

## The Mediating Role of Trust in the Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and Sales Promotions on Purchase Decisions in Shopee E-Commerce among Urban Consumer

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**Abstract** — *Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and sales promotion are critical factors influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the digital age. While previous studies have identified the impact of these factors on Trust, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of their roles in the consumer decision-making process. This study explores the relationships between Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), Sales Promotion, Trust, and Purchase Decisions in e-commerce. Utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM) with data from online consumers, the research demonstrates that EWOM and Sales Promotion significantly impact Trust, significantly influencing Purchase Decisions. The findings confirm that all constructs exhibit high reliability and validity. The study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the mediating role of Trust between EWOM, Sales Promotion, and Purchase Decisions. From a policy perspective, ensuring transparency and authenticity in online reviews and sales promotions is crucial for maintaining consumer trust. E-commerce platforms like Shopee should enhance verification processes and leverage social media for effective promotional strategies. Businesses are advised to build Trust through high-quality products, excellent customer service, and transparent communication. This research reinforces the importance of EWOM and Sales Promotion in building consumer trust, which is essential for driving purchase decisions and achieving better market performance.*

**Keywords:** *Electronic Word of Mouth, Sales Promotion, Trust, Purchase Decisions, E-commerce, Structural Equation Modeling, Consumer Behavior, Online Reviews, Social Media Marketing*

**Abstrak** — *Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) dan promosi penjualan adalah faktor penting yang mempengaruhi perilaku konsumen, terutama di era digital saat ini. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya telah mengkaji dampak kedua faktor ini terhadap kepercayaan konsumen, masih dibutuhkan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai peran keduanya dalam proses pengambilan keputusan pembelian. Penelitian ini meneliti hubungan antara eWOM, promosi penjualan, kepercayaan, dan keputusan pembelian di e-commerce. Dengan menggunakan metode pemodelan persamaan struktural (SEM) dan data dari konsumen online, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa eWOM dan promosi penjualan memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap kepercayaan, yang pada gilirannya berdampak kuat pada keputusan pembelian. Temuan ini mengkonfirmasi bahwa semua variabel yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini memiliki tingkat keandalan dan validitas yang tinggi. Kontribusi penelitian ini adalah menyoroti peran penting kepercayaan sebagai faktor penghubung (mediator) antara eWOM, promosi penjualan, dan keputusan pembelian. Dari perspektif kebijakan, penting bagi platform e-commerce seperti Shopee untuk menjaga transparansi dan keaslian ulasan serta promosi yang ditawarkan agar dapat mempertahankan kepercayaan konsumen. Platform ini disarankan untuk memperbaiki proses verifikasi dan memanfaatkan media sosial sebagai strategi promosi yang lebih efektif. Bagi pelaku bisnis, membangun kepercayaan dapat dilakukan dengan menyediakan produk berkualitas, layanan pelanggan yang baik, dan komunikasi yang transparan. Penelitian ini menekankan bahwa eWOM dan promosi penjualan memainkan peran penting dalam membangun kepercayaan konsumen, yang merupakan kunci untuk mendorong keputusan pembelian dan meningkatkan kinerja pasar.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Electronic Word of Mouth, Promosi Penjualan, Kepercayaan, Keputusan Pembelian, E-commerce, Pemodelan Persamaan Struktural, Perilaku Konsumen, Ulasan Online, Pemasaran Media Sosial.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid technological advancement, the proliferation of digital technology has significantly impacted various sectors, notably the Internet. The increasing prevalence of internet usage has catalyzed the growth of e-commerce, transforming how businesses operate and consumers shop. This shift has led to an integral role of trust as a critical mediating variable in the digital marketplace, especially within platforms like Shopee. Trust not only alleviates uncertainties associated with online transactions but also serves as a bridge between marketing strategies, such as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and sales promotions, and consumer purchase decisions. As highlighted by state-of-the-art research, trust wields significant power in shaping consumer behavior, influencing how they interpret and respond to promotional efforts and user-generated content online.

E-commerce participation refers to the extent to which an organization has adopted, integrated, and utilized technologies and applications (Ratnasingam, 2003). The growing shift towards e-commerce has become an integral part of modern consumer life, including in Indonesia. This shift has altered consumer lifestyles, with many opting for online shopping over traditional offline methods due to the convenience and efficiency e-commerce platforms offer. Consumers can now shop effortlessly from their devices, such as smartphones and laptops, without visiting physical stores.

Indonesia's economic growth is significantly bolstered by e-commerce. According to RedSeer, e-commerce transactions in Indonesia reached US\$67.4 billion in 2021 and is projected to grow to US\$137.5 billion by 2025 (Pahlevi, 2022). Statista reports that the number of e-commerce users in Indonesia will increase to 244.67 million by 2027, up from 93.42 million in 2018 and 196.47 million in 2023. Among the various e-commerce platforms, Shopee has emerged as a popular choice for Indonesian consumers. Shopee offers a wide range of products, including beauty, health, food, household necessities, and more, catering to the diverse needs of its users. Consumers access the Shopee platform to select products that meet their needs and make purchase decisions.

The credibility of an online platform can significantly influence customer attitudes and behaviors related to purchase decisions (Arief et al., 2023). The decision-making process is influenced by consumer knowledge, self-confidence, and perceived value of the products. Consumers rely on their expertise and information-seeking efforts to identify their needs and create solutions (Tang et al., 2010). The purchase decision is a crucial process where consumers choose from multiple options based on their preferences, leading to purchasing goods or services.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) shapes consumer purchase decisions. eWOM encompasses consumer reviews, recommendations, and feedback shared through online platforms, influencing cognitive beliefs and brand evaluations (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). Consumers tend to trust the opinions of other users who have previously used the products or services. Research has shown that positive eWOM can enhance consumer trust in a brand or product. Studies by Pourfakhimi et al. (2020), Tan and Lee (2019), Zhao et al. (2020), and Wang et al. (2013) have demonstrated the influence of eWOM on trust.

In addition to eWOM, sales promotions are a crucial source of information for online shoppers. Sales promotions encourage customers to purchase specific goods or services (Umair Akram et al., 2018). Well-executed sales promotions by reputable companies can motivate consumers to trust and engage in online shopping. Previous research indicates that sales promotions impact trust (Kwon et al., 2020). Although Zhu et al. (2020) found no significant effect of sales promotions on trust, Langga et al. (2021) and Lu et al. (2020) confirmed a positive and significant impact.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has dramatically impacted consumer trust, particularly when information is perceived as credible and authentic. Similarly, when executed transparently, sales promotions enhance trust and drive purchase intentions. This study explores these dynamics by exploring how eWOM and sales promotions influence purchase decisions in Shopee e-commerce, mediated by trust. By leveraging structural equation modeling (SEM) and accurate consumer data, the research validates the pivotal role of trust as a mediator, advancing the understanding of trust's role in modern e-commerce strategies. This state-of-the-art approach highlights the importance of integrating trust-building efforts into marketing strategies, ensuring that e-commerce platforms and businesses align their efforts with consumer expectations to foster loyalty and enhance purchase decisions.

Trust is essential for consumers as it helps alleviate doubts and uncertainties associated with online shopping. Prasad et al. (2017) and Farivar et al. (2017) highlighted the positive impact of trust on purchase decision involvement. Given the theoretical and empirical background, this study aims to investigate the influence of eWOM and sales promotions on purchase decisions in Shopee e-commerce mediated by trust. Specifically, this research seeks to:

1. Examine the impact of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on consumer trust in the Shopee e-commerce platform.
2. Investigate whether sales promotions significantly impact consumer trust in the Shopee e-commerce platform.
3. Explore the effect of trust on consumer purchase decisions on Shopee.

4. To assess whether trust mediates the influence of eWOM on consumer purchase decisions on Shopee.
5. To identify whether trust mediates the impact of sales promotions on consumer purchase decisions on Shopee.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Purchase Decision*

Purchase decisions are influenced by the strength of attachment, involvement, and perceived risk (Peter A. Voyer, 2018). According to Rachmawati et al. (2022), purchase decisions involve evaluating options and selecting products that meet consumers' needs and preferences. Typically, consumers make choices that align with their needs, preferences, values, and circumstances to achieve the best outcomes (Purwanto, 2014). Consumers undergo several processes to reach a purchase decision, including identifying needs or problems, seeking information, comparing options, making the purchase decision, and post-purchase actions, encompassing the five steps in the purchase decision process (Akgunduz et al., 2023). Additionally, various factors influence online purchase decisions, such as perceived risk, trust, relative benefits, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Chetioui et al., 2021). Therefore, purchase decisions result from an evaluation and consideration process influenced by price, quality, and trust offered by specific products or services (Dapas et al., 2019).

### **Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)**

Electronic Word of Mouth is a significant factor for consumers before purchasing a product or service. Consumers often rely on reviews from others who have previously purchased the desired product or service. Throughout the eWOM adoption process, consumers receive, manage, and absorb product information (Yang, 2022). Consumers' trust in the platform increases when they receive recommendations or positive reviews. Participation in eWOM is crucial for online businesses as it enables consumers to share experiences, perspectives, and information about products and services, ultimately shaping purchasing behavior (Gharib et al., 2020). eWOM is considered effective marketing as it can disseminate information rapidly and promote it effectively on online social networks (Hu et al., 2019). Positive eWOM can minimize perceived risks by consumers when making online purchases (Chetioui et al., 2021).

### **Sales Promotion**

Sales promotion can be defined as a marketing approach aimed at making products or services more appealing by providing benefits and meeting consumer expectations (Rehman et al., 2017). Sales promotion includes monetary promotions (e.g., price discounts) and non-monetary promotions (e.g., merchandise). Research by Kwon et al. (2020)

demonstrates that consumers prefer non-monetary sales promotions, although monetary promotions are often more effective. The success of sales promotions can shape consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards trust in products or services, which benefits companies in attracting new customers. However, the success of sales promotions may depend on factors such as competitive scope and brand reputation (Langga et al., 2021). Consumers evaluate sales promotions based on perceived value and credibility, including integrity and transparency (Lu et al., 2020). Thus, sales promotions are designed to increase product sales and consumer demand, encouraging consumers to purchase or engage in specific activities like trying new products or visiting stores.

### **Trust**

Trust is built upon perceptions of fairness, justice, and reliability, crucial in creating and maintaining positive consumer relationships (Akgunduz et al., 2023). According to Rehman et al. (2017), trust is typically built over time through interactions and consistent positive experiences with a brand or company. Trust is a primary consideration in e-commerce, influencing consumer behavior when shopping online, such as product and service expectations and feelings of doubt or uncertainty (Purwanto et al., 2020). A high level of trust can meet consumer expectations and satisfy transactions, alleviating perceived uncertainty and dependence in most online transactions (Prasad et al., 2019). In online shopping, trust can be influenced by website design, user-friendliness, usability, and security (Chetioui et al., 2021). Trust in e-commerce platforms enhances consumer behavior in seeking information, familiarity, and social presence, positively correlating with purchase decisions (Attar et al., 2021). Thus, trust can be defined as consumers' belief and confidence in a product's ability to meet their needs and expectations.

### **The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Trust**

Research by Gharib et al. (2020) examined trust and reciprocity in eWOM, finding that eWOM impacts trust, with different dimensions of trust (ability, integrity, and benevolence) affecting eWOM communication. Chetioui et al. (2021) also found that eWOM significantly influences trust in online shopping, as trust mediates the impact of relative advantage and eWOM on attitudes towards online shopping. Yang (2022) stated that eWOM influences consumer trust due to the credibility of the source and the content of the eWOM message. eWOM can influence trust by sharing information and opinions through online social networks (Hu et al., 2019). Liu et al. (2015) proved that eWOM is highly trusted by consumers worldwide, guiding them to accept recommendations, make purchase decisions, and choose partners for e-commerce transactions. Handi et

al. (2018) also demonstrated the influence of e-WOM on trust and food purchase decisions using the Go-Food application in Indonesia. Matute et al. (2016) explained that eWOM characteristics impact trust.

The following hypothesis can be formulated based on the discussion above:

H1: Electronic Word of Mouth influences trust.

### The Influence of Sales Promotion on Trust

Lu et al. (2020) stated that sales promotions influence customer trust in a company, as consumers perceive the benefits of sales promotions and consequently form trust. However, Zhu et al. (2020) found no significant influence of promotions on consumer trust, indicating that excessive promotions might lead to consumer skepticism about the authenticity of the promotions. Nevertheless, Langga et al. (2021) explained that several studies suggest sales promotions shape consumer perceptions and indirectly influence trust in the brand or company.

The following hypothesis can be formulated based on the discussion above:

H2: Sales promotion influences trust.

### The Influence of Trust on Purchase Decision

Prasad et al. (Prasad et al., 2019) proved that trust positively impacts purchase decisions, as trust is a critical factor in reducing perceived risks and uncertainties, positively influencing consumer trust in their purchase decisions. Akgunduz et al. (2023) also demonstrated that trust positively influences purchase decisions, showing consumers tend to purchase products and services they trust. Zhang & Li (2019) explained that trust can reduce uncertainty and facilitate information exchange. Giampietri et al. (2018) found that consumer trust impacts food purchase decisions, where trust can overcome consumer confusion and encourage purchase decisions.

Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Trust influences purchase decisions.

### The Mediating Role of Trust of the Effect of eWOM on Purchase Decision

Trust is crucial to electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and purchase decisions. Research shows that trust significantly influences how consumers perceive eWOM, subsequently affecting their purchasing intentions. In social media contexts, the credibility and quality of eWOM play vital roles in building consumer trust and impacting their purchase decisions (Kohler et al., 2023; Qi & Kuik, 2022). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that initial and ongoing trust is essential for mediating the effects of eWOM on purchase intentions, particularly in e-commerce settings (Choi & Jin, 2015). The interaction between positive and negative eWOM further emphasizes the importance of trust in shaping consumer behavior (Lee et al., 2022).

For marketers, building trust through credible eWOM strategies is crucial for enhancing consumer engagement and increasing purchase intentions (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023). Trust enhances the effectiveness of eWOM by validating the information consumers share. However, not all consumers respond to eWOM uniformly; factors like personal experiences and cultural differences can lead to different interpretations of trust and eWOM. This variability suggests a need for marketers to adopt tailored approaches that consider these differences when targeting diverse markets.

Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: Trust mediates the effect of eWOM on purchase decision.

### The Mediating Role of Trust of the Effect of Sales Promotion on Purchase Decision

Trust serves as a critical mediator in the connection between sales promotions and purchase decisions. Studies show that trust can amplify the effectiveness of sales promotions by shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. For example, utilizing trust-transference methods during sales presentations has significantly boosted closing rates and overall sales volume (Milliman & Fugate, 1988). Moreover, in direct-to-consumer genetic testing, consumer trust in the company and its messaging was identified as a strong predictor of purchase intentions, underscoring trust's role in influencing consumer attitudes (VanDyke et al., 2023). In supplier-buyer dynamics, trust has also been associated with lower transaction costs and improved information exchange, indicating its ability to facilitate smoother transactions and positively affect purchasing decisions (Dyer & Chu, 2003). Additionally, the management of trust during brand name changes shows how maintaining consumer trust can be strategically leveraged to uphold loyalty and guide purchasing behavior (Pauwels-Delassus & Mogos Descotes, 2013). These insights collectively highlight the essential function of trust in mediating the impact of sales promotions on purchase decisions, reinforcing its significance in marketing strategies.

Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H5: Trust mediates the effect of sales promotion on purchase decision.

Based on the theoretical foundation above, the conceptual framework for this research is depicted in Figure 1.

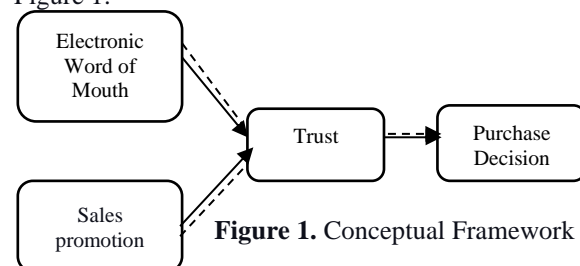


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical data (Russell-Bennett et al., 2020). Quantitative research tests hypotheses, identify patterns and generalize about specific populations (Mariani & Baggio, 2020). This research aims to determine the impact of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), sales promotion, and purchase decisions on Shopee E-commerce, mediated by trust. Data collection was conducted through questionnaires based on predefined research criteria.

### Research Subjects and Objects

Subjects refer to individual members of the sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The subjects in this study are Shopee consumers. The research object pertains to the focal points of the study and the data used to conclude. In this research, the objects are the impacts of eWOM, sales promotion, and purchase decisions on Shopee E-commerce. Participants are residents of Tangerang City who use Shopee for online shopping. Shopee was chosen due to its popularity and extensive use by the public for online shopping.

### Research Location

The research was conducted on the Shopee platform and its users. The location encompasses both Shopee's online environment and the geographical area of Tangerang City, where the respondents reside.

### Population and Sample

The population is defined as a group of people, incidents, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to study and draw conclusions about using sample statistics (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The population for this study includes the residents of Tangerang City, although the exact number is unknown.

A sample is a subset of the population. In this study, the sample size was determined using Hair's formula, which recommends multiplying the number of indicators by 5-10. Therefore, with 20 indicators, the minimum sample size required is  $20 \times 5 = 100$  respondents (Hair et al., 2010), (Purwanto & Purwanto, 2020). The sample consists of 100 Shopee customers.

### Data Collection

The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of a series of questions disseminated through social media and completed by the respondents.

### Sampling Technique

This study uses non-probability sampling. In this design, the likelihood of each population element being included in the sample is unknown (Sekaran &

Bougie, 2016). Non-probability sampling involves selecting samples based on convenience (Purwanto & Mutahar, 2020). The chosen method is convenience sampling, where information is gathered from willing participants in the population.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS application. This study employs cross-sectional data analysis, where data is collected through questionnaires at a single time. The data analysis process involves two stages:

#### Outer Model Analysis

Outer Model Analysis includes Loading Factor, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Convergent Validity. In PLS analysis, the loading factor determines how much latent variables or constructs influence observed variables or indicators. A loading factor  $>0.70$  is considered acceptable. Indicators with a loading factor  $<0.70$  should be excluded from the analysis (Chan et al., 2020). Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency of a set of items. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value indicates better reliability, although it assumes equal loading of indicators across the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This metric assesses the reliability of latent variables. Composite reliability values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater reliability. For exploratory research, composite reliability values between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable (Hair et al., 2011).

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) represents the average amount of variance explained by the indicators related to the latent construct. A minimum AVE value of 0.50 is considered acceptable, indicating that the latent variable accounts for more than half of the variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2011). Convergent validity is achieved if different sources indicate a high correlation when measuring the same construct. Indicators are considered valid if their loading factor is  $>0.70$  and AVE is  $>0.50$  (Kwong, 2013).

#### Inner Model Analysis

Inner Model Analysis or path analysis involves estimating multiple regression models simultaneously. It can include mediation, moderation, or interaction effects among variables (Dash & Paul, 2021). The inner model specifies the relationships between latent variables, while the outer model defines the relationships between latent variables and their observed indicators (Henseler et al., 2009). Then, the t-statistic is used for hypothesis testing. A significant level of 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) and a t-statistic threshold of 1.96 are used. If the t-statistic  $> 1.96$ , the hypothesis is accepted (Liuspita & Purwanto, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Outer Model Analysis

#### Loading Factor

Based on the results of the SmartPLS analysis presented in Table 1, we can conclude the following: Indicator reliability is evaluated by examining the loading factors of each item. A loading factor greater than 0.70 indicates the item is a reliable indicator of its corresponding latent variable. Here's the detailed analysis for each variable:

All items' value of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) above 0.70. EWOM1 is 0.847, EWOM2 is 0.757, EWOM3 is 0.704, EWOM4 is 0.824, and EWOM5 is 0.840). So, all items for the electronic word-of-mouth variable have loading factors above 0.70, demonstrating that they all meet the threshold for indicator reliability.

Similarly, all items for the Purchase Decision variable exceed the 0.70 threshold, confirming their reliability. PD1 is 0.862, PD2 is 0.814, PD3 is 0.855, PD4 is 0.856, and PD5 is 0.706. The items for sales promotion have loading factors well above 0.70, with Sis 0.857 for SP1, 0.825 for SP2, and 0.810 for SP3. This indicates that they are reliable indicators of the construct. All items for the Trust variable meet the reliability criterion, with loading factors above 0.70. T1 is 0.769, T2 is 0.851, T3 is 0.803, and T4 is 0.819.

The analysis shows that all indicators across Electronic Word of Mouth, Purchase Decision, Sales Promotion, and Trust have high loading factors (>0.70). This confirms that all items are reliable indicators of their respective constructs. We can confidently conclude that the measurement model demonstrates good indicator reliability for all latent variables. This is crucial for ensuring the validity and reliability of the structural model in further analyses.

**Table 1.** Factor Loading

Electronic Word of Mouth	
EWOM1	0.847
EWOM2	0.757
EWOM3	0.704
EWOM4	0.824
EWOM5	0.840
Purchase Decision	
PD1	0.862
PD2	0.814
PD3	0.855
PD4	0.856
PD5	0.706
Sales Promotion	
SP1	0.857
SP2	0.825
SP3	0.810

Trust	
T1	0.769
T2	0.851
T3	0.803
T4	0.819

With the confirmed indicator reliability, the next steps in the analysis should include evaluating the construct reliability (using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability), convergent validity (using Average Variance Extracted), and discriminant validity to further confirm the robustness of the measurement model. Additionally, examining the structural model's path coefficients and hypothesis testing will provide insights into the relationships between the constructs.

#### Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha indicates that all constructs have acceptable values, with scores above the threshold of 0.7 (see Table 2). Specifically, Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.854, a Purchase Decision score of 0.879, Sales Promotion at 0.777, and Trust has a value of 0.827. These values suggest that each construct demonstrates good internal consistency, meaning that the items within each construct are highly correlated and reliable for measuring the intended constructs.

**Table 2.** Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.854
Purchase Decision	0.879
Sales Promotion	0.777
Trust	0.827

#### Composite Reliability

Moreover, we have used Composite Reliability, a superior measure of overall reliability, to further validate our findings. Table 3 shows that the CR values for E-WOM, Purchase Decision, Sales Promotion, and Trust are 0.896, 0.911, 0.870, and 0.885, respectively. These values, surpassing the 0.7 threshold, underscore the high reliability of the constructs. Composite Reliability is considered superior to Cronbach's Alpha as it considers the loadings of individual indicators, providing a more accurate measure of overall reliability.

**Table 3.** Composite Reliability

Composite Reliability	
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.896
Purchase Decision	0.911
Sales Promotion	0.870
Trust	0.885

**Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

The constructs' convergent validity is assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). AVE measures the variance a construct captures about the variance due to measurement error. Table 4 shows that the AVE values obtained for each construct are as follows: EWOM is 0.634, Purchase Decision is 0.674, Sales Promotion is 0.691, and Trust is 0.658. All these values are above the threshold of 0.5, indicating that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of their respective indicators. This confirms that the constructs possess adequate convergent validity.

**Table 4.** Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.634
Purchase Decision	0.674
Sales Promotion	0.691
Trust	0.658

**Convergent Validity**

Discriminant validity is evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. This criterion requires that the square root of the AVE of each construct should be greater than the correlations of the construct with any other constructs. In the Fornell-Larcker table (Table 5), the square root of the AVE for each construct is compared with the correlations between that construct and the others. The results show that the diagonal values (representing the square root of AVE) are greater than the off-diagonal correlation values. For instance, the square root of AVE for EWOM is 0.796, which is greater than its correlations with PD (0.833), SP (0.723), and T (0.702). The same pattern is observed for the other constructs: PD (0.821), SP (0.831), and T (0.811).

**Table 5.** Discriminant Validity - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	EWOM	PD	SP	T
EWOM	<b>0.796</b>			
PD	0.833	<b>0.821</b>		
SP	0.723	0.656	<b>0.831</b>	
T	0.702	0.600	0.690	<b>0.811</b>

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates that all constructs in the measurement model exhibit good reliability and validity. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability indicate that the constructs are reliable, while AVE and discriminant validity analysis through the Fornell-Larcker Criterion confirm that the constructs have adequate convergent and discriminant validity. These results support the use of these constructs in further analysis, as they have proven to be reliable and valid measurements.

**Inner Model Analysis**

The analysis of path coefficients provides insight into the direct relationships between constructs in the model. Table 4 shows that the relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) and Trust (H1) shows a path coefficient of 0.426, a T-statistic of 3.487, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a significant positive effect of EWOM on Trust at the 0.001 level. The high T-statistic and the low p-value suggest that this relationship is statistically robust, supporting the hypothesis that EWOM significantly enhances consumer trust.

The path coefficient for the relationship between Sales Promotion and Trust (H2) is 0.382, with a T-statistic of 3.096 and a p-value of 0.002. This signifies a significant positive impact of Sales Promotion on Trust, at the 0.01 level. The significant T-statistic and p-value indicate that effective sales promotions can significantly build consumer Trust. Trust is shown to have a substantial effect on Purchase Decision (H3) with a path coefficient of 0.600, a T-statistic of 7.620, and a p-value of 0.000. This strong relationship highlights that Trust is a critical factor influencing Purchase Decisions, supported by highly significant statistical evidence.

**Table 4.** Path Coefficients

Hipotesis	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
H1 Electronic Word of Mouth → Trust	0.426	3.487	0.000
H2 Sales Promotion → Trust	0.382	3.096	0.002
H3 Trust → Purchase Decision	0.600	7.620	0.000

The analysis of specific indirect effects reveals how intermediary variables (in this case, trust) mediate the relationships between other constructs. Table 5 shows that the indirect effect of EWOM on Purchase Decision through Trust is quantified with a path coefficient of 0.256, a T-statistic of 2.744, and a p-value of 0.006. This significant indirect effect ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicates that trust partially mediates the relationship between EWOM and Purchase Decision, meaning that EWOM not only directly influences trust but has a subsequent positive effect on Purchase Decision by enhancing trust. The indirect effect of Sales Promotion on Purchase Decision through Trust has a path coefficient of 0.229, with a T-statistic of 3.008 and a p-value of 0.003. This significant indirect effect ( $p < 0.01$ ) suggests that trust also partially mediates the relationship between Sales Promotion and Purchase Decision. Effective sales promotions enhance trust, positively influencing purchase decisions.

**Table 5.** Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
Electronic Word of Mouth → Trust → Purchase Decision	0.256	2.744	0.006
Sales Promotion → Trust → Purchase Decision	0.229	3.008	0.003

The results from the SmartPLS analysis offer substantial evidence supporting the hypothesized relationships. EWOM and sales promotion significantly enhance trust, a pivotal factor in purchasing decisions. Moreover, trust acts as a crucial mediator, reinforcing the indirect effects of EWOM and Sales Promotion on Purchase Decisions. These findings underline the importance of fostering trust through strategic marketing efforts such as effective EWOM and Sales Promotion to influence consumer Purchase Decisions. The robustness of these relationships, as evidenced by high T-statistics and low p-values, provides strong support for the proposed model and its applicability in understanding consumer behavior in electronic word-of-mouth and promotional activities.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) significantly impacts trust, with a p-value of 0.000, supporting the first hypothesis. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Chetoui et al. (2021), Hu et al. (2019), Liu et al. (2015), and Yang (2022), spanning studies from 2015 to 2022, which also demonstrated that EWOM has a positive and significant effect on trust.

In the current market landscape, EWOM is highly valued by consumers seeking to make informed purchase decisions. EWOM provides consumers with preliminary insights about products they are interested in, and reviews from other consumers play a crucial role in building trust. The recommendations and experiences shared by others through EWOM help potential buyers make more informed decisions and enhance their confidence in the products they intend to purchase.

From a policy perspective, businesses should be encouraged to foster an environment where genuine and honest reviews can flourish. Regulatory bodies might consider implementing guidelines to ensure transparency and authenticity in online reviews to prevent fraudulent activities that could undermine consumer trust. Additionally, platforms hosting reviews should enhance their verification processes to ensure the reliability of the information shared.

Businesses can leverage the power of EWOM by actively engaging with their customers on social media and review platforms. Encouraging satisfied customers to share their positive experiences can help build a robust repository of trustworthy reviews.

Moreover, companies should monitor and respond to positive and negative reviews to show that they value customer feedback and are committed to improving their products and services. This proactive engagement can enhance trust and influence potential customers' purchase decisions.

The analysis also confirms that Sales Promotion positively influences trust, with a p-value of 0.002, thereby accepting the second hypothesis. This result aligns with previous studies by Lu et al. (2020), Zhu et al. (2020), and Langga et al. (2021), which found a positive and significant relationship between Sales Promotion and Trust, based on research conducted from 2020 to 2021.

The findings suggest that effective sales promotions can significantly enhance consumer trust in products. For instance, in the context of Shopee, the implication is that Shopee should continue to leverage and improve its sales promotions through social media platforms like Instagram. By doing so, Shopee can attract more consumers and boost their trust, ultimately influencing their purchase decisions favorably.

From a policy perspective, regulatory bodies should ensure transparency and authenticity in sales promotions to protect consumer interests and maintain trust in the marketplace. Guidelines could be established to prevent misleading promotions and to require clear, truthful information about promotional offers. Additionally, e-commerce platforms like Shopee should implement robust mechanisms to verify the legitimacy of promotional activities conducted by sellers on their platforms.

Businesses can maximize the impact of sales promotions by integrating them with social media marketing strategies. By actively promoting sales events on platforms such as Instagram, companies can reach a wider audience and engage consumers more effectively. It is also crucial for businesses to monitor and respond to consumer feedback on promotions, addressing any concerns promptly to maintain trust and enhance the overall effectiveness of promotional strategies.

The analysis further validates the third hypothesis, showing that trust significantly impacts Purchase Decisions, with a p-value of 0.000. This finding is consistent with prior research by Zhang & Li (2019), Giampietri et al. (2018), and Akgunduz et al. (2023), which explored the influence of Trust on Purchase Decisions from 2018 to 2023 and concluded that trust has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions.

This significant relationship underscores the critical role of trust in the consumer decision-making process. When consumers trust a product or brand, they are more likely to proceed with their purchase decisions. Trust is a fundamental driver, reducing perceived risks and enhancing consumer confidence in purchasing.

Policymakers should consider frameworks that



support establishing and maintaining consumer trust in digital markets. Regulations ensuring data security, consumer privacy, and transparent business practices are essential. For instance, enforcing stringent measures against fraudulent activities and misleading advertisements can help build a more trustworthy e-commerce environment.

Building trust should be an integral part of businesses' marketing and operational strategies. Ensuring product quality, providing excellent customer service, and maintaining transparent communication can significantly enhance consumer trust. Additionally, leveraging technology to offer secure and user-friendly online shopping experiences can further boost consumer confidence and trust.

For Hypothesis 4, the specific indirect effect of eWOM on purchase decisions through trust shows a path coefficient of 0.256, a T-value of 2.744, and a p-value of 0.006. These results confirm that the relationship between eWOM and purchase decisions is significantly mediated by trust, supporting the hypothesis. This finding suggests that consumers' trust in the information shared through eWOM significantly influences their purchasing behavior. When consumers perceive the eWOM as trustworthy, it positively impacts their trust in the product or service, increasing their likelihood of purchasing.

For Hypothesis 5, the indirect effect of sales promotion on purchase decisions through trust shows a path coefficient of 0.229, a T-value of 3.008, and a p-value of 0.003. This result supports the hypothesis that trust mediates the effect of sales promotion on purchase decisions. It highlights the importance of building trust during promotional activities, as more than promotions alone may be required to influence consumer behavior with the presence of trust. This finding emphasizes that the effectiveness of sales promotions depends significantly on the consumers' trust in the brand and the promotional message, ultimately enhancing their purchase intentions.

Reiterating the importance of trust, the findings validate its mediating role in both eWOM and sales promotion contexts. This reinforces the idea that trust is a critical factor influencing consumer purchase decisions. The results have significant implications for marketers, suggesting that strategies aimed at building and maintaining consumer trust are essential. These strategies are crucial for maximizing the impact of eWOM and sales promotions on purchasing behavior, highlighting the central role of trust in consumer decision-making.

The findings highlight the crucial role of trust as a mediator in the impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and sales promotions on consumer purchase decisions, suggesting several practical implications for marketers. First, marketers should focus on creating eWOM campaigns that foster and maintain trust by partnering with credible influencers, promoting authentic customer reviews, and ensuring transparency in the information shared online. When

consumers perceive eWOM content as trustworthy, their trust in the product or service increases, leading to a higher likelihood of purchasing. Additionally, the design of sales promotions must prioritize trust-building strategies. Simply offering discounts or incentives may not suffice; marketers must ensure that promotional messages are clearly communicated, genuinely beneficial, and aligned with the brand's values to foster consumer trust and drive purchase intentions.

Furthermore, consistency and transparency in brand messaging across all marketing channels are essential for building and maintaining trust. Consumers are more likely to trust brands that communicate consistently, whether through eWOM, advertisements, or promotional activities. This reinforces the need for marketers to align all aspects of their messaging to create a cohesive and trustworthy brand image. Long-term investment in trust-building is also crucial, including delivering high-quality products, excellent customer service, and fostering a loyal community. By building a strong foundation of trust, brands can amplify the impact of future marketing efforts. Finally, marketers should actively monitor consumer perceptions of trust through social media sentiment analysis, customer surveys, and feedback on promotional activities. This powerful tool empowers marketers to adjust their strategies and ensure the effectiveness of their eWOM and sales promotion campaigns.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms the significant roles of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and sales promotions in influencing purchase decisions on e-commerce platforms like Shopee, primarily through the mediating effect of trust. The findings demonstrate that trust serves as a crucial bridge, significantly enhancing the impact of eWOM and sales promotions on consumer behavior. The results show that eWOM positively affects trust, increasing the likelihood of purchase decisions when the information is perceived as credible and authentic. Similarly, effective sales promotions also build trust, emphasizing the need for clear and transparent promotional strategies that align with brand values to foster long-term consumer trust.

The research underscores the critical importance of integrating trust-building efforts into e-commerce marketing strategies. For businesses, this implies the necessity of developing marketing campaigns that prioritize credibility, authenticity, and transparency, as these elements are pivotal for sustaining consumer trust and maximizing the impact of both eWOM and promotional efforts. The findings also suggest that e-commerce platforms like Shopee should implement systems that verify the authenticity of reviews and promotional activities to maintain and enhance trust. Future studies could explore these dynamics further across different platforms and industries,

incorporating longitudinal data to examine changes in consumer trust and purchasing behavior over time. Potential areas for future research could include the impact of trust on consumer loyalty and the effectiveness of different trust-building strategies.

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