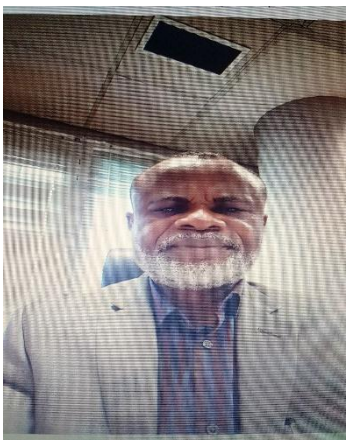
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PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND CREDIBILITY AMONG FREQUENT ONLINE REVIEW CONTRIBUTORS: THE ROLE OF REVIEW AUTHENTICITY, INFORMATION DIAGNOSTICITY, AND BRAND RESPONSE TRANSPARENCY

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of frequent online review contributors on perceived brand credibility, with particular interest on the role of review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand response transparency. Data was sourced through a structured questionnaire, from six digital environments [e-platforms] viz, Google Reviews, Jumia, Konga, Instagram, Facebook, and TripAdvisor.The study population for investigation isfrequentlyonline review contributors who have done six reviews and more during the twelve months preceding the survey. 200 questionnaires were sent out, at the end of the day 200 respondents turned in their responses. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the constructs and result shows consistency. Pearson correlation analysis was utilized to examine the direction and strength of the association among the independent variables and dependent variables. And multiple regression was used to determine the joint effects of review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand review transparency on brand credibility using SPSS tool. The study findings reveal generally positive perceptions across the three constructs, review authenticity, information diagnosticity and brand response transparency. Review Authenticity, the result indicates that respondents tended on average to perceive online reviews as exhibiting a moderate to positive degree of authenticity. Information Diagnosticity reveals the highest mean and standard deviation among the three independent variables suggesting that respondents generally considered online reviews useful for evaluating products and service alternatives. Brand Response Transparency remained above midpoint of the 5-pointscale, demonstrating a moderate level of

transparency in their response to online reviews. The study recommends, among other recommendations, for brands to strengthen mechanisms that encourage genuine customer reviews and discourage fabricated or manipulated review content. Finally, that organization should develop transparent response practices by addressing customer concerns, explaining actions taken and communicating openly about unresolved issues.

Key words: Brand Credibility, Review Authenticity, Information Diagnosticity, Brand Response Transparency

Introduction: The rapid expansion of digital commerce has transformed the way consumers search for, evaluate and exchange information about products and services. In conventional markets, consumers could rely on physical inspection, salesperson explanations, interpersonal recommendations and repeated personal experience before deciding whether a brand was dependable. Digital markets substantially alter this information environment. Consumers increasingly encounter products through search engines, social-media platforms, online marketplaces and review communities where a large proportion of the information available to them is generated by other users. Online consumer reviews therefore operate as an important form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), allowing consumers to communicate experiences, evaluations and recommendations to audiences that may be geographically distant from the original transaction.

The informational importance of online reviews is closely associated with the uncertainty surrounding many online purchase decisions. A prospective customer may not be able to physically inspect a product, observe the service process or verify every claim made by a seller before purchase. Reviews can reduce some of this uncertainty by providing experience-based information about product performance, service quality, reliability and problems encountered after consumption. Filieri (2015) shows that information diagnosticity is central to the usefulness and adoption of online review information, while Filieri, et al, (2018) demonstrate that relevance, currency, factuality, source credibility and ranking cues can affect how diagnostic consumers perceive review information to be.

The growth of online review systems, however, has also created a credibility problem. Not every review is necessarily an independent and authentic account of a consumer experience. Reviews may be fabricated, incentivized, strategically exaggerated, manipulated or generated without the reviewer having genuine experience with the product or service. Recent research continues to document consumers' difficulty in distinguishing genuine from deceptive reviews (Harrison-Walker & Jiang, 2023; Yin et al., 2025), while technological research has developed increasingly sophisticated methods for detecting fake reviews (Pan & Xu, 2024).

Review authenticity is therefore important to the interpretation of online review information. In the present study, review authenticity refers to the extent to which a frequent review contributor perceives an online review as genuine, experience-based, non-manipulated and representative of an actual consumer encounter. The concept is deliberately distinguished from the objective truth of a review. A consumer may perceive a review to be authentic even when its objective veracity is unknown. Conversely, a genuine review may be judged as suspicious if its wording, extremity, lack of detail or other characteristics create doubt. Banerjee et al, (2017) demonstrated that linguistic cues can assist judgments about whether reviews are authentic or fictitious, while Harrison-Walker and Jiang (2023) show that consumers use multiple cues when evaluating whether online reviews are fake or credible. More recent work also suggests that authenticity judgments extend beyond a simple real-

versus-fake distinction and can include expressive and linguistic considerations (Fourkan et al., 2026).

Whether the information contained in a review is sufficiently useful for evaluating the brand is another issue. This concern is captured by information diagnosticity. Information is diagnostic when it assists a consumer in learning about and evaluating product or service performance and in making a more confident decision. Diagnosticity is not synonymous with information quantity. A long review is not automatically more useful than a short review. Rather, the relevance, factuality, currency, specificity and decision usefulness of information determines whether it helps a consumer discriminate among alternatives. Filieri (2015) found that information quality was a major influence on perceived diagnosticity, while Filieri et al. (2018) found that the determinants of diagnosticity can vary with information characteristics and time. Kim et al., (2020) further showed that the content of reviews can alter perceived helpfulness even when ratings are identical. These findings suggest that frequent review contributors may evaluate brands partly through the diagnostic quality of the information that circulates about them.

Another consideration concerns the manner in which brands respond publicly to online reviews. Review is not always a one-way communication from consumer to consumer. On many platforms, firms can acknowledge complaints, clarify disputed facts, explain service failures, provide evidence, apologize, indicate corrective actions or otherwise respond to review content. The public nature of such responses means that the original reviewer is not the only audience. Other consumers can observe how the brand behaves when confronted with praise, criticism, uncertainty or allegations of poor performance. Bhandari and Rodgers (2018) found that brand feedback to negative eWOM can influence brand trust and purchase intentions, while Bhandari et al., (2021) showed that the effects of brand feedback depend partly on the controllability and stability of the underlying problem. Weitzl and Hutzinger (2017) similarly examined marketer- and advocate-initiated online service recovery responses from the perspective of silent bystanders. These studies establish that firm responses form part of the eWOM information environment rather than merely constituting a private service-recovery exchange.

The present study uses the term brand response transparency to capture the perceived openness, clarity, specificity, consistency and accountability of a brand's public responses to online reviews. Transparency is not simply the existence of a response. A response can be present but vague, evasive or promotional. Conversely, a transparent response communicates relevant information, acknowledges the substance of the complaint or praise, clarifies what the firm knows, explains its position and, where appropriate, indicates what action is being taken. Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) conceptualize organizational transparency around information characteristics including disclosure, clarity and accuracy and link transparency to trust in stakeholder relationships. In the context of online reviews, transparency can therefore be understood as a visible communication cue through which consumers infer whether a brand is willing to engage openly with information about its performance.

Brand credibility is the dependent construct in the present study because consumers ultimately have to form a judgment about whether a brand can be believed and relied upon. Erdem and Swait (2004) conceptualize brand credibility in terms of the perceived believability of a brand's claims, particularly its trustworthiness and expertise. Their work demonstrates that credibility matters for consideration and choice, especially in situations

characterized by uncertainty and information acquisition costs. In an online review environment, credibility is potentially affected not only by what a brand says about itself but also by the authenticity and diagnosticity of information supplied by other consumers and by the transparency of the firm's responses to that information.

The population of interest in this study is frequent online review contributors. This group is analytically important because individuals who regularly write reviews are not merely occasional readers of digital information; they have repeated experience with the processes of evaluating products, forming judgments, composing review narratives and observing responses from other users and firms.

Taken together the three explanatory variables represent complementary information mechanisms. Review authenticity addresses whether the review is perceived as genuine; information diagnosticity addresses whether the information is useful for evaluating the brand; and brand response transparency addresses whether the brand responds to review information openly and credibly. Brand credibility represents the resulting overall judgment about whether the brand is believable, trustworthy and capable of delivering on its communicated promises. This study therefore proposes a parsimonious model in which review authenticity, information diagnosticity and brand response transparency independently and jointly predict perceived brand credibility among frequent online review contributors.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Online reviews have become an important source of market information, but their usefulness depends on the extent to which consumers can interpret them as genuine, informative and fairly handled by the brands concerned. The central problem addressed by this study is that the growth in the volume of online review information has not eliminated uncertainty about its credibility. Instead, consumers may face a double uncertainty: uncertainty about whether a review accurately represents a consumer experience and uncertainty about how much decision-relevant information the review actually contains. When these uncertainties are compounded by unclear or defensive brand responses, the information environment surrounding the brand can become difficult to interpret.

The increasing availability of fabricated, incentivized and manipulated reviews means that review volume cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of genuine customer experience. Existing research has investigated linguistic cues, reviewer characteristics, review valence and computational detection, but the consumer-perception dimension remains important because consumers generally make decisions without knowing the true status of a review. Harrison-Walker and Jiang (2023) show that consumers use multiple cues to judge whether reviews are fake, and Yin et al. (2025) demonstrate that consumers can display systematic biases in judging review authenticity. Thus, there remains a need to examine how perceived authenticity relates specifically to perceptions of the credibility of the brand being reviewed.

Consumers may encounter a large number of reviews without obtaining information that is sufficiently relevant, factual, current or specific to their decision. Prior research has established that diagnosticity is related to information quality and review characteristics, but much of that literature focuses on review helpfulness, information adoption or purchase intentions rather than on the perceived credibility of the brand itself. This creates a conceptual gap: a review may be considered useful for a purchase decision without the study explicitly establishing how that usefulness translates into a broader judgment that the brand

itself is credible. The present study addresses this issue by treating information diagnosticity as a direct predictor of brand credibility.

Brands increasingly have opportunities to respond publicly to reviews, yet the mere existence of a response does not guarantee that consumers will interpret the brand positively. A response may be perceived as informative and accountable, or it may be perceived as evasive, generic, promotional or defensive. Research on brand feedback has demonstrated that public responses can influence trust, attitudes and purchase intentions, but the literature has often examined particular response strategies or specific service-failure conditions. There is therefore scope for a more general construct that captures the perceived transparency of brand responses across review situations and examines its relationship with brand credibility among experienced review contributors.

Research on fake reviews and authenticity tends to focus on deception detection and review evaluation; research on diagnosticity tends to focus on helpfulness, information adoption and decision quality; and research on firm response tends to focus on service recovery, brand trust, attitudes or purchase intentions. These streams are related because all three concern how consumers interpret information in the public review environment, but they are not always integrated into a single parsimonious explanatory model of brand credibility. The present study brings the three constructs together and tests their independence and joint effects.

Aim and Objectives: This study sets out to investigate perceptions of brand credibility among frequent online review contributors. To achieve this research outlines, the following targeted objectives were formulated, which are to:

i. Examine the effect of review authenticity on brand credibility among frequent online review contributors.
ii. Assess the effect of information diagnosticity on brand credibility.
iii. Evaluate the effect of brand response transparency on brand credibility.
iv. Determine the combined (joint) effect of review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand response transparency on brand credibility.

Research Questions: To guide the investigation, the following research questions are posed

i. What is the effect of review authenticity on brand credibility among frequent online review contributors?
ii. What effect does information diagnosticity have on brand credibility among frequent online review contributors?
iii. What effect does brand response transparency have on brand credibility among frequent online review contributors?
iv. What is the joint effect of review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand response transparency on brand credibility among frequent online contributors?

Research Hypotheses: Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses will be tested empirically:

H_{01}: Review authenticity has no significant positive effect on brand credibility.
H_{02}: Information diagnosticity has no significant positive effect on brand credibility.
H_{03}: Brand response transparency has no significant positive effect on brand credibility.
H_{04}: Review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand response transparency jointly do not significantly predict brand credibility.

Literature review: Reviews of literature relevant to the relationship between review authenticity, information diagnosticity, brand response transparency and perceived brand credibility is done. The review is organized into conceptual, theoretical and empirical components. The conceptual review clarifies the meaning and boundaries of each construct. The theoretical framework explains the mechanisms linking the predictors to brand credibility. The empirical review evaluates evidence from prior studies and identifies the unresolved gap addressed by the present study. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework.

Concept of Brand Credibility: Brand credibility refers to the perceived believability of a brand's claims and its perceived capacity to fulfil those claims. Erdem and Swait (2004) distinguish credibility through dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise and show that credibility is particularly relevant where consumers face uncertainty and information acquisition costs. This definition is suitable for the present study because online review environments are characterized by information asymmetry: consumers typically possess less information about the actual quality of a product or service than the seller or previous users.

Brand credibility is narrower in the present context because it focuses on the believability of the brand and the perceived capability and willingness to deliver what it communicates. The construct is consequently appropriate as the dependent variable through which review information and brand responses can be reflected in an overall judgment about the brand.

Online reviews can affect credibility through an informational route. When consumers perceive reviews as authentic, they have less reason to discount the evidence as fabricated. When reviews are diagnostic, the information becomes more useful for assessing actual product or service performance. When brands respond transparently, the response provides additional information through which observers can evaluate the brand's openness and accountability. These mechanisms suggest that brand credibility in online environments is not formed solely by brand-generated advertising; it is also influenced by the surrounding information ecosystem.

Concept of Review Authenticity: Review authenticity concerns the perceived genuineness of a review as an expression of a real consumer experience. The concept should not be reduced to stylistic naturalness. A review may be grammatically polished and still be authentic, while an informal review may be fabricated. What matters is the consumer's judgment that the review appears to originate from a real experience and has not been materially manipulated for deceptive purposes.

Research on deceptive reviews demonstrates that authenticity judgments can be based on multiple cues. Banerjee et al. (2017) identified linguistic features such as comprehensibility, specificity and exaggeration as useful in distinguishing authentic from fictitious hotel reviews. Harrison-Walker and Jiang (2023) identified multiple cues that consumers use when assessing whether reviews are fake or credible. Yin et al. (2025) further shows that consumers can display a truth bias when judging reviews of unknown veracity. These findings indicate that perceived authenticity is an evaluative judgment rather than a simple objective property available to the consumer.

For the present study, review authenticity is operationalized through perceptions of genuineness, actual experience, absence of material fabrication, balanced detail and consistency with observable experience. The construct is treated as an antecedent of brand

credibility because consumers may use the perceived authenticity of third-party information to infer whether the positive or negative claims surrounding a brand deserve to be believed.

Concept of Information Diagnosticity: Information diagnosticity is the extent to which information helps a consumer distinguish among alternatives, evaluate quality and make a decision with greater confidence. In online review research, diagnosticity is closely related to review usefulness because a review is valuable when its content provides decision-relevant evidence rather than merely increasing the volume of available information.

Filieri (2015) found that information quality is a central predictor of perceived diagnosticity and that diagnosticity contributes to information adoption. Filieri et al. (2018) further showed that review relevance and currency consistently contribute to perceived diagnosticity and that the effects of factuality and source credibility can change over time. These studies suggest that diagnosticity is multidimensional and context sensitive. Kim et al. (2020) similarly demonstrates that the written content of reviews can change perceived helpfulness even when rating levels are held constant.

The present study treats information diagnosticity as a direct explanatory construct rather than as a moderator. The respondent evaluates whether the review information is sufficiently relevant, specific, factual, current and useful for judging the brand. This interpretation preserves the distinction between diagnosticity and review authenticity: a review can appear authentic but contain little decision-relevant information, while a highly informative review may still be questioned if the reviewer appears unreliable.

Concept of Brand Response Transparency: Brand response transparency refers to the perceived openness and informational quality of a firm's public response to online reviews. It includes the degree to which the response addresses the substance of the review, provides relevant clarification, avoids misleading omissions, communicates what the firm knows, and indicates accountability where appropriate. Transparency therefore concerns the quality of disclosure and communication rather than simply whether a firm responds.

Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) identify disclosure, clarity and accuracy as central dimensions of organizational transparency. Applied to online review settings, these dimensions suggest that consumers can evaluate a response according to whether it supplies understandable and accurate information. Brand-response research also demonstrates that public responses can affect trust and other brand outcomes. Bhandari and Rodgers (2018) found that brand feedback to negative eWOM had both positive and negative effects on purchase intentions, with brand trust mediating the positive pathway. Bhandari et al. (2021) found that the effectiveness of brand feedback depends partly on the perceived cause and controllability of the problem. More recent work likewise shows that firms' responses to illegitimate negative reviews can affect third-party credibility judgments and that inappropriate aggressiveness can undermine the benefits of a defensive response.

The present study therefore conceptualizes transparency as a perception of the informational character of brand responses. It is not equivalent to apologies, defensiveness, accommodation or response speed. Those are specific response strategies or attributes that may be studied separately. Transparency concerns whether the response is sufficiently open, clear, specific and accountable to support a credible interpretation of the brand.

Relationship among Review Authenticity, Information Diagnosticity, Brand Response Transparency and Brand Credibility

The three predictors address different stages of interpretation in the online review environment. Review authenticity concerns whether the information appears genuine; information diagnosticity concerns whether the information is useful for evaluating performance; and brand - response transparency concerns the quality of the brand's own public communication in response to review information.

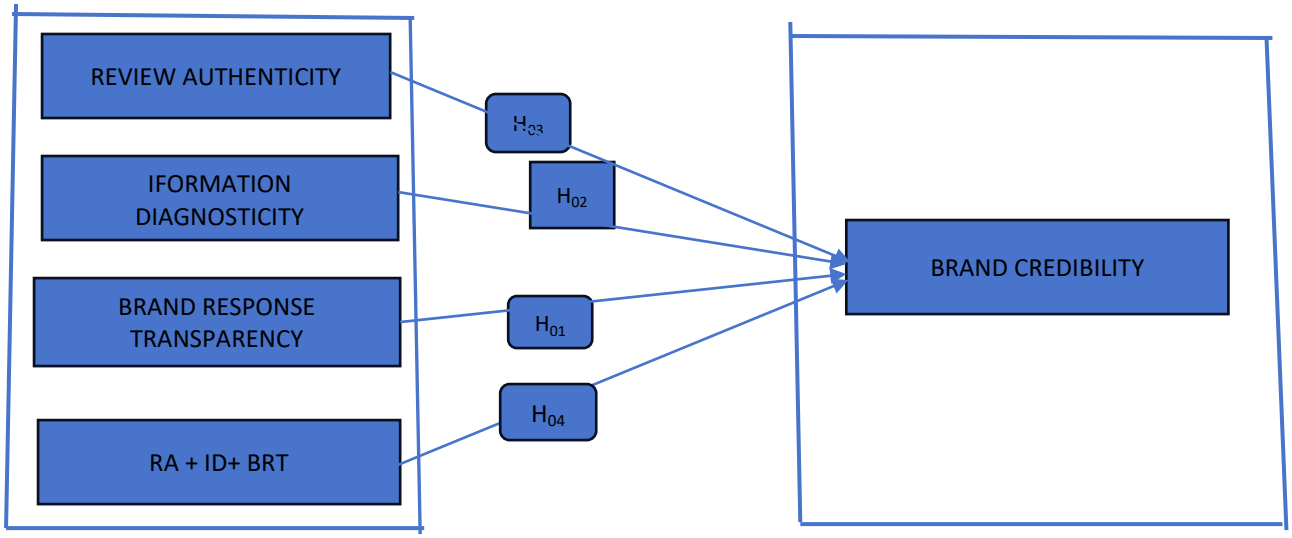


Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework showing the relationships between RA, ID and BRT and Brand Credibility [BRT]. Source: Researchers conceptualization [2026] adapted from Literature.

Theoretical Framework: This study is anchored on two theories that are considered relevant in x-raying the independent and dependent variables.

Elaboration Likelihood Model: The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) developed by Petty and Cacioppo explains how individuals process persuasive information through different levels of cognitive elaboration. Under conditions of high involvement and sufficient ability, individuals are more likely to scrutinize argument quality through the central route. Under lower elaboration conditions, peripheral cues such as source characteristics can have greater influence. The model does not imply that one route is universally superior; rather, it explains why different information cues can influence judgments under different conditions.

The model is relevant to information diagnosticity because diagnostic information supplies substantive arguments that can be evaluated for relevance, factuality, specificity and decision usefulness. Filieri et al. (2018) explicitly applied ELM to the determinants of information diagnosticity in online consumer reviews and found that both central and peripheral cues can influence perceived diagnosticity. The model also provides a bridge between review authenticity and diagnosticity: authenticity may operate partly as a source cue, whereas diagnosticity concerns the substantive usefulness of the information itself.

The limitation of ELM for the present study is that the model is broad and does not by itself specify how firms communicate observable signals in conditions of information asymmetry. Signaling Theory therefore complements ELM by explaining why brand responses can serve as observable indicators of underlying brand qualities.

Signaling Theory: Signaling Theory originated in information economics and is particularly relevant where one party possesses information that another party cannot easily observe. Spence (1973) demonstrated how signals can reduce information asymmetry when observable characteristics communicate otherwise unobservable qualities. In consumer markets, brand names, warranties, certifications and communication practices can function as signals because consumers cannot directly observe every aspect of product quality before purchasing.

In an online review environment, a brand's public response can function as an observable signal. A detailed and transparent response may communicate willingness to disclose information and engage with criticism, while an evasive response may provide less information for observers. The theory therefore supports the relationship between brand response transparency and brand credibility. It also explains why transparency should be conceptualized as more than the existence of a response: the signal is informative only to the extent that the communication provides credible and interpretable information.

A limitation of Signaling Theory is that not every observable communication is a credible signal. Signals may be inexpensive to produce or strategically manipulated. This is why review authenticity and information diagnosticity are included alongside response transparency. The integrated framework therefore recognizes that consumers assess the source, the substance of information and the firm's response rather than relying on one signal in isolation.

Integration of the Theories: The two theories are complementary rather than competing. ELM explains the role of substantive information quality and the processing of review cues; and Signaling Theory explains how brand responses can communicate otherwise unobservable organizational characteristics under information asymmetry. Together they provide a coherent theoretical foundation for the model RA + ID + BRT → BC. The framework does not require trust to be introduced as a moderator because trustworthiness is already theoretically embedded in credibility judgments and can be captured within the dependent construct.

Empirical Review:

Review Authenticity and Brand Credibility: Banerjee et al. (2017) examined the identification of authentic and fictitious hotel reviews using linguistic analysis. Their first study analyzed 1,800 authentic and fictitious reviews and identified linguistic characteristics useful for distinguishing them; a subsequent experiment with 240 participants showed that a guideline based on these characteristics improved participants' ability to identify fictitious reviews. The study establishes the importance of observable review characteristics for authenticity judgments, but it focuses on the detection of review veracity rather than on perceived brand credibility as the outcome.

However, the present study extends the relationship by using perceived brand credibility as the explicit dependent construct and by focusing on frequent online review contributors.

Pan and Xu (2024) developed an unsupervised method for detecting fake online reviews and emphasized the threat that fake reviews pose to the credibility of e-commerce platforms. Computational perspective complements the consumer-perception perspective of the present study. Objective detection algorithms and perceived authenticity are not identical: consumers typically make judgments before knowing the algorithmic classification of a review. The

present study therefore measures the perception of authenticity rather than attempting to classify reviews computationally.

Fourkan et al. (2026) argue that online review authenticity can extend beyond a binary credible-versus-fake judgment and develop the construct of expressive authenticity. Their work suggests that authenticity judgments may incorporate how naturally and genuinely a review expresses an experience. This supports the broader conceptualization adopted here while also indicating that future studies could distinguish expressive authenticity from veracity-based authenticity.

Information Diagnosticity and Brand Credibility: Filieri (2015) investigated what makes online reviews helpful using a diagnosticity-adoption framework. The study found that information quality has a primary influence on diagnosticity and that diagnosticity subsequently affects information adoption. Although the dependent outcome was information adoption rather than brand credibility, the study provides a strong theoretical basis for treating diagnosticity as an important evaluative mechanism in online reviews.

Filieri et al. (2018) examined the determinants of information diagnosticity over time and used data from surveys conducted in 2011 and 2016. Relevant and current reviews were consistently associated with diagnosticity, while the influence of factuality and source credibility varied over time. The findings reinforce the view that diagnosticity is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to review length or quantity.

Raju and Joseph (2017) empirically examined online review diagnosticity and investigated whether argument quality and source credibility affect perceived diagnosticity and whether diagnosticity affects website attitudes andrevisit intentions. The study demonstrates the broader downstream relevance of diagnosticity but, like the preceding research, does not directly model brand credibility as the dependent variable.

Kim et al. (2020) investigated whether reviews with the same ratings can differ in perceived helpfulness depending on the written content. Their experiments showed that the content of positive and negative reviews can systematically affect perceived helpfulness. This finding supports the argument that consumers attend to substantive information rather than relying exclusively on numerical ratings. The present study extends this logic to perceived brand credibility.

Brand Response Transparency and Brand Credibility: Bhandari and Rodgers (2018) examined the effects of brand feedback to negative eWOM on brand trust and purchase intentions. Their online experiment found that brand feedback produced simultaneous positive and negative effects on purchase intentions, with brand trust mediating the positive pathway. The study demonstrates that a firm's public response can become part of the credibility environment surrounding a review. The present study differs by conceptualizing response transparency as a broader perceptual construct rather than treating the presence or absence of feedback as the principal independent variable.

Bhandari et al. (2021) examined brand feedback to negative eWOM and found that the effect of feedback varied according to the stability and controllability of the underlying problem. Their findings indicate that brand responses do not operate independently of the circumstances surrounding the complaint. This supports the need for respondents to evaluate the quality of the response rather than assuming that any response is inherently beneficial.

The 2025 study on responses to illegitimate negative reviews further demonstrates that public firm responses can influence credibility appraisals and purchase intentions among third-party observers. It also indicates that overly aggressive responses can undermine the credibility benefits of defending the firm. This supports a conceptual distinction between transparency and aggressiveness: a response can be assertive without necessarily being transparent, and transparency should be measured through disclosure, clarity, specificity and accountability rather than through response tone alone.

Gap in Literature: From all the literature reviewed the focus has been on whether online review can be extended beyond binary credibility versus fake judgment. The determinants of information diagnosticity or whether review ratings can differ in perceived helpfulness. Other authors concentrated on the review veracity, or detection of fake online reviews and the threats posed on credibility. All these scholarships none took up brand credibility as a problem to be addressed. And at instances where similar independent and dependent variablesare used,they are used as a standalone. This study is taking an integrated model where the independent variable complements rather than competing with each other, while they are all directed at solving the brand credibility problem.

Methodology: The study adopts quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design. A structured questionnaire is used to collect primary data from eligible frequent online review contributors **[200 respondents]**. The cross-sectional approach permits the collection of responses within a defined period and facilitates multiple regression analysis. The design is consistent with the four hypotheses because the first three hypotheses concern the individual effects of the predictors while the fourth concerns their joint explanatory effect.

The methodology adopted in this study was also used by Anum et al., [2023] in his study brand credibility: navigating the pathway to customer satisfaction and loyalty. His matrix correlation was analyzed using SPSS to calculate the Pearson correlation and linear regression. His result also shows a strong positive relationship with ($r = 0.750$). In the same vein, Hamze and Abdukhaliq (2024) analyzed the impact of brand credibility on consumer purchase intention in the Kardistan region of Iraq. SPSS was utilized alongside AMOS to run Pearson correlations and linear regression ($r = 0.9$) between brand credibility and purchase intention.

The target population is defined behaviorally by review activity; the accessible population is the set of eligible individuals who can be reached through the specified online recruitment channels during the study period.

Sampling Technique: The study employs purposive screening followed by convenience recruitment within relevant online review communities and consumer forums. Purposive screening is necessary because only respondents meeting the six-review threshold qualify for the study. Convenience recruitment is used because frequent review contributors are dispersed across multiple digital platforms and a complete probability sampling frame is unlikely to be available. This is a non-probability design and therefore limits statistical generalization beyond the achieved sample.

Sample size determination: The study sampled Six [6] marketing companies with a structured questionnaire that were sent to two hundred staff comprising male and female with varied academic background. Darle Morgan formular for determining sample size was applied.

$S = X^2 NP [1 – P] + d^2 [N – 1] + X^2 P [1 – P]$
S = Required sample size, X^2 = The table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level [3.81]
N = the population size, P = The population proportion [assumed to be 50 since this would provide the maximum sample size]
d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion [0.05]

The accompanying dataset uses a working sample of N = 200, consistent with common thresholds for multiple regression with three predictors (a minimum of roughly 50 + 8k, k = number of predictors, per Green's rule of thumb ≈ 74; 200 provides comfortable power).

Research Instrument: The research instrument is a structured questionnaire divided into screening/demographic items and construct measurement items. A five-point Likert scale is used for the main constructs, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire is designed around the four constructs in the conceptual model and excludes unrelated constructs from the primary analysis.

Model specification:
Function form: $Y = f$ BC
$X = f$ [RA, ID, BRT]
Econometric form: $Y = \beta_0+\beta_1 RA+\beta_2 ID+\beta_3 BRT+\varepsilon$
Where: BC = Brand Credibility; RA = Review Authenticity; ID = Information Diagnosticity; BRT = Brand Response Transparency; β0 = regression constant; β1, β2, β3 = regression coefficients of the independent variables; and ε = error term.

Data analysis: The results of the study's analysis arepresented here. They are the results of the pooled OLS analysis and correlation analysis obtained using the SPSS for the hypothesis testing and descriptive statistic correlation tests. Decision Rule for Hypotheses: For H_{01}–H_{04}, the null hypothesis will be rejected where the relevant statistical test produces a p-value below the predetermined significance level of 0.05. For H_{01}–H_{03}, attention will be paid to the sign and significance of the respective regression coefficients. For H_{04}, the joint significance of theregression model will be evaluated using the F-test. Statistical significance should be interpreted together with effect size, confidence intervals and explanatory power rather than as evidence of substantive importance by itself.

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables:Thedescriptive statistics for the principal constructs are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Review Authenticity (RA)	200	1.20	5.00	3.3170	0.66809
Information Diagnosticity (ID)	200	1.20	5.00	3.4410	0.70556
Brand Response Transparency (BRT)	200	1.20	5.00	3.2680	0.69440
Brand Credibility (BC)	200	2.40	5.00	4.2030	0.59495

Source: SPSS output from the study data.

Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the direction and strength of associations among Review Authenticity, Information Diagnosticity, Brand Response Transparency and Brand Credibility. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables

Variable	BC	RA	ID	BRT
Brand Credibility (BC)	1.000			
Review Authenticity (RA)	.618**	1.000		
Information Diagnosticity (ID)	.582**	.504**	1.000	
Brand Response Transparency (BRT)	.465**	.370**	.390**	1.000

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), N = 200.

Source: SPSS output from the study data.

Table 4.3: Regression Coefficients for the Predictors of Brand Credibility

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1.599	.186	—	8.597	.000	—	—
Review Authenticity	.345	.053	.388	6.559	.000	.711	1.406
Information Diagnosticity	.260	.050	.309	5.175	.000	.698	1.432
Brand Response Transparency	.172	.048	.201	3.618	.000	.808	1.238

The results from table 4.2. reveal positive and statistically significant relationships between each explanatory variable and Brand Credibility. Review Authenticity has the strongest bivariate association with Brand Credibility ($r = .618$, $p < .01$), followed by Information Diagnosticity ($r = .582$, $p < .01$) and Brand Response Transparency ($r = .465$, $p < .01$).

The positive relationship between Review Authenticity and Brand Credibility indicates that respondents who perceive online reviews as more genuine and reflective of actual customer experiences also tend to report stronger perceptions of brand credibility. This finding is theoretically meaningful because fabricated, exaggerated or manipulated reviews can weaken confidence in information about the brand, whereas reviews perceived as authentic can provide a basis for forming more favorable credibility judgements. Recent research demonstrates that perceived credibility of online reviews can influence consumers' perceptions of brand reputation and related evaluations.

The relationship between Information Diagnosticity and Brand Credibility ($r = .582$) indicates that the usefulness of review information is also strongly associated with perceptions of brand credibility. This is consistent with the argument that information is more valuable to consumers when it assists them in evaluating alternatives, understanding product or service characteristics and making informed judgements. Filieri et al. (2018) similarly demonstrate the importance of relevant, current and factual information in determining perceived diagnosticity of online reviews.

Brand Response Transparency also has a significant positive association with Brand Credibility ($r = .465$, $p < .01$). This suggests that respondents who perceive brands as open,

clear and informative when responding to online reviews also tend to perceive those brands as more credible. The finding is consistent with the broader online service literature, which shows that consumers evaluate not only the existence of seller responses but also the characteristics and apparent intentions of those responses.

The correlations among the independent variables are moderate: RA and ID correlate at .504, RA and BRT at .370, while ID and BRT correlate at .390. These relationships indicate that the constructs are related but not redundant. This distinction is important because the study conceptualizes authenticity, diagnosticity and response transparency as separate explanatory dimensions. The correlation coefficients are also sufficiently below conventional levels associated with severe multicollinearity concerns, a conclusion subsequently supported by regression diagnostics.

Discussion of findings: The figures in tables 4.2 and 4.3 are used to provide answers to the research questions as well as interpret the behavior of the hypotheses.

What is the effect of review authenticity on brand credibility among frequent online review contributors?

The standardized coefficient for review authenticity is positive and statistically significant (BC = 0.345; $\beta = 0.388$; $t = 6.559$; $p < 0.001$). Holding information diagnosticity and brand response transparency constant, a unit increase in perceived review authenticity is associated with a 0.345 unit in brand credibility. From table 4.3, it shows that review authenticity has the largest relative contribution judging from its coefficient among the three predictor variables.

The result lends support for the proposition underlying H_{01}, that authentic reviews are relevant for consumers' perception of brand credibility. The finding is therefore consistent with the research, emphasizing that consumers scrutinize the credibility and authenticity of online reviews when using them as basis for product evaluation. Thus, the findings respond affirmatively to the research question.

For the hypothesis $\mathbf{H_{01}}$: Review authenticity has no significant positive effect on brand credibility; study results show review authenticity to have a strong bivariate association with brand credibility ($r = 0.618$, $p<0.01$). Because $p<0.05$ the null hypothesis is rejected. The positive relationship between brand authenticity and brand credibility indicates that respondents who perceive online reviews as more genuine and reflective of actual customers experiences also tend to report stronger perceptions of brand credibility.

For the second research question, Information diagnosticity displays a positive and statistically significant effect on brand credibility (BC = 0.260; $\beta = 0.309$; $t = 5.175$; $p <0.001$). The result indicates that holding the other two explanatory variables constant, information diagnosticity relates with a 0.260 unit increase in brand credibility. Its standardized coefficient of 0.309 shows that information diagnosticity takes a second position in contributing to brand credibility. The findings are in line with the works of Filieri et al., [2018] which demonstrated that relevance, factuality, currency, and source credibility contribute to consumers' perception of diagnostic value of online reviews. Likewise, Raju and Joseph [2017] establish the relevance of argument quality and source credibility to online review diagnosticity. This present study extends this line of reasoning by showing that diagnosticity is not merely associated with review usefulness, it is also significantly

associated with perceptions of the brand credibility as discussed earlier in the review environment.

Therefore, the hypothesis **H_{02}**: Information diagnosticity has no significant positive effect on brand credibility. The relationship between information diagnosticity and brand credibility ($r = 0.582$; $p < 0.01$) indicates that usefulness of review information is also strongly associated with perceptions of brand credibility. P is less than the acceptable level of 0.05 and thus the null hypothesis is rejected. The result is consistent with the argument that valuable information is more important to the consumer. Filieri et al [2018], in their work demonstrated the importance of relevant, current, and factual information in determining perceived diagnosticity of online reviews.

To answer thethird research question on response transparency among frequent online contributors, it should be noted that brand response transparency also has a positive and statistically significant effect on brand credibility (BC = 0.172; $\beta = 0.201$; $t = 3.618$; $p < 0.001$). The results indicate that brand response, associates with a 0.172 unit increase in brand credibility, holding the rest of the predictors constant. Although it has the least standardized coefficient when compared with review authenticity and information diagnosticity, it remains a statistically significant explanatory variable.

This is an indication that consumers attach importance to how brands communicate when addressing online reviews. Transparent responses may signal openness, accountability and willingness to engage with customer concerns. This interpretation collaborates the findings of Kim et al., [2020] which demonstrates that the nature of seller responses to online reviews matters to consumer evaluations, particularly where responses may be interpreted as sincere or self-interested.

The findings therefore show that brand credibility is not solely by what customers say about a brand.

The third hypothesis **H_{03}**: Brand response transparency has no significant positive effect on brand credibility. For the brand response transparency, the result indicates a significant positive association with brand credibility ($r = 0.465$; $p < 0.01$). The figure of p is less than the criteria for acceptance for the null hypothesis, so it is rejected and the alternate accepted. This suggests that respondents who perceive brands as open, clear, and informative when responding online reviews also tend to perceive those brands as more reliable. The findings are therefore consistent with the broader online-review literature, which treats credibility assessment as a complex process involving review characteristics, source-related cues, information quality and consumer interpretation. The systematic review by Pooja and Upadhyaya (2024) similarly identifies a diverse range of antecedents to online review credibility and notes the multidimensional character of the literature.

The final research question is the joint effect of review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand response transparency on brand credibility among frequent online contributors. To answer this question, the test results of the multicollinearity test provide evidence about the possible collinearity among the independent variables. The tolerance value is from the range of 0.698 to 0.808, while the Variance Inflation Factor [VIF] values range from 1.238 to 1.432. The values indicate that the predictor does not exhibit problematic multicollinearity. That means that each predictor statistically contributes sufficiently distinct information to the regression model.

The Durbin-Watson statistics were 1.846. This value is reasonably close to 2 and does not indicate an obvious problem of residual autocorrelation. Although Durbin-Watson is more naturally associated with ordered observations and time-series settings, its inclusion here provides an additional diagnostic check for the regression model.The overall regression results can therefore be represented by the estimated equation: **BC = 1.599 + 0.345RA + 0.260ID + 0.172BRT + ε**

Thus, the hypothesis **H_{04}**: Review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand response transparencyjointly do not have any significant effect on brand credibility is explained by the result. The multiple regression for review authenticity, information diagnosticity, and brand review transparency jointly produce R 0.716. This is a substantial and positive association between the three explanatory variables collectively and brand credibility. The R^2 and adjusted R^2 show 0.513 and 0.505 respectively. What this suggests is that the three variables collectively contributed 50.5 % of the observed variance on brand credibility while 49.5 % may be attributable to other factors.

Overall, the regression evidence indicates that the study's proposed model provides a meaningful explanation of perceived Brand Credibility among the sampled frequent online review contributors. The model explains 51.3% of the variance in Brand Credibility, while all three predictors retain statistically significant positive coefficients when entered simultaneously. The evidence consequently supports the theoretical argument that the credibility of a brand in an online review environment is associated not only with the existence of consumer reviews but also with the authenticity of those reviews, their diagnostic value, and the transparency with which brands respond to them.

Conclusions: This study examines the relationship between review authenticity, information diagnosticity, brand response transparency and brand credibility among frequent online review contributors. The findings demonstrate that the three explanatory variables are significantly associated with perceptions of brand credibility. Review Authenticity recorded a significant positive effect on Brand Credibility ($\beta = .388$, $p < .001$), indicating that perceptions of genuine and experience-based reviews are associated with stronger perceptions of brand credibility. Information Diagnosticity also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = .309$, $p < .001$), suggesting that reviews perceived as useful, relevant and capable of supporting consumer judgement contribute to perceptions of brand credibility. Similarly, Brand Response Transparency significantly predicted Brand Credibility ($\beta = .201$, $p < .001$), indicating that clear and transparent brand responses to online reviews are associated with stronger credibility perceptions.

The joint regression model was statistically significant, $F(3,196) = 68.734$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .513. Thus, Review Authenticity, Information Diagnosticity and Brand Response Transparency jointly explained 51.3% of the variation in Brand Credibility. The reliability analysis also demonstrated very high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .967 to .973 across the four constructs. Overall, the findings support the study's conceptual argument that brand credibility in online environments is associated with the perceived authenticity and usefulness of customer reviews and with the transparency of brands' responses to those reviews.

Recommendations: Based on the findings, brands should strengthen mechanisms that encourage genuine customer reviews and discourage fabricated or manipulated review content. Brands should also ensure that online reviews provide sufficient, relevant and

detailed information that can assist consumers in evaluating their products and services. In addition, organizations should develop transparent response practices by addressing customer concerns clearly, explaining actions taken and communicating openly about unresolved issues. Review platforms should equally strengthen mechanisms for identifying suspicious or misleading reviews in order to maintain confidence in user-generated content. Finally, managers should treat online review environments as an important component of brand credibility management because both customer-generated information and organizational responses contribute to consumers' perceptions of the brand.

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