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THE INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH ON PURCHASE INTENTION THROUGH BRAND AWARENESS AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM OF CONSUMERS IN THE DIGITAL ERA AMONG TIKTOK USERS

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Abstract. Social media has revolutionized how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. TikTok stands out as a dynamic environment among various platforms where short-form videos and user-generated content drive brand exposure and consumer engagement. Within this ecosystem, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) plays a central role, as users continuously share product recommendations, experiences, and reviews that shape audience perceptions. This study aims to investigate the effect of e-WOM on purchase intention through brand awareness as a mediating variable among TikTok users in Indonesia. A quantitative research design employing a survey method was adopted, using cross-sectional data collected from TikTok users who had recently engaged with product promotion content. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using a semantic differential scale and analyzed using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM), which enabled comprehensive testing of both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The findings reveal that e-WOM positively and significantly influences both brand awareness and purchase intention, and that brand awareness mediates the relationship between e-WOM and purchase intention. These results highlight that repeated exposure to credible and positive e-WOM content on TikTok strengthens consumers' familiarity with brands, ultimately enhancing their purchase intentions. This study extends the understanding of consumer psychology in social media marketing and offers strategic insights for brands seeking to leverage e-WOM to build stronger connections and stimulate purchase decisions in the digital era.

Keywords; e-WOM, Purchase Intention, Brand Awareness.

1. Introduction

Globally, the phenomenon of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) through social media is growing rapidly alongside the dominance of short video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts in influencing consumption behavior. TikTok, in particular, has created a community-based brand communication ecosystem, where authentic content and user participation drive purchasing decisions. According to DataReportal (2025), over 74% of TikTok users have purchased a product after seeing it on the platform, and 55% of them shared personal reviews that triggered a new e-WOM cycle. In this context, e-WOM has become a global social process that strengthens brand awareness and brand preference (Liu et al., 2024), in a sustainable manner, making TikTok a strategic channel for marketers to increase purchase intention across countries.

In this fast-paced digital era, e-WOM in the form of reviews, recommendations, or viral content is viewed as more credible by consumers than traditional marketing messages, thus having a tangible impact on purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms. Consistent exposure to e-WOM increases brand awareness because publicly shared user experiences strengthen brand recognition and association in the minds of

digital audiences (Indrawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, brand awareness functions as a cognitive bridge that increases the likelihood of purchase; consumers who recognize and remember a brand tend to have higher trust and purchase intention (Indrawati et al., 2023). Therefore, the choice of TikTok as the object of research is highly relevant, given its role as the main arena for short content that goes viral easily, accelerating the spread of consumer opinions in a matter of hours. Usage data shows TikTok's high penetration, with a significant surge in active users and usage duration (DataReportal, 2025). Empirical studies have found a positive relationship between viral marketing on TikTok and brand awareness and purchase intention, especially when the content highlights authenticity and social proof (Melgarejo-Espinoza et al., 2025; Pane et al., 2024). These findings confirm that e-WOM mechanisms on TikTok, such as comments, duets, and challenges, are effective in shaping rapid brand exposure and triggering purchase intent.

Although studies such as (Pane et al., 2024) show a direct relationship between viral marketing on TikTok, studies examining the mediating role of brand awareness in the context of dynamic platforms such as TikTok are still limited, especially for consumer segments such as Generation Z or TikTok Shop users in Indonesia. The urgency of this study lies in the empirical need to evaluate how e-WOM on TikTok increases brand awareness and converts it into purchase intention in the collectivist Southeast Asian market. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of e-WOM on TikTok on brand awareness and analyze the role of brand awareness in linking e-WOM to purchase intention.

The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions in strengthening the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model in the digital context, as well as practical contributions for digital marketers, such as helping brands design TikTok content that increases brand awareness and purchase intention on platforms such as TikTok Shop. This study is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 2020), which explains that an individual's behavioral intention is influenced by beliefs, attitudes, and social norms. In the context of social media such as TikTok, this theory is relevant for understanding how e-WOM shapes consumer perceptions and purchase intentions through brand awareness and brand trust.

Positive information from e-WOM increases brand awareness because it expands consumer exposure and recognition of the brand (Cheung et al., 2020; Hanaysha, 2022). This awareness then strengthens brand trust, because familiar brands tend to be considered more credible and consistent (Hwang & Zhang, 2022; Zhu et al., 2022). Furthermore, brand trust reduces risk perception and increases consumer confidence to buy, thereby encouraging purchase intention (Chen et al., 2023; López & Sicilia, 2021). Thus, this research model describes the flow: e-WOM → Brand Awareness → Purchase Intention, which is consistent with the TPB structure where social communication shapes beliefs, fosters positive attitudes toward brands, and ultimately generates purchase intent. Main hypotheses: H1: e-WOM on TikTok has a positive effect on brand awareness; H2: brand awareness affects purchase intention.

2. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to analyze the relationship between AI attribute dimensions (e-WOM) and Purchase Intention, with Brand Awareness as a mediating variable. This method was chosen to obtain a clear picture and analyze the relationship between variables at a specific point in time (Capili, 2021). The research data used is cross-sectional data, which means that the data was

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collected at a specific point in time. This approach emphasizes the importance of obtaining a representative sample so that the research results can describe the population condition descriptively without manipulating variables (Capili, 2021).

The population of this study is TikTok social media users in Indonesia who have watched product promotion content through influencer videos. The sample was determined using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) at least 17 years old, (2) has a TikTok account, and (3) has seen or followed product promotion content from influencers on TikTok in the last three months. The sample size refers to the minimum guideline of 5–10 times the estimated parameter in the SEM model (Hair et al., 2014). This study uses nine indicators. Thus, the minimum sample requirement is 110 respondents.

The research instrument uses a Semantic Differential scale to measure respondents' attitudes toward the constructs under study. This scale allows respondents to rate statements on a range of two opposite adjectives, so that the data obtained can represent the intensity of attitudes and perceptions more accurately (Mcleod, 2023). The data were analyzed using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) with the help of the AMOS application. The CB-SEM technique was chosen because it provides a more comprehensive and in-depth model analysis (Hair et al., 2025).



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Research Result, 2025

3. Results and Discussion

This study successfully collected information from 110 TikTok users who met all the inclusion criteria relevant to the study's focus on electronic word of mouth and brand awareness. All participants self-reported that they were at least 18 years old, were TikTok users, and had made at least one purchase influenced by TikTok content or recommendations.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Attribute	Total	
Gender	Male	41	37.3
	Female	69	62.7
Age	Gen Z	68	61.8
	Millennials	36	32.7
	Generation X	6	5.5
Social Background	Students	55	50.0
	Employees	43	39.1

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Characteristic	Attribute	Total
	Entrepreneurs	12 10.9

Source: Research Results, 2025

According to the data in Table 1, the majority of respondents in this study were women, comprising 62.7%, while men accounted for 37.3%. These findings indicate that women are more likely to engage in online shopping and interactions on e-commerce platforms. In terms of age, most respondents were from Generation Z (61.8%), followed by Millennials (32.7%) and Generation X (5.5%). This composition illustrates that younger age groups are more dominant in digital consumption activities, given their high ability to adapt to technology and their responsiveness to social media marketing trends.

In a social context, the majority of questionnaire respondents were students (50.0%), followed by employees (39.1%), and then entrepreneurs (10.9%). For employees and entrepreneurs, filling out the questionnaire was certainly done outside of working hours and in addition to managing their daily schedules. This indicates that the questionnaire respondents are still within the productive age range and are economically active. These characteristics represent the young and educated segment of the online shopping ecosystem in Indonesia, particularly in online shopping that interacts with social media and entertainment.

Before testing the relationship between variables in the structural model, validity and reliability tests were first conducted on all indicators used. These tests aimed to ensure that each statement item was truly capable of measuring the intended construct consistently and accurately.

Based on the results shown in Table 2, all indicators in this study meet the required criteria, with a loading factor value above 0.70, indicating that each statement has good representational power for the construct being measured.

Table 2. Meansuring, Loading Factor, CR, and VE

No	Question Statement	Construct	Indicator	Loading Factor	CR	VE
1	I believe that the opinions shared by other TikTok users can be considered when making a purchase decision.	e-WOM	WOM1	0.818	0.736	0.700
2	Product reviews on TikTok provide relevant details that help me make purchasing decisions.		WOM2	0.891		
3	Product reviews on TikTok are useful in determining whether a product suits my needs.		WOM3	0.794		
4	I can quickly recognize the logo or symbol of brands that are frequently discussed on TikTok.	Brand Awareness	BA1	0.858	0.759	0.815
5	I am familiar with the characteristics of products from brands I often see on TikTok.		BA2	0.820		

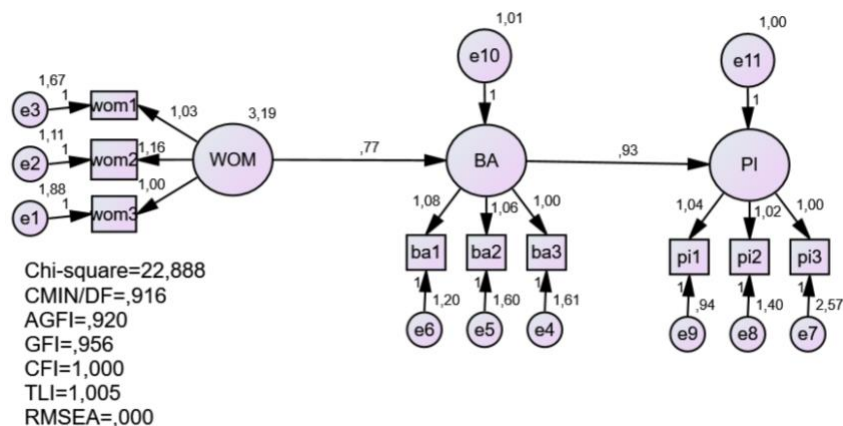
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No	Question Statement	Construct	Indicator	Loading Factor	CR	VE
6	I often pay attention to brands that appear repeatedly on my TikTok feed.	Purchase Intention	BA2	8.01	0.725	0.689
7	I consider purchasing products that are recommended on TikTok.		PI1	0.894		
8	After watching product reviews on TikTok, I plan to buy the product in the future.		PI2	0.849		
9	I am likely to purchase products recommended by influencers or other TikTok users I trust.		PI3	0.758		

Source: Research Result, 2025

The Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) construct has a loading factor value between 0.794 and 0.891 with a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.736 and a Variance Extracted (VE) of 0.700. These values prove that trust in TikTok user opinions and the benefits of product reviews are strong indicators in explaining consumer electronic communication behavior. Meanwhile, the Brand Awareness construct also shows good results, with the highest loading factor of 0.858, CR of 0.759, and VE of 0.815, indicating that consumers have a high level of brand awareness of products that frequently appear and are discussed on TikTok. The Purchase Intention construct shows a loading factor value between 0.758 and 0.894, with a CR of 0.752 and a VE of 0.689. This indicates that each indicator, such as purchase intention and product purchase plans after viewing reviews, is able to describe purchase intention behavior in a valid and reliable manner.

With all these criteria met, it can be concluded that the measurement model in this study is valid and reliable. Therefore, this model is suitable to proceed to the structural model analysis stage for hypothesis testing. With these results, all constructs are declared to meet the criteria for good validity and reliability, so that they can be continued to the next stage, namely testing the feasibility of the model to assess the extent to which the theoretical model structure is in accordance with empirical data.



Source: Research Result, 2025

Figure 2. Research Path Diagram

Table 3. Model Fit Test Results (Goodness of Fit)

<i>Goodness of Fit</i>	Analysis Results	Cut-off Value	Model Evaluation
<i>Chi-Square</i>	22.888	Expected to be small	Marginal Fit
CMIN/DF	0.916	< 2.0	Good Fit
AGFI	0.920	> 0.90	Good Fit
GFI	0.956	> 0.90	Good Fit
TLI	1.005	> 0.95	Good Fit
CFI	1.000	> 0.95	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.000	< 0.80	Good Fit

Source: Research Future, 2025

After the instrument was declared valid and reliable, the next step was to conduct a model suitability test or Goodness of Fit to assess the extent to which the research model was consistent with the data collected. Based on the results in Table 3, this research model shows an excellent level of fit. The Chi-Square value of 22.888 is relatively small and indicates minimal differences between the observed data and the theoretical model. The CMIN/DF ratio of 0.916 is well below the threshold of 2.0, indicating that this model has an excellent structural fit. In addition, feasibility indices such as AGFI (0.920), GFI (0.956), TLI (1.005), and CFI (1.000) all exceed the recommended threshold values (>0.90–0.95), which means that the model is able to explain the relationship between variables with a high degree of accuracy. The RMSEA value of 0.000 also indicates that the model is free from significant measurement errors. These results confirm that the conceptual model proposed in this study is empirically classified as a good fit, making it suitable for use in the hypothesis testing stage.

This strong model validity test provides the basis for proceeding to the next stage, which is to test the relationship between latent variables in the structural model to prove the proposed hypothesis.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Influence Relationship	Estimate	C.R	P	Decision
<i>Brand Awareness <--- WOM</i>	0.766	7,355	0.00	Accepted
<i>Purchase Intention <--- Brand Awareness</i>	0.927	7,365	0.00	Accepted

Source: Research Results, 2025

Based on the results of the structural model analysis presented in Table 4, all hypotheses in this study were accepted. The relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth and Brand Awareness showed an estimate value of 0.766 with a p-value of 0.000, which means it has a positive and significant effect. This result shows that the more consumers are exposed to opinions, reviews, and product recommendations on TikTok, the higher their level of awareness of a brand. Repeated exposure to information through

other users' content plays an important role in building brand recognition and strengthening consumer memory of certain products.

Furthermore, the relationship between Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention also shows significant results with an estimate of 0.927 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that brand awareness has a strong direct influence on purchase intention. When consumers feel familiar with and trust a brand that often appears on TikTok, they tend to have greater confidence in purchasing that product in the future. These results are in line with consumer behavior theory, which asserts that brand awareness is the first step in building trust and purchasing decisions.

The findings of this study make an important contribution to the development of consumer behavior theory and digital marketing communication. First, these results reinforce the understanding that e-WOM on short video platforms such as TikTok is effective in shaping brand awareness, by expanding the application of Electronic Word of Mouth theory and brand knowledge in the context of entertainment-based algorithmic social media, which has previously been studied more extensively on text or image platforms. Second, this study confirms the role of brand awareness as a psychological bridge between digital communication and consumer decisions. By demonstrating its strong influence on purchase intention, these findings empirically support the Hierarchy of Effects model, which explains that consumers must recognize and remember a brand before showing purchase intention. This enriches the literature by positioning TikTok as an effective space for shaping these cognitive stages, especially among the younger generation. Third, these results expand the relevance of consumer behavior theory in Southeast Asian collectivist cultures. Because collectivist societies are highly influenced by social opinion, this study shows that e-WOM from TikTok users has high social legitimacy in influencing brand perception, thereby confirming the role of digital social norms in the consumer journey from information exposure to purchase intention formation.

From a practical perspective, these findings provide strategic guidelines for marketers, business people, and brand managers to maximize TikTok as a marketing channel. First, because e-WOM significantly increases brand awareness, companies should encourage organic conversations through challenge campaigns, user review programs, and collaborations with micro-influencers. This strategy creates a more authentic and trustworthy impression, as exemplified by viral campaigns that involve ordinary users sharing their product experiences. Second, since brand awareness directly influences purchase intention, brands need to ensure that their marketing messages on TikTok are consistent, memorable, and frequently appear on the For You Page. Optimize visual elements such as logos, colors, packaging, and slogans to strengthen consumer memory through repeated exposure. Third, given that TikTok's dominant audience (Gen Z and young users) is responsive to social recommendations, companies should design communications that prioritize authenticity, relevance, and emotional value not direct promotion. Use storytelling, informative-entertaining short videos, and viral trends to attract attention and increase purchase opportunities.

Overall, these theoretical and managerial implications suggest that this research not only contributes empirically to the literature but also provides practical guidance for

optimizing TikTok as an effective e-WOM marketing platform, particularly in the context of the Southeast Asian market.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The above results show that this research model is able to explain the relationship between variables well. Electronic Word of Mouth has been proven to play an important role in increasing Brand Awareness, which ultimately drives Purchase Intention. This mechanism illustrates how social interaction and information exchange on TikTok not only influence consumers' perceptions of a brand, but also shape purchasing decisions through cognitive and affective processes.

These findings confirm that communication between users on social media functions as the main stimulus in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, where shared opinions and reviews (stimulus) influence brand awareness (organism), which then generates purchase intention (response). Thus, this study empirically proves that e-WOM-based marketing strategies on platforms such as TikTok have a real impact on consumer behavior, particularly in building brand awareness and encouraging purchase intent.

Based on the results of this study, several things can be used as guidelines for future research. First, it is recommended to add other variables such as trust, perceived value, or customer engagement to enrich the understanding of the psychological factors that influence consumer purchase intent after being exposed to reviews on social media. Second, future research can broaden the context by comparing various digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or Shopee Live, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the differences in consumer behavior on each medium. In addition, the use of a longitudinal design will provide a better understanding of changes in consumer behavior over time compared to the cross-sectional approach currently used. Third, future research could involve respondents with more diverse backgrounds in terms of age, occupation, and region to examine the influence of demographic characteristics on perceptions and purchase intentions. Finally, the use of a mixed methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews would enrich the findings and provide a deeper understanding of how reviews and social interactions on TikTok shape consumer purchasing decisions.

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