

Influencer Marketing and Purchasing Decisions: The Mediating Role of E-WOM on TikTok

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Abstract

The increasingly fierce competition in the cosmetics industry, driven by the growing use of TikTok as a platform for information and shopping, has created an urgency to understand how digital marketing influences Gen-Z purchasing decisions in the modern marketing era. Influencer marketing is rapidly growing as a key strategy, but its effectiveness remains inconsistent and depends on the platform and audience context. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing on purchasing decisions and to examine the role of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as a mediating variable among TikTok Shop users in Pontianak City. The study used a quantitative method, administering a questionnaire to 123 Gen-Z female respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using SEM-AMOS and the Sobel Test to examine the mediating effect more comprehensively. The results indicate that influencer marketing significantly influences E-WOM and purchasing decisions. Additionally, E-WOM has been shown to influence purchasing decisions strongly. The Sobel Test confirms that E-WOM partially mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that although influencers can generate initial interest, positive reviews from other consumers are an important factor in converting that interest into confidence and actual purchasing behavior. This study implies that digital marketing strategies should integrate influencer collaboration with E-WOM reinforcement to increase the effectiveness of promotions on TikTok Shop.

Keywords: E-WOM; Gen-Z; Influencer Marketing; Purchase Decision; TikTok Shop.

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I. Introduction

In today's modern digital era, it is easier for people to obtain information and make purchasing decisions. To date, the cosmetic industry has grown by increasing people's awareness of their appearance and by promoting a lifestyle that follows trends. A study of the cosmetics industry in Indonesia found that the number of businesses increased from 913 in 2022 to 1,010 by mid-2023, an increase of around 21.9%. This reflects that competition in this industry is getting tougher. The rapid growth of social media, particularly TikTok, has been a driving force behind the cosmetics industry's growth. This platform is popular as a source of information, offering a variety of content, including cosmetic product reviews, which influence purchasing decisions. [Table 1](#) shows the countries with the largest TikTok audience as of July 2024 ([Rahmani et al., 2024](#)).

Table 1. TikTok Users in 2024

No	Country	Number of Users (in millions)
1	Indonesia	157.6
2	United States	120.5
3	Brazil	105.2
4	Mexico	77.54
5	Vietnam	65.64
6	Pakistan	62.05
7	Philippines	56.14

In the context of competition between companies, they must promote their products through various strategies. One widely used approach is electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), which can include the dissemination of consumer product reviews, both positive and negative, through digital media. These reviews play an essential role in shaping consumer perceptions, so companies need to build a strong image to encourage purchasing decisions. Positive E-WOM encourages people to make purchasing decisions more readily ([Yulindasari & Fikriyah, 2022](#)).

In practice, E-WOM is reinforced through a collaboration strategy with influencer marketing, which can reach audiences directly through digital media. Influencer marketing is also capable of driving product sales and influencing purchasing decisions ([Haikal et al., 2025](#)). However, empirical findings on the effectiveness of influencer marketing remain ambiguous and inconsistent. On the one hand, several studies prove its significant influence on purchasing decisions ([Seruni et al., 2024](#)). On the other hand, other studies state that influencer marketing is often only effective in building brand awareness without being able to drive real purchase conversions, so that its influence on purchasing decisions becomes insignificant or weak ([Purnomo, 2023](#); [Uyuan, 2022](#)).

This inconsistency suggests that the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions may not be direct but rather mediated by psychological and social mechanisms. Research by [Purnomo \(2023\)](#) suggests that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is a key variable that can explain the complexity of this relationship. E-WOM is hypothesized to bridge the gap between the awareness created by influencers and purchasing actions by providing social proof. Furthermore, this research gap becomes increasingly relevant in the context of the TikTok Shop platform and the Gen-Z demographic in Indonesia, particularly in the Pontianak region. Additionally, the behavior of Gen-Z, as digital natives highly influenced by trends and peer reviews in urban areas such as Pontianak, has not been widely explored. Thus, this study not only addresses the inconsistency of previous findings but also provides a new contextual perspective in digital marketing literature.

Influencer marketers play an essential role in encouraging E-WOM on various platforms. When manufacturers collaborate with influencers, the content produced tends to attract their followers' attention because these influencers are trusted and have an emotional connection with them. When influencers convey their beliefs to their followers through electronic media, positive reviews can increase their likelihood of buying the product ([Orlando & Fajarini, 2024](#)). The strong link between influencer marketing and E-WOM, with the context of positive E-WOM, has a profound impact on the dissemination of product information that can increase purchasing decisions ([Istiqomah et al., 2025](#); [Riama, 2021](#)). Therefore, the combination of influencer marketing and E-WOM strategies is a key factor in increasing the effective-

ness of promotions and consumer purchasing decisions in digital media. It is concluded that Influencer Marketing influences E-WOM.

Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is a means of communication between consumers via the internet that allows anyone to access positive or negative comments or reviews on a product. When the reviews convey a positive impression, it can trigger a purchase decision for the E-WOM audience (Fitri, 2024; Mudarifah, 2020; Padmawati & Suasana, 2020). Consumers need positive product recommendations when making decisions because there are more and more similar products offering the same benefits on the market. When confused about which brand to buy, prospective buyers will compare products based on the number of positive reviews. Positive reviews are considered proof of user testimonials, so that potential buyers have an idea of the quality of the product (Fitri, 2024). It can be concluded that E-WOM influences purchasing decisions.

Influencer marketing is a form of promotion that relies on the influence of public figures on social media to introduce products to their followers. The use of influencer marketing in product promotion in digital media has been proven to have a positive influence on product purchasing decisions (Ichtiar et al., 2025). Because influencer marketing is considered trustworthy, this strategy can foster a more personal relationship with the audience, thereby increasing consumer confidence in the products offered. Interesting and creative content created through influencer marketing can also trigger spontaneous purchases without much prior consideration. Therefore, influencer marketing not only shapes positive perceptions but also encourages consumers to make direct purchases on digital media. It is concluded that Influencer Marketing influences purchasing decisions.

Promotions carried out by influencers often succeed in attracting the audience's attention because the content is interesting. However, before actually purchasing a product, consumers usually want to see testimonials from other users who have tried it. In this case, E-WOM plays an important role as a more honest and trustworthy source of information, making digital media a place to share product reviews and testimonials. Positive reviews from previous users' experiences are considered helpful to potential buyers in understanding the product's quality, thereby reinforcing the promotion carried out by influencers. In other words, even though promotions from influencer marketing have a significant impact, the final decision of consumers to buy depends on the testimonials of other users (Darmawan & Setiawan, 2024; Ismail et al., 2025). Therefore, positive testimonials and trusted influencer marketing that are emotionally connected to the audience both strengthen consumers' decisions to purchase products (Alfajri & Nasution, 2025). It was concluded that E-WOM can mediate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions.

II. Method

This study uses a quantitative, associative approach to examine the role of E-WOM in mediating influencer marketing and purchasing decisions among Gen-Z in Pontianak. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to Gen-Z teenage girls who actively shop on TikTok Shop. Purposive sampling was used to ensure respondents had relevant experience with the platform. The research population consisted of all Gen-Z females aged 18 to 28 years old residing in Pontianak City who were TikTok users, although the exact number was unknown. The sample size was determined using strata quota sampling, with 20 respondents per sub-district in Pontianak City: South Pontianak, North Pontianak, East Pontianak, West Pontianak, and Southeast Pontianak. The sampling method used was accidental sampling. Data processing methods used a Rating Scale and the AMOS tool. The research's conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

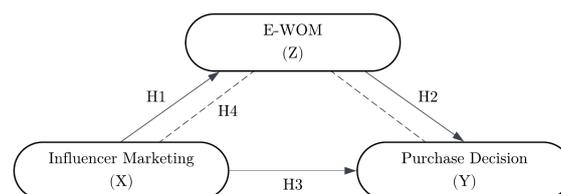


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

H1 : Influencer Marketing affects E-WOM

H2 : E-WOM influences purchasing decisions

H3 : Influencer Marketing affects purchasing decisions

H4 : E-WOM can mediate influencer marketing on purchasing decisions

Table 2 presents a matrix of operational definitions of variables, listing each variable's definition and the indicators used to measure it.

Table 2. Variables and Indicators

Research Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators	Sources
Influencer Marketing	Marketing through an influential person on social media, recommending products or services to their followers via promotional content they share.	1. Content appeal 2. Influencer image 3. Communication skills 4. Accuracy of Information	Ariesta et al. (2024)
E-WOM	A form of promotion that arises from a person's experience with a product or service, which is then shared with others through direct conversation, writing, or social media.	1. Review intensity 2. Review content 3. Ability to motivate purchases	Cahyani and Khuzaini (2022)
Purchase Decision	At the final stage of the selection process, consumers ultimately decide to purchase a product or service that they feel suits their needs.	1. Buying According to Needs 2. Considering product options 3. Confidence in quality 4. Repeat Purchases	Satria (2023)

III. Results and Discussion

1. Testing the Validity and Reliability of Endogenous Constructs

Validity testing is used to determine whether the data collected from the questionnaire are valid. Questionnaire data is considered valid if the Average Variance Extract (AVE) value exceeds 0.50 and the Construct Reliability (CR) exceeds 0.70. The table below shows the reliability calculation results (Table 3).

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Variance Extract of Endogenous Constructs

Construct	Influencer Marketing			Purchase Decision			E-WOM		
	Standard Loading	(Std. Loading) ²	Std. Error	Standard Loading	(Std. Loading) ²	Std. Error	Standard Loading	(Std. Loading) ²	Std. Error
IM1	0.825	0.681	0.319						
IM2	0.920	0.846	0.154						
IM3	0.809	0.654	0.346						
IM4	0.867	0.752	0.248						
KM1				0.875	0.766	0.234			
KM2				0.915	0.837	0.163			
KM3				0.882	0.778	0.222			

Construct	Influencer Marketing			Purchase Decision			E-WOM			
	Item	Standard Loading	(Std. Loading) ²	Std. Error	Standard Loading	(Std. Loading) ²	Std. Error	Standard Loading	(Std. Loading) ²	Std. Error
KM4					0.853	0.728	0.272			
EWOM1								0.841	0.707	0.293
EWOM2								0.83	0.689	0.311
EWOM3								0.846	0.716	0.284
$\sum \lambda$	3.421				3.525			2.517		
$\sum \varepsilon_j$	1.067				0.892			0.888		
$(\sum \lambda)^2$	2.933				3.108			2.112		
$(\sum \lambda)^2 + \sum \varepsilon_j$	11.703				12.426			6.335		
AVE	0.733				0.777			0.704		
CR	0.916				0.933			0.877		

From the results in Table 3 above, the validity of each research indicator can be assessed using the AVE (Average Variance Extraction) value, with a cutoff of 0.5. The table above shows that the AVE value for the variables influencer marketing, purchasing decisions, and e-WOM is above 0.5. Meanwhile, the CR (Construct Reliability) value has a cutoff value of 0.70. The table above shows that the CR value for the variables influencer marketing, purchasing decisions, and e-WOM is above 0.70.

2. Goodness of Fit Criteria Testing

This study has a sample size of 123, obtained from questionnaires, which meets the SEM requirements for 100-200 samples (Figure 2 and Table 4).

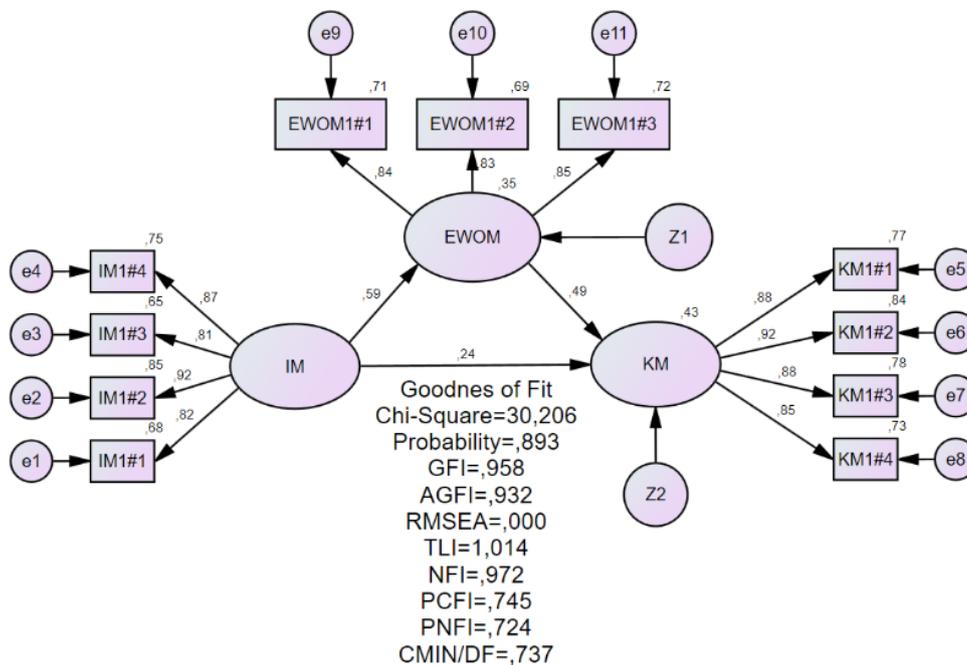


Figure 2. Results of the Path Model of the Role of E-WOM in Mediating Influencer Marketing on Purchasing Decisions

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Index Test Results

Goodness of Fit Index	Research Results	Cut-off Value	Model Study
GFI	0.958	≥ 0.90	FIT
AGFI	0.932	≥ 0.90	
RMSEA	0.000	≤ 0.08	
TLI	1.014	≥ 0.90	FIT
NFI	0.972	≥ 0.90	
PCFI	0.745	≥ 0.60	
PNFI	0.724	≥ 0.60	
CMIN/DF	0.737	≤ 2.00	

Based on the data in [Figure 2](#) and [Table 4](#), the GFI value of 0.958 meets the cut-off criterion of 0.90. The AGFI value of 0.932 is also appropriate, as it meets the 0.90 cut-off. The RMSEA value of 0.000 meets the 0.08 cut-off criterion. The TLI value of 1.014 meets the criteria for a cut-off value of 0.90. Furthermore, the NFI value of 0.972 is said to meet the criteria for a cut-off value of 0.90. Meanwhile, the PCFI value of 0.745 meets the cut-off criterion of 0.60. The PNFI value of 0.724 meets the criteria for a cut-off value of 0.60, and the CMIN/DF value of 0.737 meets the criteria for a cut-off value because it is below 2.00.

3. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing is a decision-making method based on data analysis. In statistics, a result is considered statistically significant if it is highly unlikely to be due to chance, within a predetermined probability threshold. The results of the hypothesis test are detailed in [Table 5](#).

Table 5. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	C.R.	Cut-off Value	P	Cut-off Value	Result
H1: Influencer Marketing affects E-WOM	6.143	≥ 1.96	***	≤ 0.05	Supported
H2: E-WOM influences purchasing decisions	4.358	≥ 1.96	0.02	≤ 0.05	Supported
H3: Influencer Marketing affects purchasing decisions	2.327	≥ 1.96	***	≤ 0.05	Supported

Based on the results of the data test in [Table 5](#), it shows a very significant positive effect of Influencer Marketing on E-WOM (C.R. = 6.143, $p < 0.001$), the existence of a significant relationship between influencer marketing and E-WOM in promoting products or services to consumers ([Harahap & Fionita, 2025](#); [Rahman et al., 2024](#)). In this study, Gen-Z users in Pontianak, who are highly digitally connected, are likely to consider content from relevant influencers as a credible and shareable source of information, thereby strengthening E-WOM. E-WOM significantly influences Purchase Decision (C.R. = 4.358, $p = 0.020$). For critical Gen-Z consumers, positive E-WOM serves as peer validation, making it a more trustworthy source of information than traditional advertising. Therefore, E-WOM is significant in strengthening consumer purchase decisions ([Hashifah & Nasution, 2024](#); [Wibowo et al., 2024](#)). The above data shows a significant direct effect of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Decisions (C.R. = 2.327, $p < 0.001$), meaning that influencer marketing is significant in purchase decisions ([Amalia, 2025](#); [Yasinta & Romauli Nainggolan, 2023](#)). The visual and engaging nature of TikTok content, combined with the selection of influencers targeting the Gen-Z demographic in Pontianak, may explain this strong direct effect, as it can create emotional appeal that triggers impulsive purchases.

4. Sobel Test

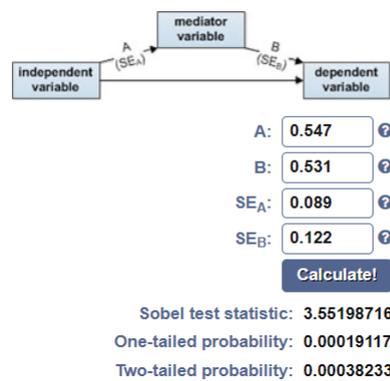


Figure 3. Sobel Test

The Sobel test was conducted to examine the mediating role of E-WOM (H4). The results show a t-statistic value of 3.55, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96. This proves that E-WOM acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Purchase Decisions. This finding is the main contribution of this study. It provides a mechanistic explanation of the relationship between influencer promotion and consumer behavior. Although Influencer Marketing is effective in attracting attention and generating interest (as shown by H1 and H3), it is the presence of positive E-WOM that significantly strengthens consumer trust and ultimately converts that interest into concrete purchasing decisions (Aini & Zagladi, 2025; Rosada & Anshori, 2025). In other words, influencers plant the seeds of desire, but E-WOM provides the necessary assurance for that desire to develop into a transaction.

Influencer Marketing Affects E-WOM

Influencer marketing has been shown to significantly impact electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) (C.R. = 6.143; $p < 0.001$). This is because influencer marketing strategies leverage influencers' credibility, trust, and close relationships with their audiences, encouraging followers to share experiences and recommendations online. Influencers act as authoritative figures or opinion leaders, so when they recommend a product or share positive content, audiences tend to share the message within their social networks, ultimately shaping and expanding digital conversations in the form of E-WOM (Maulidiyah & Handoko, 2024).

E-WOM Influences Purchasing Decisions

E-WOM has been shown to have a significant influence on purchasing decisions (C.R. = 4.358, $p = 0.020$), indicating that information and reviews shared by consumers online can shape consumer perceptions and decisions in purchasing a product. This is because E-WOM provides credible and relevant information from other consumers' experiences that can reduce uncertainty and increase potential buyers' trust in a product or brand, so they are more confident in making purchasing decisions (Firmansyah & Arif, 2024).

Influencer Marketing Affects Purchasing Decisions

Influencer marketing has been shown to significantly influence purchasing decisions (C.R. = 2.327; $p < 0.001$), indicating that interactions and promotions by influencers can influence consumers' decision-making to purchase a product. This influence arises because influencers are often viewed as credible and trustworthy figures by their audiences. Their recommendations provide social proof and help reduce consumer uncertainty in evaluating products, thereby increasing the likelihood of consumers making a purchase (Amalia, 2025; Yasinta & Romauli Nainggolan, 2023).

E-WOM Mediates Influencer Marketing towards Purchasing Decisions

The Sobel test was conducted to examine the mediating role of E-WOM variables in the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions. The test results showed a t-statistic value of 3.55, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96, thus proving that E-WOM significantly mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions partially, in other words, E-WOM also becomes an important connecting channel in influencing purchasing decisions through consumer information and recommendations spread online, which supports the reduction of consumer uncertainty and strengthens the effect of influencer marketing in the purchasing decision-making process.

IV. Conclusion

This study confirms a significant model, where electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) acts as a partial mediator in the influence of influencer marketing on Generation Z consumers' purchasing decisions on cosmetic products at TikTok Shop Pontianak, indicating that although influencer marketing has a direct influence on purchasing decisions, most of its impact is channeled indirectly through the formation of positive E-WOM. Theoretically, this finding makes an important contribution by explaining the inconsistency of previous research results by confirming the role of E-WOM as a connecting mechanism between influencer marketing and purchasing behavior, while enriching the digital marketing literature by showing that in the context of Generation Z and social commerce, the process from awareness to purchasing decisions is more accurately understood through the role of social proof in the form of E-WOM as a mediator. From a practical perspective, the results of this study suggest that managers and brands targeting Generation Z on platforms like TikTok Shop need to implement an integrated marketing strategy, focusing not only on influencer campaigns but also selectively selecting relevant and authentic influencers, activating E-WOM through post-purchase engagement strategies such as reviews or hashtag campaigns, and prioritizing E-WOM management by monitoring and showcasing user content and reviews as key factors in building trust and converting interest into purchases. Future research is recommended to test this model across different product categories and cultural contexts, and to explore additional mediating variables, such as brand trust.

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Declaration

I declare that this article is my own work and that it contains no plagiarism. All data, analysis, and interpretations presented in this article have been obtained and processed honestly and responsibly. All sources derived from the work of others have been acknowledged and cited in accordance with the provisions and ethics of scientific writing.

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