

The Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on Consumer Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Trust

Chengxuan Wang^{1*}, Yaqi Zhang²

¹ Universiti Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; e-mail: wang.chengxuan@s.unikl.edu.my

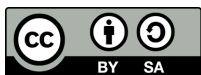
² Universiti Malaya, Malaysia; e-mail: 25067350@siswa.um.edu.my

* Corresponding Author: Chengxuan Wang

Abstract: The development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed consumer behavior, particularly in the process of searching for information prior to making a purchase. One rapidly growing phenomenon is *Electronic Word-of-Mouth* (eWOM), which refers to informal communication among consumers through digital platforms such as social media, online forums, and product review websites. eWOM is considered more credible than traditional advertising because it originates from real user experiences. This study aims to analyze the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intention with trust as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design was employed, involving active users of digital platforms who accessed product reviews before purchasing. Data were collected via online questionnaires and analyzed using multiple regression and mediation testing (Baron and Kenny approach with Sobel test). The findings reveal that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.72$) and directly influences purchase intention ($\beta = 0.31$). Trust demonstrates a stronger effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.56$) and serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention (indirect effect = 0.40). These results highlight that the quality, credibility, and consistency of eWOM information are crucial in building consumer trust, which subsequently enhances purchase intention. Theoretically, this study enriches digital marketing literature, while practically it provides implications for companies to manage online reviews transparently and foster consumer trust to drive purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior; Digital Marketing; Electronic Word-of-Mouth; Purchase Intention; Trust.

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1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in consumer behavior, particularly in the process of searching for information before making a purchase. One phenomenon that has grown rapidly is Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), which refers to informal communication among consumers through digital platforms such as social media, online forums, and product review websites. eWOM is considered a more credible source of information compared to traditional advertising because it originates from real user experiences (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Consumers tend to trust opinions from other users more than messages delivered by companies. This makes eWOM an important factor in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. In addition, the ease of access to information has further strengthened the role of eWOM across various industries. Companies have also begun to utilize eWOM as part of their digital marketing strategies. Therefore, understanding the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intention is highly relevant in the context of modern marketing.

Consumer purchase intention is one of the key indicators in determining the success of a marketing strategy. Purchase intention reflects the tendency of consumers to buy a product after going through an evaluation process of available information (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the digital era, eWOM has become one of the primary sources influencing this evaluation process. Information conveyed through eWOM can shape consumer perceptions of product quality, benefits, and risks. The more positive the reviews received, the higher the likelihood that consumers will develop purchase intentions. Conversely, negative reviews can reduce trust and hinder purchasing decisions. Therefore, eWOM plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and behavior. This makes eWOM an important variable in marketing research.

However, the influence of eWOM on purchase intention is not always direct. There are other variables that act as mediators in this relationship, one of which is trust. Trust is a psychological factor that reflects consumers' confidence in the reliability and integrity of a product or seller (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the context of eWOM, trust is formed through perceptions of the credibility of the information source and the quality of the reviews provided. Consumers who trust eWOM information are more likely to feel confident in making purchase decisions. On the other hand, low levels of trust weaken the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. Therefore, trust plays a crucial role as a mediating variable. Research on the mediating role of trust in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention is increasingly important to explore.

Previous studies have shown that eWOM has a significant impact on consumer trust. Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006) found that online reviews significantly influence consumer perceptions of product quality. Furthermore, Filieri (2015) stated that the credibility of eWOM information contributes greatly to building consumer trust. Relevant, accurate, and consistent information will increase trust levels. On the contrary, unclear or doubtful information can reduce consumer trust. This indicates that the quality of eWOM is an important factor in shaping trust. Thus, the relationship between eWOM and trust needs to be analyzed more deeply. The trust that is formed will subsequently influence consumer purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, trust has also been proven to have a direct influence on consumer purchase intention. According to Pavlou (2003), trust is a key factor in online transactions because it reduces uncertainty and perceived risk among consumers. Consumers with high levels of trust are more likely to make purchases. This is particularly relevant in digital environments where physical interaction is minimal. Trust also enhances perceptions of security and comfort in transactions. Therefore, trust becomes an important variable in bridging the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. Without trust, the influence of eWOM will not be optimal. Hence, the mediating role of trust needs to be empirically examined.

In the context of this study, it is important to understand how eWOM influences purchase intention through trust as a mediating variable. This relationship model provides a more comprehensive picture of consumer behavior in the digital era. In addition, this study can contribute theoretically to the development of digital marketing literature. From a practical perspective, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for companies in designing eWOM-based marketing strategies. Companies need to pay attention to the quality of reviews and consistently build consumer trust. This can be achieved through information transparency and improving product quality. By doing so, companies can effectively increase consumer purchase intention. Therefore, this study has high relevance both academically and practically.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intention with trust as a mediating variable. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanism of relationships among these variables. In addition, this study seeks to fill the research gap in previous studies that have been limited in examining the mediating role of trust. Using a quantitative approach, this study will empirically test the relationships between variables. The results are expected to contribute to the development of more effective digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, this study can serve as a reference for future researchers. Thus, this study holds significant value in the study of consumer behavior in the digital era.

2. Research Method

An alternative research method in this study employs a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design to analyze the effect of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention, with trust acting as a mediating variable. The population of this study consists of active users of digital platforms such as marketplaces and social media who have accessed product reviews before making a purchase. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling due to the ease of accessing respondents who meet the research criteria. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via platforms such as Google Forms. Each variable was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The eWOM variable includes indicators such as information quality, credibility, and quantity of reviews, while the trust variable encompasses aspects of reliability and integrity of information. Purchase intention was measured based on respondents' tendency to make a purchase after receiving information from eWOM. Prior to the main analysis, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the quality of the collected data.

The data analysis in this study utilizes multiple linear regression and mediation testing using the Baron and Kenny approach to examine the relationships among variables. The analysis begins with classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure that the regression model meets statistical requirements. This is followed by testing the direct effect of eWOM on purchase intention, the effect of eWOM on trust, and the effect of trust on purchase intention. To examine the mediating role, a stepwise regression analysis is conducted along with the Sobel test to determine the significance of the indirect effect. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to assess the contribution of independent variables in explaining the dependent variable. All analyses are performed using statistical software such as SPSS. This method is expected to provide a simpler yet comprehensive understanding of the relationship between eWOM, trust, and consumer purchase intention in the digital context.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Results.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
eWOM	4.12	0.65	2.80	5.00
Trust	4.05	0.70	2.60	5.00
Purchase Intention	4.18	0.68	2.90	5.00

The descriptive statistics results indicate that all variables have relatively high mean values, exceeding 4. This suggests that respondents generally hold positive perceptions toward eWOM, trust, and purchase intention. The *Purchase Intention* variable has the highest mean value of 4.18, indicating a strong tendency among respondents to make purchases. Meanwhile, the standard deviation values, ranging from 0.65 to 0.70, indicate relatively low variability in responses, suggesting that the data are fairly homogeneous. The minimum and maximum values further show that the full range of the measurement scale was effectively utilized by respondents.

Correlation Test

Table 2. Correlation Test Results.

Variable	eWOM	Trust	Purchase Intention
eWOM	1.00	0.72**	0.69**
Trust	0.72**	1.00	0.75**
Purchase Intention	0.69**	0.75**	1.00

Note: $p < 0.01$

The correlation test results show that there are positive and significant relationships among all research variables. eWOM has a strong correlation with Trust (0.72) and with Purchase Intention (0.69). Additionally, Trust exhibits a very strong relationship with Purchase Intention, with a correlation coefficient of 0.75. All relationships are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$), indicating that an increase in one variable tends to be accompanied by an increase in others. These findings suggest that eWOM plays a crucial role in building consumer trust, which in turn influences purchase intention.

Regression Test

Table 3. Regression Test Results (Direct Effects).

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Remark
H1	eWOM $\rightarrow$ Trust	0.72	10.85	0.000	Accepted
H2	eWOM $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.31	4.25	0.000	Accepted
H3	Trust $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.56	7.90	0.000	Accepted

The regression analysis results indicate that all proposed hypotheses are supported. eWOM has a positive and significant effect on Trust, with a coefficient of 0.72 and a t-statistic of 10.85. Additionally, eWOM directly influences Purchase Intention with a coefficient of 0.31. On the other hand, Trust has a stronger effect on Purchase Intention, with a coefficient of 0.56. All relationships have p-values below 0.05, confirming their statistical significance. These findings highlight that trust is a key factor that strengthens the influence of eWOM on consumer purchase intention.

Mediation Test

Table 4. Mediation Test Results (Sobel / Bootstrapping).

Mediation Relationship	Indirect Effect	t-statistic	p-value	Remark
eWOM $\rightarrow$ Trust $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.40	6.75	0.000	Significant mediation

The mediation test results show that Trust serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between eWOM and Purchase Intention. The indirect effect value of 0.40, with a t-statistic of 6.75 and a p-value of 0.000, indicates that the indirect effect is statistically significant. This means that eWOM influences purchase intention not only directly but also indirectly through the enhancement of consumer trust. Therefore, Trust can be classified as a partial mediator that strengthens the relationship between eWOM and Purchase Intention.

R-Square Values

Table 5. R-Square Values.

Dependent Variable	R²	Description
Trust	0.52	Explained by eWOM
Purchase Intention	0.68	Explained by eWOM & Trust

The R-square values indicate the explanatory power of the model. The Trust variable has an R² value of 0.52, meaning that 52% of the variance in Trust can be explained by eWOM. Meanwhile, Purchase Intention has an R² value of 0.68, indicating that 68% of its variance is explained by both eWOM and Trust. These values are considered relatively high, suggesting that the research model has good explanatory power. The remaining variance is influenced by other variables not included in this study.

Discussion

The Effect of eWOM on Consumer Trust

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a crucial factor influencing consumer trust in the digital marketplace. With the proliferation of online platforms, consumers increasingly rely on reviews, ratings, and testimonials shared by other users to make informed decisions. Unlike traditional marketing communications, eWOM is perceived as more authentic and credible because it originates from fellow consumers rather than companies (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This perception of authenticity plays a significant role in shaping trust, particularly in environments where direct product experience is not possible (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Trust, in this context, refers to the willingness of consumers to rely on information provided by others when making purchase decisions. The influence of eWOM becomes even more pronounced in high-risk purchases, where uncertainty is greater (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Consequently, businesses are increasingly focusing on managing online reviews and customer feedback. The relationship between eWOM and trust is therefore a key area of study in consumer behavior research. Understanding this relationship can help firms develop strategies to enhance customer confidence and loyalty.

The credibility of eWOM is a primary determinant of its effectiveness in building consumer trust. Credibility is influenced by factors such as the perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity of the information source (Filieri, 2016). When consumers perceive reviewers as knowledgeable or experienced, they are more likely to trust the information provided. Additionally, reviews that appear unbiased and balanced tend to be more persuasive than overly positive or negative ones (Purnawirawan et al., 2015). The presence of verified purchase labels or detailed descriptions can further enhance credibility. Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to trust reviews that include specific product usage experiences (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Furthermore, the perceived honesty of the reviewer contributes significantly to trust formation. As a result, platforms that promote transparency and authenticity tend to foster higher levels of consumer trust. This highlights the importance of credible eWOM in influencing purchasing behavior.

Another important factor influencing the impact of eWOM on trust is the volume of reviews available. A higher number of reviews often signals popularity and reliability, which can increase consumer confidence (Liu, 2006). When many users share similar opinions, it creates a sense of consensus that reinforces trust. However, excessive volume without quality may lead to information overload, potentially reducing its effectiveness (Park & Lee, 2008). Consumers may struggle to process large amounts of information, leading them to rely on heuristics such as average ratings. Therefore, both quantity and quality of eWOM are essential in shaping trust. Research indicates that a moderate to high volume of consistent reviews has the strongest impact on trust formation (Xie et al., 2014). Additionally, platforms that organize and summarize reviews effectively can enhance user experience. Thus, managing review volume is critical for maximizing the benefits of eWOM.

The valence of eWOM, whether positive or negative, also plays a crucial role in determining consumer trust. Positive reviews generally enhance trust by reinforcing favorable perceptions of a product or service (Sparks & Browning, 2011). However, the presence of some negative reviews can increase the overall credibility of the information (Purnawirawan et al., 2015). Consumers often perceive a mix of opinions as more realistic and trustworthy. Excessively positive reviews may raise suspicion and reduce trust. Negative reviews, when presented constructively, can provide valuable insights and help consumers make better decisions (Filiari, 2016). Moreover, how companies respond to negative feedback can influence trust levels. Timely and professional responses demonstrate accountability and customer orientation. Therefore, both positive and negative eWOM contribute to trust in different ways.

The role of platform characteristics cannot be overlooked in understanding the effect of eWOM on trust. Different platforms, such as e-commerce websites, social media, and review sites, offer varying levels of credibility and user engagement (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Platforms with strong moderation policies and verification systems tend to be more trusted by users. The design and usability of the platform also influence how consumers perceive and interact with eWOM (Filiari, 2016). Features such as filtering options, helpfulness ratings, and reviewer profiles can enhance trust. Additionally, social media platforms enable users to access eWOM from their personal networks, which may increase perceived reliability. The integration of multimedia elements, such as photos and videos, further strengthens trust by providing visual evidence. Therefore, platform design and functionality play a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of eWOM.

Consumer characteristics also moderate the relationship between eWOM and trust. Factors such as prior experience, product knowledge, and individual skepticism influence how consumers interpret online reviews (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Experienced consumers may rely less on eWOM, while novices are more likely to depend on it. Similarly, consumers with high levels of skepticism may question the authenticity of reviews, reducing their impact on trust (Filiari, 2016). Cultural factors can also influence trust formation, as individuals from different backgrounds may interpret eWOM differently. Additionally, personal involvement with the product category affects the extent to which eWOM is considered. Highly involved consumers tend to seek more detailed and credible information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Thus, individual differences play an important role in determining the effectiveness of eWOM in building trust.

The anonymity of online reviewers presents both opportunities and challenges for trust formation. On one hand, anonymity allows users to express honest opinions without fear of social repercussions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). On the other hand, it raises concerns about fake reviews and manipulation. The presence of fraudulent reviews can significantly undermine consumer trust (Xie et al., 2014). To address this issue, many platforms have implemented measures such as review verification and AI-based detection systems. These efforts aim to ensure the authenticity and reliability of eWOM. Transparency in reviewer identity, such as displaying user history or credibility scores, can also enhance trust (Filieri, 2016). Despite these challenges, consumers continue to rely on eWOM as a valuable source of information. Therefore, managing anonymity and authenticity is crucial for maintaining trust.

The dynamic nature of eWOM also influences consumer trust over time. As new reviews are continuously added, consumer perceptions may change (Liu, 2006). Recent reviews are often considered more relevant than older ones, especially in rapidly evolving markets. This temporal aspect of eWOM highlights the importance of maintaining consistent product quality and customer satisfaction. Businesses must actively monitor and respond to feedback to sustain trust (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Additionally, trends in eWOM can signal shifts in consumer preferences and expectations. The ability to adapt to these changes is essential for long-term success. Therefore, the ongoing management of eWOM is critical in maintaining consumer trust.

From a managerial perspective, leveraging eWOM effectively requires strategic planning and execution. Companies should encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences online (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Providing incentives or simplifying the review process can increase participation. At the same time, businesses must address negative feedback constructively to demonstrate commitment to customer satisfaction (Filieri, 2016). Transparency and honesty in communication are key to building trust. Monitoring eWOM through analytics tools can provide valuable insights into consumer sentiment (Ismagilova et al., 2020). These insights can inform product development and marketing strategies. Ultimately, a proactive approach to managing eWOM can enhance trust and strengthen brand reputation.

In conclusion, eWOM plays a significant role in shaping consumer trust in the digital age. Its influence is determined by factors such as credibility, volume, valence, platform characteristics, and consumer attributes. While eWOM offers valuable opportunities for building trust, it also presents challenges related to authenticity and information overload (Park & Lee, 2008). Businesses must adopt strategies to ensure the reliability and effectiveness of online reviews. By fostering transparency, encouraging genuine feedback, and responding to consumer concerns, companies can enhance trust and drive positive outcomes (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Future research should continue to explore the evolving dynamics of eWOM and its impact on consumer behavior. Understanding these dynamics will be essential for navigating the increasingly complex digital marketplace.

The Mediating Role of Trust in the Relationship Between eWOM and Purchase Intention

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has become one of the key factors influencing consumer behavior in the digital era. The rapid development of information technology and

widespread internet usage have made consumers increasingly reliant on online reviews before making purchasing decisions. eWOM provides access to real experiences from other consumers, which are often perceived as more objective than company-generated advertisements (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The information conveyed through eWOM typically includes product quality, service performance, and user satisfaction. Therefore, eWOM plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' initial perceptions of a product. The more positive reviews received, the greater the likelihood that consumers will be attracted to the product (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). However, not all eWOM information directly influences purchase decisions without certain psychological processes. One important factor mediating this relationship is consumer trust. Trust serves as a key element in reducing uncertainty in online transactions (Pavlou, 2003).

Consumer trust is a psychological factor that reflects an individual's belief in the credibility of information or a particular party. In the context of eWOM, trust is formed when consumers perceive the information as honest, relevant, and reliable (Filieri, 2015). Consumers tend to trust reviews from other users because they are perceived as having no direct commercial interest. This differs from company promotions, which are often viewed as biased. A high level of trust in eWOM enhances consumers' confidence in evaluating product quality (Gefen et al., 2003). Furthermore, trust helps reduce perceived risks associated with online purchases. Thus, trust becomes an important variable mediating the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. Without trust, eWOM information will not have a significant impact. Therefore, the role of trust cannot be overlooked in digital consumer behavior models.

The relationship between eWOM and trust has been widely supported by previous studies. Consistent and positive eWOM information can enhance credibility in the eyes of consumers (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Consumers are more likely to trust reviews when they come from multiple sources providing similar evaluations. Additionally, the quality of information, such as detail, clarity, and relevance, also influences trust (Filieri, 2015). The higher the quality of eWOM information, the greater the level of trust formed. Another influencing factor is the reputation of the platform where eWOM is shared. Trusted platforms tend to increase the validity of the available information. This indicates that not only message content but also the context of delivery affects trust. Therefore, companies need to strategically manage online reviews. By improving the quality of eWOM, consumer trust can be significantly strengthened.

Purchase intention is an important indicator in measuring consumers' tendency to buy a product. It reflects consumers' desire and readiness to take purchasing action (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). In the digital context, purchase intention is often influenced by online information, including eWOM. Positive and convincing information can increase consumers' interest in a product. However, without trust, purchase intention cannot be optimally formed (Kim et al., 2008). Trust acts as the foundation for consumers in making purchasing decisions. When consumers trust the information they receive, they are more confident in choosing a product. Conversely, if the level of trust is low, purchase intention will also decrease. This highlights the critical role of trust in linking eWOM with purchase intention.

The mediating role of trust in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention can be explained through consumer behavior theory. According to trust-based models in e-

commerce, purchasing decisions are influenced by cognitive and affective factors (Pavlou, 2003). eWOM functions as an information source that affects the cognitive aspect of consumers. Meanwhile, trust represents an affective response formed through the evaluation of that information (Kim et al., 2008). When eWOM provides positive information, consumers develop favorable perceptions. These perceptions then evolve into trust. This trust ultimately drives the formation of purchase intention. Thus, trust acts as a mediating variable bridging eWOM and purchase intention. Without trust, the influence of eWOM on purchase intention becomes indirect and weaker. Therefore, this mediation model is essential for understanding consumer behavior more comprehensively.

Previous research findings indicate that trust plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. Several studies have found that eWOM does not directly influence purchase intention but operates through trust (See-To & Ho, 2014). This suggests that trust is a crucial mechanism in the consumer decision-making process. Moreover, a high level of trust can strengthen the impact of eWOM on purchase intention (Gefen et al., 2003). Conversely, when trust is low, the effect of eWOM becomes insignificant. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that trust is a key factor in online transactions. Therefore, companies need to build consumer trust through various strategies. One approach is to provide transparent and honest information. In this way, trust can be enhanced and positively affect purchase intention.

In practice, companies can leverage eWOM as an effective marketing strategy. By encouraging consumers to provide positive reviews, companies can improve product image in the public eye (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Additionally, companies must ensure that displayed reviews are authentic and not manipulated. Transparency in review management is essential for maintaining consumer trust (Filieri, 2015). Companies can also actively respond to consumer reviews to demonstrate concern for customers. This can enhance both trust and customer loyalty. Furthermore, using credible influencers can strengthen the effect of eWOM. Influencers trusted by their audience can increase the validity of the information delivered. With the right strategy, eWOM can be a powerful tool in increasing purchase intention.

Besides eWOM and trust, other variables can also influence consumer purchase intention. Factors such as price, product quality, and brand image play significant roles in purchasing decisions (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). However, in the digital context, trust remains a dominant factor. This is because online transactions involve higher levels of uncertainty compared to offline transactions (Pavlou, 2003). Therefore, consumers require trust assurance before making purchases. eWOM serves as one of the information sources that can help build this trust. Through reviews from other consumers, perceived risks can be reduced. This makes consumers more confident in making purchasing decisions. Thus, eWOM and trust are interrelated in influencing purchase intention.

The mediating role of trust may also vary depending on consumer characteristics. Consumers with extensive online shopping experience tend to be more critical of eWOM information (Filieri, 2015). They are more selective in trusting available reviews. In contrast, less experienced consumers tend to trust eWOM more easily (Gefen et al., 2003). This indicates that individual factors also influence the relationship between eWOM, trust, and purchase intention. Additionally, culture and social environment can affect consumer trust levels. In societies with high collectivism, eWOM tends to have a stronger influence. This is

because recommendations from others are considered more important. Therefore, further research is needed to understand the factors influencing this relationship. This will allow models to be adapted to different contexts.

Overall, trust plays a very important role in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. eWOM as an information source will not be effective without consumer trust (Kim et al., 2008). Trust acts as a bridge connecting information to purchasing actions. Therefore, companies need to focus on building and maintaining consumer trust. This can be achieved through transparency, product quality, and good service. Additionally, effective eWOM management is crucial to enhancing trust (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). With the right strategies, companies can leverage eWOM to significantly increase purchase intention. These findings provide important implications for marketing practitioners in designing digital strategies. By understanding the mediating role of trust, companies can improve the effectiveness of their marketing efforts.

Strategic Implications for Businesses

Strategic implications for businesses have become increasingly complex amid dynamic global environments characterized by technological advancements, shifting consumer behavior, and intensified competition. Companies are required to develop strategies that are adaptive and responsive to market changes (Grant, 2019). One important aspect is the ability to identify trends and anticipate changes in consumer preferences quickly. This condition requires organizations not only to rely on long-term strategies but also to maintain flexibility in strategic implementation (Teece, 2010). Digital transformation has become a key element in enhancing business competitiveness (Laudon & Laudon, 2020). Firms that fail to adapt to these changes tend to lose relevance in the market. Therefore, the utilization of information technology must be an integral part of business strategy. Additionally, data-driven decision-making is increasingly important in determining strategic direction. Thus, strategic implications require a holistic and innovation-based approach.

In the marketing context, consumer-oriented strategies are essential for improving competitiveness. Companies must understand customer needs and preferences through in-depth data analysis (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Customer relationship management (CRM) serves as a strategic tool for building long-term relationships with customers. Through this approach, companies can enhance customer loyalty while strengthening brand image. Furthermore, service personalization has become a key factor in attracting modern consumers. Digital marketing strategies such as social media and e-commerce provide significant opportunities for businesses (Laudon & Laudon, 2020). However, these strategies must be supported by effective online reputation management. Customer reviews can significantly influence public perception of products or services. Therefore, companies need to manage digital communication effectively.

Strategic implications are also evident in human resource management. Companies must develop a workforce that is competent and adaptable to technological changes. Employee training and development are important investments in improving organizational performance (Hill & Jones, 2012). Additionally, an innovative organizational culture plays a crucial role in fostering creativity and productivity. Visionary leadership is essential in guiding organizations toward their strategic goals. Leaders must be able to inspire and motivate employees to achieve optimal performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2004). Team collaboration is

also a key factor in generating innovative solutions. Companies that effectively manage human resources will gain a competitive advantage. Therefore, HR strategies must align with overall business strategies.

From an operational perspective, efficiency and effectiveness are primary focuses of strategic implications. Companies must optimize production processes to reduce costs and improve quality. The use of automation technology can enhance operational efficiency (Laudon & Laudon, 2020). In addition, supply chain management plays a critical role in ensuring smooth product distribution. Disruptions in the supply chain can significantly impact company performance. Therefore, supplier diversification becomes an important strategy to mitigate risks. Companies should also adopt lean management principles to improve productivity. This approach helps reduce waste and increase customer value. Hence, operational efficiency is a crucial component of business strategy.

In the era of globalization, companies must also consider market expansion strategies. Entering international markets offers significant growth opportunities (Hill & Jones, 2012). However, companies must understand cultural differences, regulations, and consumer preferences in each country. Local adaptation strategies are essential to address these challenges. Strategic partnerships with local firms can also accelerate market penetration. Companies must also consider political and economic risks in global expansion. Comprehensive market analysis forms the basis for strategic decision-making. With the right strategies, firms can enhance their competitiveness in global markets. Therefore, international expansion must be carefully planned.

Innovation is one of the most important strategic implications for modern businesses. Companies must continuously develop new products and services to meet consumer needs (Chesbrough, 2010). Innovation is not limited to products but also includes business models and operational processes (Teece, 2010). Innovative firms are more likely to survive in highly competitive environments. Furthermore, investment in research and development (R&D) is crucial for driving innovation. Collaboration with academic institutions and startups can accelerate innovation processes. A supportive environment for creativity will generate valuable ideas. Therefore, innovation must become part of organizational culture. In this way, companies can achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Strategic implications also involve effective risk management. Companies must be able to identify and manage various risks that may affect business performance. These risks may include financial, operational, and reputational risks. Effective risk management helps companies **להתמודד** uncertainty (Grant, 2019). Additionally, the use of analytical technologies can assist in predicting potential risks. Companies should also prepare contingency plans to handle unexpected situations. Transparency in risk management is important to maintain stakeholder trust. With a systematic approach, companies can minimize the impact of risks. This shows that risk management is an integral part of business strategy.

Sustainability has become a major focus in contemporary strategic business implications. Companies are expected not only to pursue profits but also to consider social and environmental impacts (Porter & Kramer, 2011). The triple bottom line concept serves as a foundation for measuring company performance holistically. Companies that adopt sustainable business practices tend to have better reputations. Moreover, modern consumers are increasingly concerned about environmental issues. This encourages companies to adopt

environmentally friendly practices in their operations. Government regulations are also becoming stricter regarding sustainability. Therefore, companies must align their strategies with these demands. Thus, sustainability becomes an essential part of long-term strategy.

Digital technology plays a significant role in shaping strategic implications for businesses. Digital transformation enables companies to improve efficiency and innovation (Laudon & Laudon, 2020). The use of big data and artificial intelligence supports more accurate decision-making. In addition, digitalization opens new opportunities for business models (Teece, 2010). Companies can develop platform-based services to reach broader markets. However, digital transformation also brings challenges such as data security and privacy concerns. Therefore, companies must manage digital risks effectively. Investment in technological infrastructure is essential. With the right digital strategy, firms can enhance their competitiveness.

Overall, strategic implications for businesses encompass various interconnected aspects, including marketing, operations, innovation, and sustainability. Companies must adopt an integrated approach in formulating business strategies (Porter, 2008). Flexibility and adaptability are key to responding to changes in the business environment. Strong leadership and a clear vision are also critical factors. Companies that manage their resources effectively will achieve competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The use of technology and data becomes a determining factor in strategic success. By understanding strategic implications comprehensively, firms can improve performance and competitiveness. Therefore, business strategies must be continuously evaluated and adjusted to evolving conditions. This highlights that business success depends on the ability to respond strategically to change.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a significant influence on consumers' purchase intention, both directly and indirectly through the mediating variable of trust. The results of regression analysis and mediation testing confirm that trust plays an important role in strengthening the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. In other words, the higher the quality, credibility, and consistency of information received by consumers through eWOM, the greater the level of trust that is formed, which ultimately increases consumers' likelihood of making a purchase. This research model has proven to have a relatively strong explanatory power, thereby contributing theoretically to the development of digital marketing and consumer behavior literature in the modern era.

From a practical perspective, these findings emphasize the importance for companies to strategically manage eWOM in order to build and maintain consumer trust. Companies need to ensure information transparency, encourage authentic reviews, and respond to consumer feedback professionally. By doing so, companies can not only enhance their product image but also strengthen customer loyalty. Furthermore, this study opens opportunities for future research to explore other variables that may influence the relationship between eWOM, trust, and purchase intention, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior dynamics in the digital environment.

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