

Exploring the Role of Social Influence and Trust in Shaping Purchase Intentions: The Impact of Face-to-Face Friendship, E-WOM Readership, and Social Media Viewership

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the influence of social and influencer exposure on consumer purchase intention through brand trust in the context of e-commerce in Indonesia. The method used is a quantitative research method with the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach through SmartPLS. The results show a significant relationship between trust and purchase intention, social media and trust, and e-WOM and social influence. However, there is a potential discriminant issue between the social influence construct and e-WOM and social media. This study concludes that influencer exposure, electronic word-of-mouth, and brand trust have an important role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions in the digital era.

Keywords: e-commerce, influencer, social influence, e-WOM, brand trust.

Introduction

Consumers usually rely on the preferences of others who have used the product to be used. Indonesia is one of the countries that uses a lot of online sales and purchases in e-commerce. The influence of people who become "public figures" will also determine how much the purchase of a brand in Indonesia increases (Sukidin et al., 2025), because most Indonesian people trust influencers who they like to see / respect.

Research conducted by Weiger et al., (2025) stated that, although influencer and brand engagement independently increase purchases, high brand engagement can reduce the purchase-enhancing effect of influencer engagement through weakened PSR (which describes the "reverse vampire effect"). This negative interaction between influencer and brand engagement is particularly pronounced among followers of mega influencers, who have millions of followers. High brand engagement can weaken PSR, especially with mega influencers, because they can be perceived as manipulative.

Meanwhile, another study conducted by Nyazabe et al., (2025) exposure significantly increases perceived credibility, which in turn positively influences purchase intentions. In addition, social ties strengthen the exposure-credibility relationship, emphasizing the role of peer trust and tie strength in shaping consumer behavior.

This study will discuss how social influence and influencer influence in Indonesia can increase the interest in buying and selling goods through e-commerce according to the brand they choose. In addition, this study will also prove how humans are influenced by their very broad external environment (social, spectacle / "public figure", brand) which will affect their purchasing power / level and interest in using e-commerce.

In an effort to find out the results of this study, calculations will be used using SEM PLS (Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares) with SmartPLS (Smart Partial Least Squares) software as a medium for calculating the results. When the quantitative results have been successfully found, the analysis process will be carried out and compared with previous studies using descriptive analysis.

This study aims to determine how much social influence and influencers have on the use of e-commerce through existing product branding. In addition, in theory, this study will provide education on how branding will affect the process of selling or purchasing goods which are also influenced by social variables and from influencers. Where, practically the results of this study can be used as an evaluation process in determining the future of a brand's business in the development of the times.

Literature review

Face-to-Face Friendship

Face-to-face friendship refers to interpersonal interactions and trust built through direct communication, such as between friends or family members. Prior studies have shown that social relationships significantly influence consumer behavior, particularly in high-involvement decisions (Wang et al., 2012). In the digital context, recommendations from friends and family remain a trusted source of product information, reinforcing the role of interpersonal influence even in online purchases.

Social Media Viewership

Social media platforms serve as key channels for brand exposure, often mediated by influencers or content creators. According to Lee & Watkins (2016), consumers' perceptions and attitudes are shaped by influencers' familiarity with the brand and the frequency of exposure through livestreaming, product placements, or endorsements. These parasocial interactions often foster a sense of trust and loyalty, thereby increasing purchase intention.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)

E-WOM encompasses reviews, ratings, and user-generated content that circulate on digital platforms. It has emerged as a critical determinant in shaping perceptions of product quality and brand credibility (Singh & Matsui, 2017). Unlike traditional advertising, e-WOM is considered more authentic and reliable due to its perceived neutrality. Its relevance and timeliness directly impact consumers' trust and, subsequently, their decision-making process.

Trust

Trust is a pivotal construct in the online purchasing process. It reflects the degree of confidence consumers have in a brand, product, or information source. Kenworthy et al., (2008) emphasize that brand trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty in digital transactions. Trust is formed when consumers perceive consistency between promises and actual brand performance, particularly in online contexts where physical inspection is not possible.

Social Influence

Social influence pertains to the perceived social pressure to conform to the expectations of others, including friends, family, and broader peer groups. (Bian & Forsythe, 2012) argue that ownership of specific branded products can serve as a form of social signaling, enhancing perceived self-worth and acceptance within a social group. In online settings, social influence can manifest through shared content, likes, comments, and reposts that normalize certain behaviors or products.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention represents the consumer's readiness to engage in a transaction. It is a forward-looking measure, reflecting the likelihood that a consumer will purchase or recommend a product. According to Liang et al., (2024), purchase intention is shaped by a combination of emotional, cognitive, and social factors, with trust serving as a central mediator. Strong brand-consumer relationships and high perceived value are commonly associated with higher purchase intention.

Theoretical framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed for this study, which investigates the role of social influence in shaping online purchase intention. Drawing on multiple streams of literature, the model highlights how various social-related factors impact consumer behavior in digital environments. Specifically, the framework identifies three primary antecedents to social influence: face-to-face friendship, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) readership, and social media viewership. These components reflect different modes of interpersonal and digital interaction that can shape consumer perceptions and decisions. Previous research has shown that interpersonal communication, such as face-to-face friendship, plays a critical role in building credibility and influencing purchasing behavior. Additionally, E-WOM readership captures the extent to which consumers are exposed to and

influenced by online reviews, comments, and shared experiences from other users. Social media viewership further extends this by incorporating passive exposure to product-related content across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Central to this model is the construct of social influence, which serves as a mediating variable. Social influence synthesizes the effects of these three antecedents and is hypothesized to directly affect purchase intention. Furthermore, trust is included as an essential factor that strengthens the effect of social influence. Trust is conceptualized as consumer confidence in the credibility and reliability of social input, reinforcing the role of social influence in guiding purchase decisions. This model is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary online shopping environments, where consumers are increasingly relying on digital social cues rather than traditional advertising. By examining these interconnected constructs, the study aims to better understand how trust and social dynamics translate into behavioral intentions in an e-commerce setting. The complete theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The conceptual model

Table 1. Variabel

Social Influence		
face to face friendship		
FFF1	I seek out the advice of my friends and family before I choose a product.	X. Wang et al. (2012)
FFF2	I trust the products recommended by my friends for friendships I have with my peers mean a lot to me.	
FFF3	I asked my peers for information about the product.	
Social Media view-ship		
SM1	The knowledge of brands comes from online celebrities.	Lee and Watkins (2016)
SM2	Live streaming of online celebrities will guide the purchase of brand goods	
SM3	The celebrity is familiar with the brand, so I pay attention to the brand she recommended	
e-WOM readership		
EWOM1	An accurate and quality message about an online product is trustworthy and helpful.	Singh and Matsui (2017), Putri Utami et al. (2020), Sa'ait et al. (2016)
EWOM2	The probability of choosing this brand because the online review has sufficient reasons supporting the opinions.	
EWOM3	The relevance, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of online reviews affect the reliability of the information.	
Trust		
TRU1	Source credibility determines the reliability of network information	Kenworthy et al. (2016)
TRU2	Brand live streaming can be trusted, since they keep the promises they make to us.	
TRU3	The network's evaluation of the brand is relatively objective	
Social influence		
SI1	Having certain brands is a way to express oneself.	Q. Bian and Forsythe (2012)
SI2	Owning brand goods attracts attention	
SI3	Brand goods are important to me because they make me feel accepted in my social circle.	

Purchase Intention		
PI1	I am highly likely to purchase brand items.	Park et al. (2021), Hsu and Lin (2016)
PI2	I would recommend brand goods to other people.	
PI3	I'm likely to purchase brand items.6 SAGE Open	

Drawing from the literature above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Face-to-Face Friendship has a significant positive effect on Social Influence.

H₂: Social Media Viewership has a significant positive effect on Trust.

H₃: Electronic Word-of-Mouth has a significant positive effect on Social Influence.

H₄: Social Influence has a significant positive effect on Trust.

H₅: Trust has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention.

H₆: Social Influence moderates the effect of Trust on Purchase Intention.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between social factors and purchase intention in the e-commerce context. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to online consumers in Indonesia. The measurement items were adapted from prior validated studies and assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A total of 190 valid responses were obtained. The constructs measured include Face-to-Face Friendship, Social Media Viewership, e-WOM, Trust, Social Influence, and Purchase Intention.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique via SmartPLS 4.0 software. Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Fornell-Larcker criterion. Model fit was examined using Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and RMS Theta, while multicollinearity was evaluated via VIF values.

Result and Discussion

The sample comprises 190 respondents, who completed a structured survey measuring six latent variables: Face-to-Face Friendship (FF), Social Media Viewership (SM), Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), Trust (TRU), Social Influence (SI), and Purchase Intention (PI). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

The mean values across items ranged from 3.1 to 4.7, suggesting that respondents generally showed positive agreement toward the constructs. The standard deviation values ranged between 0.70 and 1.20, indicating moderate variability and no severe response bias. Skewness and kurtosis values (not shown) were within acceptable limits for normal distribution assumptions in SEM-PLS, supporting the robustness of the statistical analyses that followed.

The measurement model was evaluated based on internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 2 Internal Consistency.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	rho_A
EWOM	0.906	0.941	0.917
FF	0.874	0.919	0.922
SM	0.916	0.947	0.919
TRU	0.902	0.939	0.903
SI	0.909	0.943	0.910

PI	0.845	0.907	0.850
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Source: Author's work (2025)

All values exceeded the thresholds of 0.70 for Cronbach's Alpha, 0.70 for rho_A, and 0.70 for Composite Reliability, indicating strong internal consistency across constructs.

Convergent Validity

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs ranged between 0.764 and 0.857, well above the recommended cutoff of 0.50, thus demonstrating adequate convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity

- Based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion, each construct's AVE square root was greater than its correlation with other constructs.
- However, HTMT values revealed some issues:
 - SI-EWOM = 1.045
 - SI-SM = 1.052

These values slightly exceed the 0.90 threshold, suggesting potential discriminant validity concerns between social influence, e-WOM, and social media constructs. Further refinement or second-order factor modeling may be required in future studies.

Gof model

The structural model was assessed through R² values, f² effect sizes, VIF collinearity diagnostics, and hypothesis testing using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples).

Table 3 Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Dependent Variable	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.534	0.526
Social Influence (SI)	0.981	0.980

Source: Author's work (2025)

The R² values indicate that:

- 53.4% of the variance in purchase intention is explained by trust and social influence.
- A very high 98.1% of the variance in social influence is explained by face-to-face friendship and e-WOM, demonstrating an excellent model fit for SI.

Table 4 Effect Size (f²)

Relationship	f ²
SM → TRU	2.210 (large)
EWOM → SI	1.219 (large)
TRU → PI	0.140 (medium)
FF → SI	0.013 (small)
SI * TRU → PI	0.048 (small)
TRU → SI	0.045 (small)

Source: Author's work (2025)

These values support the strong predictive relevance of social media and e-WOM in the model, with trust serving as a meaningful mediator toward purchase intention.

Collinearity (VIF)

- Outer VIF values were generally below 5, indicating acceptable multicollinearity.
- However, inner VIF values were relatively high for:
 - EWOM (12.834)
 - SM (8.771)
 - FF (6.943)

While not ideal, this is tolerable in SEM-PLS especially if the constructs are conceptually related and the model is theoretically justified.

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing (T-values)

Path	T-value	Significance
TRU → PI	5.434	Significant
SM → TRU	9.874	Significant
EWOM → SI	7.537	Significant
FF → SI	~0.5–1.0	Not significant
SI * TRU → PI (moderation)	~1.2–1.5	Not significant

Source: Author's work (2025)

Hence, H2, H3, H5 are strongly supported; H1 and H6 are weak or not supported. Model fit indices were assessed using **SRMR**, **RMS Theta**, and additional information criteria:

Table 6 Effect of endogenous variables

Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
SRMR	0.090	< 0.10	Acceptable
RMS Theta	0.286	< 0.12–0.30	Good
Chi-Square	Infinite	—	Not applicable in PLS
AIC (PI)	-137.290	Lower = better	Strong
AIC (SI)	-738.466	Lower = better	Strong

Source: Author's work (2025)

The SRMR value below 0.10 and RMS Theta < 0.30 confirm that the model is adequately specified and represents the data well. Despite the infinite Chi-Square (common in PLS-SEM), overall model performance is statistically and theoretically acceptable.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the effects of social influence, social media viewership, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on purchase intention in the context of Indonesian e-commerce, emphasizing the mediating role of brand trust. The findings, derived using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), reveal that social media viewership and e-WOM are

significant antecedents of trust and social influence, respectively, with trust serving as a crucial driver of purchase intention. The results confirm that digital interactions – particularly those involving influencers and peer reviews – play a pivotal role in shaping consumer decisions. While trust emerged as a strong predictor of purchase intention, the hypothesized moderating effect of social influence on the trust–intention relationship was not supported, suggesting that trust acts more as a direct channel than a conditional effect shaped by social norms. Despite the robustness of the findings, the study is not without limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretation, and the cultural specificity of the Indonesian context may limit the generalizability of results to other markets. Moreover, minor concerns regarding discriminant validity (notably between social media, e-WOM, and social influence constructs) and multicollinearity among predictors point to potential measurement redundancies. Future research should consider longitudinal or experimental designs to capture behavioral change over time and validate causal relationships. Cross-cultural comparative studies are also recommended to assess the model’s applicability in varying sociocultural settings. Additionally, distinguishing between different influencer types (e.g., micro vs. macro influencers), exploring platform-specific effects (such as TikTok vs. Instagram), and incorporating multidimensional constructs of trust—including emotional and cognitive components—could offer deeper theoretical and practical insights. These directions would enhance understanding of how digital persuasion mechanisms operate and evolve in the global e-commerce landscape.

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