The Influence of Social Media Reviews for Brand Reputation, Association, and Purchasing Decisions: The Case of Online Grocery Stores in Thailand

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Abstract

Recently, the impact of COVID-19 has changed consumer behavior, perception and attitude toward online shopping globally, including online grocery stores sector. While many studies have indicated that many customers consider consumer reviews to be trustworthy because they are based on real experiences by real people, therefore, social media review is the important key to predict customers' purchasing behavior. The objective of this study has been examined and explained as to how antecedents influence consumers' purchase decisions regarding online grocery shopping. Data for the analysis were gathered from 288 respondents who had online shopping experience through an online platform in Thailand. The hypotheses framework was analyzed by structural equation modeling technique for investigate the casual relationship between social media reviews, brand reputation, association, and purchasing decisions. The research findings reveal that social media reviews have positive impacts directly to brand reputation and brand association. Results confirmed the effects of both direct and indirect relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables hypothesized in the structural models. The results of this study might contribute and offer several managerial implications to online store owners and online shopping platform developers.

Keywords: Social media reviews, Brand reputation, Brand association, Purchasing decision

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อิทธิพลของรีวิวจากสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ต่อชื่อเสียงตราสินค้า การเชื่อมโยงตราสินค้า และการตัดสินใจซื้อ: กรณีของ ร้านขายของชำออนไลน์ในประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

ผลกระทบของโควิด-19 ในช่วงที่ผ่านมาได้เปลี่ยนพฤติกรรม การรับรู้ และทัศนคติของผู้บริโภค ต่อการซื้อสินค้าออนไลน์ทั่วโลก ซึ่งรวมถึงการค้าขายของร้านขายของชำออนไลน์ด้วย มีการศึกษาจำนวน มากระบุว่าลูกค้าจำนวนมากมองว่ารีวิวของผู้บริโภคมีความน่าเชื่อถือ เพราะรีวิวนั้นอิงจากประสบการณ์ จริงจากคนจริง ดังนั้นการรีวิวจากสื่อสังคมออนไลน์จึงเป็นกุญแจสำคัญในการทำนายพฤติกรรมการซื้อ ของลูกค้า วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษานี้ต้องการตรวจสอบและอธิบายถึงปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจ ซื้อของผู้บริโภคเกี่ยวกับการซื้อของชำออนไลน์ การศึกษานี้รวบรวมจากผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม 288 คน ที่เคยมีประสบการณ์ซื้อของชำออนไลน์ผ่านแพลตฟอร์มร้านขายของชำออนไลน์ในประเทศไทย งานวิจัยนี้ ได้พัฒนาและนำเสนอกรอบสมมติฐาน และได้รับการวิเคราะห์ด้วยการใช้แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง (SEM) เพื่อตรวจสอบความสัมพันธ์ทางการสมมติ (causal relationship) ระหว่างการรีวิวจากสื่อสังคม ออนไลน์ ชื่อเสียงของตราสินค้า การเชื่อมโยงตราสินค้า และการตัดสินใจซื้อ ผลการวิจัยเผยให้เห็นว่า การรีวิวบนโซเชียลมีเดียมีผลกระทบโดยตรงต่อชื่อเสียงของตราสินค้าและการเชื่อมโยงตราสินค้า ผลลัพธ์ จากการศึกษายืนยันผลกระทบที่มีนัยสำคัญของความสัมพันธ์ทั้งทางตรงและทางอ้อมระหว่างตัวแปร ภายนอกและตัวแปรภายในที่ตั้งสมมติฐานไว้ในแบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง ผลการศึกษานี้นำไปต่อยอด การพัฒนาการบริหาร การจัดการของเจ้าของร้านค้าออนไลน์และผู้พัฒนาแพลตฟอร์มการซื้อขายสินค้า ของชำออนไลน์ได้

คำสำคัญ: รีวิวจากสื่อสังคมออนไลน์, ชื่อเสียงตราสินค้า, การเชื่อมโยงตราสินค้า, การตัดสินใจซื้อ

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Introduction

An online grocery is a type of e-commerce provided through a website or mobile application which allows consumers to purchase food, including fresh products and other household items, online (Driediger & Bhatiasevi, 2019). Over the past few years, online grocery stores have been lagging in market share, and usage has been slower than expected (Frank & Peschel, 2020). Rogus, et al. (2019) stated that online groceries cost more than physical stores, the quality control of perishable foods is lower, and consumer distrust in the online process is higher and these are some of the reasons for the slow growth. However, the impact of COVID-19 has changed consumer perception and purchasing behavior globally. According to Statista (2020), global online traffic for grocery stores increased by 34.8% in 2020. A study in the US found that 42% of US consumers purchase groceries online, an almost twofold increase from 22% in 2018 (Super, 2020). This trend may not be a temporary change during the pandemic but may change consumer behavior permanently as more than 41% of people who never buy groceries online said they would continue to purchase online for the next six months (Super, 2020). A study by Bauerová (2021) pointed out that in recent years, online grocery stores were adopted more in Generation Y. However, Covid-19 regulations such as social distancing have influenced customers from other generations, including those from Generation X and the Baby Bloomers, to engage in online grocery shopping.

The accelerating growth of online grocery stores could serve as a challenge since customers can easily switch to other stores with a better offer. Other factors, such as word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising could also increase switching stores as consumers receive positive recommendations or opinions about alternatives (Singh & Rosengren 2020). Kühn et al. (2020) suggested that most customers remain concerned about online grocery consumption because they need haptic information to make purchasing decisions. Hence, Amazon, the world's leader in e-commerce, has provided consumers a system to rate products and post reviews on the platform to express their experience, opinion, and feedback, thereby attracting new customers and helping current customers make better decisions (Heng et al., 2018).

1. Online Grocery Stores in Thailand

In 2019, the grocery market in Thailand was valued at 30 million USD (Asia perspective, 2020). Compared with other e-commerce categories, online grocery purchases in Thailand are still considered

a new market (Driediger & Bhatiasevi, 2019) but this has recently become one of the fastest-growing sectors in Thailand (Asia perspective, 2020). Tesco Lotus is one of the first online grocery stores, followed by Big C, a strong grocery competitor in Thailand (as cited in Driediger & Bhatiasevi, 2019). Not only do these stores offer direct service from the official website application, but most online groceries in Thailand have also partnered with third-party firms; on-demand logistic services such as Grab, Lineman, Food Panda, and Happy fresh, and other online shopping platforms such as Shopee and Lazada.

The extra costs, such as delivery fees, mean greater expense purchasing online (Berg & Henriksson, 2020). However, the time-savings can be a critical factor encouraging the consumer to switch to online grocery shopping (Bauerová, 2021). Purchasing products online is more convenient and easier for a customer than going to a physical store (Berg & Henriksson, 2020). Especially in Bangkok, where the population encounters air pollution issues, including the heavy traffic around the city, people seek other solutions to purchase products. Apart from this, the regulation of plastic bags means that they are banned in retail stores, and there is heavy competition among service providers for promotions and free delivery. Thus, the population is increasingly interested in switching to online grocery stores (Asia perspective, 2020).

1. Social media reviews

The increasing usage of social media has completely changed the way consumers interact with brands online (Peeroo et al., 2017). Social media is an online communication platform where people can communicate, create, and share content (Asur & Huberman, 2010). Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) cited the following main characteristics of social media: 1) social media involves information technology, including online tools, applications, platforms, and media; 2) social media are peer-to-peer communication channels that allow participants to communicate, create content, collaborate and exchange information among individuals, communities, and organizations; 3) social media gather users across platforms into virtual communities, thereby affecting human behavior and real life.

Social media has a powerful impact on consumer intentions as it is easy to share information and opinions about products with other consumers. Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) stated that consumer discussions about a product or brand on social media, including opinion platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, can be called social eWOM. Social media reviews or Social eWOM are a specific type of eWOM (Hu & Ha, 2015) that is most frequently used among consumers (Chu & Kim, 2011). Social media is

considered an extension of traditional WOM communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) which has evolved from face-to-face communication into an electronic form. It refers to any information involving products or brands created, shared, or reposted from brands or other sources by potential, current or former customers that can be accessed via the internet (Hu & Ha, 2015).

Social media, typically, a Facebook fan page, is one of the most popular tools used by brands to enhance consumer engagement and increase loyalty (Hu & Ha, 2015). According to the Pew Research Center (Auxier & Anderson, 2021), YouTube and Facebook continue to be some of the most widely used online platforms. Most Americans under 30 years old use YouTube and Facebook while also using Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. Even though Instagram has fewer users than YouTube and Facebook, the user engagement of the photo and video-sharing platform cannot be underestimated. Instagram is a popular platform used by millennials and Gen Z that has quickly developed into an important tool for marketers (Copeland & Zhao, 2020). Varma et al. (2020) discovered that Instagram has a higher user engagement rate than Facebook and Twitter. Similarly, the study by Belanche et al. (2020) found that Instagram becomes the preferred social media for brands to disseminate their commercial message primarily through influencers as it has a higher engagement rate than other social media, and it can reach more target audiences.

The role of online reviews is increasing in consumer's daily decisions making progress as consumers tend to search the internet for other's opinions on almost all decisions, from the simple to increasingly important (Kim et al., 2019). Many customers consider consumer reviews to be trustworthy because they are based on real experiences by real people (Stephen & Toubia, 2009). According to BrightLocal Local Consumer Survey (Murphy, 2020), 92% of consumers are unlikely to purchase from a business with negative reviews, and 94% are willing to use a company based on positive reviews. The study also shows that 79% of people trust online reviews just much as they trust recommendations from friends or family. Furthermore, Tran (2020) has divided online reviews into three components, namely: 1) textual comments, or written content providing details about the experience, perception, and opinion of products and services; 2) contextual images, such as photos provided along with the detailed descriptions which allow for more visual access, leading to increased purchasing intentions; 3) numerical ratings or customer evaluations of a product or service. It also indicates customer satisfaction when they give a high or low rating.

From the above illustration together with the after COVID pandemic era, the local Thai consumers have higher demand of online grocery shopping and engage in social media review. Therefore, it's essential and right time to develop model in the context of the influence of social media review on purchasing decisions, especially factors that social media reviews can influence on. This research enhance knowledge of this industry and results could help researchers as well as manager in the industry understand consumer behavior better and be able to formulate relevant strategies for customer's need.

Literature Review

1. Social media reviews and brand reputation

Customer's purchasing decisions are based on brand reputation. When the brand's reputation is positive and highly valued, it enables companies to charge higher prices (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) and helps the brand to enhance its competitive advantage (De Chernatony, 1999). Before the rapid growth of the digital usage, the traditional process to increase brand reputation is to push market agents with a brand message. However, it has less impact on brand reputation than electronic word of mouth (eWOM) spread in social media (Nisar et al.,2020). Castellano and Dutot (2016) demonstrated that traditional reviews and recommendations (WOM) significantly influenced brand reputation as well as in the online context, eWOM has a direct effect on e-reputation (Castellano & Dutot 2016).

Social media features such as Twitter retweets or the Facebook "like" enhance the engagement between brands and consumers and help brands disseminate brand messages more virally. If word of mouth about brands is positive among consumers, it will help the brand build its reputation (Guo et al., 2020). Prasad et al. (2019) showed that generation Y actively engages in social media activities. Especially for consuming content, a customer often looks for an online opinion from other users before purchasing. Although product reviews on social media might be an opportunity for a brand, it could also cause a threat to brand reputation when a company does not solve the problem of negative feedback posted online (Aramendia-Muneta, 2017)

Hypothesis One: Social media reviews positively influences brand reputation

2. Social media reviews and brand association

Brand association is one of the brand equity dimensions that plays a vital role in purchasing decision processes (Chen et al., 2013). Brand association is involved in brand recall from consumer memory (Quester & Farrelly, 1998). Keller (1993) defined brand association as "the strength of the connection with the brand node that contains the meaning of the brand, which depends on how the information enters customer memory (coding) and how it is stored as part of the brand image (storage)" and French and Smith (2013) found that consumers memorize brand information in pieces and link it to the formation of complex brand association networks. The brand association enables consumers to distinguish a brand from its rivals (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). A brand that consumers strongly remember or has unique qualities, or the brand is recognized over competitors could more likely lead to a purchase intention (Koll & von Wallpach, 2014).

Chakraborty and Bhat (2017) found that online reviews from credible sources affect brand association, leading to consumer purchasing intention. The study has divided brand association into three components: perceived value, brand personality, and organizational associations. Chakraborty and Bhat (2017) also pointed out that online reviews impact perceived value and organizational associations.

Hypothesis Two: Social media reviews positively influence brand association

3. Social media reviews and purchasing decisions

Research shows that social media influences the consumer decision–making process and has an impact on brands among several industries such as hotels and tourism, box offices, grocery stores, and restaurants (e.g., Ding et al., 2017; Koufie & Kesa, 2020; Peeroo et al., 2017; Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017). The discussions, comments, posts, shares, and other social media activities from others who have had previous experience with a product or brand substantially affect purchasing intention. It is considered an essential reference for consumer choices to purchase (Alrwashdeh et al. 2019).

Because of the potential risks of online shopping, a consumer prefers to infer product or brand quality and reduce uncertainty (Zhang et al., 2018) by relying more on social media platforms as it enables them to conveniently access information, opinions, and knowledge of the product or brand from other consumers (Tran, 2020). Alrwashdeh et al. (2019) noted that consumers tend to look for information available on the internet, online reviews, and recommendations when unsure about a particular brand. These help them to enhance their confidence in decisions to buy. A study by Bhandari

et al. (2020) noted that a negative review may reduce the intention to purchase. However, the brand can respond to a negative comment to reduce negative eWOM impact. The research found that potential consumers who read brand responses help the firm enhance positive brand evaluation, leading to consumer consumption.

Nevertheless, Dwidienawati et al. (2020) argued that not all types of eWOM would affect purchase intention. A study in the smartphone context found that online consumer reviews show a decline in influencing a consumer purchasing decision. The reasons are the reliability of the sources of consumer reviews and the quality of the reviews. As well as the type of product, a smartphone is an expensive product that requires a review with higher credibility for making a purchasing decision. Dwidienawati et al. (2020) also suggested that consumer reviews with complete product details can improve the reliability and quality of the review.

Hypothesis Three: Social media reviews positively influence purchasing decisions

4. Brand reputation, brand association, and purchasing decisions

Brand reputation plays a vital role in the consumer decision-making process. It enhances consumer confidence that they have made better decisions. Most consumers tend to purchase a product from brands with a better reputation (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Previous research found that brand reputation is a source of building brand association (Smith et al., 2010). Brand association is related to how deeply, strongly, and uniquely, brand information is linked to customer memory nodes (Emari et al., 2012). It indicates how meaningful a brand is for a consumer (Keller, 1993).

A brand with a positive brand association lead to brand favorability (Emari et al., 2012). Prasad et al. (2019) showed the relationship between brand reputation, social media reviews, and purchasing decisions, that brand reputation moderates the relationship between online reviews and purchasing intentions. The relationship between brand and customer becomes significantly stronger with a more positive brand reputation. The relationship between brand association, social media reviews, and purchasing decisions, Chakraborty (2019) stated that brand association mediates online reviews and purchasing decisions. In the context of electronic products in India, the source of the online review has a significant impact on the reliability of the review. The study showed that online reviews from a trustworthy source essentially influence consumer purchasing decisions through the perceived value component associated with the brand. Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis Four: brand reputation positively influences purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis Five: brand association positively influences purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis Six: brand reputation mediates the effects of social media reviews on consumer purchasing decisions to buy groceries online.

Hypothesis Seven: brand association mediates the effects of social media reviews on consumer purchasing decisions to buy groceries online.

Based on the literature review presented in the previous section, the seven hypothesis frameworks are shown in Figure 1.
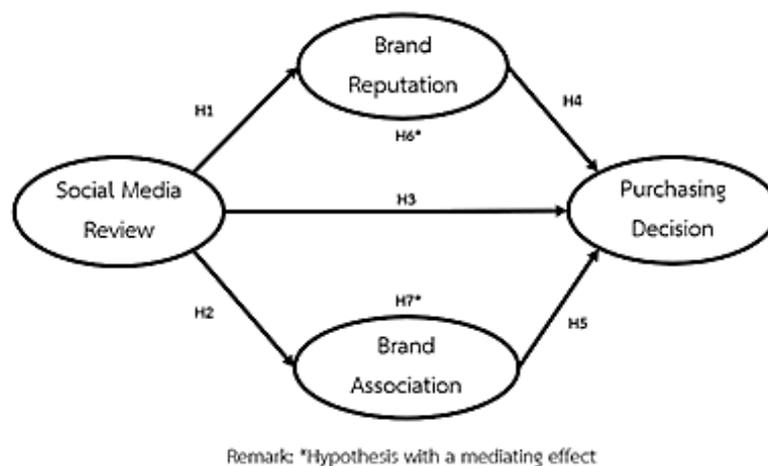

Remark: *Hypothesis with a mediating effect

Figure 1: Hypotheses Framework

Objectives

1. This research study aims to examine the influence of social media review influence on brand reputation, brand association and consumers' purchase decisions regarding online grocery shopping.

2. Examine the moderating role of brand reputation and brand association between social media reviews and purchasing decision.

Scope of the study

Population and samples

The research was conducted on respondents who have had purchasing experiences with online grocery stores platform service that operated in Thailand, including Big C, Tops, Makro, Foodland, Maxvalue, Happy Fresh, and 7-Eleven. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data through an online platform in Thailand. A total of 322 questionnaires were filled out and returned, however, there were 288 valid questionnaires which constitute a response rate of 89.4%. The total respondents' samples were 53.8 percent female and 46.2 percent male. Most samples were aged between 20 to 30 years old (46.5%). Regarding the income of the samples, most of them receive a monthly income in the range of 15,000 to 30,000 Baht (44%); some receive less than 15,000 Baht (18.1%), more than 60,000 Baht (14%), 30,001 – 45,000 Baht (12.5%), and 45,001–60,000 (11%). Most of them have spent time shopping in online grocery stores about 2–3 times per month (42.4%), less than 2 times a month (24.7%), 4–5 times per month (16.7%), and more than 5 times per month (16.3%). About 53.5% of the Thai respondents have perceived and read the online reviews from Facebook, with 28.1%, 11.1%, and 7.3% accessing online reviews from Instagram, websites, and other social media platforms respectively. The study in mainly in the case of Thailand, therefore, it will enhance the study of online review in the context of Thailand. In addition, while snowball sampling was employed, we ensured sample representativeness by comparing key demographics with the target population. Our sample's age distribution, gender ratio, and online shopping frequency closely aligned with the characteristics of typical online shoppers in Thailand, suggesting that our non-probability sample reasonably reflects the target population.

Research Methodology

Respondents who had experienced purchasing from online grocery store platform services operating in Thailand were the focus of the research. The study applied the snowball sampling technique to efficiently reach the respondents. (Naderifar et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2019). Finding potential respondents with the same demand in the same context is rational and convenient. The proposed causal hypotheses were investigated using a structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. We used a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) before exploring hypothesis testing. According to Hair et al. (2010), the number of samples recommended is a 10:1 to 20:1 sample-to-variable ratio as a rule of sample

selection can be analyzed by structural equation modeling. As this research had 18 observed variables, a 10:1 ratio was adapted to indicate the sample size of at least 180 samples which was chosen by a convenience sampling method. Table 1 shows how each measure are obtained as well as sources. Since they were validated in the context of other service industries, some constructs were modified.

Table 1: Measurement Items

Measures	Variables	References
Social media reviews	● I often read other consumer's social media reviews to know which online grocery store makes good impressions on others (SMR1). ● I often read other consumer's social media reviews to ensure that I make a purchase from the right online grocery store (SMR2). ● I frequently gather information from social media reviews before I make a purchase from a certain online grocery store (SMR3). ● Social media reviews increase my confidence in purchasing products from online grocery stores (SMR4).	Adapted from Dwidienawati et al. (2020)
Brand reputation	● The online grocery store with which I transact is trustworthy (BR1). ● The online grocery store with which I transact is reputable (BR2). ● The online grocery store with which I transact makes honest claims (BR3). ● The online grocery store with which I transact has been in business a long time (BR4). ● In the past, today, and in the future, the values of the online grocery store with which I transact will not change (BR5).	Adapted from Prasad et al. (2019)

Measures	Variables	References
Brand association	● Social media reviews help me to buy those products which are cost-efficient (BA1). ● Social media reviews make it easier for me to buy those products from an online grocery store for greater value for money (BA2). ● Social media reviews give me a clear picture of the type of person who would buy a product from this online grocery store (BA3). ● Social media reviews give me an idea which online grocery stores suit my needs (BA4). ● The online grocery store that appeared on social media has its own personality (BA5). ● The online grocery store that appeared on social media is familiar to me (BA6).	Adapted from Chakraborty (2019); Chakraborty and Bhat (2017); Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015)
Purchasing Decision	● I would rather buy products from the online grocery store introduced by my friends on social media than other competing online grocery stores (PD1). ● I would like to buy products from online grocery stores following their introduction by my friends on social media (PD2). ● I am willing to purchase products from online grocery stores that are reviewed on social media (PD3).	Adapted from Alrwashdeh et al (2019); Chakraborty (2019); Tran (2020)

Results

Reliability and convergent validity

According to the reliability of the research measurement, the scale examination has been discovered using the measurement of the alpha coefficient (α) to calculate the internal consistency of

measurement correlation. The result revealed that alpha coefficients ranged between 0.736 to 0.843. All variable measurements were acceptable which is higher than a 0.6 level of reliability (Hulin et al, 2001) (Table 2).

Convergent validity also measured the level of multiple measurement correlation in the same construct. Composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed 0.50, and the indicators with outer loading below 0.40 should be considered removable (Hamid et al., 2017). In Table 2, convergent validity was discovered from composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE), all variables were greater than 0.50. The outer factor loading of all indicators was acceptable ranging between 0.624 to 0.910.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Dimensions and Items	Cronbach's (α)	AVE	CR	Factor Loading (λ)
Social Media Reviews				
SMR				–
SMR1				.864
SMR2	.843	.685	.897	.807
SMR3				.789
SMR4				.849
Brand Reputation				
BR				
BR1				.759
BR2	.736	.501	.827	.624
BR3				.774
BR4				.700
BR5				.634
Brand Association				

Dimensions and Items	Cronbach's (α)	AVE	CR	Factor Loading (λ)
BA				
BA1				.749
BA2				.689
BA3	.829	.545	.877	.741
BA4				.757
BA5				.712
BA6				.778
Purchase Decision				
PD				
PD1	.819	.734	.892	.826
PD2				.833
PD3				.910

Structural models

The empirical investigation involved examining the causal relationships among exogenous and endogenous variables hypothesized in the structural models. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted for the entire construct to develop the construct validity. According to Hair et al. (2010), the minimum discrepancy of Chi–square (CMIN)/Degree of freedom (DF) should be considered a reasonable fit if the value is below 3. Meanwhile, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) should be greater than 0.90 which implies a strong unidimensional construct. Bentler and Bonett (1980) recommended that the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) values should be lower than 0.07 and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) values should be less than 0.08. Hence, all indicators indicate the constructed model is fit and acceptable for analyzing a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method.

Since the initial constructs were examined and revealed that χ^2/ d.f., CFI, GFI, RMSEA, and RMR values were unacceptable, an observed variable from brand reputation (BR2) was considered removable for modifying the model based on the suggested construct criteria. Hence, the overall construct model was

acceptable for analyzing further causal hypotheses: χ^2/d.f.=2.311, CFI=0.940, GFI=0.913, RMSEA=0.068, and RMR=0.061 (Table 3).

Table 3: Construct Validity Test (n=288)

Dimensions and Items	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Standardized factor weight	R^2
Social Media Reviews					
SMR1	1.000	–	–	.784	.615
SMR2	1.082	.151	7.176	.712	.508
SMR3	.898	.071	12.687	.643	.413
SMR4	1.121	.151	7.400	.796	.634
Brand Reputation (R^2 = .237)					
BR1	1.000	–	–	.773	.598
BR3	.868	.079	10.999	.714	.510
BR4	.692	.083	8.365	.537	.289
BR5	.708	.086	8.217	.525	.276
Brand Association (R^2 = .192)					
BA1	1.000	–	–	.749	.560
BA2	.812	.082	9.953	.597	.356
BA3	.978	.083	11.831	.701	.491
BA4	.732	.068	10.686	.639	.408
BA5	.715	.068	10.449	.635	.403
BA6	.726	.068	10.732	.641	.411
Purchase Decision (R^2 = .727)					
PD1	1.000	–	–	.830	.690
PD2	1.091	.091	12.050	.836	.699
PD3	1.074	.083	12.977	.781	.610

	Absolute Model Fit Indices							
Model	χ^2	d.f.	χ^2/ d.f.	p–value	CFI	RMSEA	GFI	RMR
Initial	759.44	130	5.842	.000	.746	.130	.770	.140
Modified	238.06	103	2.311	.000	.940	.068	.913	.061

***Remarks: χ^2/ d.f. < 3.0, p–value <0.05, CFI>0.90, GFI>0.90, RMSEA<0.07, RMR<0.08*

(Bentler & Bonett,1980; Hair et al., 2010)

      The results of the standardized regression weights are summarized in Figure 2. Based on Structural Equation Modeling results, social media reviews had positive significant effects on brand reputation (H1) and brand association (H2) with standardized coefficients of 0.487 and 0.439 respectively. Furthermore, the brand association also had a positive effect on purchase decisions with standardized coefficients of 0.900 (H5). However, the effects of social media reviews (H3) and brand reputation (H4) were revealed to have a negatively insignificant impact on purchasing decisions. The proposed mediating hypotheses were also tested and found that brand reputation (H6) and brand association (H7) had mediating influences on the causal relationships between social media reviews and consumer purchasing decisions with regard to online grocery stores.
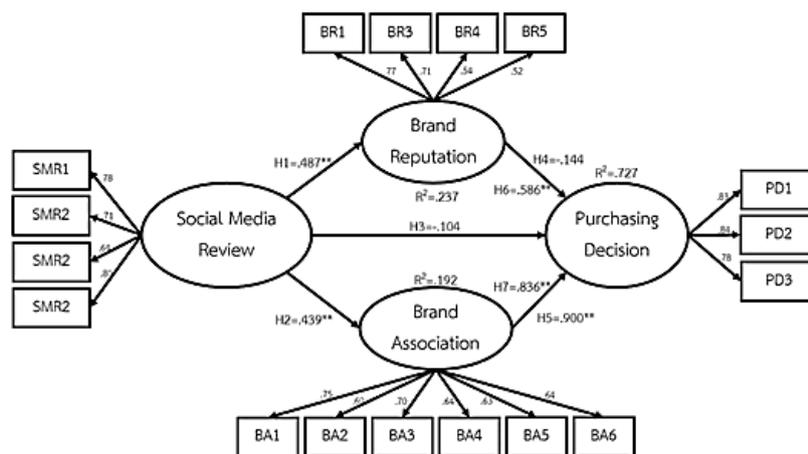

Figure 2: Hypotheses Framework and Path Diagram of SEM

Conclusion and Discussion

      Hypothesis 1, social media reviews positively influence brand reputation, was 0.487 and statistically significant at the 1 percent level. Empirically, the finding was supported by several results that consistently found a positive effect of social media reviews for brand reputation. For example, Castellano and Dutot (2016); Nisar et al. (2020) found positive effects of social media reviews for brand reputation in social media communities.

Hypothesis 2, which dealt with the causal relationship between social media and brand association, was investigated and showed that social media reviews had a positive significant effect on brand association with a standard coefficient of 0.439 at the 0.01 level. This result regarding the positive impact of social media reviews for brand association was supported by the previous empirical results. For instance, Chakraborty and Bhat (2017); Koll and von Wallpach (2014) revealed the positive effect of social media reviews for brand association in consumer goods and on service brand contexts

Hypothesis 3, which proposed the direct impact of social media reviews on purchase decisions, was investigated and showed a negatively insignificant coefficient of –0.104 at the 0.05 level. This result is not consistent with the results of Ding et al., (2017); Koufie & Kesa (2020); Peeroo et al. (2017); Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017)'s studies conducted in the service industry. In addition, the standardized coefficient of Hypothesis 4 for the causal relationship between brand reputation and purchase decision was –0.144, and it was insignificant at the 5 percent level. This result is not supported by the empirical results of Ryan and Casidy (2018) which studied consumers' purchase decisions with regard to organic food consumption. In online grocery store platforms, price strategy is the most important factor for capturing customers' purchase decisions (Li et al., 2019). Therefore, online consumers may prioritize product price over social media reviews and brand reputation when they decide to purchase online Hypothesis 5, the path coefficient for the path between brand association and purchase decisions was 0.90 and was positively significant at the 1 percent level. The results of this study show that brand awareness is the most significant factor for predicting purchase decisions at the highest value of the standardized coefficients. Thus, it could be concluded that brand association was a good predictor for heightening consumers' attitudes towards purchase decisions regarding online shopping. This result is supported by the empirical study proposed by Chakraborty (2019) and Emari et al. (2012). which indicated a positive significant effect of brand association on purchase decisions in online shopping platforms.

Hypothesis 6 and 7, brand reputation and association had a significantly mediating relationship between social media reviews and consumer purchasing decisions. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), if a direct link between the independent and dependent variables is found to have an insignificant effect, the mediation effect analysis indicates a full mediation. Hence, the findings (Table 4) products, especially the price strategies offered by online stores (Poort & Borgesius, 2019).

indicated that brand reputation and association fully mediated the relationship between social media reviews and purchasing decisions.

Thus, the primary objective of this study has been examined and explained as to how antecedents influence consumers' purchase decisions regarding online grocery shopping in the Thai context.

Table 4 Mediation Test

Mediating Effects	Direct Effect without Mediator	Direct Effect with Mediator	Results
H6: SMR → BR → PD	–.104 (p>.000)	.586** (p<.000)	Fully mediation
H7: SMR → BA → PD	–.104 (p>.000)	.836** (p<.000)	Fully mediation

Limitation and Suggestion

This research examines the impact of social media reviews on purchasing decisions mediated by brand reputation and brand association in the online grocery store context. The switching from shopping in a physical store to an online grocery store is continually growing along with online consumer review adoption. With quick and easy access to enormous product information, consumers tend to seek an online opinion on social media to narrow down their choices. Therefore, a brand should be concerned with more emphasis on social media reviews. However, there is a limitation in data collection since small application platforms are not well known enough to collect data. In addition, the quality of online can be further discussed on social media reviews factor.

The results of this study have several managerial implications for online store owners and online shopping platform developers. First, this finding highlights the significance of consumers' reviews as a predictor of other customers' buying intentions. Bhandari et al. (2020) suggested that a brand can deal with negative feedback by responding to those negative comments. When a brand shows a responsibility or concern for consumer complaints, it may reduce the negative impact on the brand and enhance potential consumers' willingness to purchase.

The quality and reliability of consumer reviews are also factors that should concern a brand. Previous research pointed out that consumer reviews failed to influence the consumer to purchase a smartphone due to the lack of reliability of the reviews (Dwidienawati et al. 2020). Similarly, electronic product purchasing in India also requires reviews from trustworthy sources (Chakraborty, 2019). Chakraborty (2019) suggested that a brand can enhance review trustworthiness by encouraging the consumer to write a review that includes product details provided by the brands. Finally, a brand should establish a unique marketing message, content, or campaign on social media as it affects brand associations. The most important concept is that a brand has to ensure that it conveys its meaning and distinguishes itself from its competitors.

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