

The Role of Brand Image in Mediating eWOM toward Consumer Purchase Intention on e-Commerce Shopee

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Abstract: The decline in purchase intention on Shopee e-commerce requires e-commerce to be able to compete with its competitors, namely by building positive eWOM in order to create a good brand image, so that it will have an impact on increasing consumer purchase intention to buy at Shopee e-commerce. This study aims to be able to see the effect of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) mediated by brand image on consumer purchase intention. In this study, the approach used is a quantitative approach, a number of hypotheses are tested using a sample of Shopee e-commerce users in Jakarta, Bekasi and Tangerang totaling 102 respondents. The data analysis technique used in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS 3.0) (SEM-PLS). In this study, we found that eWOM has a positive and significant impact on purchase intention with brand image as an intervening variable.

Keywords: *Electronic word of mouth (eWOM), Brand image, Purchase Intention*

1. Introduction

The rapid development of technology is utilized by the community to be able to facilitate the community in conducting activities and also facilitate the community in order to fulfill their needs with greater speed and efficiency. According to data from APJII (Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association) the number of internet users in 2022-2023 reached 215.63 million people. This represents a 2.67% increase from the previous 210.03 million users, making up 78.19% of Indonesia's total population of 275.77 million. Therefore, with over half the population using the internet extensively, it's causing a shift in consumer behavior towards online shopping, also known as Electronic Commerce (e-commerce).



Fig.1. Number of e-commerce visitors in Indonesia in 2022 in quarter 1

iPrice, an institution that launches topics related to e-commerce and startups released data on the number of visitors to e-commerce sites in Indonesia in the first quarter of 2022. When compared to existing e-commerce in Indonesia, Tokopedia and Shopee compete fiercely to be able to lead the e-commerce market in Indonesia. Therefore, Shopee must continue to strive to compete and grow continuously to prevent being displaced by other e-commerce platforms in Indonesia.



Fig.2. Number of Shopee visitors for the period Oct 2022 - Feb 2023

With the increasing growth of e-commerce, e-commerce is automatically required to be able to survive and compete with its competitors. Similarweb data released in April 2023, shows

that the trend of visits to the Shopee e-commerce site in Indonesia has decreased in October 2022-February 2023. With the decrease in the number of visitors to Shopee e-commerce, it can indirectly illustrate that there is a decrease in purchase intention in Shopee e-commerce.

When purchasing a product, consumers typically seek information about the product before making a purchase (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012 in Irfan Syahputra et al., 2023). A consumer will buy very low-priced or very expensive goods based on a recommendation from someone even from someone they consider to have no influence or not a leader (Yogesh & Yesha, 2014).

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) can help companies to communicate the message of a product to attract consumer attention, which can increase consumer interest in buying the advertised product (Irfan Syahputra et al., 2023). eWOM also has a significant role in influencing the formation of brand image (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). eWOM can also influence consumer purchase intention or be a consideration when consumers are about to make a decision (Handoko & Melinda, 2021).

Even though the Shopee brand is one of the e-commerce brands that is widely used in Indonesia, our review shows that the results of reviews from users of this brand on Playstore show that there are unfavorable reviews such as complaints about slow loading of applications, payment problems, not being able to log into the application and other problems. Negative eWOM will affect the brand image of a product or company, if a company has negative eWOM, it will encourage consumers to have the perception that the company or product has a poor brand image. A favorable brand image is something that is expected by customers because with a good brand image of a company or product, customers will feel more confident in buying products or services offered by the company (Indriyati et al., 2022). In addition, a good brand image is able to increase consumer purchase intention and knowledge about that brand and can increase consumer confidence in a product (Handoko & Melinda, 2021) besides that, a strong brand image will be able to provide huge advantages for businesses, including building a competitive advantage (Nursyabani & Silvianita, 2023).

eWOM has a positive and considerable influence on purchase intention (Zaki Akbar et al., 2021). Brand image can also mediate the effect of eWOM on purchase intention. Meanwhile, brand image and eWOM have a major impact on purchase intention and eWOM has a meaningful impact on brand image (Onurlubaş, 2019). However, there are gaps in research results that Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has no significant effect on purchase intention (Mantiri et al., 2022), and brand image has no effect on purchase intention (Demante & Dwiyanto, 2019). However, there are gaps in research results that indicating that eWOM lacks a significant impact on purchase intention (Mantiri et al., 2022), and brand image does not influence purchase intention (Demante & Dwiyanto, 2019). Given these identified issues and the gaps in previous research, we are motivated to investigating deeper into the correlation between eWOM and purchase intention through brand image.

2. Literature review

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) refers to the activity of sharing personal experiences, opinions, and comments by consumers about a product, service, or brand, delivered to other consumers through their network channels (Cong & Zheng, 2017). And nowadays consumers are more interested in sharing and communicating their shopping experiences through platforms so that eWOM is one of the factors that can influence consumers' purchase intention to do online shopping.

eWOM communication is described as the sharing of opinions, both positive and negative, from current or past customers of a product or company, which is accessible to a wide audience through the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Social media users trust other people's reviews and recommendations because the information is shared by previous buyers. Shared information sent through electronic reviews can influence people to buy products/services through various recommendations shared on social media (Shanmugam & Sulthana, 2019).

The results of previous research show that the better consumers accept eWOM, the higher consumer purchase intention through Shopee in Denpasar (Ayu et al., 2020). eWOM has a positive and significant impact on purchase intention (Rahimah & Kuswanto, 2022). However, there is a gap in the results of previous research that Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) does not have a significant effect on purchase intention (Mantiri et al., 2022). In addition, it is also stated that eWOM can be an alternative to obtaining a good brand image, because the more a brand gets positive testimonials (positive eWOM), the more positive the brand image of a company (W & , 2018).

Brand Image

Brand image is a combination of recognition, affection and evaluation processes (Lee et al., 2014). Brand image is defined as the consumer's perception of the brand and is reflected as an association with the brand. Brand image is considered a key intangible asset that influence consumers' perceptions of a company. Brand image has two main components, including functional and emotional aspects. Functional aspects are dimensions that have specific properties that can be measured. In contrast, emotional aspects are related to feelings and psychological attitudes towards the company (Agmeka et al., 2019). The importance of brand image is to help customers identify the brands they use, so they can assess and evaluate brands or companies (Nurlita et al., 2016). Previous researchers also stated that brand image has a significant positive impact on purchase intention, it means that the better the brand image of a product or company, the higher the willingness of consumers to buy (Putera & Gdeketut Warmika, 2020). Brand image has a major influence on purchase intention (Torlak et al., 2014).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a key variable that measures potential consumer behavior. Understanding purchase intention aids businesses in adapting products and services to boost sales and profits by offerings to market demand (Agmeka et al., 2019). purchase intention is an awareness that is owned by each individual, and has planned to try to get the product (Spears & Singh, 2004). Purchase intention can be defined as the possibility that the customer will purchase the product (Fazli et al., 2009). Before consumers decide to buy a product, there are several stages that are carried out, first collecting information about the brand they want, then using the product to evaluate the characteristics of the brand and determine whether it matches the buyer's intentions, then the buyer starts thinking about his purchase decision. When buyers have complete knowledge about a product and have a good perception of the product they will certainly be interested in considering and then buying the brand (Tariq et al., 2013).

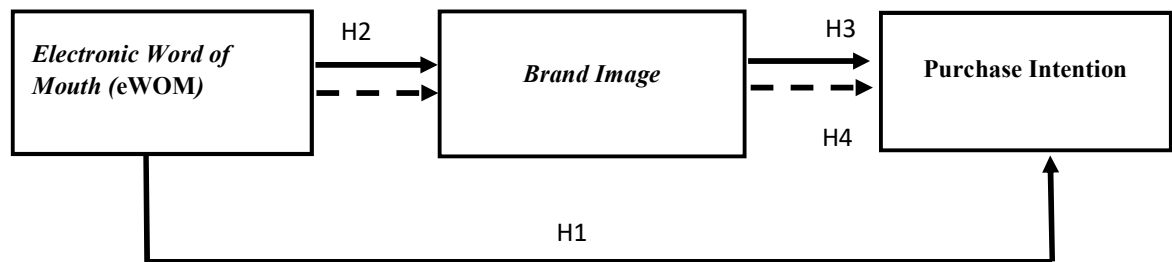


Fig .3. Research model

The hypothesis is arranged based on the theory and theoretical framework previously described, so from the theory and framework above, several hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H1: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention in Shopee e-commerce.

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on brand image in Shopee e-commerce.

H3: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention in Shopee e-commerce.

H4: Brand Image can mediate the relationship between eWOM and consumer purchase intention in Shopee e-commerce.

3. Research method

In this study the approach used is a quantitative approach. Prof.Dr. Sugiyono (2016: 6) quantitative method is a research method that presents research data in the form of numbers and uses statistical analysis. The population in this study were Shopee e-commerce users in the Jakarta, Tangerang and Bekasi areas with an unknown population due to the large number of Shopee users available. The data collection technique uses Purposive Sampling, which is a method of sampling through determining characteristics in accordance with the research objectives so that it is expected to answer research problems (Andrade, 2021). In this research, the sample selection should adhere to the following criteria:

- 1) internet users with a minimum age of 17 - 30 years.
- 2) have shopped online at shopee e-commerce at least 1 time.
- 3) the population in this study are Shopee e-commerce users in the Jakarta, Tangerang and Bekasi areas.

The sample size was determined using the hair formula, which is suitable when the population size is uncertain, recommending a sample size 5-10 times the indicators (2010: 176). According to (Hair, et al., 2014) ideally, the sample size is at least 100 or greater than 100 so that the number of samples in this study was 102 respondents obtained from the calculation of the following hair formula ($17 \text{ indicators} \times 6 = 102 \text{ respondents}$).

The sample size was taken using the hair formula. Hair's formula (2010: 176) is used due to uncertainty about the exact population size and recommends a sample size that is 5-10 times the number of indicators. Thus, the number of indicators is 17 times ($17 \times 6 = 102$). On the basis of these calculations, the sample taken for this study amounted to 102 respondents.

In this study, researchers distributed questionnaires online using Google Form. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents according to a Likert scale. The Likert scale has 5 categories used in this study for the independent variable according to its size: Strongly Agree (SS) is rated at 5; Agree (S) is rated at 4; Undecided (RR) is rated at 3; Disagree (TS) is rated at 2; Strongly Disagree (STS) is rated at 1 (Djaja et al., 2022).

The data analysis technique employed in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). SEM-PLS is utilized to examine and refine the model. This analysis provides an opportunity to illustrate the model between variables and determine the indicator for each variable (Ashoer et al., 2019). SEM analysis includes testing the overall model fit and testing the individual significance of the relationships among the variables (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

Table 1.

Measurement of variables

Variable	Operational definition	Indicator
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i> (eWOM).	eWOM communication is described as the sharing of opinions, both positive and negative, from current or past customers of a product or company, which is accessible to a wide audience through the internet. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).	(Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). 1. Support from the platform 2. Expressing unfavorable emotions 3. Caring about other consumers 4. Extroversion and positive self-improvement 5. Social advantages 6. Financial incentives 7. Assisting the company 8. Advice seeking
Brand image	Brand image can be defined as one of the most important intangible assets that influence consumers' perception of a company. Brand image has two main components, including functional and emotional aspects. Functional dimensions are those that have specific properties that can be measured. On the other hand, the emotional aspect relates to feelings and psychological attitudes towards the company. (Agmeka et al., 2019).	(Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012) 1. Desire to buy a product over another brand. 2. Availability to provide recommendations to others about a product / brand. 3. Intention to buy a product in the future.
Purchase Intention	Purchase interest means the probability that a customer will make a purchase of a particular product or brand. (Fazli et al., 2009).	Kotler dan Keller (2009) 1. How consumers perceive product identification. 2. How consumers perceive product excellence. 3. How consumers perceive

product dimensions.

4. How consumers perceive product style or model.
5. How consumers perceive product color.
6. How consumers perceive product pricing.

4. Results and discussion

To determine the influence between the eWOM variable (X) and the brand image variable (Z) on purchase intention (Y), in this study we employed hypothesis testing through the analytical method of Partial Least Square (PLS) using the smartPLS 3.0 software. Below is an outline of the PLS program model that is being tested:

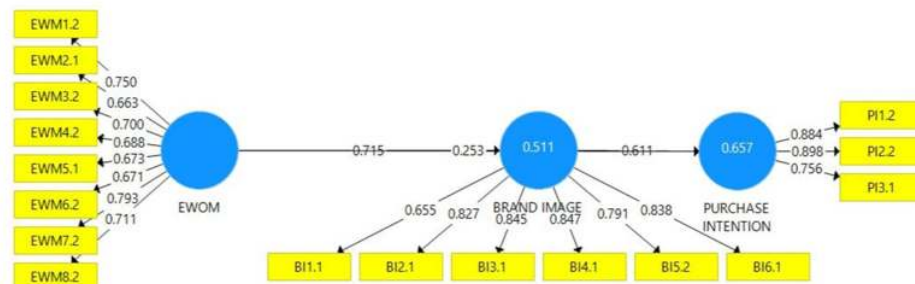


Fig.4. Schematic of the research model

To investigate the influence between the eWOM variable (X) and the brand image variable (Z) on purchase intention (Y), the authors use quantitative analysis using statistical calculations with an analysis model, namely SEM-PLS analysis. This analysis model is used to determine the amount of direct and indirect influence on the variables we studied. Where the data we use comes from a questionnaire that we distributed to Shopee users.

The Outer Loading test aims to determine the correlation of the indicator score with the variable score (Yusuf, I., & Sartika, D. 2021). Indicators are deemed reliable if they have a correlation value above 0.7 however, in the development phase a correlation of 0.50 is still acceptable.

Table 2.

Outer loading table

	BRAND IMAGE	EWM	PURCHASE INTENTION
BI1.1	0,655		
BI2.1	0,827		
BI3.1	0,845		
BI4.1	0,847		
BI5.2	0,791		
BI6.1	0,838		
EWM1.2		0,750	
EWM2.1		0,663	
EWM3.2		0,700	
EWM4.2		0,688	
EWM5.1		0,673	
EWM6.2		0,671	
EWM7.2		0,793	
EWM8.2		0,711	
PI1.2			0,884
PI2.2			0,898
PI3.1			0,756

Based on the data in the table above, most indicators of the research variable have outer loading values > 0.7 , but there are still some indicators with outer loading values < 0.7 . An outer loading value in the range of 0.5-0.6 is deemed adequate to fulfill convergent validity criteria. (Imam Ghazali: 2006). The data indicates that no variable indicators have an outer loading value below 0.5. Therefore, all indicators are deemed suitable and valid for research use, ready for further analysis.

Table 3.

Construct validity and reliability table

	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
BRAND IMAGE	0,888	0,895	0,916	0,646
EWM	0,857	0,864	0,889	0,500
PURCHASE INTENTION	0,802	0,811	0,884	0,719

Based on the data in the table above, AVE value is equal or more than 0.5, indicating that the construct can account for 50% or more of the variance in the items (Wong K.K., 2013, Sarstedt et al., 2017). The next assessment involves evaluating the composite reliability of the indicator block used to measure the construct. A construct is considered reliable when the composite reliability value is greater than 0.60. (Sarstedt et al., 2017) and we can see that the composite reliability value is > 0.60 so it is said to be reliable. Nunnally's (1994) data can be considered reliable when the Cronbach's alpha value exceeds 0.7.

Table 4.

Path coefficients table

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
BRAND IMAGE -> PURCHASE INTENTION	0,611	0,593	0,119	5,127	0,000
EWM -> BRAND IMAGE	0,715	0,712	0,084	8,458	0,000
EWM -> PURCHASE INTENTION	0,253	0,268	0,111	2,272	0,012

The results above reflect the path coefficients which are the outcomes of direct effect testing:

- Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, we can see from the t statistic value $> 1,96$, namely 5,127 and p values $< 0,05$ and we get p values 0,000.
- eWOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image, we can see from the t statistic value $> 1,96$, namely 8,458 and p values $< 0,05$ and we get p values 0,000.
- eWOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, we can see from the t statistic value $> 1,96$, namely 2,272 and p values $< 0,05$ and we get p values 0,012.

The direct effect of brand image on purchase intention.

The value of the parameter coefficient of the brand image variable on purchase intention is 0.611, which indicates that there is a positive influence of brand image on purchase intention. This implies that an increase in the brand image value corresponds to a higher purchase intention. A one-unit increase in brand image will lead to a 61.1% increase in purchase intention. Based on calculations using bootstrap or resampling, the test results for the estimated coefficient of brand image on purchase intention from bootstrap are 0.611 with a t value of 5.217 and a standard deviation of 0.119. Additionally, a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ was obtained, indicating acceptance of H1. This suggests that the direct effect of brand image on purchase intention is both statistically significant and meaningful. This research is supported by Agmeka et al. (2019), indicating that consumers' intentions regarding purchasing products or services can be influenced by positive or negative perceptions of brands. Febrin et al. (2020) similarly found in their research that there is a strong and positive correlation between brand image and purchase intention.

The direct effect of eWOM on brand image.

The parameter coefficient for the eWOM variable on brand image is 0.715, indicating a positive impact of eWOM on brand image. This suggests that as the eWOM value increases, the brand image also increases. An increase of one unit of eWOM will increase brand image by 71,5%. From the calculations using bootstrap or resampling, where the test results of the estimated coefficient of eWOM on brand image bootstrap results are 0,715 with a t value of 8,458 and a standard deviation of 0,084. And the p value obtained is $0,000 < 0,05$ so that H1 is accepted, which means that the direct effect of eWOM on brand image is meaningful or statistically significant. In a study conducted by (Pratiwi et al., 2019) showed that eWOM can indeed be a cause for building a positive brand image. It is also supported by the results of research from (Putera & Gdeketut Warmika, 2020) that the more effective eWOM communication is, the more positive the brand image will be.

The direct effect of eWOM on purchase intention.

The parameter coefficient for the eWOM variable in relation to purchase intention is 0.253, indicating a positive impact. This implies that as the eWOM value increases, purchase intention also increases. An increase of one unit of eWOM will increase purchase intention by 25,3%. Based on calculations using bootstrap or resampling, where the test results of the estimated coefficient of eWOM on purchase intention of bootstrap results are 0,268 with a t value of 2,272 and a standard deviation of 0,111. And the p value obtained is $0,012 < 0,05$ so

that H1 is accepted or which means that the direct effect of eWOM on purchase intention is meaningful or statistically significant. The results of this study are supported by the results of previous research by (Dewi, K. A. P., Giantari, and I. G. A. K. 2020) indicates that the more positive the consumer response to eWOM, the grWeater the likelihood of consumers to make a purchase. (Handoko & Melinda, 2021) in their research also found that eWOM also has the potential to influence consumer purchase intentions or become a factor that is considered when consumers will make decisions.

Table 5.

Specific indirect effects table

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
EWOM → BRAND IMAGE → PURCHASE INTENTION	0,436	0,423	0,103	4,234	0,000

Based on this figure, it can be concluded that:

The eWOM variable has an indirect effect on purchase intention through brand image, we can see from the statistical t value > 1,96, namely 4,234 and p values < 0,05 and we get p values 0.000.

The indirect effect of eWOM on purchase intention through brand image.

The parameter coefficient for the eWOM on purchase intention through brand image is 0,436, which means that there is a positive indirect effect of eWOM on purchase intention through brand image. Or it can be interpreted that the higher the eWOM value, the purchase intention through brand image will also increase. An increase of one unit of eWOM will increase purchase intention through brand image by 43,6%. Based on calculations using bootstrap or resampling, where the results of the eWOM estimation coefficient test on purchase intention through brand image bootstrap results are 0,423 with a t value of 4,234 and a standard deviation of 0,103. Then the p value is 0,000 < 0,05 so that H1 is accepted or which means that the indirect effect of eWOM on purchase intention through brand image is meaningful or statistically significant. To validate this finding (Supradita et al., 2020) in their research found that, if the company can create good eWOM, it will make a positive perception of the brand in the public, the positive effect of eWOM will also increase consumer motivation to make purchases. This shows that a good brand image formed through eWOM contributes to increasing consumer purchase intention.

Table 6.

R- Square table

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
BRAND IMAGE	0,511	0,506
PURCHASE INTENTION	0,657	0,651

The R- squared value of 0.75 falls into the strong category, while 0.50 is categorized as moderate, and 0.25 is considered weak. (Hair et al., 2011). Based on the R Square table data above, brand image is influenced by 0.511 or 51.1% by the eWOM variable and the remaining 48.9% is influenced by other variables outside this study. And purchase intention is influenced

by 0.657 or 65.7% by the eWOM and brand image, while the remaining 34.3% is influenced by variables outside this study.

Table 7.

Model fit table

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,076	0,076
d ULS	0,885	0,885
d G	0,417	0,417
Chi-Square	226,794	226,794
NFI	0,784	0,784

If the Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR) is < 0.08 and NFI values are close to 1, it means that the model used is fit (Nitta & Wardhani, 2022). From the fit model table data above, it can be seen that the SRMR value is $0,076 < 0,08$ and the NFI value is $0,784$ (close to 1) so it can be concluded that the data has described the overall model or the model fits the data.

Based on the all statistical calculation data that has been carried out above, the hypothesis developed from the research model proves that eWOM and brand image have a positive effect on purchase intention. The brand image variable strongly influences purchase intention, indicating a positive correlation where higher brand image values lead to increased purchase intention.

In this study, it is also explained that purchase intention is the result of the brand image of the company. This study also supports the results of research by (Agmeka et al., 2019) that brand image has a major influence on purchase intention. In addition, it also strengthens the results of research conducted by (Putera & Gdeketut Warmika, 2020) that brand image has a significant positive impact on purchase intention. A positive company brand image will create trust in the minds of customers, so that it can reduce their doubts in making purchases. (Febrin et al., 2020). This implies that the more positive brand image of a product or company, the greater consumers' willingness to make a purchase.

Social media can influence consumer purchase intention because with a digital marketing strategy through electronic media, in this case, such as growing positive eWOM, it is a very important part for companies to pay attention to because with positive eWOM, it will foster a good brand image for the company which will encourage increased purchase intention from consumers to buy. Sharing posts or providing reviews via the internet and using social media has been proven to trigger consumer purchase intention (Indika, D. R., & Jovita, C., 2017). eWOM can help to reduce risk and uncertainty for buyers. With reviews, consumers can find out more about the quality of products and services from a particular company or manufacturer. This information is the basis for consumers to decide whether to make a purchase or not (An & Alvia, 2022). Potential buyers will pay attention to post-purchase valuation from other consumers, before they decide to make a purchase with this eWOM and brand image must be a company's concern (Sumaa et al., 2021).

5. Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that there is a significant and positive impact of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention when brand image is considered as an intervening variable. This study explains that the higher eWOM value, the more consumer purchase intention through brand image will increase. This shows that online reviews or recommendations from consumers can influence other consumers' purchase intention. A good brand image also has an important role in triggering consumer purchase intention. Therefore, various branding and reputation management efforts are needed to be able to create and maintain eWOM and a positive brand image of the company.

6. Implications

The managerial implication of the results of this study is that companies must improve online marketing strategies, in this case one of which can be done by creating positive eWOM, because based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be seen that eWOM is proven to have a positive and significant impact on building a positive brand image and also encouraging purchase intention in consumers. Therefore, Shopee must focus more on doing online marketing by collaborating with consumers and motivating them to be able to share positive experiences about products or services in Shopee. Not only that, Shopee also needs to pay attention to review and reputation management so that it can play an active role in responding to customer reviews, especially for negative eWOM reviews, with quick and appropriate solutions and responses.

7. Research limitations

This research includes data from a specific time period and the impact may change over time such as market situations or trends that at the time of the research may not always be relevant. In addition, this research is limited in that it cannot consider all factors that may have a significant impact on purchase intention in shopee e-commerce. The shopee e-commerce platform will also certainly continue to develop so this research cannot capture all future platform changes that may affect purchase intention.

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