

THE INFLUENCE OF TRUST IN MEDIATING E-WOM AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE TOWARD PURCHASE DECISION INVOLVEMENT AT TIKTOK

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Abstract

Since digital technology has advanced so quickly, consumer behavior has changed, and social media platforms have become powerful marketing tools. Specifically, TikTok has become well-known for combining entertainment and e-commerce, allowing viewers to discover products in real time and make purchases through TikTok Shop. This study examines the influence of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and social media usage on purchase decision involvement, with trust as a mediating variable. Drawing on existing literature, the study highlights how features such as reviews, live streaming, and influencer endorsements significantly impact consumer trust and engagement. However, the abundance of information on social media raises concerns regarding credibility, making trust a vital factor in processing online content and making purchase decisions. The findings aim to provide insights into the interplay between e-WOM, social media usage, and trust in shaping consumer involvement in purchase decisions on TikTok. This study fills a research gap by exploring the mediating role of trust in a rapidly evolving social commerce environment.

Keywords: Social Media Usage; Electronic word of mouth; Purchase decision; Trust.

Abstrak

Perkembangan pesat teknologi digital telah mengubah perilaku konsumen secara signifikan, sehingga mendorong munculnya media sosial sebagai alat pemasaran yang berpengaruh. TikTok menjadi salah satu platform yang menonjol melalui integrasi hiburan dan e-commerce, memungkinkan pengguna menemukan dan melakukan transaksi produk secara langsung melalui fitur TikTok Shop. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis dampak penggunaan media sosial dan electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) terhadap kepercayaan konsumen, dengan menggunakan kepercayaan sebagai variabel mediasi. Berdasarkan tinjauan literatur, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa fitur seperti ulasan pelanggan, live streaming, dan dukungan influencer berperan penting dalam membangun kepercayaan dan keterlibatan konsumen. Namun, tingginya volume informasi di media sosial menimbulkan kekhawatiran terhadap kredibilitas, sehingga kepercayaan menjadi faktor penting dalam memproses informasi dan mengambil keputusan pembelian. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan memberikan pemahaman mengenai hubungan antara e-WOM, penggunaan media sosial, dan trust dalam membentuk keterlibatan keputusan pembelian konsumen di platform TikTok. Studi ini mengisi kesenjangan penelitian terkait peran trust sebagai variabel mediasi dalam konteks social commerce yang terus berkembang.

Keywords: Social Media Usage; Electronic word of mouth; Purchase decision; Trust.

1. Research Background

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed consumer behavior, especially in how individuals engage with marketing content online (Muturi, 2024). One of the most notable trends is the extensive usage of social media as a marketing tool that influences consumer purchasing behavior in addition to providing information (Macías Urrego et al., 2024). In Indonesia, TikTok has emerged as one of the leading platforms, combining entertainment, social interaction, and in-app transactions via TikTok Shop, making it highly appealing to younger users (Rosmiati, 2022; Nur et al., 2023). This integrated social commerce model enables seamless purchases without leaving the app, setting TikTok apart from other platforms such as Instagram or Facebook which still rely on third-party redirections (Zhao et al., 2023).

Product reviews, unpacking videos, and live stream demos are examples of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) that has become crucial in influencing consumer trust and buying decision-making in this ecosystem (Sern et al., 2022; Dhanabal, 2024). Influencers like Tasya Farasya have increased the credibility of such content, with her "Tasya Farasya Approved" label often serving as a trusted reference for Indonesian consumers (Kalodata, 2024). Trust becomes critical, especially when users face information overload and cannot verify product quality directly (Gefen et al., 2015; Ryswaldi & Pujani, 2020). Features like live streaming and interactive reviews not only inform but also foster trust and emotional connection, thereby enhancing the likelihood of spontaneous purchases (Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Elvi Susanti & Suhroji Adha, 2023).

Although several studies have investigated the separate roles of social media usage, e-WOM, and trust in consumer behavior, research that integrates these variables particularly with trust as a mediating factor—remains limited (Prasad et al., 2017; Appiah Kusi et al., 2022). This gap is especially evident in the context of TikTok Shop in Indonesia. Given TikTok's dominance in user engagement time (Meltwater, 2024) and its growing popularity as a shopping platform (Populix, 2022), there is a compelling need to examine how social media usage and e-WOM influence purchase decision involvement through the lens of trust. Thus, this study investigates the **influence of trust in mediating the relationship between e-WOM and social media usage toward purchase decision involvement on TikTok**.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Purchase Decision Involvement

Purchase decisions, according to Meliawati et al. (2023), are behaviors that emerge in reaction to items that show a customer's desire to make decisions about what to buy. Purchase decisions are the process by which customers choose to purchase a good or service, starting with their understanding of their requirements or desires, claim Nugraha & Firdausy (2022). Purchase Choice Customers' degree of interest and focus on the purchasing choice is known as involvement. First, the benefits provided in a particular situation influence the decision to buy; second, the consumer's mindset when selecting a product, whether they believe the chosen product is the right one and fulfills their desires in comparison to other alternatives; and third, the emotional reactions that emerge during the purchase decision process, such as information search and product evaluation. According to Mittal (1989), the degree of consumer involvement in the purchasing decision is influenced by these three criteria.

2.2 Social Media Usage

Social media, which is defined as digital platforms that facilitate the production, dissemination, and exchange of user-generated content, is a crucial component of digital marketing because it helps people and organizations engage with audiences in real time, build relationships with customers, and raise brand awareness (Kotler & Keller, 2022). According to Ohara in Bautista et al. (2024) said that social media use has grown quickly and has become a significant aspect of peoples' daily lives through fostering connections, facilitating communications, exchanging information, and even supporting causes and businesses.

2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) plays a significant role in modern marketing as it enables consumers to exchange opinions and share experiences about products they have used, often through social media platforms or websites (Ryswaldi & Pujani, 2020). The process by which customers use digital platforms like social media, online forums, and review websites to express their thoughts, experiences, and recommendations about goods or services is known as "electronic word of mouth" (Indrawati et al, 2023). Electronic Word of Mouth has become a major area of study in marketing research as internet media progressively replaces traditional face-to-face marketing strategies and depends on influencer involvement to draw in customers and sway their decisions to buy (Silva et al., 2020). Furthermore, e-WOM helps expand consumer reach and significantly impacts buying behaviour by providing easily accessible information based on real user experiences, which supports consumers in making well-informed decisions during the initial stages of the purchase process (Prasetio et al., 2022)

2.4 Trust

A company's readiness to depend on a business partner is known as trust (Kotler & Keller, 2022). Madsen & So (2024) argue that trust can be viewed as a type of risk-taking behavior in which a person decides to act in a way that presumes another individual will conduct in a way that will result in favorable outcomes, even in the absence of control over the other's behavior. Trust affects decision-making in leaderless movements, enabling participants to proceed in unclear and dangerous circumstances. In meanwhile, trust is a type of risk-taking behavior, according to Deutsch in (Madsen & So, 2024), where a person acts with the belief that others will act as expected, producing positive outcomes, even in the absence of control over their actions. In leaderless movements, trust is essential in influencing decision-making, allowing participants to take action and proceed in uncertain and risky situations by depending on the conviction that others will act in accordance with shared objectives.

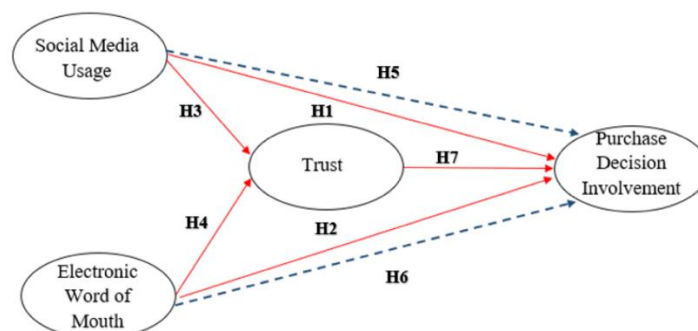


Figure 2. 1 Theoretical Framework

Source: (Prasad et al., 2017) Processed by Author

2.5 Research Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical foundation and the framework of thought presented in this study, the research hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

1. Does social media usage significantly affect purchase decision involvement on Tiktok?
2. Does electronic word of mouth significantly affect purchase decision involvement on Tiktok?
3. Does social media usage significantly affect purchase trust on Tiktok?
4. Does electronic word of mouth significantly affect trust on Tiktok?
5. Does social media usage significantly affect purchase decision involvement through trust as mediating variable on Tiktok?
6. Does electronic word of mouth significantly affect purchase decision involvement through trust as mediating variable on Tiktok?
7. Does trust significantly affect purchase decision involvement on Tiktok?

3. Research Methodology

This study uses the method of quantitative research to investigate how trust functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and social media usage on purchase decision involvement among TikTok users in Jakarta. Testing hypotheses and examining causal links between the variables are the goals of the explanatory research design.

3.1 Population and Sample

A population, according to Indrawati (2015), is the total set of people, things, or events that a researcher plans to examine. The study's demographic consists of social media users, specifically Jakartan TikTok users. Jakarta's position as the capital and a significant center of social, digital, and economic activity makes it a pertinent and representative region. According to data from Populix (2022), Jakarta has the largest TikTok user base in Indonesia, which makes it a perfect place to research how social media use, e-WOM, and trust affect the involvement of buying decisions.

The study used Bernoulli's method to calculate the right sample size, assuming a 50% response proportion ($p = 0.5$; $q = 0.5$), a level of confidence of 95% ($Z = 1.96$), and a 5% margin of error ($e = 0.05$). The needed minimum number of respondents of 384.16, as determined by the algorithm, was rounded up to 385 responders for practical reasons. Purposive sampling was used to choose respondents based on factors including being active TikTok users in Jakarta and having previous involvement with TikTok Shop.

3.2 Data Collection Method

Both primary and secondary data sources were used in this investigation. Sekaran & Bougie (2016) define primary data as information gathered directly from the source by the researcher for a particular study goal. A structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms in order to collect primary data for this study. Targeting respondents who fit specific criteria regarding TikTok usage and online purchasing experience, the questionnaire was distributed using the researcher's social media platforms.

Secondary data, as defined by Sekaran & Bougie (2016), refers to data collected by other parties for purposes other than the current study. For this research, secondary data was sourced from relevant literature, including international and national journals, books, articles, news sources, and previous studies. These materials supported the theoretical foundation of the study, focusing on concepts such as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), social media usage, trust, and purchase decision involvement.

3.3 Data Analysis Technique

In order to examine the interactions between variables, including the mediating function of trust, this study uses partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. Iba & Wardhana (2023) state that PLS-SEM is a variance-based SEM method that is appropriate for studies including mediating variables because it enables researchers to examine intricate causal models involving numerous components.

Following the approach suggested by Hair et al. (2017), the PLS-SEM analysis includes two main components:

- a) Measurement Model (Outer Model): This model assesses the validity and dependability of constructs. The average variance extracted (AVE) and outer loadings are used to evaluate convergent validity; satisfactory validity is indicated by outer loadings ≥ 0.70 and AVE values > 0.50 . The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the

Fornell-Larcker criterion are used to assess discriminant validity; HTMT values less than 0.90 are regarded as acceptable. Internal consistency is evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR), with scores ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 being sufficient.

- b) The inner model, also known as the structural model, looks at how latent variables relate to one another. Path coefficients, R-Square (coefficient of determination), F-Square (effect size), and Q-Square (predictive relevance) are all included in the study. One can interpret R-Square values as weak (≥ 0.19), moderate (≥ 0.33), or strong (≥ 0.67). At the level of confidence of 95%, path coefficients are deemed relevant if the t-values are more than 1.65.

4. Result and Discussion

The respondents in this study were TikTok users in Jakarta who had engaged in online shopping on the platform, regardless of whether they had completed a purchase. Out of 464 total respondents, 385 (87.1%) passed the screening criteria. Based on gender, the majority were female, accounting for 55.8%, while males made up 44.2%. In terms of age, most respondents were in the 24–29-year range (39.5%). Regarding occupation, the largest group consisted of employees (57.4%), followed by students (32.7%), and a smaller portion were unemployed (9.9%).

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The four research variables social media usage, trust, e-WOM, and purchase decision involvement are shown in this section along with their descriptive statistical findings. This analysis's goal is to give a broad picture of respondents' opinions based on how they answered the questionnaire's statements. Resulting from descriptive analysis are the following:

Table 4. 1 Descriptive Analysis Score

Variable	Item Code	Percentage	Category
Social Media Usage	SM1	76.8%	Good
	SM2	77.1%	Good
	SM3	77.7%	Good
	SM4	69.5%	Good
	SM5	75.1%	Good
	SM6	72%	Good
Total Score		80.1%	Good
Electronic Word of Mouth	EW1	75,6	Good
	EW2	76,0	Good
	EW3	76,7	Good
	EW4	77,4	Good
	EW5	78,5	Good
Total Score		82.4%	Good
Trust	TR1	78,3	Good
	TR2	78,5	Good
	TR3	77,2	Good
	TR4	78,7	Good
	TR5	79,8	Good
Total Score		84.2%	Very Good
Purchase Decision Involvement	PD1	79,8	Good
	PD2	78,8	Good
	PD3	79,2	Good
Total Score		85%	Very Good

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

The descriptive analysis results indicate that all four research variables fall into the good to very good category. Social Media Usage scored 80.1%, reflecting active engagement with TikTok features, especially in following sales and promotions. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) scored 82.4%, showing that respondents rely heavily on peer reviews and online recommendations when shopping. Trust received a higher score of 84.2%, suggesting that users feel confident and satisfied with TikTok as a shopping platform. Purchase Decision Involvement achieved the highest score of 85.0%, indicating that respondents are highly involved and thoughtful in their decision-making process.

4.2 SEM-PLS

4.2.1 Outer Model

Outer Model Analysis The outer model is used to assess the quality of measurement instruments through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability tests.

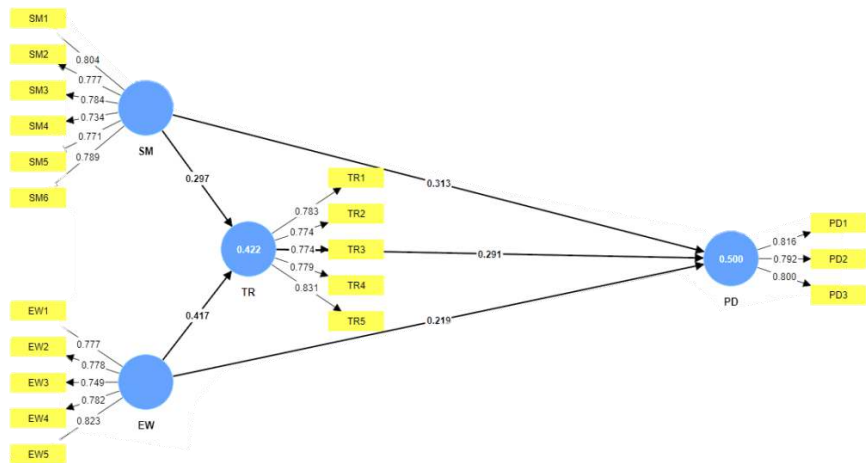


Figure 4. 5 Outer Model
Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

Table 4.2 Reliability and Validity Test Result

Latent Variable	Composite Reliability	AVE	Description
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.831	0.644	Valid and Reliable
Purchase Decision Involvement	0.720	0.622	Valid and Reliable
Social Media Usage	0.871	0.612	Valid and Reliable
Trust	0.842	0.603	Valid and Reliable

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

According to the findings of the reliability and validity analyses shown in Table 3.2, every variable satisfies the requirements for construct reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity. The validity and reliability of the measurement model are confirmed by the significant outer loading values (≥ 0.70), average variance extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$), and reliability values (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70) displayed by all indicators. In order to investigate the connections between latent variables, the analysis can move on to the evaluation of the outer model and then the structural framework (inner model) based on these findings.

Additionally, tests of validity and reliability were conducted to determine whether or not each indicator in the research could be considered reliable and valid. The Composite Reliability, or CR, score is used to assess reliability, and the value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to determine validity. Table 2 displays the data for AVE and CR. Additionally, to assess the degree of influence of exogenous factors and ascertain their capacity to explain fluctuations in endogenous variables, the R Square test (R^2) was used. The following are the outcomes of the R-squared test:

4.2.2 Inner Model

Table 4.3 R-Square

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Purchase Decision Involvement	0.500	0.496
Trust	0.422	0.419

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

The R-square results show that Purchase Decision Involvement is moderately explained by the model with a value of 0.500, while Trust is also moderately explained with a value of 0.422, indicating that both variables are influenced by the predictors to a moderate degree.

Table 4.4 F-Square

	EW	PD	SM	TR
EW		0.048		0.175
PD				
SM		0.105		0.089
TR		0.098		

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

The F-square analysis shows that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a small effect on purchase decision involvement and a moderate effect on trust. Meanwhile, social media usage has a small effect on both purchase involvement and trust, and trust itself also shows a small effect on purchase decision involvement.

Table 4.5 Q-Square

	SSO	SSE	Q^2
Electronic Word of Mouth	2.105.000	2.105.000	0.000
Purchase Decision Involvement	1.263.000	862.667	0.317
Social Media Usage	2526.000	2526.000	0.000
Trust	2105.000	1565.798	0.256

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

Based on Table 4.5, the Q analysis shows that the values for each variable are 0.317 for purchase decision involvement and 0.256 for trust, which are greater than 0. This indicates that the model has predictive relevance.

Table 4.6 Hypothesis Testing Result

	Path	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H1	EW->PD	0.219	0.219	0.051	4.261	0.000	Accepted
H2	EW->TR	0.417	0.416	0.059	7.101	0.000	Accepted
H3	SM->PD	0.313	0.312	0.062	5.025	0.000	Accepted
H4	SM->TR	0.297	0.298	0.057	5.237	0.000	Accepted
H5	TR->PD	0.291	0.293	0.063	4.623	0.000	Accepted
H6	EW->TR->PD	0.121	0.122	0.031	3.880	0.000	Accepted
H7	SM->TR->PD	0.086	0.088	0.029	2.964	0.003	Accepted

Source: Data Processed by Author (2025)

The findings of this study's hypothesis testing show that all seven assumptions were accepted, pointing to important connections between the variables looked at. In particular, trust and purchase decision involvement are positively and significantly impacted by both social media usage and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Furthermore, Trust's mediating role is confirmed by the fact that it significantly improves Purchase Decision Involvement. This is further supported by the mediation tests, which show that trust plays a major mediating role in the links between social media usage and purchase decision involvement as well as between e-WOM and purchase decision involvement. According to these findings, trust is essential for transforming peer recommendations and TikTok involvement into significant online social influence that influences consumer decision-making.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Conclusion

This study shows that social media usage and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) have a significant effect on purchase decision involvement among Jakartan TikTok users, either directly or indirectly through trust. The findings show that trust is an important mediator that enhances the impact of online interactions on the purchasing habits of consumers. When consumers trust the platform and the information that is given, especially through peer reviews and social interaction, they are more involved in the choice to buy. These findings underline the significance of trust, engagement, and credible e-WOM in the context of social commerce, supporting current theories on information uptake and consumer attitudes. As a based-on content platform, TikTok offers marketers a great opportunity to shape customer behavior by creating reliable and genuine digital experiences.

5.2 Suggestion

5.2.1 Theoretical Suggestion

This study suggests that TikTok Shop sellers should focus on building trust through authentic and transparent content, such as real product usage, behind-the-scenes footage, and verified customer testimonials. Trust elements like payment guarantees, official badges, and responsive customer service should be highlighted in captions or pinned comments. Since most users are aged 18–29, content should be tailored to Gen Z and young millennials through trend-based and visually appealing formats. Collaborating with micro-influencers is recommended to enhance e-WOM authenticity, while using features like “Reply with video” and pinning high-engagement comments can turn user reviews into effective conversion tools. Posting trust-driven content during peak hours and combining educational with promotional elements can further improve engagement and purchase involvement.

5.2.2 Practical Suggestion

This research contributes to the understanding of how social media usage, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and trust interact to influence purchase decision involvement within TikTok’s ecosystem. Future studies are encouraged to expand demographic coverage beyond Jakarta to capture regional diversity. A generational comparison could also reveal how different age groups perceive and respond to e-WOM and social media trust. Additionally, testing the same model across platforms such as Instagram Shopping, WhatsApp Business, or Facebook Marketplace could uncover platform-specific consumer behavior and deepen the theoretical understanding of trust and engagement in digital commerce.

5.3 Study Limitations and Implications

This study is limited to TikTok users residing in Jakarta, with a sample dominated by individuals aged 18–29, which restricts generalization to other age groups and regions. Moreover, the use of a quantitative approach through SEM analysis captures statistical relationships but lacks insight into deeper behavioral aspects such as motivations, cultural context, or content fatigue. Future research should consider adopting a mixed-method approach to explore these qualitative dimensions and provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer engagement in social media marketing.

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