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The Influence of Consumer Involvement and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions with Consumer Trust as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

The rapid growth of TikTok Shop has transformed online shopping by integrating social interaction, user-generated content, and purchasing activities within a single platform. However, consumers' purchase decisions are influenced not only by direct marketing stimuli but also by psychological factors such as trust. This study aims to examine the effects of consumer involvement and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on consumer trust and purchase decisions, as well as the mediating role of consumer trust. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data from TikTok Shop users, which were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings demonstrate that consumer involvement and e-WOM have positive and significant effects on consumer trust and purchase decisions. Consumer trust also positively and significantly affects purchase decisions. Furthermore, consumer trust significantly mediates the effects of both consumer involvement and e-WOM on purchase decisions, with the mediation identified as partial. These findings indicate that active consumer engagement and credible digital word-of-mouth can strengthen purchasing behavior, particularly when supported by consumer trust. The study implies that TikTok Shop sellers should enhance interactive engagement and encourage credible user-generated information to strengthen trust and facilitate purchase decisions.

Keywords

Consumer Involvement, Consumer Trust, Electronic Word of Mouth, Purchase Decision, TikTok Shop.

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has reshaped consumer interaction, communication, and transactions, accelerating the shift from conventional retail to e-commerce and social commerce, which integrates social media, marketing, and direct purchasing. In Indonesia, TikTok Shop has become a major social commerce platform. Figure 1 presents data from the 2025 survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (*Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia/APJII*), showing that Shopee remained the most accessed e-commerce platform (53.22%), while TikTok Shop ranked second (27.37%), rising substantially from 12.20% the previous year (Suharno, 2025). This growth is supported by approximately 125 million monthly active TikTok Shop users in Indonesia in February 2024, compared with 18 million for Tokopedia, and its US\$6.2 billion GMV in 2024, making Indonesia its second-largest global market (Databoks, 2024; Data Reportal, 2024; Kitonga, 2025). Furthermore, 44% of consumers purchasing through affiliate links visited TikTok Shop, ranking second after Shopee (Rendanianti, 2026). These trends highlight TikTok Shop's growing importance in Indonesia's e-commerce landscape and the need to examine its influence on consumer behavior.

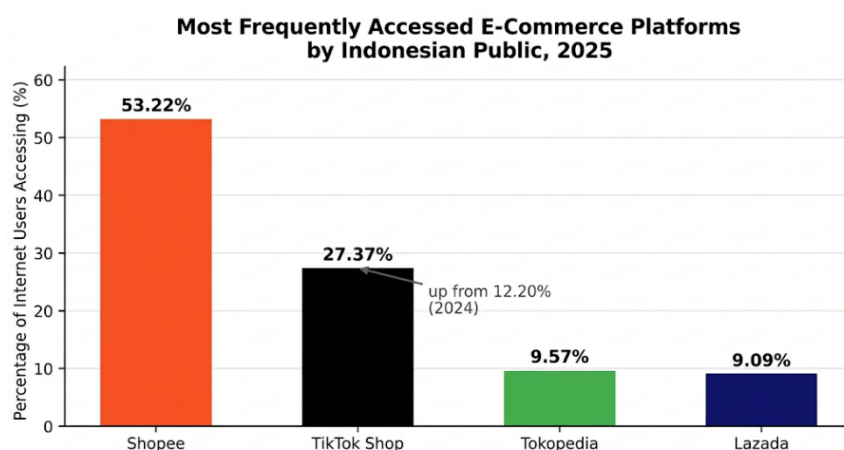


Figure 1. Market Share of E-commerce Platforms Most Frequently Accessed by Indonesians in 2025

Consumer involvement is an important factor in TikTok Shop, reflecting consumers' perceived personal importance, interest, and relevance toward products or purchasing activities. Its interactive and entertainment-oriented features encourage product exploration, seller interaction, live streaming, and discussion, which can shape purchasing behavior. Ho and Chung (2020) found that consumer involvement positively and significantly influenced brand equity and repurchase intention, indicating that higher involvement can strengthen consumers' behavioral responses and willingness to transact. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is another important determinant of purchasing decisions in social commerce, encompassing online reviews, comments, recommendations, and testimonials. On TikTok Shop, e-WOM is reflected through product reviews, comment sections, creator content, and live streaming interactions. Siallagan and Wasiman (2025) found that word of mouth and consumer trust significantly influenced purchasing decisions, while Itasari et al. (2025) confirmed the significant role of e-WOM in TikTok Shop purchasing decisions, highlighting the influence of consumers' opinions and experiences on potential buyers.

The effects of consumer involvement and e-WOM on purchasing decisions may also operate through consumer trust. Digital purchasing involves greater

uncertainty because consumers cannot directly inspect or physically experience products before completing transactions. In this context, consumer trust can function as a psychological mechanism that reduces perceived uncertainty and connects marketing stimuli with purchasing decisions. Fenolychia and Soepatini (2024) demonstrated that trust plays an important moderating role in the relationship between customer reviews and influencer endorsement and purchase intention. Meanwhile, Itasari et al. (2025) positioned brand trust as a factor that strengthens the influence of e-WOM on purchasing decisions on TikTok Shop. These findings indicate that trust is not only relevant as a strengthening condition but may also serve as a mediating mechanism through which consumer involvement and e-WOM influence purchasing decisions.

Although previous studies have examined e-WOM, trust, and purchasing decisions on TikTok Shop, several gaps remain. First, consumer involvement and e-WOM have rarely been examined simultaneously within the same model, as prior studies have focused more on e-WOM alongside variables such as price, product quality, or celebrity endorsement (Siallagan & Wasiman, 2025). Second, the role of trust remains inconsistent, being positioned as a moderator by Fenolychia and Soepatini (2024) and as a strengthening factor by Itasari et al. (2025), leaving its mediating role insufficiently explored. Third, many studies predate or coincide with the TikTok Shop–Tokopedia merger in 2024, limiting their relevance to TikTok Shop’s rapid growth in 2025.

Based on these gaps, this study offers three aspects of novelty. First, it integrates consumer involvement and e-WOM as independent variables influencing both consumer trust and purchasing decisions, providing a comprehensive model of consumer behavior on TikTok Shop. Second, it positions consumer trust as a mediating variable to explain the indirect mechanisms through which consumer involvement and e-WOM affect purchasing decisions, rather than treating trust solely as a moderator or independent variable. Third, it focuses on the contemporary TikTok Shop context in 2025, specifically among university students in Malang City who purchased through TikTok Shop, providing evidence from a current social commerce environment following the platform’s transformation and growth. This study examines the effects of consumer involvement and e-WOM on consumer trust and purchasing decisions, the effect of trust on purchasing decisions, and its mediating role in both relationships. The study contributes to digital consumer behavior and marketing literature by integrating these constructs within the TikTok Shop context.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Consumer Involvement, E-WOM, and Consumer Trust

This study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Model as its grand theory to explain purchasing behavior on TikTok Shop. The model proposes that external stimuli are processed through consumers’ internal psychological states before generating behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Kimiagari and Malafe (2021) confirm its relevance in explaining purchasing behavior, while Zhu et al. (2020) show that information quality can generate positive internal responses that encourage purchases. Accordingly, consumer involvement and e-WOM represent the Stimulus (S), consumer trust represents the Organism (O), and purchase decision represents the Response (R). Previous research also demonstrates that shopping stimuli such as live streaming and flash sales can influence trust and purchasing decisions (Chen & Yang, 2023; Andriyana et al., 2024). Thus, the S-O-R framework explains how consumer involvement and e-WOM can shape purchase decisions directly and indirectly through consumer trust.

Within this framework, consumer involvement represents an external stimulus that shapes consumers' internal evaluations. On TikTok Shop, active participation through likes, comments, content sharing, live shopping, and seller interactions provides greater product information, reduces uncertainty, and strengthens trust. This is consistent with Verawati et al. (2026), who found that customer engagement positively and significantly affects brand trust among TikTok Shop consumers. Similarly, e-WOM serves as another stimulus influencing consumer trust through reviews, comments, ratings, and recommendations. Positive and credible user-generated information helps consumers evaluate product quality and seller credibility, thereby strengthening confidence before purchase. This finding is supported by Cahyani et al. (2026), who found a positive and significant effect of e-WOM on trust among TikTok Shop users, and Dewi and Yasa (2026), who confirmed that e-WOM strengthens consumer brand trust.

H1: Consumer involvement has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust.

H2: E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust.

2.2. Consumer Trust and Purchase Decisions

Consumer trust is a critical psychological factor in online purchasing because it reflects consumers' confidence that sellers and platforms will provide products as promised, protect transactions, and meet their expectations (Sulistiyo & Simanjuntak, 2025). In social commerce, where consumers cannot physically inspect products before purchase, trust helps reduce perceived uncertainty and transaction risk. Gefen (2020) emphasizes that familiarity and trust are fundamental to e-commerce behavior, while Oliveira et al. (2017) highlight trust as an important dimension shaping consumers' evaluations of online shopping. In the context of TikTok Shop, trust is particularly relevant because purchasing decisions are influenced by interactions with sellers, product information, reviews, and live-streaming activities. Wu and Huang (2023) found that consumer trust plays an important role in translating live-streaming experiences into purchase intentions, while Putri et al. (2023) demonstrated that trust significantly shapes Generation Z's purchasing behavior on TikTok Shop.

Empirical evidence further supports the positive relationship between trust and purchasing outcomes. Cahyani et al. (2026) found that trust mediates the influence of content marketing and e-WOM on purchase decisions among TikTok Shop users, indicating that consumers are more likely to purchase when information received through digital interactions generates confidence. Similarly, Dewi and Yasa (2026) identified brand trust as an important mechanism influencing purchasing decisions in TikTok Shop. Siallagan and Wasiman (2025) also demonstrated that consumer trust significantly contributes to purchasing decisions in TikTok Shop. Therefore, higher consumer trust is expected to strengthen consumers' confidence and willingness to complete transactions, leading to the following hypothesis:

H3: Consumer trust has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

2.3. Consumer Involvement, E-WOM, and Purchase Decisions

Consumer involvement reflects the level of attention, participation, and interaction that consumers demonstrate toward a brand, product, or digital shopping platform. In the context of TikTok Shop, active involvement can occur through viewing and interacting with product content, commenting, participating in live shopping, sharing information, and communicating with sellers. These activities enable consumers to obtain more comprehensive information, evaluate products more carefully, and develop stronger familiarity with sellers and products. Greater

involvement can therefore increase consumers' confidence and encourage them to proceed with a purchase. From the perspective of consumer behavior, active engagement also makes consumers more cognitively and emotionally connected to the shopping process, which can strengthen their intention to act. This relationship is supported by Verawati et al. (2026), who found that customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions among TikTok Shop users.

Alongside consumer involvement, electronic word of mouth provides another important source of external information that can shape purchase decisions. Reviews, ratings, testimonials, recommendations, and experiences shared by other users help consumers evaluate product quality and seller credibility before purchasing. Positive and credible e-WOM can reduce uncertainty and perceived risk, making consumers more confident in selecting a product. Conversely, negative information may discourage consumers from purchasing. Thus, the greater the quality and positivity of e-WOM received, the stronger the likelihood of purchase. This relationship is supported by Cahyani et al. (2026) and Dewi and Yasa (2026), who found that e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

H4: Consumer involvement has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions

H5: E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

2.4. Consumer Trust as a Mediating Variable

Consumer involvement may influence purchase decisions not only directly but also by first strengthening consumer trust. Intensive interactions through product content, live streaming, and communication with sellers allow consumers to gain more information and positive experiences, which can gradually build trust. Once trust is established, consumers are more confident and secure in making purchases. Thus, consumer trust functions as a mechanism that connects consumer involvement with purchase decisions. This relationship is supported by Verawati et al. (2026), who found that trust mediates the relationship between customer engagement and purchase decisions among TikTok Shop users.

Similarly, positive e-WOM may not directly lead consumers to purchase but can first develop their trust in products and sellers. Reviews, recommendations, and other users' experiences provide information that helps consumers assess product credibility and reduce perceived transaction risk. When trust has been established, consumers are more likely to feel confident and secure in completing a purchase. Therefore, consumer trust can serve as a mediating mechanism that strengthens the influence of e-WOM on purchase decisions. This argument is supported by Cahyani et al. (2026) and Dewi and Yasa (2026), who found that customer trust mediates the effects of e-WOM on purchase decisions or purchase intention in the TikTok Shop context.

H6: Consumer trust mediates the effect of consumer involvement on purchase decisions.

H7: Consumer trust mediates the effect of e-WOM on purchase decisions.

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework examining the relationships among consumer involvement, e-WOM, consumer trust, and purchase decisions. Consumer involvement (X1) and e-WOM (X2) are proposed as independent variables that influence consumer trust (Z). Consumer trust is subsequently expected to affect consumers' purchase decisions (Y). The framework positions consumer trust as a mediating variable that explains how consumer engagement and e-WOM may contribute to purchase decisions. Thus, the proposed relationships provide a basis for examining both the direct influence of the independent variables and the indirect influence through consumer trust.

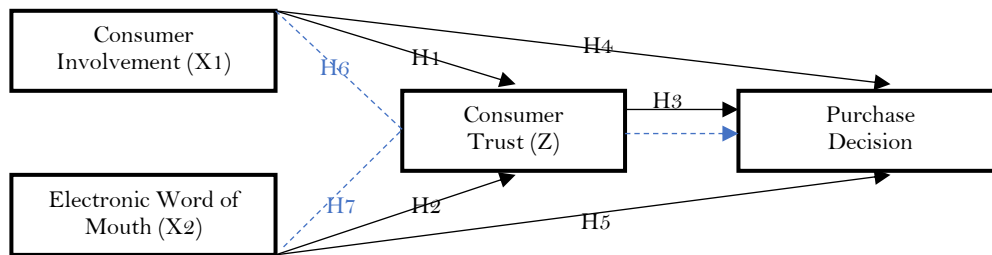


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

3. Methods

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among consumer involvement, e-WOM, consumer trust, and purchasing decisions. A quantitative approach was selected because the study tests hypotheses using numerical data and statistical analysis. The research was conducted among university students in Malang City, Indonesia, because the city has a large student population belonging predominantly to Generation Z, who are active social media users and relevant to the TikTok Shop purchasing context.

The population comprised university students in Malang City aged 17–25 years, who actively use TikTok and had purchased products through TikTok Shop within the previous three months. Because the population size was unknown, purposive sampling was employed based on predetermined respondent criteria. The sample size followed the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) recommendation of 5–10 times the number of indicators (Hair et al., 2022). With 12 indicators, the maximum ratio of 10 times was applied, resulting in 120 respondents.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to eligible respondents. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The measurement model consisted of four constructs: consumer involvement (X1), measured through cognitive, affective, and conative involvement indicators (So et al., 2014). E-WOM (X2) was measured through the frequency of positive reviews, influence of recommendations from other users, and content quality (Ismagilova et al., 2017). Purchasing decisions (Y) were measured through confidence in purchasing, purchasing according to needs, and willingness to repurchase (Kotler et al., 2021). Meanwhile, consumer trust (Z) was measured through honesty, transaction security, and goodwill (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

Data were analyzed using SEM-PLS, which is suitable for examining relationships among latent constructs and testing direct and indirect effects, including mediation (Hair et al., 2022). Analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the outer model was evaluated through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. Convergent validity was assessed using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with recommended values above 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Ghozali & Latan, 2021). Discriminant validity was assessed using cross-loadings, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable. The inner model was then assessed using R^2 and Q^2 to evaluate explanatory and predictive relevance. Hypotheses were tested using path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and f^2 . Relationships were considered significant when $p < 0.05$ at a 95% confidence level. This procedure also enabled testing the mediating role of consumer trust in the relationships between consumer involvement, e-WOM, and purchasing decisions.

4. Results

Malang City was selected as the research setting because it is a major educational center with a large and diverse student population, particularly Generation Z, who are highly adaptive to digital technology and actively use social media for entertainment, communication, and online transactions. TikTok Shop, as a social commerce platform, integrates short-video content, live shopping, comments, reviews, and direct seller–consumer interactions, creating opportunities for consumer involvement and e-WOM while reducing purchase uncertainty and strengthening consumer trust. These characteristics make TikTok Shop relevant for examining how consumer involvement and e-WOM influence purchasing decisions through consumer trust among Generation Z. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, involving 120 respondents who actively use social media and have purchased through TikTok Shop; respondent characteristics included gender, age, purchase frequency during the previous three months, and university affiliation in Malang City.

Table 1. Characteristic Respondent

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	48	40.0
	Female	72	60.0
Age	17–19 years	24	20.0
	20–22 years	56	46.7
	23–25 years	40	33.3
Purchase Frequency	1–2 times	52	43.3
	3–5 times	46	38.3
	>5 times	22	18.4
Total Respondents		120	100.0

Table 1 shows that female respondents dominated the sample, accounting for 60.0%, while males represented 40.0%. The largest age group was 20–22 years (46.7%), followed by respondents aged 23–25 years (33.3%) and 17–19 years (20.0%). In terms of purchase frequency, 43.3% of respondents purchased through TikTok Shop 1–2 times in the previous three months. Another 38.3% made 3–5 purchases, while 18.4% purchased more than five times. These characteristics indicate that the sample mainly consisted of young adult users with relatively moderate purchasing experience on TikTok Shop.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Indicator	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Consumer Involvement	X1.1	1	5	3.867	0.999	–0.539	–0.332
	X1.2	1	5	3.800	1.130	–0.615	–0.641
	X1.3	1	5	3.967	1.072	–0.796	–0.459
Electronic Word of Mouth	X2.1	1	5	3.950	0.930	–0.845	–0.581
	X2.2	1	5	3.758	1.041	–0.442	–0.782
	X2.3	1	5	3.933	0.998	–0.527	–0.620
Purchase Decision	Y1	1	5	3.750	1.112	–0.667	–0.267
	Y2	1	5	3.658	1.114	–0.461	–0.631
	Y3	1	5	3.625	1.049	–0.380	–0.546
Consumer Trust	Z1	2	5	3.592	1.092	–0.335	–0.627
	Z2	1	5	3.633	1.024	–0.626	–0.095
	Z3	1	5	3.650	1.062	–0.012	–0.129

As shown in Table 2, all indicators were measured on a 1–5 scale, with mean values ranging from 3.592 to 3.967, indicating generally positive perceptions across

the constructs. Consumer involvement recorded the highest mean, particularly X1.3 (3.967), while e-WOM was also relatively high, with X2.1 reaching 3.950. Purchase decision and consumer trust showed slightly lower but still positive mean values, ranging from 3.592 to 3.750. Standard deviations ranged from 0.930 to 1.130, indicating moderate response variation. All indicators exhibited negative skewness, reflecting a tendency toward higher response categories, while the kurtosis values indicated relatively moderate distribution patterns.

Table 3. Measurement Model Assessment

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
Consumer Involvement	X1.1	0.878	0.857	0.913	Valid & Reliable
	X1.2	0.860			
	X1.3	0.907			
Electronic Word of Mouth	X2.1	0.846	0.804	0.884	Valid & Reliable
	X2.2	0.842			
	X2.3	0.853			
Purchase Decision	Y1	0.908	0.859	0.914	Valid & Reliable
	Y2	0.903			
	Y3	0.836			
Consumer Trust	Z1	0.847	0.828	0.897	Valid & Reliable
	Z2	0.875			
	Z3	0.865			

As shown in Table 3, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory validity and reliability across all constructs. The outer loading values range from 0.836 to 0.908, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its respective construct. The AVE values range from 0.804 to 0.859, well above the minimum criterion of 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity. Composite reliability values range from 0.884 to 0.914, indicating strong internal consistency among the indicators. Consumer involvement records an AVE of 0.857 and composite reliability of 0.913, while e-WOM records 0.804 and 0.884, respectively. Purchase decision has the highest AVE at 0.859 and composite reliability of 0.914, whereas consumer trust records an AVE of 0.828 and composite reliability of 0.897. Therefore, all constructs meet the required validity and reliability criteria and are suitable for further structural model analysis.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

Item	Consumer Involvement	e-WOM	Purchase Decision	Consumer Trust
X1.1	0.878	0.274	0.492	0.538
X1.2	0.860	0.185	0.538	0.484
X1.3	0.907	0.291	0.593	0.539
X2.1	0.240	0.846	0.410	0.443
X2.2	0.276	0.842	0.409	0.392
X2.3	0.211	0.853	0.418	0.445
Y1	0.566	0.472	0.908	0.583
Y2	0.572	0.452	0.903	0.557
Y3	0.482	0.353	0.836	0.427
Z1	0.525	0.417	0.491	0.847
Z2	0.499	0.469	0.585	0.875
Z3	0.505	0.415	0.462	0.865

As shown in Table 4, the cross-loading values indicate that each indicator has its highest loading on its respective construct, with all primary loadings exceeding 0.70. The values range from 0.836 to 0.908, demonstrating that each indicator represents

its intended construct more strongly than the other constructs. This confirms that the indicators adequately distinguish among consumer involvement, e-WOM, purchase decision, and consumer trust. Therefore, all items satisfy the required criteria for discriminant validity and can be retained for further analysis.

Table 5. Coefficient Determinant

Endogenous Construct	R-Square (R^2)
Purchase Decision	0.514
Consumer Trust	0.472

Based on Table 5, it can be concluded that the consumer trust variable has an R-Square value of 0.472, meaning that the e-WOM and consumer involvement variables explain 47.2% of consumer trust, while factors outside the research model influence the remaining 52.8%. Meanwhile, the purchase decision variable has an R-Square value of 0.514, indicating that the variables in the research model can explain 51.4% of the variation in purchase decisions, while other factors influence the remaining 48.6%. Thus, both R-Square values indicate that the research model possesses a moderate level of explanatory power.

Table 6. Goodness of Fit Index

Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.060	0.059
d_ULS	0.280	0.274
d_G	0.185	0.180
Chi-Square	133.763	129.099
NFI	0.830	0.836

As shown in Table 6, the SRMR value of the saturated model is 0.060, while the estimated model has an SRMR value of 0.059. Both values are below the 0.10 threshold, indicating that the discrepancy between the observed and model-implied correlations is relatively small. The NFI values of 0.830 and 0.836 further indicate an acceptable level of model fit, although they do not reach the more stringent 0.90 criterion. The model demonstrates an acceptable fit and is suitable for further structural analysis.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

Path	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value
Consumer Involvement → Consumer Trust	0.486	6.439	0.000
e-WOM → Consumer Trust	0.365	4.692	0.000
Consumer Trust → Purchase Decision	0.206	2.464	0.014
Consumer Involvement → Purchase Decision	0.391	5.087	0.000
e-WOM → Purchase Decision	0.255	3.267	0.001
Consumer Involvement → Consumer Trust → Purchase Decision	0.100	2.195	0.028
e-WOM → Consumer Trust → Purchase Decision	0.075	2.191	0.028

As shown in Table 7, consumer involvement has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.486$; $t = 6.439$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, e-WOM positively and significantly affects consumer trust ($\beta = 0.365$; $t = 4.692$; $p < 0.001$). Consumer trust also has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision ($\beta = 0.206$; $t = 2.464$; $p = 0.014$). Furthermore, consumer involvement positively and significantly affects purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.391$; $t = 5.087$; $p < 0.001$), while e-WOM also has

a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.255$; $t = 3.267$; $p = 0.001$). These findings indicate that consumer involvement and e-WOM contribute to both the formation of consumer trust and purchase decisions, while consumer trust itself also plays a significant role in encouraging purchase decisions.

The mediation test result shows that consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between consumer involvement and purchase decision, with an indirect effect of 0.100 ($t = 2.195$; $p = 0.028$). This indicates that consumer involvement can influence purchase decision through the formation of consumer trust. Similarly, consumer trust significantly mediates the relationship between e-WOM and purchase decision, with an indirect effect of 0.075 ($t = 2.191$; $p = 0.028$). Thus, both consumer involvement and e-WOM contribute to purchase decision not only directly but also indirectly through consumer trust.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that consumer involvement has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust. This indicates that greater involvement in searching for information, evaluating products, reading reviews, and interacting with TikTok Shop content strengthens consumers' trust in the platform and sellers. This finding is consistent with the logic of Consumer Engagement Theory, which emphasizes that repeated cognitive, affective, and behavioral interactions can foster confidence toward a brand or platform. In the TikTok Shop context, activities such as commenting, joining live shopping sessions, and interacting with sellers provide additional information that can reduce uncertainty and gradually build trust. This result is consistent with Putri et al. (2023), who found that social interaction plays an important role in building trust among TikTok Shop users. Chen et al. (2022) identified a positive relationship between customer engagement and brand trust in influencing consumer behavior.

The results also show that e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust. Thus, positive, relevant, and credible information conveyed through reviews, ratings, comments, video reviews, and live-shopping interactions can strengthen consumers' confidence in products, sellers, and the platform. This finding supports Pangarkar et al. (2023) and Wahongan and Ananto (2025), who found that e-WOM and social media marketing influence consumer trust. It is also consistent with Santos et al. (2022) and Handoyo (2024), which highlight social media marketing and e-WOM as important factors associated with trust and purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, consumer trust positively and significantly affects purchase decisions. This finding indicates that consumers who have greater confidence in TikTok Shop, its sellers, and the products offered are more likely to proceed with a purchase. Although its coefficient is lower than the effects of consumer involvement and e-WOM on purchase decisions, trust remains important because online transactions involve uncertainty and prevent consumers from physically examining products before purchasing. Trust can therefore reduce perceived transaction risk and strengthen purchasing confidence. This finding is consistent with Abror and Sulton (2025) and Triana et al. (2026), who found that online trust plays an important role in purchase intention for marketed products.

The analysis further reveals that consumer involvement has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Higher involvement encourages consumers to actively seek information, evaluate products, follow content, read reviews, and interact with sellers, thereby increasing their tendency to purchase. This result is consistent with Lin and Nuangjamnong (2022), who found that customer engagement significantly influences purchase decisions on TikTok Shop. Similarly, e-WOM significantly and positively affects purchase decisions, indicating that credible reviews, recommendations, ratings, and testimonials can reduce information

uncertainty and facilitate product evaluation. This finding supports Utami et al. (2024), which reported significant effects of e-WOM on purchasing decisions.

The mediation analysis confirms that consumer trust significantly mediates both consumer involvement and e-WOM in relation to purchase decisions. Because the direct effects remain significant, trust functions as a partial mediator, meaning that consumer involvement and e-WOM influence purchase decisions both directly and through trust formation. This result is consistent with Verawati et al. (2026), who found that trust mediates the relationship between customer engagement and purchase decisions among TikTok Shop users. It is also consistent with Cahyani et al. (2026) and Dewi and Yasa (2026), who found that customer trust mediates the effects of e-WOM on purchase decisions or purchase intention in the TikTok Shop context.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that consumer involvement and e-WOM positively and significantly influence consumer trust and purchase decisions on TikTok Shop. Consumer involvement demonstrates the strongest direct effect on purchase decisions, indicating that active interactions with content, live shopping, and platform features encourage consumers to proceed with purchases. Meanwhile, e-WOM significantly strengthens both consumer trust and purchase decisions by providing credible reviews, recommendations, and user experiences that reduce perceived uncertainty. Consumer trust also positively affects purchase decisions, confirming its role in reducing consumers' hesitation when conducting online transactions. Furthermore, consumer trust significantly mediates the effects of both consumer involvement and e-WOM on purchase decisions, with both relationships indicating partial mediation, as their direct effects remain significant.

These findings have practical implications for TikTok Shop sellers and the platform. Sellers should strengthen interactive engagement through responsive communication, engaging live shopping, and participatory content, while TikTok Shop should continue developing features such as real-time comments, live chat, and reliable rating and review systems to strengthen trust and facilitate purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, this study is limited to university students aged 17–25 in Malang City who had purchased through TikTok Shop within the previous three months, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should therefore involve broader populations and other regions while considering additional variables such as influencer content quality, price, perceived ease of use, and perceived risk to provide a more comprehensive explanation of purchasing behavior on social commerce platforms.

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