

## **ABSTRACT**

As the world races forward, digitalization has transformed the ways we communicate and shop, leading to the rise of electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) and e-commerce. The convenience of e-commerce has made it easier for people to shop for pet food, with cats being the most commonly owned pets in Indonesian households. Consequently, the cat food sector has become the largest segment in the country's pet food industry. Whiskas has established itself as a leading cat food brand; however, recent data indicates a 3.5% decline in its brand index.

This study aims to investigate the effect of electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) on purchase intention for Whiskas cat food products on the Shopee platform. Specifically, it seeks to understand how EWOM influences purchase intention and whether brand equity acts as a mediator in this relationship. The study also aims to explore the role of brand equity in shaping consumer behavior and purchase intentions.

The research employs a quantitative approach, using a survey to gather data from a sample of cat enthusiasts on the Shopee platform. The data collected is analyzed using PLS-SEM methods using SmartPLS to determine the causal relationships between these variables. The study includes 411 samples using non-probability and purposive sampling. The characteristics of the respondents are cat owners or cat enthusiasts who are familiar with the Whiskas brand and use Shopee.

The results indicate that EWOM of Whiskas positively and significantly influence purchase intention. Additionally, EWOM of Whiskas positively and significantly influence brand equity, brand equity positively and significantly influence purchase intention. Furthermore, the study find out that EWOM of Whiskas positively and significantly influence purchase intention through brand equity as the mediating variable.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that Whiskas and other pet food brands focus on improving EWOM by encouraging positive reviews and engaging with consumers. This can be achieved by offering voucher for satisfied customers to leave reviews and by actively responding to consumer feedback. Additionally, the study suggests that brands should collaborate with influencers who can authentically promote their products to enhance brand recognition and loyalty. These strategies can help brands like Whiskas maintain their market position in the competitive pet food industry.

**Keywords: Brand Equity, EWOM, Pet Food, Purchase Intention.**