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The Influence of Instagram and Tiktok on E-Commerce Purchase Decisions: Consumer Behavior Analysis Using SEM-PLS

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Consumer Behavior, E-WOM, Instagram, Purchase Decision, SEM-PLS, Social Media, TikTok, Trust

ABSTRACT
Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have significantly transformed how consumers interact with products and make purchasing decisions. This study aims to analyze the influence of social media usage and electronic word of mouth (*e-WOM*) on purchase decisions, with trust and consumer behavior serving as mediating variables. A quantitative, explanatory research design was employed. Data were collected from 164 respondents using purposive sampling and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (*SEM–PLS*). The results show that social media usage has a significant effect on consumer behavior and directly influences purchase decisions. Meanwhile, *e-WOM* does not have a direct effect on purchase decisions but contributes significantly through the mediating roles of trust and consumer behavior. Trust plays an essential role in linking *e-WOM* to consumer behavioral responses. Among all the tested relationships, consumer behavior emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase decisions. These findings emphasize the importance of digital marketing strategies that foster trust and strengthen behavioral engagement. The study also reinforces the theoretical relevance of the *Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R)* and *Uses and Gratification (U&G)* models in the context of social commerce. Future studies are encouraged to explore additional mediating factors such as emotional engagement or platform-specific characteristics to improve the model's predictive strength.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly changed consumers' lifestyles and purchasing behaviors, especially in the context of social media engagement (Cao et al., 2021). Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have evolved from mere entertainment tools to strategic marketing channels that influence consumer perception, behavior patterns, and brand trust (El Gozmir et al., 2024; Bulele & Wibowo, 2020; Suprianto & Hajar, 2024). These platforms not only allow for the spread of promotions but also facilitate interactions between users, user testimonials, and real-time feedback—all of which contribute to shaping consumer evaluations in the *e-commerce* environment. As online shopping becomes more prevalent among Generation Z and millennials, understanding how digital interactions shape purchase intent is becoming increasingly important for businesses looking to maintain competitiveness in the digital marketplace. Notably, excessive engagement with short video platforms like TikTok has been linked to the emergence of compulsive consumption patterns, especially among younger users (Tamonob et al., 2023).

Several studies have highlighted the impact of social media on consumer behavior. *Regina* (2024) found that Gen Z consumers tend to prioritize pricing, accessibility of product information, and digital promotions when making purchasing decisions (Regina, 2024). *Nugroho* emphasized that pricing and promotion strategies significantly increase consumer engagement on platforms like TikTok Shop (Nugroho, n.d.), while *Raghil* and *Riofita* (2024) note that social media interactions, especially through influencer endorsements, build brand trust and stimulate both impulsive and deliberate buying behavior (Raghil and Riofita, 2024). In line with this, *Wibisono* (2024) revealed that marketing strategies implemented through Instagram substantially shape consumer buying interest (Wibisono, 2024). *Tani* and *Tedy* (2023) also observed that influencer-based marketing on TikTok and Instagram plays an important role in shaping purchasing decisions among Gen Z consumers, particularly in the lifestyle and food categories (Sabilah Nurul Tani & Ardiansyah Tedy, 2023).

Although previous research has explored the influence of social media on *e-commerce*, understanding of the combined effects of social media use, electronic word-of-mouth (*E-WOM*), trust, and consumer behavior on purchasing decisions in an integrated structural model is still limited. Furthermore, many of these studies rely on qualitative insights or examine user behavior separately without including psychological constructs such as consumer trust and behavior as mediating variables. To overcome these limitations, this study adopts a quantitative approach based on the *Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR)* model and the Theory of *Use and Gratification*. By analyzing how TikTok and Instagram affect consumer trust and behavioral outcomes in Indonesia's *e-commerce* landscape, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of digital consumers. These findings are expected to provide practical guidance for marketers seeking to strengthen engagement and build consumer trust across social media platforms.

The development of digital technology has changed the way consumers interact with brands, especially through social media. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are no longer just spaces for social networking; they now function as influential marketing tools that are able to shape consumer purchasing attitudes and behaviors. Consumers, especially younger generations, are actively engaged with content such as reviews, testimonials, and product demonstrations—all of which contribute to forming trust and behavioral responses (Hertiningsih et al., 2022). The platforms enable two-way communication that encourages user engagement and emotional bonding, which in turn increases the perception of authenticity and trust in an influencer or brand (Alkan and Ulas, 2023).

Electronic word-of-mouth (*E-WOM*) promotion plays an important role in this ecosystem. In contrast to traditional advertising, *E-WOM* emerges organically from user experience and is considered more credible and less biased (Ismagilova et al., 2019; Litvin et al., 2008). Several studies have confirmed that consumers rely heavily on peer opinions, influencer recommendations, and user-generated content in evaluating product quality and trustworthiness (Wang et al., 2013). *E-WOM* not only influences attitude formation, but also contributes directly and indirectly to purchasing decisions by reinforcing beliefs and behavioral intentions (Camelia & Tjokrosaputro, 2024; Kristina & Sugiarto, 2020). In the digital commerce

environment, this relationship is particularly evident when consumers navigate a highly competitive and rapidly changing product ecosystem.

Furthermore, social media interactions trigger cognitive and emotional responses that influence decision-making. TikTok and Instagram, for example, blend entertainment with information in a format that encourages immersion and impulsivity. Algorithm-based feeds expose users to persuasive content at high frequency, which contributes to impulsive and emotional buying behavior (Djawa and Rahman, 2023). Visual storytelling, short-form videos, and interactive features such as likes and comments also increase consumer engagement and trust by simulating peer support and social proof (Afandi et al., 2021). These characteristics make social media and *E-WOM* important variables in understanding how digital consumer behavior develops in the *e-commerce* landscape.

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is based on the *Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR)* model, which states that external stimuli can influence internal psychological conditions, ultimately leading to behavioral outcomes. In the context of this study, stimulus refers to content exposure on social media platforms and *E-WOM* interactions. The organism component includes consumer beliefs and behaviors, while the response reflects the final decision to make a purchase (Adiawaty et al., 2022).

The *SOR* model has been widely used in marketing studies and consumer behavior to explain how environmental cues affect psychological and behavioral responses (Armawan et al., 2022). By applying this model, this study aims to clarify the mediating role of consumer trust and behavior in translating digital stimulus into purchasing decisions (Kexin & Teo, 2023). In addition, the Theory of *Use and Gratification (U&G)* complements the *SOR* model by emphasizing user motivation. *U&G* states that individuals actively choose media based on their needs and desires (Krasonikolakis, 2022). In this study, consumers used TikTok and Instagram not only for entertainment, but also to search for product-related information, assess social proof, and engage with content that satisfies their personal or social needs (Adnans et al., n.d.). This perspective helps explain why certain media experiences are more likely to lead to the formation of trust and purchasing behavior.

METHOD

Participants and Sampling

This study uses a quantitative explanatory design that aims to test the causal relationship between variables in a structured model (Memon et al., 2025). This approach is well suited to examine the direct and mediated effects involving latent constructs such as social media use, word-of-mouth promotion (*E-WOM*), trust, consumer behavior, and purchasing decisions. This design aligns with quantitative methods commonly used to analyze behavioral outcomes and psychological constructs in the study of digital commerce (Veronica et al., 2022).

To ensure the sample meets the purpose of the study, the *purposive sampling* technique is used. This method allows researchers to deliberately select respondents based on specific inclusion criteria: active users of TikTok or Instagram and individuals who have recently made online purchases influenced by content on those platforms. *Purposive sampling* is considered appropriate when the study targets specific user characteristics related to media exposure and online behavior (Asrulla et al., 2023).

Data collection was carried out in early 2025 through online surveys distributed via WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. The survey targeted users aged 18 to 40 years in various regions of Indonesia. A total of 164 valid responses were obtained. Most of the participants came from the Generation Z and millennial age groups, used social media daily, and had regular experience in *e-commerce* transactions.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable Demographics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	112	68,3%
	Woman	52	31,7%
Age Group	≤ 20 years old	27	16,5%
	21–25 years old	40	24,4%
	26–30 years	30	18,3%
	31–35 years old	15	9,1%
	36–40 years old	47	28,7%
	> 40 years old	5	3,0%
Frequency of Social Media Use	Everyday	140	85,37%
	3–6 times/week	18	11,59%
	1–2 times/week	5	3,05%
Frequency of Online Shopping	1–2 times/month	84	51,83%
	3–5 times/month	48	29,27%
	>5 times/month	20	12,20%
	Rare (promo only)	11	6,71%

The research instrument consisted of a structured online questionnaire designed to measure five main constructs: social media use, *E-WOM*, trust, consumer behavior, and purchasing decisions. Each variable was measured using reflective indicators, with items adapted from instruments validated in previous studies. Responses were collected using a five-point *Likert* scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, trials were conducted on a small group of respondents. Feedback was used to refine ambiguous or unclear items. The final version of the questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms and reached the intended participants through social media promotions and live sharing. The items were reviewed by academic advisors to ensure alignment of the content with the research objectives.

Structural Equation Modeling

Data analysis used the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (*PLS-SEM*) technique with SmartPLS 4 software. This method is suitable for predictive analysis and theoretical testing in models involving multiple latent constructs and complex mediation pathways. *PLS-SEM* is particularly suitable for studies with small sample sizes and abnormally distributed data (Ningsih et al., 2022).

The analysis process consists of two main stages. First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated for internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability), convergent validity (via Average Variance Extracted or *AVE*), and discriminant validity using HTMT ratios and the Fornell–Larcker criteria (Hair et al., 2021). Second, the structural model (inner model) was assessed by examining the path coefficient, significance level (*p*-value), and determination coefficient (R^2) of the endogenous construct. The bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS was used to determine the statistical significance of each hypothesized relationship.

The entire research procedure followed a logical sequence: instrument development → expert review and online distribution → trials → data filtering → *PLS-SEM* analysis. This process ensures methodological rigor and produces valid and reliable results, aligned with the theoretical framework of the research.

Variable Measurement

The study measured five key latent variables: social media use, electronic word of mouth (*E-WOM*), trust, consumer behavior, and purchasing decisions. Each variable was measured using reflective indicators adapted from previous research (Putri et al., 2024; Atmaja et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2022), and reinforced with theoretical constructs from Camelia & Tjokrosaputro (2024) and Kristina & Sugiarto (2020).

All responses were recorded using a five-point *Likert* scale, with a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The number of indicators and their sources are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement Variables and Sources

NOT	Variable	Number of Indicators	Item Number	Reference
1	Social Media Use	4	1–4	(Putri & Alfian, 2024)
2	E-WOM	4	5–8	(Atmaja et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2022)
3	Trust	3	9–11	Putri et al. (2024); Wijaya et al. (2022); Camelia & Tjokrosaputro (2024)
4	Consumer Behavior	4	12–15	Putri et al. (2024)
5	Purchase Decision	5	16–20	Putri et al. (2024); Atmaja et al. (2022); Kristina & Sugiarto (2020)

The selected indicators reflect relevant behavioral and psychological dimensions and are aligned with the research objectives. These measurement items serve as the basis for evaluating the reliability and validity of the construct during the PLS-SEM analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Evaluation of Measurement Models

The evaluation of the measurement model is carried out through several stages, including indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, in accordance with the SEM-PLS approach. All indicator loads exceed the threshold value of 0.70, which confirms the sufficient reliability of the indicator for each construct.

Table 3. External Load Indicator

Build	Indicator	Loading Factor
Social Media (X1)	X1.1	0,866
	X1.2	0,870
	X1.3	0,864
E-WOM (X2)	X2.1	0,870
	X2.2	0,901
	X2.3	0,871
Trust (X3)	X3.1	0,870
	X3.2	0,876
	X3.3	0,888

Build	Indicator	Loading Factor
Behavior (Z)	Z1	0,872
	Z2	0,883
	Z3	0,878
Purchase Decision (Y)	Year 1	0,882
	Year 2	0,896
	Y3	0,890

All indicators have charge values above 0.70, which indicates a strong convergence between the observed variables and their respective constructs. Furthermore, convergent validity and internal consistency were evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR). The AVE value of all constructs is above 0.50, and the CR value is above 0.70, as presented below.

Table 4. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Build	ROAD	Composite Reliability
Social Media (X1)	0,751	0,897
E-WOM (X2)	0,785	0,913
Trust (X3)	0,774	0,912
Behavior (Z)	0,768	0,910
Purchase Decision (Y)	0,796	0,918

These results meet the recommended thresholds, supporting the reliability and convergent validity of all constructs in the model. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criteria and the HTMT ratio. The results of the Fornell–Larcker criterion show that the square root of AVE of each construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs.

Table 5. Discriminatory Validity – Fornell–Larcker Criteria

	X1	X2	X3	With	Kamu
Social Media (X1)	0,867				
E-WOM (X2)	0,655	0,886			
Trust (X3)	0.621	0,729	0,880		
Behavior (Z)	0,653	0,650	0,698	0,876	
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.640	0,728	0,780	0.730	0,892

Table 6. Discriminant Validity – HTMT Ratio

	X1	X2	X3	With	Kamu
Social Media (X1)		0,744	0,733	0,757	0,734
E-WOM (X2)			0.820	0,737	0,798
Trust (X3)				0,791	0,852
Behavior (Z)					0,832
Purchase Decision (Y)					

According to Henseler et al. (2015), an HTMT value below 0.85 indicates a satisfactory discriminant validity. Therefore, all constructs in this study meet the standards of convergent and discriminant validity. (Henseler et al., 2015)With these findings, the measurement model is considered valid and reliable, thus allowing further evaluation of the structural model in the next section.

Structural Model Evaluation

Structural models are evaluated to assess the significance and strength of relationships between latent variables. This evaluation includes direct and indirect influences in the hypothetical model. The complete structural model generated using SmartPLS is presented in Figure 1.

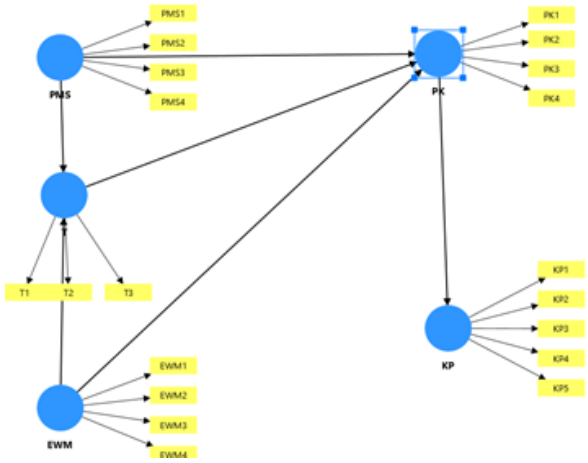

Figure 1. Final Structural Model Results (SEM-PLS)

The model consists of five constructs: Social Media Usage, Electronic Word-of-Mouth Communication (E-WOM), Trust, Consumer Behavior, and Purchase Decisions. Two exogenous constructs (Social Media and E-WOM) influence endogenous variables (Purchase Decisions), either directly or indirectly through Consumer Trust and Behavior as mediators. To determine the explanatory power of the model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is checked. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable endogenous	R^2	Interprets
Trust	0,574	Keep
Consumer Behavior	0,500	Keep
Purchase Decision	0,385	Weak to moderate

These results show that the model explains 57.4% of the Trust variance, the 50% Consumer Behavior variance, and the 38.5% Purchase Decision variance. These values show a moderate level of explainability for most endogenous constructs.

Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS to determine the statistical significance of the path coefficient. Evaluation used a standard threshold of $t \geq 1.96$ and $p \leq 0.05$. The results of the direct effect test are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Hypothesis Test Results (Direct Influence)

Hypothesis	Relation	Line Coefficient (β)	Statistics T	P value	Result
H1	Social Media → Consumer Behavior	0.217	3.079	0,002	Supported
H2	E-WOM → Trust	0.341	6.166	0.000	Supported
H3	Consumer Behavior → Purchase Decisions	0,593	11.823	0.000	Supported
H4	Social Media → Purchase Decisions	0,186	3.079	0.000	Supported
H5	E-WOM → Purchase Decision	0.103	1.086	0,278	Not Supported

The findings show that four out of five direct relationships are statistically significant. Notably, E-WOM does not directly affect the Purchase Decision, although it does have an indirect impact. In addition to direct influence, indirect (mediated) relationships were also tested to assess the role of Consumer Trust and Behavior as mediators. The results are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Hypothesis Test Results (Indirect Influence)

Hypothesis	Mediation Relationship	Statistics T	P value	Result
H6	E-WOM → Trust → Purchase Decision	2.838	0,005	Supported
H7	Social Media → Consumer Behavior → Purchase Decisions	5.189	0.000	Supported
H8	E-WOM → Consumer Trust → Behavior	3.095	0,002	Supported

These results confirm the mediating role of Consumer Trust and Behavior. Although the direct path from the E-WOM to the Purchase Decision is not supported, its influence is effectively channeled through the indirect path, thus strengthening the structural integrity of the model.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of this study reveals important insights into how digital stimuli, particularly the use of social media and electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) promotions, influences purchasing decisions, both directly and through the mediating role of consumer trust and behavior. Each hypothesis is discussed based on previous studies and relevant theories, in particular the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework and the Theory of Use and Gratification (U&G).

H1: Social Media → Consumer Behavior

This hypothesis is supported, suggesting that content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram significantly shapes consumer behavior. Social media content, especially visual and algorithm-based content, serves as a stimulus that triggers internal psychological responses such as impulsivity or emotional desire. This is in line with the findings of Suprianto and Hajar, who argue that social media interactions change consumption patterns by shaping preferences and emotional responses. (Suprianto & Hajar, 2024).

H2: E-WOM → Trust

Significant results support that E-WOM contributes to consumer confidence. Credible reviews, recommendations, and testimonials shared online help reduce consumer uncertainty. This supports the Trust Transfer Theory, which describes how consumers extend trust from

trusted sources to lesser-known sellers or platforms. Camelia & Tjokrosaputro also highlighted trust as an important intermediary between E-WOM and consumer actions. (Camelia & Tjokrosaputro, 2024).

H3: Consumer Behavior → Purchase Decision

The strongest direct relationship is found here, with a path coefficient of 0.593. This suggests that consumers' internal processes such as impulsivity, lifestyle orientation, and emotional propensity directly influence their purchasing decisions. These findings support the Consumer Decision-Making Theory, which emphasizes that purchasing behavior results from rational and affective processes, as consumers move from desires to decisions.

H4: Social Media → Purchase Decisions

The use of social media also has a direct influence on purchasing decisions. This is in line with research by Ong et al. who found that online direct selling increases consumer urgency and encourages direct purchases through interactive exposure. Interactive promotional tools, such as live broadcasts or influencer reviews, shorten the decision-making cycle. (Ong et al., 2024).

H5: E-WOM → Purchase Decision

Contrary to expectations, this relationship is not statistically significant. Although E-WOM builds trust, it does not directly trigger purchases. This supports the findings of Hamid et al. who stated that the effects of E-WOM are often indirect, especially when the platform lacks transactional features or when the reviews are less personalized. (Hamid et al., 2023).

H6: E-WOM → Trust → Purchase Decision

Although H5 is insignificant, the indirect pathway through trust is quite significant, which confirms trust as a mediator. Consumers rely on trusted information before acting, which reinforces the role of perceived credibility as a bridge to action.

H7: Social Media → Consumer Behavior → Purchasing Decisions

This pathway also shows strong significance, highlighting the behavioral impact of social media exposure. Through content that involves emotions and lifestyle aspirations, social media indirectly shapes the outcome of purchases.

H8: E-WOM → Consumer Trust → Behavior

This mediation path confirms that trust influences consumer behavior, especially in the digital environment. Trust reduces perceived risk, allowing consumers to adopt behaviors such as browsing, comparing, or even impulsive buying.

Synthesis and Theoretical Contributions. These findings reinforce the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model, in which social media and E-WOM act as stimulus, beliefs and behaviors as organism responses, and purchasing decisions as the final response. Further, the Theory of Use and Gratification explains why consumers interact with these platforms: for information, social validation, or entertainment. The process is not passive, but rather driven by conscious content selection, which then influences purchase intent.

Practical Implications For e-commerce marketers, this study highlights the importance of:

1. Create believable and emotionally engaging content
2. Leverage peer-generated reviews to build credibility
3. Prioritizing the consumer experience over just exposure

In short, digital influence is not linear. The indirect pathway through trust and behavior is stronger than the direct stimulus-response pathway. These insights are essential for designing a persuasive marketing strategy that goes beyond just visibility.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine how the use of social media and electronic word-of-mouth (*E-WOM*) influences consumer purchasing decisions, with consumer trust and behavior acting as mediating variables. Using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (*SEM–PLS*) approach, the findings show that social media content significantly influences consumer behavior and directly impacts purchasing decisions. Although *E-WOM* does not directly influence purchasing decisions, its effect is strongly mediated through trust and behavior, reaffirming the role of psychological and behavioral intermediaries in digital commerce. Among the hypotheses tested, seven out of eight were supported. The strongest predictor of a purchase decision is consumer behavior, followed by trust. These findings are consistent with the *Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR)* framework, which describes how external digital stimuli trigger internal evaluations that lead to purchasing actions. Additionally, *Uses and Gratification (U&G)* theory provides a basis for understanding why users interact with social platforms—to seek information, validation, or entertainment—which then shapes their beliefs and behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of research on digital marketing by highlighting the indirect pathways through which social media and *E-WOM* influence consumer decisions. In practical terms, the results suggest that marketers should prioritize building trust through reliable user-generated content and focus on shaping behavior through social media strategies that engage emotions. While the findings are robust, the study has limitations in terms of generalizability, as the sample is limited to TikTok and Instagram users in Indonesia. Further research should explore additional mediators, such as emotional engagement or platform usability, and test these models in the context of other cultures or platforms, including direct selling ecosystems or short video commerce.

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