IConEnt
The 4th International Conference on Entrepreneurship

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF EWOM ON PURCHASE INTENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLES OF TRUST, VALUE CO-CREATION, AND BRAND IMAGE IN APPLE PRODUCT

GRADY DEVEN
Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business
Pelita Harapan University
MH Thamrin Boulevard 1100, Tangerang, Banten 15811
INDONESIA

SABRINA O. SIHOMBING (*corresponding author*)
Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business
Pelita Harapan University
MH Thamrin Boulevard 1100, Tangerang, Banten 15811
INDONESIA

Abstract: - The rise of digital communication has transformed traditional word of mouth (WoM) into electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), significantly influencing consumer behavior. This study investigates the impact of eWOM on purchase intention, with a focus on Apple products among Indonesian students. The research explores the mediating roles of trust beliefs, value co-creation, hedonic brand image, and functional brand image in this relationship. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data were collected from 240 respondents through an online questionnaire, and the results were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings demonstrate that eWOM has a positive effect on purchase intention, with trust beliefs and value co-creation acting as significant mediators. Moreover, both hedonic and functional brand image were found to positively mediate the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. These results highlight the importance of eWOM as a strategic tool in influencing consumer decisions, especially for premium brands like Apple. The study provides insights for marketers on leveraging trust, value creation, and brand image to enhance purchase intention through eWOM.

Key-Words: - eWOM, trust beliefs, value co-creation, brand image, purchase intention, Apple products, Indonesian consumers, digital marketing

1 Introduction

In the age of digital transformation, word of mouth (WoM) has evolved significantly with the advent of electronic platforms, giving rise to electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). eWOM is defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet [1]. Unlike traditional WoM, which is limited to personal, face-to-face communication, eWOM transcends geographical boundaries, allowing users to share their opinions on a global scale through social media, review platforms, and online forums. As a result, eWOM has become a powerful force in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in influencing purchase intention [2]. The impact of eWOM is particularly relevant for premium brands like Apple, whose strong digital presence and devoted customer base amplify the influence of online reviews and recommendations. In Indonesia, Apple products, although not the market leader, have steadily increased their market share, driven in part by the influence of eWOM among tech-savvy consumers [7]. This is especially pronounced among university students, who are early adopters of technology and heavily rely on online reviews and recommendations when making purchasing decisions [3]. Recent studies suggest that the effectiveness of eWOM in influencing purchase intention is mediated by several key factors, including trust, value co-creation, and brand image [4]. Trust, defined as the belief in the reliability and competence of a product or brand, plays a crucial role in converting eWOM into actual purchases [3]. Additionally, value co-creation, where consumers engage with brands and contribute to their development through online interactions, further enhances the

impact of eWOM on purchase intention [5]. Brand image, particularly hedonic and functional perceptions, also mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchase decisions. Hedonic brand image refers to the emotional and experiential aspects of a brand, while functional brand image focuses on its practical and utilitarian benefits [6]. This study seeks to explore the influence of eWOM on purchase intention, specifically focusing on Apple products among Indonesian students. The research examines the mediating roles of trust beliefs, value co-creation, and both hedonic and functional brand image. By utilizing Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how eWOM, coupled with these mediators, drives purchase intention in the context of Apple products. The findings will offer valuable insights for marketers on how to effectively leverage eWOM in shaping consumer behavior in the competitive tech industry.

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the consumer's plan or decision to buy a specific product or service in the future. It reflects the likelihood that a consumer will engage in a purchase based on various factors, such as perceived value, brand image, and marketing influences like electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Previous studies have shown that purchase intention is a significant predictor of actual buying behavior, making it a crucial metric for marketers. Understanding how factors like trust, brand image, and value co-creation impact purchase intention allows businesses to craft more effective strategies to convert potential consumers into actual buyers [8].

2.2. Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) refers to the dissemination of opinions, experiences, and recommendations via online platforms. In the digital age, eWOM is a powerful influence on consumer behavior, particularly in shaping purchase decisions. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, eWOM can reach a broader audience and has the potential to significantly impact a brand's reputation. eWOM has been identified as a key factor in driving purchase intention by fostering trust and enhancing brand perception among consumers [9].

2.3. Trust Belief

NegatiTrust belief plays a critical role in the decision-making process, particularly in an online environment where face-to-face interactions are absent. Trust is often built through credible reviews and reliable eWOM, which helps consumers feel more confident about their purchase decisions. Trust can mediate the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention, as a positive eWOM fosters trust, and trust, in turn, influences the likelihood of a purchase [10].

2.4. Value Co-Creation

Value co-creation refers to the collaborative process where consumers actively participate in creating value with the brand. This interaction can happen through online reviews, feedback, and discussions, often facilitated by eWOM. Involving consumers in the value creation process not only enhances their experience with the brand but also strengthens their commitment to it. When consumers feel that they are part of the brand's journey, their purchase intentions are likely to increase [11].

2.5. Hedonic Brand Image

Hedonic brand image relates to the emotional and experiential attributes of a brand. Consumers often associate premium products like Apple with a hedonic brand image that emphasizes luxury, enjoyment, and a sense of status. Hedonic brand image can mediate the effect of eWOM on purchase intention by highlighting the emotional benefits of owning the product. Positive eWOM can enhance the hedonic image of a brand, making consumers more inclined to purchase [12].

2.6. Functional Brand Image

Functional brand image refers to the practical and utilitarian aspects of a product or brand. Consumers seek functionality, especially when it comes to technology products like Apple's. The functional benefits highlighted by eWOM, such as durability, performance, and ease of use, contribute to a stronger functional brand image. A robust functional brand image positively influences purchase intention by assuring

consumers that the product will meet their practical needs [13].

2.7. The relationship between variable

2.7.1. The Relationship Between ePWOM and Purchase Intention

Electronic Positive Word-of-Mouth (ePWOM) refers to positive reviews or recommendations shared by consumers through digital platforms. Previous research has demonstrated that ePWOM has a positive effect on purchase intention. According to Cheung and Thadani [14], ePWOM serves as a critical source of information for consumers, influencing their purchasing decisions. This aligns with the findings of Park et al. [15], who highlighted that consumers are more likely to consider ePWOM before making a purchase, particularly in the context of social media. Based on this literature, the proposed hypothesis is:

H1: ePWOM has a positive relationship with purchase intention.

2.7.2. The Relationship Between ePWOM, Consumer Trust, and Purchase Intention

Consumer trust is a key factor mediating the influence of ePWOM on purchase intention. Pavlou and Gefen [16] showed that consumer trust built through positive reviews increases their likelihood of purchasing a product. This is supported by Kim et al. [17], who found that the higher the consumer's trust in the reviews they read, the greater the likelihood of making a purchase. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H2: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between ePWOM and purchase intention.

2.7.3. The Relationship Between ePWOM, Value Co-Creation, and Purchase Intention

Value co-creation occurs when consumers participate in the process of creating product experiences through interactions on social media. According to Ramaswamy and Ozcan [18], value co-creation enhances consumers' perceptions of a brand and, in turn, influences purchase intention. Zhang et al. [19] also found that consumer involvement in value co-creation through social media reviews positively affects their purchasing decisions. Thus, the proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Value co-creation mediates the relationship between ePWOM and purchase intention.

2.7.4. The Relationship Between ePWOM, Consumer Trust, Value Co-Creation, and Purchase Intention

Previous research has shown that consumer trust and value co-creation act as strong mediators in the relationship between ePWOM and purchase intention. Hennig-Thurau et al. [20] noted that the combination of high consumer trust and value co-creation leads to a greater influence on consumer purchase decisions. Further research by Lusch and Vargo [21] supports the idea that value co-creation and consumer trust can strengthen the impact of ePWOM on purchase intention. Based on this literature, the proposed hypothesis is:

H4: Consumer trust and value co-creation simultaneously mediate the relationship between ePWOM and purchase intention.

2.7.5. The Relationship Between ePWOM, Hedonic Brand Image, and Purchase Intention

Hedonic brand image refers to consumers' perceptions of the emotional and pleasurable aspects of a brand. Research by Batra and Ahtola [22] demonstrated that a strong hedonic brand image can influence consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, Chandon et al. [23] found that positive reviews of a brand on social media enhance its hedonic brand image, which subsequently increases purchase intention. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H5: Hedonic brand image mediates the relationship between ePWOM and purchase intention.

2.7.6. The Relationship Between ePWOM, Functional Brand Image, and Purchase Intention

Functional brand image reflects consumers' perceptions of the usefulness and performance of a product. Keller [24] suggested that positive reviews highlighting the functional benefits of a product can increase consumers' purchase intentions. This is supported by Aaker [25], who found that functional brand image plays a crucial role in building consumer loyalty to a brand. Based on this literature, the proposed hypothesis is:

H6: Functional brand image mediates the relationship between ePWOM and purchase intention.

Based on the description previously presented, this research model is replicated from [26] as shown in figure 1 below.

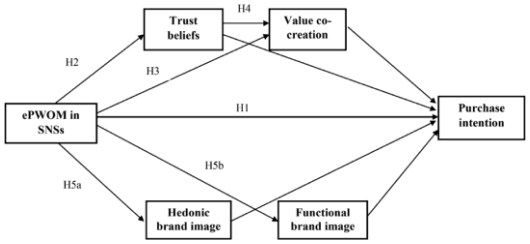

Figure 1. Research model
Source: Rao et al. (2021)

3 Method

This study employs a quantitative approach to investigate the influence of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention, incorporating trust, value co-creation, and brand image (hedonic and functional) as mediating variables. A causal research design was used to establish the relationships between these variables, allowing for the examination of the direct and indirect effects of eWOM on purchase intention. The population of interest for this study consists of university students in Indonesia who have either purchased or are planning to purchase Apple products. These students are familiar with digital platforms and are frequently exposed to eWOM related to Apple, making them an ideal sample for this study. A sample of 240 respondents was selected using convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that involves collecting data from readily accessible individuals. This sampling approach was chosen due to the ease of reaching respondents via online platforms, where the study was conducted. The sample size was deemed sufficient for the application of Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) [27], which was used to test the hypothesized relationships in the study. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire distributed across social media platforms and email. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," which was used to assess the various constructs of interest, including eWOM, trust, value co-creation, brand image (hedonic and functional), and purchase intention. Prior to full data collection, a pre-test was conducted with a small subset of respondents to ensure the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire items [28]. The SEM-PLS technique was selected for data analysis due to its suitability for smaller sample sizes and its ability to handle complex models involving multiple mediators [29]. This method involves two stages of analysis: the measurement model and the structural model. In the first stage, the measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha were used to evaluate internal consistency, while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to assess convergent validity [30]. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings [31]. After establishing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the structural model was tested to evaluate the proposed relationships between the constructs. This stage of analysis focused on testing the direct effect of eWOM on purchase intention, as well as the indirect effects mediated by trust, value co-creation, and brand image [32]. The SEM-PLS method is well-suited to handle this kind of analysis, as it allows for the simultaneous testing of multiple relationships and mediating effects [33].

4 Results and Discussion

A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed via Google Form links shared through platforms like Line, WhatsApp, and other social media channels. The respondent profile data indicates that most respondents are male, comprising about 51,2% of the sample, while females make up the remaining 48,8%. The age distribution shows a concentration in the 20-22 age range, representing approximately 78,3% of respondents, followed by those aged 17-19 years (13,8%), 23-25 years (6,7%), and a smaller group above 25 years (1,2%). Most respondents reside in DKI Jakarta (46,3%), with additional representation from Banten (27,5%), West Java (4,6%), and other regions (21,6%). Employment-wise, the majority of respondents are students (90,4%), while the remaining 9,6% are working professionals. This demographic provides a representative snapshot of young, educated individuals who are familiar with Apple products and engaged with digital word-of-mouth content.

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the primary characteristics of the respondents and examine the data distribution across various items in the study. This analysis helps to understand the general tendencies in responses related to constructs like ePWOM, trust beliefs, value co-creation, and brand image (hedonic and functional), as well as purchase intention. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are presented in Table 1, summarizing the mean and standard deviation for each item, which indicates a generally favorable response across all measured constructs.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Name	Mean	Scale min	Scale max	Standard deviation
ePWOM1	3.646	1	5	1.078
ePWOM2	3.621	1	5	1.126
ePWOM3	3.692	1	5	1.094
ePWOM4	3.479	1	5	1.072
TB1	3.433	1	5	1.116
TB2	3.571	1	5	1.101
TB3	3.504	1	5	1.076
TB4	3.479	1	5	1.140
TB5	3.658	1	5	1.041
VCC1	3.554	1	5	1.157
VCC2	3.604	1	5	1.117
VCC3	3.663	1	5	1.056
VCC4	3.608	1	5	1.047
HBI1	3.771	1	5	1.065
HBI2	3.742	1	5	1.041
HBI3	3.600	1	5	1.158
HBI4	3.579	1	5	1.141
FBI1	3.513	1	5	1.144
FBI2	3.600	1	5	1.132
FBI3	3.667	1	5	1.087
FBI4	3.717	1	5	1.134
PI1	3.800	1	5	1.104
PI2	3.862	1	5	1.085
PI3	3.758	1	5	0.996

The reliability analysis, presented in Table 2, assesses the internal consistency of the measurement instruments using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values. Both Cronbach's alpha and CR for all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability across constructs. This ensures that the items within each construct are measuring the intended variable consistently, confirming the robustness of the measurement model used in this study.

Table 2. Reliability results

	Cronbach's Alopha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)
Functional Brand Image	0,849	0,899
Hedonic Brand Image	0,829	0,886
Purchase Intention	0,760	0,861
Trust Belief	0,858	0,898
Value Co-Creation	0,833	0,889
ePWOM in SNSs	0,835	0,890

Table 3 presents the outer loadings for each indicator on its respective construct, which serves to evaluate the individual item reliability. The outer loading values for all indicators range from 0.721 to 0.874, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7. This indicates that each item contributes adequately to its assigned construct, confirming that the indicators are well-aligned with their respective constructs and enhancing the measurement model's convergent validity.

Table 3. Outer Loadings

	FBI	HBI	PI	TB	VCC	ePWOM
FBI 1	0,796					
FBI 2	0,834					
FBI 3	0,860					
FBI 4	0,829					
HBI 1		0,827				
HBI 2		0,804				
HBI 3		0,790				

HBI 4		0,829				
PI 1			0,857			
PI 2			0,769			
PI 3			0,835			
TB 1				0,768		
TB 2				0,842		
TB 3				0,852		
TB 4				0,721		
TB 5				0,809		
VCC 1					0,785	
VCC 2					0,836	
VCC 3					0,842	
VCC 4					0,801	
ePWOM 1						0,874
ePWOM 2						0,804
ePWOM 3						0,831
ePWOM 4						0,761

Table 4 displays the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct, which assesses the convergent validity of the measurement model. The AVE values range from 0.640 to 0.689, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.5, indicating that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. This confirms that the constructs have adequate convergent validity, meaning they are well-represented by their respective indicators.

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted

	Average Variance Extracted
Functional Brand Image	0,689
Hedonic Brand Image	0,660
Purchase Intention	0,674
Trust Belief	0,640
Value Co-Creation	0,667
ePWOM in SNSs	0,670

Table 5 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values, which assess discriminant validity by measuring the correlation between constructs. Discriminant validity is confirmed when HTMT values fall below the threshold of 0.85, which range from 0.564 to 0.798. All values fall below the recommended threshold of 0.85, confirming adequate discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 5. HTMT

	FBI	HBI	PI	TB	VCC	ePWOM
FBI						
HBI	0,776					
PI	0,760	0,792				
TB	0,572	0,609	0,618			
VCC	0,748	0,738	0,776	0,564		
ePWOM	0,749	0,798	0,794	0,604	0,769	

Table 6 displays the Fornell-Larcker criterion values, used to assess discriminant validity by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with its correlations to other constructs. In this study, the diagonal values (representing the square root of AVE) range from 0.800 to 0.830, which are higher than the inter-construct correlations, confirming that each construct is distinct and possesses adequate discriminant validity.

Table 6. Fornell-Larcker

	FBI	HBI	PI	TB	VCC	ePWOM
FBI	**0,830**					

HBI	0,651	**0,813**				
PI	0,616	0,638	**0,821**			
TB	0,491	0,517	0,503	**0,800**		
VCC	0,631	0,614	0,630	0,478	**0,816**	
ePWOM	0,636	0,668	0,646	0,516	0,647	**0,819**

Table 7 presents the inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, used to assess multicollinearity among the predictor constructs. All VIF values are below the commonly accepted threshold of 3, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in this model. This ensures that each predictor construct provides unique information to the model, contributing independently to the explanation of variance in the dependent variables.

Table 7. Inner Variance Inflation Factor

	FBI	HBI	PI	TB	VCC	ePWOM
FFBI			2,194			
HBI			2,299			
PI						
TB			1,526		1,362	
VCC			2,107			
ePWOM	1,000	1,000	2,345	1,000	1,362	

Table 8 presents the adjusted R-squared values, which range from 0.263 to 0.546. These values indicate that the model explains a moderate portion of the variance in the dependent variables. While 0.263 reflects a modest level of explanatory power, values approaching 0.546 suggest a stronger influence, indicating that the predictor constructs moderately explain the variance in the outcome variables.

Table 8. R^2 adjusted test results

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
FBI	0,405	0,402
HBI	0,446	0,444
PI	0,555	0,546
TB	0,266	0,263
VCC	0,447	0,442

Table 9 displays the path coefficients, which indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between the constructs in the model. Each path coefficient represents the direct effect of one construct on another. In this analysis, the path coefficients range from 0.105 to 0.668, with all paths being positive and statistically significant, suggesting a meaningful influence between constructs. These coefficients confirm the hypothesized relationships, showing that constructs like eWOM, trust, and brand image have a significant impact on purchase intention within the model.

Table 9. Path Coefficients

	Original Sampel (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
ePWOM -> PI	0.214	0.215	0.078	2.746	0.003
FBI -> PI	0.158	0.167	0.087	1.810	0.035
HBI -> PI	0.205	0.201	0.087	2.369	0.009
TB -> PI	0.105	0.104	0.059	1.796	0.036
TB-> VCC	0.198	0.198	0.056	3.548	0.000
VCC -> PI	0.215	0.211	0.082	2.639	0.004
ePWOM -> FBI	0.636	0.635	0.050	12.697	0.000
ePWOM -> HBI	0.668	0.669	0.049	13.644	0.000
ePWOM -> TB	0.516	0.519	0.046	11.175	0.000

ePWOM -> VCC	0.545	0.544	0.061	8.970	0.000

Table 10 presents the specific indirect effects, which highlight the mediating influence of various constructs in the model. The indirect effects range from 0.022 to 0.137, all of which are statistically significant. These results suggest that constructs such as value co-creation, trust belief, and brand image (hedonic and functional) play important mediating roles in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention, reinforcing the pathways through which eWOM influences consumer decisions.

Table 10. Specific Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STEV)	P Values
ePWOM -> VCC -> PI	0.117	0.113	0.043	2.735	0.003
ePWOM -> TB -> PI	0.054	0.054	0.031	1.755	0.040
ePWOM-> HBI-> PI	0.137	0.135	0.059	2.319	0.010
ePWOM -> FBI -> PI	0.101	0.105	0.056	1.808	0.035
ePWOM -> TB-> VCC -> PI	0.022	0.022	0.012	1.810	0.035

Table 11 presents the LV (Latent Variable) Prediction Summary, which includes Q^2 predict, RMSE, and MAE values for each construct. The Q^2 predict values range from 0.256 to 0.439, indicating acceptable predictive relevance for each construct. Lower RMSE and MAE values suggest a good predictive accuracy for constructs like Hedonic Brand Image and Value Co-Creation. These results confirm that the model has reasonable predictive power across key constructs, supporting its applicability in forecasting consumer behaviors related to eWOM and purchase intention.

Table 11. LV Prediction Summary

	Q^2 predict	RMSE	MAE
Functional Brand Image	0.398	0.783	0.603
Hedonic Brand Image	0.439	0.758	0.581
Purchase Intention	0.411	0.777	0.604
Trust Belief	0.256	0.871	0.686
Value co-Creation	0.411	0.775	0.588

Table 12 presents the model fit indices, which include SRMR, d_ULS, d_G, Chi-Square, and NFI values for both the saturated and estimated models. The SRMR values are 0.059 for the saturated model and 0.092 for the estimated model, both within acceptable limits, indicating a good model fit. Additionally, the NFI values are 0.826 and 0.810 for the saturated and estimated models, respectively, suggesting an adequate fit. These results confirm that the model fits the data well, supporting the validity of the structural relationships analyzed.

Table 12. Model Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,059	0,092
d_ULS	1,030	2,549

d_G	0,405	0,467
Chi-Square	563,187	614,826
NFI	0,826	0,810

Discussion

The first hypothesis (H1) posits that electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive impact on purchase intention. The results support this hypothesis, showing that positive reviews and recommendations shared through digital platforms significantly increase consumers' intention to purchase Apple products. This finding aligns with prior research by Cheung and Thadani, who noted that eWOM, due to its perceived authenticity and social credibility, plays a critical role in influencing consumers' purchase decisions in online contexts [34]. By serving as a trustworthy source of product information, eWOM effectively shapes consumer perceptions and reinforces their purchase intentions.

The second hypothesis (H2) suggests that trust beliefs mediate the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. This hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that trust acts as an essential mediator, enhancing the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. Pavlou and Gefen's research emphasize that trust is a cornerstone of online consumer behavior, especially when consumers cannot physically inspect a product. They argue that trust established through positive eWOM reduces uncertainty and risk perceptions, thus encouraging purchase decisions [35]. In the case of Apple products, consumers' trust in the brand and its community of users amplifies the positive impact of eWOM on purchase intention.

The third hypothesis (H3) posits that value co-creation mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. The findings support this hypothesis, suggesting that when consumers actively engage in value co-creation, such as providing feedback or engaging in discussions, their intention to purchase is positively influenced. Ramaswamy and Ozcan assert that value co-creation strengthens consumers' connection to the brand, increasing loyalty and enhancing purchase intent by creating a sense of ownership. [36]. This finding highlights the importance of consumer engagement in eWOM, as it deepens the relationship between the brand and its customers, thereby positively impacting purchase intention.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) examines the simultaneous mediation effect of trust and value co-creation between eWOM and purchase intention. The results confirm this hypothesis, showing that the combination of trust and value co-creation creates a powerful pathway through which eWOM affects purchase intention. Hennig-Thurau et al. suggest that trust, combined with active consumer participation, creates a comprehensive framework for understanding consumer intentions in digital environments [37]. When consumers both trust the brand and participate in value co-creation, the impact of eWOM on purchase intentions is significantly amplified.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) posits that a hedonic brand image mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. The findings confirm this hypothesis, revealing that consumers' emotional and experiential perceptions of Apple products play an essential role in translating positive eWOM into purchase intentions. Batra and Ahtola's research supports this by suggesting that a brand's hedonic appeal enhances its attractiveness, motivating consumers who seek emotional satisfaction from their purchases [38]. Positive eWOM thus not only provides information but also enhances the brand's emotional appeal, making it more desirable to consumers.

The sixth hypothesis (H6) proposes that a functional brand image mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. This hypothesis is supported by the data, indicating that consumers' perceptions of Apple's practical benefits and performance attributes strengthen the impact of eWOM on their purchase intentions. Keller's work on brand equity highlights that a strong functional image assures consumers of product quality and reliability, which is crucial in influencing purchase intentions [39]. When eWOM emphasizes these functional attributes, it reinforces consumers' belief in the brand's value, thus promoting a positive intention to buy.

5 Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in influencing purchase intention for Apple products among Indonesian consumers, showing that eWOM significantly affects consumer decisions in digital environments. The findings demonstrate that eWOM not only directly impacts purchase intention but also does so through essential mediators such as trust, value co-creation, and brand image (hedonic and functional). These mediating factors amplify the effectiveness of eWOM by enhancing consumers' emotional connections, engagement, and perceptions of product quality, thus encouraging purchasing behavior [40][41].

Trust was shown to be a fundamental mediator, confirming that consumers are more inclined to act on eWOM when they trust the source and brand, which is consistent with findings from previous research on the importance of trust in digital consumer behavior. The presence of value co-creation as another significant mediator underscores the impact of consumer engagement, as individuals who actively participate in brand discussions or share feedback tend to develop stronger purchase intentions. This aligns with Ramaswamy and Ozcan's (2014) perspective on co-creation as a catalyst for brand loyalty and enhanced purchasing behavior [40][42].

Moreover, the study reveals that brand image—both hedonic and functional—plays a vital role in translating eWOM into purchase intention. Consumers are drawn not only to the functional benefits of a product, such as quality and performance, but also to the emotional appeal associated with the brand. Batra and Ahtola's (1991) findings suggest that a balanced brand image, blending both functional and hedonic attributes, optimizes consumer engagement and purchase motivation [43].

In summary, the findings suggest that brands can leverage eWOM effectively by focusing on building trust, encouraging consumer participation, and fostering a brand image that balances emotional and practical appeal. By integrating these elements, companies can enhance the power of eWOM, strengthening consumer purchase intentions in digital marketplaces where peer influence and brand perception are pivotal [44][45].

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