

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH ON PURCHASE INTENTION MEDIATED BY BRAND EQUITY (A CASE STUDY ON FASHION CONSUMERS FROM GENERATION Z IN SURAKARTA CITY)



**<sup>1\*</sup>Devanda Martianta Sabeliana, <sup>2</sup>Jonet Ariyanto Nugroho**

<sup>1,2</sup> *Economic Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,  
Sebelas Maret University - Indonesia*

### **e-mail:**

<sup>1\*</sup>devandamartianta@student.uns.ac.id (*corresponding author*)

<sup>2</sup>jonetariyanto@staff.uns.ac.id

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to examine the influence of social media usage and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention, with brand equity serving as a mediating variable among Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 399 respondents selected using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. The findings indicate that both social media usage and eWOM have a positive and significant direct effect on purchase intention. Additionally, both variables indirectly influence purchase intention through brand equity. Brand equity itself plays a significant role in strengthening consumers' intention to purchase. These results highlight the importance of building strong brand equity to maximize the effectiveness of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth strategies. However, this study is limited to Generation Z consumers in a single city, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to include broader demographic groups and wider geographic areas to enhance the robustness and applicability of the results.*

**Keywords:** *Social Media Usage; Electronic Word of Mouth ; Brand Equity;  
Purchase Intention ; Generation Z ; Fashion*

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of the digitalization era has significantly influenced many sectors, especially technology and business, allowing individuals to access diverse resources more easily while enhancing overall efficiency (Khairi et al., 2025). This advancement benefits people by making daily activities easier, thereby making technology a basic necessity (Maria & Widayati, 2020). When someone perceives technology as easy to use, consumers tend to engage with and utilize information technology more extensively (Rucita, 2023). Research by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) indicates that Indonesia's internet penetration rate in 2024 reached 79.50%, representing approximately 221 million users out of a population of 278 million. This marks a notable rise compared to 2018, when the penetration rate was only 64.80%. The substantial growth in internet users has had a significant impact on everyday life (APJII, 2024).

Technological progress in the fashion industry has grown more advanced over time, resulting in increasingly varied consumer interests (Srisusilawati et al., 2024). The fashion industry in Indonesia is growing rapidly with the emergence of various brands. People today recognize fashion not only as a necessity for clothing but also as a means of style and following trends (Viana et al., 2022). Moreover, fashion has become an important sector in the development of Indonesia's creative industry and economy, with increasing demand for fashion products year after year, thus boosting fashion-related purchases (Jholanda & Anwar, 2025).

The apparel industry is a continuously growing sector that seeks strong marketing strategies to promote new and trending products, the role of social media and online communication plays a key role in determining the success or failure of a product or service (Jia et al., 2020). Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012, aged 13–28 in 2025. This generation is the first to be born and raised in the digital era, with full access to information and communication technologies (Taliwuna et al., 2024). Generation Z has high consumption rates and tends to make purchases easily, even for products that are unnecessary (Arda & Andriany, 2019). In Surakarta City, the number of Generation Z individuals increased by 1,174 in 2025 compared to 2023, totaling 526,870. Surakarta also has the highest per capita expenditure compared to other areas in the Solo Raya region, which includes Sragen, Karanganyar, Wonogiri, Boyolali, Klaten, and Sukoharjo (BPS, 2024).

Technological development has led to increased dependence on technology. Social media has become one of the fastest-growing marketing channels in the world, allowing people to easily purchase products offered via social platforms (Mustika & Maulidah, 2023). According to Maoyan et al. (2014), people use social media for activities such as entertainment, business, news searching, and more, marketing through social media influences external factors that shape consumer perceptions of a product, which in turn can affect their purchase intention.

Word of mouth communication has long been recognized for its important role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors, as it provides reliable information (Skieffer et al., 2023). With the rise of social networks and the internet, word of mouth has evolved into electronic word of mouth (eWOM). The main difference between WOM and eWOM lies in the medium: WOM involves direct verbal communication, while eWOM involves digital means such as websites, online forums, and news platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Currently, Indonesia is experiencing high levels of hoax dissemination, with the Ministry of Communication and Information identifying 1,923 hoax contents, false news,

and fake information throughout 2024 (Komdigi, 2024). Despite this, eWOM continues to influence purchase intention.

Today, a brand is not only an identity or product differentiator, but also represents a special emotional bond between consumers and producers (Viana et al., 2022). Brand equity is a combination of value and assets embedded in a brand. The higher the brand equity, the more consumers it can attract and the greater the brand loyalty it fosters, ultimately influencing consumers' purchase intentions (Vahdati et al., 2016). According to Augusto & Torres (2018b), consumers are willing to pay more for products or services with high brand equity, which also increases their preference for certain brands over others in the same category when making purchase decisions (Godey et al., 2016).

Technological advancements have also influenced the trade sector, particularly through online product sales via e-commerce (Rucita, 2023). Online sales make it easier for consumers to shop. According to Indonesia's 2023 Digital Trade data from the Ministry of Trade (2024), the number of e-commerce users in Indonesia has increased from 38.72 million in 2020 to 58.63 million in 2023, and is projected to reach 99.1 million users by 2029. In January 2023, the most purchased products via e-commerce were fashion items (70.13%), followed by beauty and personal care products (49.73%), and food and beverages (40.8%). However, data from the Ministry of Trade (2023) also revealed that 77.60% of businesses still prefer offline selling due to comfort, and 28.96% cited a lack of knowledge as a reason for not selling online.

Previous studies show differing views regarding the influence of social media usage and electronic word of mouth on purchase intention mediated by brand equity. Research by Amartya & Santosa (2022) indicated that social media marketing, eWOM, and celebrity endorsements do not directly affect purchase intention but significantly impact brand awareness, which in turn influences purchase intention. Research by Ramadhan & Daulay (2024) showed that social media usage and eWOM have no significant direct impact on purchase intention. A study by Ulya et al. (2023) found that brand equity does not significantly influence purchase decisions. Meanwhile, research by Khan et al. (2024) found a positive and significant effect of social media usage and eWOM on purchase intention, mediated by brand equity.

In accordance with the background described above, this study was conducted to further examine "The Influence of Social Media Usage and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention Mediated by Brand Equity (A Case Study of Generation Z Fashion Consumers in Surakarta City)." The findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for future researchers and provide insights for companies in utilizing social media and electronic word of mouth as strategies to enhance sales performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

### Social Media Usage

Social media is an online tool designed to facilitate content dissemination through social interactions among individuals, groups, and organizations by utilizing internet- and web-based technologies to enable the transformation from monologue (one-to-many) to social dialogue (many-to-many) (Botha & Mills, 2012). According to Brogan (2010), social media is a set of communication and collaboration tools that allows for various types of interactions that were previously unavailable to the general public. Social media refers to the activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions through communication media (Jashari, 2017). Social media usage refers to the various online activities that users can participate in; these activities include watching, commenting, and even sharing social media content

(Smith & Gallicano, 2015). This is in line with Rapp et al. (2013), who state that social media usage relates to the interaction and communication occurring on social media platforms, which can influence satisfaction and consumer recommendations.

Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that social media is an online platform designed to facilitate the distribution of content through social interaction among individuals, groups, and organizations. It includes various communication and collaboration tools that enable interaction. Social media usage refers to the activities that can be carried out online to interact with others, including watching, commenting on, and sharing social media content.

### **Electronic Word of Mouth**

Word of Mouth, according to Kotler et al. (2014), is personal communication about a product between buyers and the people around them. Word of mouth is considered the most effective form of promotion, where satisfied customers act as spokespeople for the company's product in a more convincing and effective way than any form of advertisement (Utami & Hanum, 2010). WOM influences pre-purchase autonomy because, by receiving advice from third parties, buyers tend to seek word-of-mouth recommendations to assess the quality and durability of a product based on others' experiences, thus reducing the risk of purchasing an unsuitable product (Tawaqal et al., 2024). Electronic word of mouth, according to Maulana (2021), refers to the dissemination of reviews by previous consumers who have used a product through the internet. According to Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011), electronic word of mouth is communication and information exchange about a product or service that occurs online, where consumers share their experiences, opinions, and recommendations through digital platforms such as social media, forums, blogs, and review websites.

Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is the dissemination of information and reviews by consumers who have used a product through the internet. eWOM involves the exchange of ideas, suggestions, and comments among consumers regarding the evaluation of certain products, services, and companies. One of the motivations for consumers to engage with eWOM is their desire to obtain accurate information, especially when they doubt the reliability of certain platforms and seek more trustworthy sources before making a purchase decision.

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention, according to Kotler (2008), is a factor that determines each customer's decision. According to Boonghee et al. (2000), purchase intention refers to the consumer's intention or desire to buy a product or service in the future. This intention is a tendency to take action or behave in a certain way that serves as the initial step before an actual purchase occurs. Schiffman and Kanuk, as cited in Mranani & Lastianti (2022), define purchase intention as a psychological activity that arises from feelings and thoughts toward a desired good or service. According to Limarta & Fahlevi (2023), purchase intention is defined as one of the cognitive components of consumers that reflects a person's desire to buy a product. Purchase intention is a condition in which a person is in a situation where they intend to make a purchase in the near future (Setiani et al., 2021).

Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that purchase intention is an important factor influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. This intention reflects an individual's tendency to act prior to making an actual purchase. Purchase intention arises from feelings and thoughts about a desired product or service and serves as a cognitive

component that indicates a willingness to buy. It represents a condition in which an individual has the desire to make a purchase in the near future and is influenced by various internal and external factors.

### **Brand Equity**

Brand equity is the value of a brand as perceived by consumers and is defined as the differential effect that arises from the presence of a brand and the superiority of a product due to its brand (Lassar, 1995). According to Boonghee et al. (2000), brand equity is the value attached to a brand that stems from consumers' perceptions of that brand. Zhafira & Rachmawati (2020) define brand equity as a set of values associated with a product, which can be observed based on consumers' perceptions or views of the product. The better the brand equity of a product, the closer the brand is to its customers.

Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that brand equity is the value attached to a brand in the eyes of consumers, which reflects the differential effect generated by the existence of the brand and the superiority of the product associated with it. Brand equity can be seen as a set of values formed based on consumers' perceptions of a product. The higher the brand equity, the closer the brand is to its customers. This value includes perceptions, associations, loyalty, and impressions that are formed in consumers' minds during their interaction with the brand.

### **Hypotheses**

Social media usage has become one of the key elements in modern marketing strategies. Social media is not only used as a communication tool but also serves as a medium for promotion, product information dissemination, and direct interaction between companies and consumers (Rapp et al., 2013). When consumers encounter engaging promotional content, positive reviews from other users, or endorsements from influencers through social media, it can enhance their purchase intention. According to studies by Yadav & Rahman (2018), Mai & Binh (2023), and Hu & Zhu (2022), social media has a significant influence on consumer purchase intention, particularly through social interaction, trust in shared information, and easy access to product reviews. Thus, the first hypothesis is derived :

*H1 : Social media usage has a positive and significant effect on the purchase intention of Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) refers to positive or negative statements made by customers whether they are loyal customers or no about a product, service, or company through the internet (Noviandi, 2021). Research by Erkan & Evans (2016) and Khan et al. (2023) shows that eWOM has a direct and significant influence on consumer purchase intention. The more eWOM a person receives, and the more positive it is, the higher their tendency to intend to purchase the product. Thus, the second hypothesis is derived :

*H2 : Electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the purchase intention of Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

Social media is one of the ways to introduce a brand to consumers and helps create brand awareness, which is a key component of brand equity (Hutter et al., 2013). Studies by Bruhn et al. (2012) and Stojanovic et al. (2018) emphasize that marketing activities

through social media and social media usage by consumers have a positive and significant impact on brand equity. Thus, the higher the intensity and quality of social media usage by both brands and consumers, the stronger the resulting brand equity. Therefore, the third hypothesis is derived :

*H3 : Social media usage has a positive and significant effect on brand equity among Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a form of informal communication that occurs online between consumers regarding their experiences, opinions, or information related to a brand or product. In the digital context, eWOM plays an important role in shaping consumer perceptions of a brand, thereby directly contributing to the development of brand equity (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011). Research by Christodoulides et al. (2012) and Kholifah et al. (2021) shows that eWOM significantly contributes to the formation of brand equity. Thus, the more positive and widespread the eWOM received by consumers, the stronger the brand equity that is built. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is derived:

*H4 : Electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on brand equity among Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

Brand equity reflects the value embedded in a brand based on consumer perceptions, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty. Strong brand equity creates a competitive advantage, as consumers are more likely to choose a familiar and trusted brand over less familiar alternatives (Zhafira & Rachmawati, 2020; Boonghee et al., 2000). Studies by Chen & Chang (2008) and Buil et al. (2013) indicate that brand equity has a direct and positive relationship with purchase intention. Thus, brand equity serves as an important bridge connecting consumers' perceptions of a brand to their actual purchasing decisions. The fifth hypothesis is therefore formulated as follows:

*H5 : Brand equity has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention among Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

Social media usage by both companies and consumers has become one of the main strategies in influencing consumer behavior. Social media usage can enhance brand equity first, which then drives consumers' purchase intention (Hu & Zhu, 2022). Through social media, brands can build closer and more interactive relationships with consumers. Consistent and valuable communication on social media can increase brand awareness, shape brand image, and strengthen brand loyalty. Once strong brand equity is established, consumers are more likely to show an increased intention to purchase products from the brand (Rapp et al., 2013). A study by BİLGİN (2018) emphasizes that brand equity serves as a mediator between social media activities and purchase intention. Therefore, brand equity functions as a crucial bridge in transforming the influence of social media into actual purchasing decisions. Without strong brand equity, the influence of social media on purchase intention may not be optimal. The sixth hypothesis is therefore formulated as follows:

*H6: Social media usage, mediated by brand equity, has a positive and significant effect on the purchase intention of Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

A study by Khan et al. (2024) confirms the mediating role of brand equity in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. Thus, the stronger the influence of eWOM on brand equity, the greater its indirect effect on purchase intention. This indicates that building strong brand equity through eWOM is a key strategy in increasing purchase conversion. It is predicted that there is a positive effect of electronic word of mouth, mediated by brand equity, on the purchase intention of fashion consumers (Khan et al., 2024). Therefore, the seventh hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H7: Electronic word of mouth, mediated by brand equity, has a positive and significant effect on the purchase intention of Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.*

## **METHOD**

The type of research used in this study is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2020), the quantitative method is a research method in which the data are in the form of numbers and the analysis uses statistics. This method adheres to scientific principles, namely being concrete, objective, measurable, rational, and systematic.

This research was conducted in the City of Surakarta. The population in this study is a known population, namely Generation Z in Surakarta City, with a total of 121,139 individuals according to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2024. The sample was determined using the Slovin formula (Sugiyono, 2020), resulting in 399 respondents.

This study used a non-probability sampling technique, which is a sampling method that does not give equal opportunity for each member of the population to be selected as a sample (Sugiyono, 2020). The specific sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with certain criteria, namely: Generation Z individuals in Surakarta City who are currently working or have worked and have made fashion purchases.

The data collection techniques in this study involved both primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly by the researcher without intermediaries (Sugiyono, 2020). In this study, the primary data was collected through questionnaires measured using a Likert scale, distributed to Generation Z individuals in Surakarta City. Secondary data is data obtained indirectly or through intermediaries (Sugiyono, 2020). The secondary data used in this study consists of supporting literature such as journals, books, and previous research.

The data analysis techniques used were descriptive analysis and structural modeling. Descriptive data analysis is the initial stage in the study to describe respondent data and descriptive statistics. The structural model includes the inner model and the outer model. This study uses the Partial Least Squares (PLS) methodology with a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach based on components or variance (Ghozali et al., 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### R-Square and Predictive Relevance

The R<sup>2</sup> testing stage aims to determine the extent to which the research model explains each variable, or in other words, to indicate the strength of its predictive accuracy (Ghozali et al., 2023). The following is a table 1 presenting the results of R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 1**  
**Result of R<sup>2</sup> dan Q<sup>2</sup>**

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	Q <sup>2</sup> Predict
BE	0,615	0,613	0,610
PI	0,773	0,771	0,733

Source: Data Analyzed, 2025

Based on the Table 1, it is known that the variable purchase intention has an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.773, which means that 77% of the variance in purchase intention can be explained by the brand equity variable. The brand equity variable has an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.615, indicating that 61% of the variance in brand equity can be explained by the variables social media usage and electronic word of mouth. It is known that the Q<sup>2</sup> value is above 0 for the variable brand equity with a value of 0.610, and for the variable purchase intention with a value of 0.733, indicating that this research model demonstrates predictive relevance that meets the required criteria.

### Hypothesis Testing Results

Path coefficient is the stage used to test hypotheses for each path in the study using SmartPLS 4 software (Ghozali et al., 2023). The significance values between variables are obtained using the bootstrapping method. Statistical testing in PLS-SEM is carried out by observing the significance of the relationships between variables, indicated by the T-statistic and P-value. A hypothesis is accepted if the T-statistic > T-table (1.96) and the P-value < 0.05, with a significance level of 5%, using the two-tailed bootstrapping method (Ghozali et al., 2023). The following is Table 2 presenting the results of the two-tailed bootstrapping analysis.

**Table 2**  
**Bootstrapping two-tailed**

	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
SMU -> PI	H1	0,324	0,323	0,059	5,446	0,000
EWOM -> PI	H2	0,349	0,352	0,055	6,348	0,000
SMU -> BE	H3	0,456	0,456	0,054	8,365	0,000
EWOM -> BE	H4	0,391	0,391	0,059	6,623	0,000
BE -> PI	H5	0,301	0,301	0,062	4,881	0,000

Source: Data Analyzed, 2025

Based on Table 2, the results of the path coefficient show that all variables have a T-statistic greater than 1.96 and a P-value less than 0.05, indicating that Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, Hypothesis 4, and Hypothesis 5 are accepted.

The next stage is to examine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable through the mediating role of another variable. This test is conducted by reviewing the output of the specific indirect effect, with the requirement that the P-

value < 0.05 and the T-statistic > 1.96. The following is Table 3 presenting the results of the indirect effect analysis.

**Table 3**  
**Output Specific indirect effect**

	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
SMU -> BE -> PI	H6	0,137	0,138	0,034	4,069	0,000
EWOM -> BE -> PI	H7	0,118	0,117	0,029	4,103	0,000

Source: Data Analyzed, 2025

Based on Table 3, the results of the indirect effect show that all variables mediated by brand equity have a T-statistic greater than 1.96 and a P-value less than 0.05, indicating that Hypothesis 6 and Hypothesis 7 are accepted.

### Discussion

Based on the research findings from the hypothesis testing results both path coefficient and indirect effect all variables show a positive and significant influence. This indicates that Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta, particularly those with high social media usage, are more likely to build brand equity and exhibit purchase intention toward fashion products. These findings are consistent with the study by Khan et al. (2024), which shows that social media usage by both consumers and brands facilitates interaction, communication, and experience sharing directly influencing purchase intention and brand perception. Similarly, Augusto and Torres (2018a) found that social media serves as an effective medium for rapidly disseminating information, which impacts consumers' purchase intentions.

The aforementioned studies support the idea that social media usage significantly contributes to the formation of brand equity in fashion products, which in turn influences consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, the study by Khan et al. (2024) also demonstrates that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) acts as a strong and trustworthy communication tool that shapes brand perception and directly affects consumers' intention to purchase clothing. This is further supported by Augusto and Torres (2018a), who emphasize that online product reviews influence and inform consumer attitudes, helping to form purchase intentions and eventually leading to purchase decisions.

Brand equity serves as a mediator between electronic word of mouth and purchase intention, showing a positive and significant impact. Thus, it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth, by providing online information about fashion products, helps build brand equity, which in turn leads to increased purchase intention among fashion consumers.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that social media usage has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention among Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City. High engagement with social media provides entertainment, interactivity, and product awareness, which positively influences consumers' intention to purchase. Similarly, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) also has

a positive and significant impact on purchase intention, as positive eWOM helps build consumer trust and serves as a cost-effective promotional tool for producers.

Furthermore, social media usage positively affects brand equity by enhancing consumer-producer interaction, leading to stronger brand recognition and image. Likewise, eWOM contributes positively to brand equity by improving brand image, shaping consumer perceptions, and increasing customer loyalty, all of which are essential components of brand equity. In turn, brand equity significantly influences purchase intention, as positive brand equity fosters brand loyalty, awareness, and perceived quality, which strengthen consumer confidence to make a purchase.

Moreover, brand equity serves as a mediating variable, strengthening the impact of both social media usage and eWOM on purchase intention. Interactive and informative social media content helps establish brand equity, which in turn reinforces consumers' purchase decisions. Similarly, effective and trustworthy eWOM helps shape strong brand equity, ultimately enhancing purchase intention among Generation Z fashion consumers in Surakarta City.

Generation Z is encouraged to be more discerning in filtering information and using social media wisely, as well as to share positive experiences to support local brands and MSMEs. The Surakarta City Government is advised to provide education and training on the wise use of social media and eWOM strategies for local MSME actors. The Economics Education program can expand learning materials related to social media, brand equity, and purchase intention, and implement practical activities such as digital marketing workshops. Retailers are encouraged to optimize social media as a marketing tool and strengthen brand equity through engaging and consistent content.

Future researchers are recommended to explore other variables such as consumer trust, product quality, and personal values, and to broaden the research scope beyond fashion products.

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