The Role of E-WOM Credibility and Online Engagement in Shaping Online Purchase Intention: An Empirical Study

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received : November 14, 2025
Revised :May 2, 2026
Accepted : May 12, 2026

Keywords:
EWOM Credibility;
Online Engagement Intention;
Online Purchase Intention;
PLS-SEM;
E-commerce;

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) credibility and online engagement intentions on online purchase intentions among e-commerce consumers in Indonesia. This study uses a quantitative approach with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis techniques. Respondents totaled 198 people who were selected purposively, with the criteria of active social media users and having made e-commerce transactions in the last three months. The results show that eWOM credibility and online engagement intentions have a positive and significant effect on online purchase intentions. This research contributes to the development of digital marketing strategies and enriches the literature on consumer behavior in the digital context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on consumer behavior in the digital context has experienced rapid development, particularly in examining the role of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and consumer engagement intentions in influencing purchasing decisions. Previous studies have shown that eWOM, both in the form of consumer reviews and recommendations, contributes significantly to the formation of perceptions, trust, and even purchase intentions (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018). Meanwhile, recent research has begun to identify the importance of active consumer engagement with brand content as a form of participation that directly impacts online purchasing behavior (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020a).

This research is within the realm of digital marketing, focusing on consumer behavior on e-commerce and social media platforms. The two variables studied, eWOM credibility and online engagement intention, represent the cognitive and affective aspects of digital consumers. In the online environment, the credibility of received information and emotional engagement with brand content are important indicators in measuring purchase intention.

Several previous studies have focused solely on the number of reviews or viral content without considering the credibility of the source(Ismagilova et al., 2020a; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). Furthermore, few studies have simultaneously analyzed the influence of consumer engagement on social media on purchase intentions (Clement Addo et al., 2021; R. Zheng et al., 2022). It can be concluded that there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled with more comprehensive empirical testing.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for practitioners to design evidence-based marketing strategies that consider the credibility of information and active consumer participation. Furthermore, academically, this study is expected to expand theoretical models in understanding digital consumer behavior, particularly in the Indonesian context, which has a high level of e-commerce and social media adoption.

Based on the identified research gap, it is important to further examine the key concepts underlying consumer behavior in the digital environment, particularly those related to electronic word

Majalah Ilmiah Bijak Vol 22 , No.2, September 2025, pp. 634-645
doi.org/10.31334/bijak.v22i2.5421

of mouth (eWOM), information credibility, and consumer engagement on social media. A clearer understanding of these constructs is necessary to explain how cognitive and affective factors interact in shaping online purchase intention.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is defined as positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or company, which are widely available through online platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Unlike traditional WOM, which is oral and limited to a specific social environment, eWOM allows for the rapid and global dissemination of information through social media, online reviews, blogs, or vlogs. Key characteristics of eWOM include accessibility, permanence, and the ability to reach a wide audience, making it an important tool in influencing consumer behavior (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020).

eWOM has a significant impact on the consumer journey, which includes the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages. In the pre-purchase stage, consumers seek eWOM to validate information, evaluate products, and reduce decision risk (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). During the purchase stage, eWOM influences purchase intentions through the credibility and quantity of information. In the post-purchase stage, consumers use eWOM to validate their purchase decisions or seek solutions to negative experiences, indicating that eWOM functions as both input and output in the decision-making process (Shin & Chung, 2017).

The credibility of eWOM, determined by the perceived reliability of the source, the quality of the presentation, and the level of engagement of other users (e.g., the number of likes or comments), is a key factor in determining the usefulness of information. Furthermore, the quantity of eWOM, such as the number of reviews or followers of an influencer, increases the perceived popularity of a product and reduces its perceived risk. In this context, eWOM influences not only consumer attitudes but also purchasing behavior through mechanisms such as strengthening trust and emotional engagement with the brand (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018).

E-commerce (electronic commerce) is defined as the process of buying, selling, or exchanging products, services, and information over the internet. E-commerce encompasses various platforms such as marketplaces (e.g., Shopee, Tokopedia), online stores, and company websites that offer online transactions. In the Indonesian context, e-commerce has experienced rapid growth along with technological developments and high internet penetration. Based on data from uploaded documents, Shopee is one of the most popular e-commerce platforms in Indonesia with 157.9 million visits per month in Q1 2023, surpassing competitors such as Tokopedia and Lazada (Mustajib, 2024).

E-commerce provides convenience for consumers by offering diverse product accessibility, time efficiency, and flexibility in shopping without having to visit a physical store. Features such as product reviews, algorithm-based recommendations, and price promotions (price discounts) are key attractions that drive consumer purchasing behavior (Salzabila Artamevia et al., 2022). Furthermore, e-commerce also influences lifestyle changes, particularly in consumerism, where online shopping is not only about fulfilling needs but also about achieving emotional satisfaction.

E-commerce also plays a role in encouraging the phenomenon of impulse buying, namely spontaneous purchases without prior planning. Marketing strategies such as price discounts, flash sales, and social media-based promotions are often used by e-commerce platforms to trigger this behavior (Herdiany et al., 2021). In the context of Shopee, the platform utilizes features like promotional notifications, gamification (e.g., Shopee Games), and user reviews to increase consumer engagement and encourage impulse purchases.

In the context of e-commerce, hedonic motivation plays a significant role in driving peril.physics, especially on platforms like Shopee. Features such as attractive interface design, interactive promotions, and visual content (e.g., product videos) enhance the enjoyable shopping experience, thereby influencing purchase intentions (Renaldi & Nurlinda, 2023). According to (Mustajib, 2024), hedonic shopping motivation has a significant influence on impulse buying on Shopee in the East Java region, with a significance value of 0.004 (<0.05), which indicates that the higher the hedonic motivation, the more likely consumers are to make impulsive purchases.

Hedonic motivation is also influenced by external factors such as promotions and social

interactions on social media. Consumers are often entertained by creative promotional content or reviews from other users, which reinforces the urge to shop (Iftitah et al., 2023). Furthermore, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory can be used to explain this relationship: stimuli such as e-commerce features (price discounts, product visuals) influence consumers' emotional responses (hedonic motivation), which then results in impulsive buying behavior.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) credibility refers to the extent to which information or recommendations shared by consumers through online platforms, particularly social networking sites (SNS), are perceived as trustworthy by message recipients. eWOM is defined as positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or company, which are made available to a wide audience via the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The credibility of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on social networking sites (SNS) is a key factor influencing consumer trust in product or brand recommendations, as described in the 4Cs of eWOM Credibility framework by (Moran & Muzellec, 2017), which includes Community, Competence, Content, and Consensus. Community emphasizes the importance of tie strength and recipient susceptibility to interpersonal influence, with SNS strengthening credibility through authentic identity policing (Chatterjee, 2011). Competence focuses on the expertise of the sender and receiver, where recommendations from experienced sources are more trusted, especially for intangible products such as services (Gangseog & Feick, 2007; Phelps et al., 2004). Content determines credibility through the clarity and valence of the message, with negative messages often considered more diagnostic, although incentives can reduce authenticity based on attribution theory. Consensus increases credibility when the message aligns with the recipient's assessment and is consistent with other reviews, such as the number of likes on SNS, although incentivized brand campaigns risk damaging trust. This framework offers theoretical and practical guidance for marketers to design credible eWOM, by avoiding aggressive approaches and leveraging authentic consumer interactions (Moran & Muzellec, 2017).

H1: *eWOM credibility has a positive effect on online purchase intention.*

Online Engagement Intention is defined as a consumer's intention to actively interact with brand content on social media, such as liking, commenting, or sharing content, reflecting a psychological and emotional attachment to the brand. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, this engagement is triggered by stimuli such as content quality and brand interactivity, which influence consumer behavioral responses, including purchase intentions. Research shows that Online Engagement Intention is driven by hedonic motivations, where consumers seek pleasurable experiences, as well as utilitarian motivations to obtain product information. In the social media ecosystem, this active engagement strengthens consumer-brand relationships and increases brand awareness, which in turn drives online purchase intentions, as confirmed by the finding that high engagement correlates with purchase decisions (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020a).

Online Engagement Intention (EI) is a consumer's intention to actively interact with brand content on social media, such as liking, commenting, or sharing information. This engagement is driven by hedonic and utilitarian motivations, where consumers seek entertainment or product information. Credible eWOM can strengthen online engagement intentions by increasing positive brand perceptions. This active engagement also contributes to the formation of long-term relationships between consumers and brands (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020a).

H2: *Online engagement intention has a positive effect on online purchase intention*

Online purchase intention refers to a consumer's tendency or intention to purchase a product or service through an online platform, such as an e-commerce website or social media. This concept is central to consumer behavior research in the digital era because it reflects the initial stage before a consumer makes an actual purchase decision. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, online purchase intention is influenced by external stimuli (such as information quality or social interactions), internal consumer responses (such as motivation or trust), and behavioral outcomes in the form of purchase intention (Akram et al., 2021).

Online Purchase Intention refers to a consumer's desire to purchase a product through an online platform based on their experience, trust, and the information they receive. Factors such as eWOM

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doi.org/10.31334/bijak.v22i2.5421

credibility and brand image play a significant role in influencing this intention, with trust being the primary predictor (Hendro & Keni, 2020). Research shows that positive eWOM, although not always significant, can increase purchase intention through the mediation of brand image. High online engagement also strengthens purchase intention by deepening consumers' emotional attachment.

2. METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to test the causal relationship between eWOM Credibility and Online Engagement Intention as independent variables with Online Purchase Intention as the dependent variable. The population in this study was narrowed to active e-commerce consumers in Indonesia who use social media as a source of product information, online reviews, and brand-related content. Thus, the study did not aim to represent all social media users, but rather a specific consumer segment that is relevant to the research variables. The sample was selected purposively based on three criteria: respondents were at least 18 years old, had made an online purchase through an e-commerce platform within the last three months, and actively used social media to search for product information or consumer reviews. This sampling approach is appropriate because purposive sampling allows researchers to select respondents who possess specific characteristics related to the research objectives.

Although the sample size of 198 respondents does not represent the entire social media population, it is adequate for explanatory research using PLS-SEM because the study focuses on testing relationships among latent variables rather than making statistical generalizations to all social media users. PLS-SEM is also considered suitable for prediction-oriented models and studies with relatively smaller samples compared with covariance-based SEM. Hair et al., (2022) explain that PLS-SEM can achieve acceptable statistical power with smaller samples, while recent methodological guidance also notes that the minimum sample size should consider model complexity and statistical power, not merely population size. This sample size meets the requirements for Partial Least Squares (PLS)-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, based on the recommendation of a minimum of 10 times the number of indicators (J. F. Hair et al., 2020). Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via social media and instant messaging applications, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Data analysis was conducted using SMART PLS 3 software, which was chosen for its ability to handle reflective models and non-normal data, in accordance with the characteristics of this study. The analysis process included two main stages: (1) evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to test validity and reliability, and (2) evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the relationship between variables. Convergent validity was examined through outer loading (> 0.7) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.5), while discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criteria and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT < 0.9). Reliability was measured by Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.7) and Composite Reliability (> 0.7). Prior to the main analysis, the questionnaire was piloted on 30 out-of-sample respondents to ensure item clarity. For the structural model, the analysis includes: (1) path coefficients to measure the strength of the relationship between variables, with significance determined through bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples, $p < 0.05$); (2) R Square to evaluate the proportion of explained variation in Online Purchase Intention; (3) F Square to measure the effect size of each independent variable; and (4) Q Square (predictive relevance) through a blindfolding procedure to assess the predictive ability of the model. The Goodness of Fit test was conducted by examining the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR < 0.08) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI > 0.9).

This research adheres to ethical principles by ensuring that respondents' participation is voluntary, providing informed consent, and maintaining data confidentiality. The questionnaire does not collect any information that could identify respondents, and the data is used solely for academic purposes. This approach ensures that the research results are credible and relevant to understanding the dynamics of digital consumer behavior in the Indonesian e-commerce context.

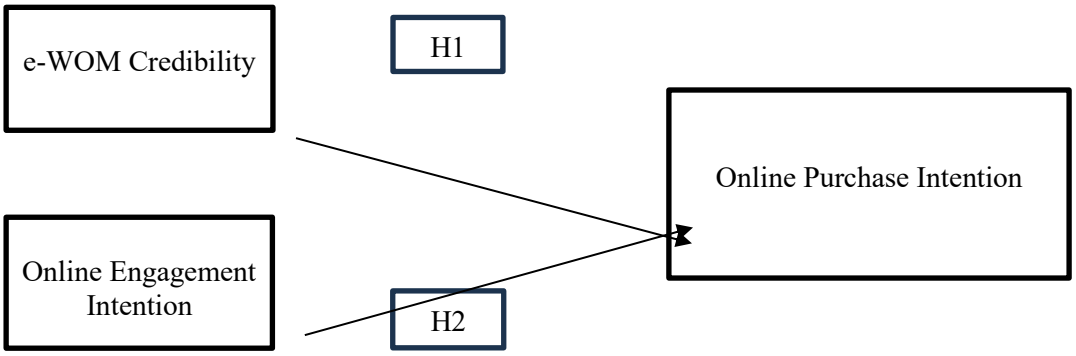

Fig.1. Research Framework

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Understanding respondent characteristics is essential to ensure the relevance of the sample to the research objectives. Therefore, Table 1 summarizes the demographic and behavioral profiles of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 198)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	87	43.94
	Woman	111	56.06
Age	< 20 years	36	18.18
	21–25 years	119	60.10
	> 25 years	43	21.72
Online Shopping Frequency	1–2 times/month	49	24.75
	3–5 times/month	108	54.55
	> 5 times/month	41	20.71
Main Platform	Shopee	96	48.48
	Tokopedia	62	31.31
	Instagram	25	12.63
	Other	15	7.58

Table 1 presents the demographic and behavioral profile of the respondents (n = 198), which provides important context for interpreting the study findings. Overall, the sample is dominated by female respondents (56.06%), while male respondents account for 43.94%. This distribution indicates that women tend to be more active in online shopping and social media engagement, which is consistent with prior studies suggesting that female consumers are generally more involved in online browsing, product evaluation, and purchasing decisions in digital environments (Ismagilova et al., 2020b).

In terms of age, the majority of respondents are between 21–25 years old (60.10%), followed by those over 25 years (21.72%) and under 20 years (18.18%). This indicates that the sample is heavily concentrated in the young adult segment, particularly Generation Z and early Millennials. This group is known for its high digital literacy, frequent use of social media, and strong reliance on online reviews and peer recommendations when making purchase decisions (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; NGUYEN-VAN et al., 2024). Therefore, the dominance of this age group strengthens the relevance of the study, as they represent the primary users of e-commerce and social media platforms.

Regarding online shopping frequency, more than half of the respondents (54.55%) reported shopping online 3–5 times per month, while 24.75% shop 1–2 times per month and 20.71% shop more than five times per month. This indicates that the respondents can be categorized as active online consumers, rather than occasional users. High shopping frequency suggests that respondents are familiar with digital purchasing processes and are more likely to be influenced by eWOM and social

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doi.org/10.31334/bijak.v22i2.5421

media engagement. Previous research confirms that frequent online shoppers tend to rely more on online reviews and social interactions when forming purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016)

In terms of platform usage, Shopee is the most frequently used platform (48.48%), followed by Tokopedia (31.31%), Instagram (12.63%), and other platforms (7.58%). This indicates that marketplace-based e-commerce platforms dominate consumer transactions, while social media platforms such as Instagram function more as information and engagement channels rather than primary transaction platforms. This pattern reflects the current structure of digital consumer behavior, where consumers often discover products through social media but complete transactions through e-commerce platforms (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020b; Leong et al., 2022).

From an analytical perspective, the characteristics of the respondents support the validity of the study context. The dominance of young, active, and digitally engaged consumers ensures that the respondents are relevant to the variables studied, namely eWOM credibility, online engagement intention, and online purchase intention. However, this also implies that the findings are more representative of digitally active consumer segments, rather than the general population.

Importantly, the combination of high shopping frequency and dominant use of marketplace platforms suggests that respondents are continuously exposed to online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content. This exposure strengthens the role of eWOM credibility in shaping purchase intention. At the same time, the use of social media platforms such as Instagram indicates that engagement behaviors, such as liking, commenting, and sharing—are likely to influence consumer attitudes and emotional attachment to brands.

In conclusion, the respondent profile reflects a relevant and appropriate target segment for this study, characterized by high digital engagement, frequent online relevant and appropriate target segment shopping behavior, and active exposure to eWOM. These characteristics provide a strong foundation for analyzing the influence of eWOM credibility and online engagement intention on online purchase intention.

Validity and Reliability

To assess the adequacy of the measurement model, validity and reliability tests were conducted. The results of the convergent validity and internal consistency reliability are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variables	Indicators	Outer Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
eWOM Credibility (EC)	EC1	0.81	0.67	0.84	0.89
	EC2	0.83			
	EC3	0.85			
Online Engagement Intention (OEI)	OEI1	0.82	0.68	0.85	0.90
	OEI2	0.84			
	OEI3	0.86			
Online Purchase Intention (OPI)	OPI1	0.84	0.69	0.86	0.91
	OPI2	0.87			
	OPI3	0.85			

Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model evaluation, including outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability. Overall, the results indicate that all constructs meet the recommended thresholds for both validity and reliability, confirming that the measurement model is robust and suitable for further structural analysis.

First, convergent validity is assessed using outer loadings and AVE values. All indicator loadings range from 0.81 to 0.87, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70, which indicates that each indicator strongly reflects its respective construct (J. F. Hair et al., 2022). In addition, the AVE values for all

constructs eWOM Credibility (0.67), Online Engagement Intention (0.68), and Online Purchase Intention (0.69) are above the recommended cut-off value of 0.50. This implies that more than 50% of the variance of the indicators is captured by the latent constructs, confirming adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Second, internal consistency reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.84 to 0.86, while Composite Reliability values range from 0.89 to 0.91. Both measures exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency among the indicators within each construct (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). Notably, Composite Reliability values are slightly higher than Cronbach's Alpha, which is expected in PLS-SEM analysis, as Composite Reliability is considered a more accurate measure of reliability for latent constructs.

From a comparative perspective, Online Purchase Intention shows the highest reliability (CR = 0.91), followed by Online Engagement Intention (CR = 0.90) and eWOM Credibility (CR = 0.89). This suggests that the indicators used to measure purchase intention are highly consistent and stable. Furthermore, the relatively balanced values across all constructs indicate that no measurement bias or inconsistency is present.

These results collectively confirm that all constructs in this study are both valid and reliable, allowing for confident interpretation of the structural model relationships. The strong measurement properties also strengthen the credibility of the subsequent findings, particularly regarding the influence of eWOM credibility and online engagement intention on online purchase intention.

Structural Model

After confirming that the measurement model met the requirements of validity and reliability, the next step was to evaluate the structural model. This analysis was conducted to assess the explanatory power, overall significance, and predictive relevance of the proposed model in explaining online purchase intention. The results of the structural model analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Results of Structural Model Analysis

Parameter	Mark	Information
R Square (R^2)	0.64	64% of the variation *in Online Purchase Intention* is explained by EC and OEI
Adjusted R Square	0.63	
Model Significance Test (F-test)	$F = 172.5$, $p < 0.001$	Overall significant model
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)	0.42	$Q^2 > 0$, indicates good predictive relevance of the model

Table 3 shows that the R Square (R^2) value is 0.64, indicating that 64% of the variance in online purchase intention can be explained by eWOM credibility and online engagement intention. This value suggests that the model has strong explanatory power, as an R^2 value above 0.50 is generally considered moderate to substantial in behavioral and marketing research using PLS-SEM (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). Therefore, the results indicate that consumers' online purchase intention is strongly influenced by the credibility of online information and their engagement with brand-related content.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.63 further confirms the stability of the model. Since the difference between R^2 and Adjusted R^2 is very small, it indicates that the independent variables included in the model contribute meaningfully and do not create excessive model inflation. This suggests that eWOM credibility and online engagement intention are relevant predictors of online purchase intention.

The model significance test also shows a significant result, with $F = 172.5$ and $p < 0.001$. This means that the overall structural model is statistically significant and that the independent variables jointly explain online purchase intention. In other words, eWOM credibility and online engagement intention collectively have a meaningful role in predicting consumers' intention to purchase online.

In addition, the predictive relevance value (Q^2) is 0.42. Since the Q^2 value is greater than zero, the model has good predictive relevance, meaning that it is not only explanatory but also capable of

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doi.org/10.31334/bijak.v22i2.5421

predicting online purchase intention. In PLS-SEM, Q^2 values above zero indicate that the model has predictive capability for the endogenous construct (J. F. Hair et al., 2022). Thus, the findings support the suitability of the proposed model for explaining digital consumer behavior in the context of e-commerce and social media.

Overall, Table 3 confirms that the structural model is statistically acceptable, theoretically meaningful, and predictively relevant. These results strengthen the argument that online purchase intention is shaped by both cognitive evaluation, represented by eWOM credibility, and affective-behavioral involvement, represented by online engagement intention.To further examine the relationships between variables and test the proposed hypotheses, path coefficient analysis was conducted. This analysis evaluates the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships between constructs, as well as the effect size of each independent variable on the dependent variable. The results of the path coefficients and effect size (f^2) are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Path Coefficients and F Square

Track	Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	F Square	Interpretation
EC → OPI	0.47	8.72	0.000	0.28	Positive, significant, moderate influence
OEI → OPI	0.42	7.95	0.000	0.23	Positive, significant, moderate influence

Table 4 shows that both hypothesized relationships are positive and statistically significant. The path from eWOM Credibility (EC) to Online Purchase Intention (OPI) has a coefficient value of $\beta = 0.47$, with a t-statistic of 8.72 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that eWOM credibility has a strong and significant positive effect on online purchase intention.

Discussion

In practical terms, the results show that the higher the perceived credibility of online reviews and information sources, the stronger the consumer's intention to make an online purchase. This finding is consistent with prior studies highlighting that credible eWOM reduces uncertainty and enhances consumer trust, which ultimately drives purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2020b).

Similarly, the relationship between Online Engagement Intention (OEI) and Online Purchase Intention (OPI) is also positive and significant, with $\beta = 0.42$, t-statistic = 7.95, and p-value = 0.000. This result indicates that consumers who actively engage with brand-related content—through actions such as liking, commenting, and sharing—are more likely to develop purchase intentions. Engagement reflects emotional and behavioral involvement, which strengthens the consumer-brand relationship and increases the likelihood of purchase decisions (Clement Addo et al., 2021; D. Zheng & Huang, 2025).

In terms of effect size, the f^2 value for eWOM credibility is 0.28, while online engagement intention has an f^2 value of 0.23. According to Cohen's (1988) criteria, both values indicate a moderate effect size ($f^2 > 0.15$), suggesting that each variable contributes meaningfully to explaining online purchase intention. Notably, eWOM credibility has a slightly stronger effect compared to online engagement intention. This suggests that cognitive evaluation of information credibility plays a more dominant role than engagement behavior in influencing purchase intention in the online context.

These findings highlight that while both variables are important, credibility serves as the primary driver, while engagement acts as a reinforcing factor. Consumers may engage with content frequently; however, without credible information, such engagement may not necessarily translate into actual purchase intention. Therefore, integrating both credible information and interactive engagement strategies is essential for effectively influencing consumer behavior in digital environments.

Overall, the results confirm that both hypotheses are supported, indicating that eWOM credibility and online engagement intention significantly influence online purchase intention, with moderate and meaningful effect sizes.

The results demonstrate that the proposed model has substantial explanatory power, with an R^2 value of 0.64, indicating that 64% of the variance in online purchase intention is explained by eWOM credibility and online engagement intention. In the context of PLS-SEM, this value can be categorized as moderate to substantial, suggesting that the model is robust in explaining consumer behavior in digital environments (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). This finding implies that online purchase intention is not solely driven by exposure to digital content, but rather by how consumers cognitively evaluate information credibility and affectively engage with brand-related content.

The analysis reveals that eWOM credibility has a positive and significant effect on online purchase intention ($\beta = 0.47$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that credibility is a critical determinant in digital decision-making processes. This supports the argument that in online environments—where direct product evaluation is limited—consumers rely heavily on the perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and reliability of information sources. Previous research confirms that credible eWOM significantly enhances information adoption and reduces perceived risk, thereby increasing purchase intention (Ismagilova et al., 2020b; Ngo et al., 2024).

Moreover, the relatively higher effect size of eWOM credibility ($f^2 = 0.28$) compared to online engagement suggests that cognitive trust mechanisms may precede affective engagement in shaping purchase intention. This aligns with dual-process theories in consumer behavior, where consumers first evaluate the reliability of information before forming emotional or behavioral responses. In other words, even highly engaging content may not lead to purchase intention if it is not perceived as credible. On the other hand, online engagement intention also shows a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.42$; $p < 0.001$), confirming that consumers who actively interact with brand content are more likely to develop purchase intention. Engagement behaviors such as liking, commenting, and sharing reflect deeper psychological involvement and signal a transition from passive information processing to active brand interaction. Prior studies indicate that such engagement enhances brand awareness, emotional attachment, and ultimately purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023; Clement Addo et al., 2021; R. Zheng et al., 2022).

However, the slightly lower effect size ($f^2 = 0.23$) suggests that engagement alone may not be sufficient to drive purchase decisions unless it is supported by credible information. This finding is particularly relevant in the current digital landscape, where high engagement metrics (e.g., likes, shares, virality) do not necessarily equate to trustworthiness. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence that engagement without credibility may lead to superficial interaction rather than actual purchase intention.

Based on a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework. In this study, eWOM credibility and online engagement function as external stimuli that influence internal cognitive (trust, evaluation) and affective (emotional involvement) states, which subsequently lead to behavioral responses in the form of purchase intention. Recent studies in social commerce also support the application of the SOR model in explaining how digital stimuli shape consumer behavior (Au, 2025; Herzallah et al., 2025).Importantly, this study extends prior research by integrating both cognitive (credibility) and affective-behavioral (engagement) constructs within a single model. While earlier studies often examined these variables separately, the present findings highlight their complementary roles in shaping purchase intention. This contributes to the literature by addressing the gap where previous studies tended to emphasize either review quantity, content virality, or engagement independently, without simultaneously examining their interaction with credibility.

From a managerial standpoint, the findings suggest that digital marketing strategies should move beyond merely increasing engagement metrics or the volume of reviews. Instead, businesses should prioritize the quality, authenticity, and credibility of eWOM, such as verified reviews, transparent communication, and credible influencers. At the same time, interactive strategies that foster meaningful engagement, such as user-generated content, live interactions, and community-based communication should be implemented to strengthen emotional connections with consumers. In conclusion, the results confirm that online purchase intention is shaped by a combination of trust-based evaluation and engagement-driven interaction, highlighting the need for integrated digital marketing strategies that

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balance credibility and engagement in the evolving e-commerce ecosystem.

3. CONCLUSION

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of consumer behavior models in a digital context by integrating two important constructs: eWOM credibility and online engagement intention. This study emphasizes the role of external stimuli in triggering purchase intentions through affective and cognitive pathways.

Practically, these findings encourage businesses to pay attention to the quality and authenticity of consumer reviews displayed on digital platforms. Companies are also advised to increase two-way interactions with consumers, such as through participatory campaigns or interactive content that encourage emotional engagement and strengthen brand loyalty.

This study has several limitations, including the use of an online survey method, which could potentially introduce perceptual bias. The sample size was also limited to the productive age group and active social media users, making the results difficult to generalize widely. Furthermore, this study only examined two independent variables, thus failing to account for other factors such as price promotions or user experience, which could also influence online purchase intentions.

Future research could examine mediating variables such as brand trust, perceived value, or consumer satisfaction to gain a more holistic understanding. A mixed-methods approach is also recommended to explore the emotional dimensions of consumers that cannot be captured through quantitative surveys alone. Cross-platform or cross-demographic research could also provide richer comparative insights into digital consumption patterns in Indonesia.

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