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The mediating role of brand awareness in the influence of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality on purchase intention: A study of prospective 'Es Teh Indonesia' consumers in Denpasar City

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Abstract

The decline in the number of branches and sales volume within the contemporary beverage industry suggests a weakening of consumer purchasing intentions amid increasingly intense market competition. The present study seeks to evaluate the impact of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality on purchase intention, while simultaneously investigating the mediating function of brand awareness. Utilizing a quantitative causal-associative design grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study gathered data from 270 respondents in Denpasar City via purposive sampling techniques. Empirical data were collected through structured questionnaires and subsequently subjected to analysis via Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Evidence suggests that E-WOM and content quality significantly enhance both brand awareness and purchase intention among the sampled population. Furthermore, brand awareness serves as a significant positive predictor of purchase intention, indicating that heightened brand recognition directly correlates with an increased willingness to buy. Additionally, the analysis confirms that brand awareness serves as a pivotal mediating mechanism, facilitating the indirect influence of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality on the purchase intention of Es Teh Indonesia consumers. These findings indicate that effective management of consumer reviews and high-quality digital content is crucial in strengthening brand awareness, which ultimately enhances purchase intention. Beyond its theoretical implications, this study delivers pragmatic applications for management to refine digital marketing initiatives and bolster brand competitiveness within the beverage industry.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM); Content Quality; Brand Awareness; Purchase Intention; Theory of Planned Behavior.

1. Introduction

Increasing competition in the contemporary beverage industry requires brands to maintain optimal levels of purchase intention to ensure business sustainability. Purchase intention is conceptualized as a cognitive manifestation of a consumer's behavioral disposition, reflecting both the inclination and the subjective probability of acquiring a particular product. [1]. Consumers with high purchase intention tend to show higher loyalty and contribute significantly to a brand's market share. However, data from the contemporary beverage sector in Denpasar indicates a concerning trend for certain established brands. For instance, Es Teh Indonesia has experienced a significant decline in its physical presence, with the number of active outlets dropping from 17 branches in 2022 to 14 in 2023, and further declining to 10 branches in 2024. This reduction is followed by a decrease in average sales volume, falling from a range of 14,000–17,000 cups per year in 2022 to approximately 10,000–12,000 cups in 2024 [2, 3, 4].

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Digital marketing strategies serve as a critical determinant in shaping consumer purchase intention, significantly influencing the cognitive processes that lead to transactional decisions [5]. In environments defined by high levels of digital engagement, the prominence of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality has intensified, becoming critical drivers of consumer perception. E-WOM, which involves consumer-to-consumer communication via digital platforms, and content quality, characterized by the relevance and appeal of a brand's digital information, are seen as vital for creating a positive brand image. A significant body of literature has established the favorable impact of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality on various consumer-centric constructs, including engagement, trust, and brand perception [6, 7, 8, 9]. Conversely, extant literature suggests that the efficacy of digital marketing initiatives is contingent upon specific sectoral contexts and diverse consumer demographics, indicating a lack of universal applicability [10, 11]. The existing empirical inconsistencies concerning the direct impact of digital stimuli on purchase intention necessitate further investigation, specifically to address contextual nuances within highly competitive local beverage markets.

Brand awareness is conceptualized as a critical underlying mechanism that elucidates the relationship between digital marketing stimuli and consumer behavioral intentions. Brand awareness represents the psychological threshold at which a consumer possesses the requisite information to distinguish and categorize a specific brand among its competitors. Brand awareness correlates positively with purchase intention, while strategic digital marketing initiatives significantly amplify a brand's cognitive salience within the consumer's mental set [12]. Brand awareness functions as a mediating conduit, bridging the gap between digital stimuli and behavioral responses. Effective digital content and constructive online feedback facilitate brand recall, which in turn facilitates a higher propensity for consumer acquisition [13]. Despite its theoretical importance, there remains a paucity of empirical research investigating brand awareness as a mediating variable within the contemporary beverage sector, particularly regarding the geographic specificity of regional markets such as Denpasar. Consequently, this research seeks to evaluate the mediating function of brand awareness in the relationship between electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), content quality, and consumer purchase intention. This study is anticipated to advance the existing body of literature by extending the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to the evolving domains of digital marketing and consumer behavioral dynamics. Furthermore, this research provides a robust empirical foundation for practitioners to architect digital marketing strategies that optimize both brand awareness and consumer purchase intentions.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) postulates that behavioral intention is fundamentally shaped by three primary antecedents: behavioral attitudes, socially driven subjective norms, and the perceived constraints or facilitators of behavioral control [14]. Within the framework of digital consumer behavior, purchase intention is conceptualized as a cognitive manifestation of a consumer's readiness to perform a specific behavior, reflecting the subjective probability of product acquisition. When consumers are exposed to positive external stimuli, they develop favorable attitudes that encourage the intention to perform a purchase. In this study, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality are seen as external informational cues that shape these psychological perceptions [15]. E-WOM and content quality impact the strengthening of purchase intentions through cognitive mechanisms, particularly in the competitive beverage industry, confirming the principle that digital information serves as a primary driver for consumer assessment. Positive reviews and high-quality digital information foster trust and reduce perceived risk, which in turn encourages consumers to demonstrate a higher willingness to buy. This process confirms the relevance of TPB, where digital stimuli serve as a basis for forming the intentions that lead to actual purchasing behavior.

Positive digital stimuli create a sense of familiarity and trust that values consumer preferences. From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), these stimuli facilitate a proactive consumer response by augmenting purchase intention, which is manifested through heightened brand interest and an increased willingness to acquire the product. Previous findings confirmed that E-WOM and digital content quality are correlated favorably with purchase intention across various retail and service contexts [1, 10].

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) has a positive impact on purchase intention.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): Content quality has a positive impact on purchase intention.

Digital marketing efforts provide the visibility needed for a brand to enter the consumer's cognitive set. E-WOM and content quality facilitate brand awareness by providing consistent and engaging information that helps consumers recognize and recall the brand. Through positive online reviews and high-quality visual content, consumers feel more informed and familiar with the brand, giving the brand a stronger identity in a crowded market [6, 13]. An engaging and informative digital presence encourages consumers to identify the brand as a top-of-mind choice. Drawing upon the

empirical evidence provided by [5, 8], it is posited that digital communication stimuli exert a positive and significant influence on the development of brand awareness.

- Hypothesis 3 (H3): Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) has a positive effect on brand awareness.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4): Content quality has a positive effect on brand awareness.

Consumers who possess a high level of brand awareness show improvements in their confidence and preference levels, which are key indicators of purchase intention [12, 16]. Brands with high levels of recognition are often associated with perceived risk mitigation, thereby enhancing cognitive familiarity and bolstering the consumer's propensity to engage in transactional behavior. Brand awareness serves as a prerequisite for purchase, as consumers are unlikely to buy a product they cannot recall or identify during the decision-making process.

- Hypothesis 5 (H5): Brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Digital stimuli are hypothesized to influence purchase intention through both direct and indirect pathways, with brand awareness serving as a critical mediating conduit. Empirical evidence suggests that brand awareness exerts a significant mediating effect, wherein digital informational cues first foster brand recognition before undergoing a cognitive transformation into formal purchase intentions.[17, 18].

- Hypothesis 6 (H6): Brand awareness mediates the effect of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) on purchase intention.
- Hypothesis 7 (H7): Brand awareness mediates the effect of content quality on purchase intention.

3. Methods

The research was conducted in Denpasar, Bali, following the academic research schedule. Adopting a quantitative, causal-associative research design, this study examines the influence of electronic word of mouth (X_1) and content quality (X_2) as exogenous constructs on purchase intention (Y). Furthermore, brand awareness (M) is integrated into the model to evaluate its role as a primary mediating variable. The target population for this research comprises prospective consumers residing in Denpasar City who met the inclusion criterion of having no prior purchase experience with 'Es Teh Indonesia' products. A sample of 270 respondents was recruited via a non-probability purposive sampling technique, ensuring that all participants met the specific inclusion criteria. Primary data were subsequently gathered through a structured online instrument utilizing a five-point Likert scale to measure the research constructs.

Electronic word of mouth was measured through the dimensions of intensity, valence of opinion, and content [1, 5]. Content quality was measured through the dimensions of relevance, accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of digital information [20]. Brand awareness was measured through the dimensions of brand recognition and brand recall [12, 13]. Purchase intention was measured through the dimensions of transactional, referential, and preferential intentions [1, 10]. The research instruments underwent rigorous assessment for construct validity and internal consistency reliability to verify the psychometric integrity and accuracy of the gathered data.

Statistical analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) [19], following a two-stage analytical procedure. This involved a comprehensive evaluation of the measurement (outer) model to establish construct validity and reliability, followed by an assessment of the structural (inner) model to examine the hypothesized relationships and the statistical significance of the mediating effects.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

The assessment of the reflective measurement model indicates that all indicators satisfied the requisite criteria for reliability and validity. Specifically, individual item reliability was confirmed as all outer loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold. Furthermore, convergent validity was established, with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for both lower-order dimensions and higher-order variables surpassing the 0.50 benchmark. Internal consistency was further evidenced by Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients exceeding 0.70, demonstrating robust psychometric integrity across all constructs.

4.2. Structural Model Evaluation

Table 1 illustrates the results of the structural model analysis. The findings indicate that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) exerts a significant positive influence on purchase intention (a path coefficient = 0.240 and a p-value < 0.05), leading to the acceptance of H1. Furthermore, content quality was found to exert a significant positive influence on purchase intention (a path coefficient = 0.392 and a p-value < 0.05), consequently, H2 is supported. The analysis further reveals that both E-WOM and content quality exert significant positive effects on brand awareness, with path coefficients of 0.322 and 0.481, respectively (p-value < 0.05). Accordingly, H3 and H4 are accepted. In addition, brand awareness was found to significantly and positively impact purchase intention with a path coefficient of 0.270 and a p-value < 0.05; Consequently, H5 is statistically supported.

Table 1 Hypothesis Testing Result

Construct	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P-values	Hypothesis Status
E-WOM (X ₁) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.240	4.378	0.000	accepted
Content Quality (X ₂) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.392	6.153	0.000	accepted
E-WOM (X ₁) -> Brand Awareness (M)	0.322	5.644	0.000	accepted
Content Quality (X ₂) -> Brand Awareness (M)	0.481	8.563	0.000	accepted
Brand Awareness (M)-> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.270	4.378	0.000	accepted

(Primary Data, 2026)

Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, the findings demonstrate that brand awareness serves as a significant mediating mechanism, bridging the relationship between digital stimuli specifically E-WOM and content quality and purchase intention. The mediation analysis indicates that these relationships exhibit complementary partial mediation. This classification is supported by the fact that both the direct and indirect effects are statistically significant and share a consistent direction. The results imply that effective digital communication builds strong brand recognition, which in turn successfully drives consumer buying interest.

Table 2 Mediating Testing Result (Specific Indirect Effect)

Construct	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P-values	Hypothesis Status
E-WOM (X ₁) -> Brand Awareness (M) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.087	0.024	3.690	0.000	accepted
Content Quality (X ₂) -> Brand Awareness (M) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.130	0.036	3.624	0.000	accepted

(Primary Data, 2026)

5. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and content quality play a significant role in enhancing consumer purchase intention. Positive online reviews and high-quality digital information create a favorable perception that drives consumers to consider purchasing the product. This finding reinforces the theoretical foundation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which emphasizes that the information and external stimuli received by individuals are key drivers in forming the attitudes and intentions necessary to perform a specific behavior.

These findings are consistent with prior research [1, 2], suggesting that digital communication serves as a significant driver of purchase intention in the beverage industry, primarily facilitated by strong informational channels. Additionally, the current findings resonate with the theoretical perspective of [10], contending that social media content quality and digital stimuli can promote consumer involvement and buying interest. The consistency of these results demonstrates that E-WOM and content quality are key and stable factors in building consumer interest within the competitive beverage industry, strengthening this research's position in the digital marketing landscape.

The findings suggest that the management of Es Teh Indonesia in Denpasar should strategically augment their digital marketing efforts. A particular emphasis on content originality and the systematic management of consumer feedback is critical to bolstering brand outcomes. Based on the data, the statement regarding the "uniqueness of content" received the lowest average score within the content quality variable. This can be addressed by more consistently creating distinctive digital campaigns that stand out from competitors. Reinforcing these dimensions is anticipated to bolster purchase intention, especially within a market landscape where consumer behavior is predominantly driven by visual aesthetics and social proof.

The significant impact of E-WOM and content quality on brand awareness suggests that proficient digital communication strategies are capable of cultivating robust cognitive associations within the consumer's mind. This encourages potential customers to recognize and recall the brand proactively amidst numerous options. This allows consumers to feel greater familiarity with the product, which in turn increases their willingness to buy. Furthermore, these results corroborate the findings of [5, 13], which posit that a brand's digital presence and the credibility of online reviews are key drivers for building strong brand awareness. Moreover, the current findings corroborate the perspective of [9], underscoring the pivotal role of sustained and interactive social media content as a primary driver for building brand recognition.

The findings of this research further demonstrate that brand awareness serves as a pivotal determinant in augmenting consumers' purchase intentions. Corroborating earlier research, the current findings indicate that consumers with superior brand recognition tend to perceive diminished risks, which subsequently amplifies their product preference [12, 13]. When a brand successfully builds awareness, consumers perceive this as a form of reliability. Representing a cognitive response, consumers reciprocate through heightened purchase intentions. These findings confirm that within the contemporary beverage industry in Denpasar, brand awareness functions not merely as a cognitive state, but as a pivotal bridge interlinking digital marketing stimuli with the ultimate purchase decision.

The partial mediation of brand awareness in the relationship between digital stimuli (E-WOM and content quality) and purchase intention indicates that while digital communication can directly increase purchase intention, the presence of brand awareness strengthens this mechanism. In other words, E-WOM and content quality will be more effective in increasing purchase intention if they successfully build strong brand recognition first. This finding explains why the influence of digital stimuli is stronger when channeled through brand awareness. These results lend empirical support to the findings of [13], the current findings highlight that brand awareness is an important internal mechanism explaining how digital marketing can influence consumer behavior. Additionally, the current findings lend further support to the conceptual framework of [12, 21], which establishes brand awareness as a critical mechanism through which marketing activities effectively stimulate purchase intention.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that organizations should strategically prioritize the cultivation of creative, high-caliber digital content while concurrently maintaining a robust online reputation through the systematic management of E-WOM. This strategic approach is anticipated to foster sustainable consumer engagement and exert a positive influence on organizational sales performance within the dynamic landscape of the contemporary beverage industry.

6. Conclusion

The findings provide empirical evidence that E-WOM and content quality significantly bolster purchase intention among consumers of Es Teh Indonesia in Denpasar, Bali. These relationships are manifested through direct effects as well as indirect channels, with brand awareness serving as a critical intervening variable. Brand awareness acts as a complementary partial mediator, strengthening the relationship between digital marketing stimuli (E-WOM and content quality) and purchase intention.

This study contributes to the theoretical landscape of consumer behavior by providing a novel integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and digital communication variables, thereby strengthening the validity of previous empirical findings. Practically, management is advised to develop and strengthen their digital marketing strategy by

focusing on the uniqueness of social media content and proactively managing online customer reviews to maintain a positive brand reputation. Organizations need to create a strong digital presence that enhances brand recognition and recall, ensuring the brand remains the primary choice for consumers in the competitive contemporary beverage market to improve overall sales performance.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

The execution of this research closely aligned with the ethical protocols mandated by the institutional review board

Statement of Informed consent

Written informed consent was successfully gathered from every individual participant in this study

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