

# The Role of E-WOM and Influencer Marketing on Generation Z's Purchasing Decisions

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and influencer marketing on Generation Z's purchasing decisions in Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 150 respondents through an online questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, including validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate that both E-WOM and influencer marketing have significant positive effects on purchasing decisions, with influencer marketing showing a stronger predictive influence. E-WOM enhances decision-making by providing credible peer-generated information, while influencer marketing exerts a powerful persuasive effect through credibility, relatability, and attractive content. The results emphasize the importance of digital engagement and social media-based strategies in influencing Generation Z's consumer behavior. This study contributes to the growing literature on digital marketing effectiveness in emerging markets and provides practical insights for brands seeking to optimize engagement with young consumers in Indonesia.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies and the widespread adoption of social media have transformed the landscape of consumer behavior globally, including in Indonesia. Among various demographic groups, Generation Z—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—has emerged as a dominant force shaping market trends. As digital natives who grew up with smartphones, social networks, and online platforms, Generation Z exhibits unique

preferences and decision-making patterns that are deeply influenced by digital interactions (Adriana & Syaefulloh, 2023; Kim Vick et al., 2024). In Indonesia, one of the world's largest digital user bases, Generation Z represents a significant portion of active internet and social media users. Their purchasing decisions are therefore strongly connected to the online environment, particularly through Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and influencer marketing.

Electronic Word of Mouth has become a critical component of digital

marketing strategies due to its ability to disseminate consumer-generated information rapidly and widely. Unlike traditional WOM, which is limited by face-to-face interactions, E-WOM enables users to share product experiences, recommendations, reviews, and ratings across platforms with virtually unlimited reach (Y.-K. Lee, 2023). For Generation Z, who routinely check online reviews, comments, and testimonials before purchasing, E-WOM serves as a key source of credibility. Numerous studies highlight that online reviews and peer-generated content significantly shape trust, attitudes, and purchase intentions, especially among younger consumers who rely on digital communities for validation (Nguyen et al., 2022).

In parallel with E-WOM, influencer marketing has also become a powerful phenomenon in shaping consumer behavior. Influencers—individuals with substantial credibility and follower bases—impact purchasing decisions through content creation, product endorsements, and lifestyle representation (Huaicun et al., 2023; Icen Fragolia, 2025). In Indonesia, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have fueled the rise of digital influencers who often act as trendsetters for Generation Z. The aspirational nature of influencers, combined with the perceived authenticity of their content, fosters strong parasocial relationships with followers, leading to heightened trust and behavioral influence. As a result, influencer marketing has become an essential tool for brands aiming to engage young consumers.

The increasing relevance of E-WOM and influencer marketing underscores the need for empirical investigation into how these factors specifically influence Generation Z's purchasing decisions in Indonesia. Although many studies have explored digital marketing influences across different age groups, limited research focuses exclusively on Generation Z—whose consumption patterns differ markedly from Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. Indonesia's distinctive context, characterized by a

collectivist culture, a rapidly expanding e-commerce ecosystem, and high social media engagement, offers an ideal setting to examine these dynamics. This study collects data from 150 Generation Z respondents using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzes it with SPSS version 25 through validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive statistics, and multiple regression to evaluate the effects of E-WOM and influencer marketing on purchase decisions.

Overall, this study seeks to determine the extent to which E-WOM and influencer marketing affect Generation Z's purchasing decisions in Indonesia and to identify which factor exerts a stronger influence. Generation Z's reliance on authenticity, transparency, and peer validation—as well as their role as trendsetters in the digital economy—makes them uniquely responsive to digital marketing stimuli. By highlighting the digital touchpoints that most significantly shape their purchasing behaviors, the study contributes valuable insights for marketers, advertisers, and brand managers in optimizing digital strategies tailored to young consumers in the Indonesian marketplace.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) refers to any positive, neutral, or negative statement made by actual or potential consumers about a product or service that is accessible to a wide audience through the internet (Kawasaki et al., 2023; Zayed et al., 2022). Compared to traditional word of mouth, E-WOM offers greater accessibility, persistence, and reach, enabling information to spread quickly across digital networks. As consumers increasingly rely on online reviews, ratings, social media comments, and digital recommendations before making purchasing decisions, E-WOM has become a powerful tool in shaping consumer perceptions and brand evaluations. Its effectiveness is largely rooted in its perceived credibility, as consumers tend to trust peer-generated content more than firm-generated

advertising due to its unbiased and experience-based nature (Barroso et al., 2022; Xia, 2022). The interactive nature of digital platforms further amplifies this influence by facilitating discussions and reducing information asymmetry, particularly in high-involvement purchases where consumers seek validation and assurance (Goyette et al., 2010).

In the Indonesian context, the significance of E-WOM is strengthened by the rapid expansion of major e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and Bukalapak, where product reviews and star ratings have become central features influencing purchasing considerations. Generation Z, who frequently engage with digital communication and value collective opinions, rely heavily on E-WOM throughout their consumer journey. Empirical studies in Southeast Asia consistently show that online reviews significantly affect purchase intention, attitudes toward products, and perceived usefulness (RifaNingtyas et al., 2022; Widjaja, 2022). Consequently, E-WOM stands as a major driver of consumption behavior among young digital consumers in Indonesia, positioning it as an essential component of modern marketing strategies.

## 2.2 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing refers to the use of individuals with strong online visibility, credibility, and follower engagement to promote products and services (Ancillai et al., 2019; Bala & Verma, 2018). These influencers may consist of celebrities, content creators, micro-influencers, or macro-influencers who consistently share content on lifestyle, beauty, technology, travel, or niche interests. Their persuasive power originates from their ability to build parasocial relationships with followers—one-sided yet emotionally significant connections that foster trust and influence (Khyareh et al., 2019; Oktaviani & Abdurrahman, 2024). The effectiveness of influencer marketing is largely determined by three core attributes: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, which shape how followers evaluate an influencer's credibility and the strength of their

recommendations (Handika & Darma, 2018; Quintana, 2023). Influencers who appear authentic, relatable, and consistent in their messaging are more likely to impact consumer attitudes and guide purchasing behavior.

In Indonesia, influencer marketing has gained substantial prominence with the rapid growth of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Indonesian influencers often serve as lifestyle curators and trendsetters, particularly for Generation Z who actively engage with short-form videos, product reviews, and daily content updates. Research indicates that influencer endorsements significantly enhance purchase intention, brand awareness, and brand loyalty (D. Lee & Ham, 2023; Zhang & Mac, 2023). Additionally, the perceived authenticity of influencer communication tends to produce stronger persuasive effects than traditional advertisements, as Generation Z places high value on genuine experiences, transparent endorsements, and peer-like interactions. Consequently, influencer marketing has become a highly effective strategy for brands aiming to capture the attention of young digital consumers.

## 2.3 Generation Z Consumer Characteristics

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a cohort fundamentally distinct in its digital behavior. As true digital natives, they comfortably multitask across devices, navigate multiple social media platforms, and participate actively in diverse online communities (Icen Fragolia, 2025; Wulandari, 2023). Their purchasing decisions are largely shaped by digital experiences rather than traditional marketing channels, as they prioritize authenticity, transparency, and peer validation. Gen Z consumers tend to trust user-generated content, online reviews, and influencer recommendations more than corporate messages. They also conduct extensive online research before purchasing, relying heavily on E-WOM and influencer insights. Studies further indicate that Generation Z has shorter attention spans but greater responsiveness to personalized,

visually engaging, and interactive digital content (Ahmad & Omar, 2017; Sethuraman, 2023), making them an ideal target for digital marketing strategies.

In Indonesia, Generation Z forms one of the largest and most active digital populations, with high engagement in mobile applications, e-commerce platforms, and fast-moving social media trends. Their strong reliance on digital ecosystems makes them particularly susceptible to the influence of content creators, online communities, and peer-generated information. This demographic's behavior demonstrates a marked preference for authenticity and real-time feedback, amplifying the role of E-WOM and influencer marketing in their consumer decision-making process. Consequently, understanding their motivations, expectations, and digital consumption patterns becomes crucial for marketers aiming to design effective and targeted digital strategies within the Indonesian market.

#### 2.4 Purchasing Decision

Purchasing decision refers to the process by which consumers identify needs, evaluate alternatives, and make choices regarding products or service (Kotler et al., 2016). This decision-making process is shaped by psychological, social, and external factors that influence how individuals interpret and respond to information. In the digital era, online information sources play a central role, as consumers increasingly rely on product reviews, influencer endorsements, peer recommendations, and social media trends when considering a purchase. The purchasing process typically consists of five stages: (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) evaluation of alternatives, (4) purchase decision, and (5) post-purchase behavior. Notably, E-WOM and influencer marketing exert their strongest impact during the information search and evaluation stages, particularly for Generation Z, whose consumer habits are closely tied to digital interactions.

Empirical studies consistently show that both E-WOM and influencer marketing significantly shape consumer decision-

making by affecting perceptions of credibility, trustworthiness, and relevance. When consumers view digital information as reliable and aligned with their needs, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes and proceed with purchasing decisions influenced by such content (Ahmad & Omar, 2017; Laurents & Dellyana, n.d.; Thomas & Monica, 2018). For Generation Z—who value authenticity, transparency, and peer-generated insight—digital touchpoints become decisive factors in forming purchase intentions. As a result, purchasing decisions increasingly reflect the direct behavioral outcomes of digital influence within an interconnected online environment.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and influencer marketing on Generation Z's purchasing decisions in Indonesia. Quantitative research is suitable for examining relationships between variables using statistical analysis, allowing researchers to test hypotheses objectively (Creswell, 2014). The study used a cross-sectional survey approach, in which data were collected at a single point in time using a structured questionnaire distributed online. This design was selected because Generation Z is highly active on digital platforms, making online surveys an efficient and appropriate method for accessing the target population.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of Generation Z individuals in Indonesia aged 18 to 27 years who actively use social media platforms and engage in online shopping, as this demographic is highly influenced by digital interactions, online reviews, and influencer content. A total of 150 respondents were selected using non-probability purposive sampling to ensure that participants met specific criteria relevant to the study, including age group and familiarity with social media influencers or E-WOM. The

sample size of 150 also meets the minimum requirements for multiple regression analysis, which generally recommends at least 10–20 respondents per variable (Hair et al., 2019), indicating that the sample is sufficient to achieve statistical reliability.

### 3.3 Data Collection Method

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, a method considered suitable because Generation Z respondents are digitally active, familiar with online survey formats, and easily reachable across different regions of Indonesia without researcher interference, ensuring independent and unbiased responses. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions using a Likert scale to measure perceptions and attitudes, and it was distributed over a two-week period through targeted channels such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram groups relevant to the intended demographic.

### 3.4 Operational Definition of Variables

The study examined three main variables: E-WOM (X1), influencer marketing (X2), and purchasing decisions (Y), each measured using multiple indicators on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). E-WOM (X1) refers to consumer-generated online communication such as reviews, comments, recommendations, and digital feedback, with indicators adapted from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) including information quality, information credibility, information quantity, and review valence. Influencer marketing (X2), defined as promotional activities conducted by social media influencers with credibility, popularity, and strong audience engagement, was measured through indicators adapted from Ohanian (1990) and Freberg et al. (2011), namely attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and content quality. The purchasing decision variable (Y), referring to the process by which consumers evaluate and select products, used indicators adapted from Kotler & Keller (2016), including interest in buying, preference development, purchase intention, and actual purchase decision. Together, these

operational definitions ensure that each construct is clearly defined and appropriately measurable for statistical analysis.

The research instrument used in this study consisted of three main sections: demographic information (including age, gender, social media usage, and frequency of online shopping), indicators for E-WOM (X1), indicators for influencer marketing (X2), and indicators for purchasing decisions (Y). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to capture respondent perceptions accurately and consistently. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, expert validation was conducted to ensure clarity, relevance, and readability, particularly for Generation Z respondents who represent the target population of this study. This validation process helped strengthen the reliability and suitability of the research instrument for subsequent data collection and analysis.

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability Tests

Instrument testing was conducted using SPSS version 25 through validity and reliability assessments to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the questionnaire. The validity test employed the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, where an item is considered valid if the significance value is below 0.05 and the r-count exceeds the r-table value at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , indicating that all indicators meeting these criteria are appropriate for use. Reliability was then evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of each variable's indicators, with a threshold of  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  as recommended by Hair et al. (2019); variables achieving alpha values above this benchmark were deemed reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25 through several stages, beginning with descriptive statistics to summarize demographic profiles, mean scores, frequency distributions, and overall perceptions of Generation Z toward E-WOM and influencer marketing. Classical

assumption tests were then conducted to ensure the regression model met statistical requirements, including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test, multicollinearity testing using Tolerance ( $>0.10$ ) and VIF ( $<10$ ), and the Glejser test for heteroscedasticity, with models meeting these criteria considered appropriate for regression analysis. Multiple linear regression was employed to examine the effects of E-WOM (X1) and influencer marketing (X2) on purchasing decisions (Y) using the equation  $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$ , where Y represents purchasing decisions, X1 is E-WOM, X2 is influencer marketing, a is the constant, b1 and b2 are regression coefficients, and e is the error term. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to measure the partial influence of X1 and X2, the F-test to assess their simultaneous influence, both accepted when Sig.  $< 0.05$ , and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) to evaluate how much variance in Y is explained by the independent variables, with higher  $R^2$  values indicating stronger predictive power.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 150 Generation Z respondents from Indonesia participated in this study, with the demographic profile indicating that 58% were female and 42% male, and most were aged 18–23 years (72%), followed by those aged 24–27 years (28%). Social media usage was notably high, with 95% of respondents using Instagram and TikTok daily, while their online shopping frequency showed that 63% frequently made purchases (three or more times per month), 30% shopped occasionally, and only 7% rarely engaged in online shopping. These findings confirm that the respondents represent highly active digital consumers, making them well-suited for assessing the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and influencer marketing on purchasing decisions.

### 4.2 Validity and Reliability Test Results

The validity test results using Pearson correlation showed that all questionnaire items had Sig.  $< 0.05$  and r-count values

greater than the r-table value of 0.160, indicating that every indicator of E-WOM, influencer marketing, and purchasing decision was valid. Reliability testing further demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.871 for E-WOM, 0.896 for influencer marketing, and 0.883 for purchasing decision, all exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70. These results confirm that the measurement instrument used in this study is both valid and highly reliable.

### 4.3 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis results show that E-WOM (X1) received a mean score of 4.18, placing it in the high category, indicating that respondents strongly agreed that online reviews are informative and trustworthy, user ratings help reduce uncertainty, and social media comments influence their perceptions. Influencer marketing (X2) achieved an even higher mean score of 4.25, categorized as very high, reflecting Generation Z's agreement that influencers appear credible and relatable, their content is visually engaging and persuasive, and their recommendations are trusted when making purchasing decisions.

Meanwhile, the purchasing decision variable (Y) recorded a mean score of 4.12, also within the high category, suggesting that respondents are highly responsive to digital stimuli that shape consumption behavior. They indicated that online information strongly influences their preferences, influencers often spark interest in buying, and online reviews play an important role in guiding their final purchase decisions.

### 4.4 Classical Assumption Test

The classical assumption tests show that the data met all required statistical criteria, with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicating normal distribution (Sig. = 0.078  $> 0.05$ ). Multicollinearity was not detected, as both E-WOM and influencer marketing had VIF values of 1.892 and tolerance values above 0.10, falling within acceptable limits. Additionally, the Glejser test results showed Sig.  $> 0.05$  for all variables, confirming that the regression model was free from

heteroscedasticity and suitable for further regression analysis.

#### 4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The regression model used in this study was expressed as  $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$ , where  $Y$  represents the purchasing decision,  $X_1$  is E-WOM,  $X_2$  is influencer marketing, and  $e$  is the error term. The model summary showed an  $R$  value of 0.768, an  $R^2$  of 0.590, and an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.583, indicating that 59% of the variance in purchasing decisions can be explained by E-WOM and influencer marketing collectively, while the remaining 41% is influenced by other variables not included in the model. These values

demonstrate a strong explanatory power, suggesting that digital communication factors meaningfully shape consumer behavior among Generation Z.

The ANOVA results further support the model's significance, with an  $F$ -value of 105.324 and a significance level of 0.000, confirming that E-WOM and influencer marketing simultaneously exert a significant effect on purchasing decisions. This finding reinforces the conclusion that both variables play crucial roles in influencing Generation Z's consumer choices within Indonesia's digital marketplace.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	t-value	Sig.	Interpretation
E-WOM (X1)	6.210	0.000	Significant positive effect
Influencer Marketing (X2)	7.845	0.000	Significant positive effect

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that both Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and influencer marketing exert significant positive effects on purchasing decisions among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The  $t$ -value for E-WOM ( $t = 6.210$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$ ) demonstrates a strong and statistically significant relationship, suggesting that clearer, more credible, and abundant online reviews substantially enhance consumers' confidence in evaluating and selecting products. This finding aligns with prior literature stating that peer-generated information reduces uncertainty and strengthens consumer attitudes, particularly within digitally active demographics. The significance of E-WOM reinforces the notion that Generation Z places considerable trust in user-generated content, making it a critical determinant in their decision-making process.

Influencer marketing also shows an even stronger influence, with a higher  $t$ -value ( $t = 7.845$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$ ), indicating that influencers play an essential role in shaping consumer perceptions and encouraging purchase intentions. The magnitude of this effect suggests that credibility, attractiveness, authenticity, and expertise of influencers serve as powerful cues that guide Generation

Z's buying behavior. This supports existing studies that highlight the persuasive power of parasocial relationships and visually engaging influencer content in stimulating consumer interest. Overall, these results emphasize that digital communication factors—both peer-driven and influencer-driven—are pivotal in influencing Generation Z's purchasing decisions, confirming that marketers must integrate E-WOM and influencer strategies to engage effectively with this demographic.

#### 4.6 Discussion

The results confirm that E-WOM significantly influences Generation Z's purchasing decisions, supporting prior research by (Adriana & Syaefulloh, 2023; Kim Vick et al., 2024; Y.-K. Lee, 2023), which emphasizes that online reviews effectively reduce uncertainty and enhance consumer trust. In this study, Generation Z respondents demonstrated strong reliance on TikTok comments, Instagram tags and customer testimonials, as well as e-commerce ratings and reviews when forming product evaluations. The Indonesian digital ecosystem, characterized by highly interactive social media platforms and transparent marketplace rating systems, further strengthens the role of E-WOM as a credible

information source that shapes both the evaluation and decision stages of the buying process. Overall, E-WOM serves to positively shape preferences, reduce perceived risk, and encourage purchase intention among young digital consumers.

Influencer marketing, however, exhibits an even stronger impact on purchasing decisions compared to E-WOM. Influencer credibility, attractiveness, and expertise play a significant role in increasing Generation Z's willingness to try or purchase a product. This aligns with the findings of (Y.-K. Lee, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022), who highlight that influencers effectively build emotional attachment, foster parasocial relationships, and produce authentic content that enhances persuasive power. In Indonesia, influencers commonly serve as trendsetters—particularly on TikTok and Instagram—where their relatable personalities and lifestyle-oriented content resonate strongly with Generation Z. As a result, influencer endorsements carry substantial weight and are readily accepted by young consumers.

The regression model indicates a clear distinction in the relative strength of the variables tested: E-WOM demonstrates a moderately strong influence, while influencer marketing shows a very strong influence on purchasing decisions. This difference arises because Generation Z prefers authentic, personalized recommendations over text-based reviews and tends to feel emotionally connected to influencers through parasocial relationships. Their responsiveness to interactive and visually engaging content such as Instagram Reels and TikTok videos further amplifies the impact of influencer marketing. Additionally, influencer experiences are perceived as more trustworthy and relatable compared to anonymous online reviews, giving influencers stronger persuasive authority.

Taken together, these findings highlight that while both E-WOM and influencer marketing significantly shape Generation Z's purchasing decisions, influencer marketing emerges as the more dominant predictor. Its emotional and

psychological influence, combined with the visual and interactive nature of social media content, provides a deeper level of engagement that surpasses the informational value of online reviews. This emphasizes the importance for brands to strategically collaborate with influencers and leverage authentic content creation to effectively reach and influence Generation Z consumers in Indonesia's rapidly growing digital marketplace.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and influencer marketing both play significant and positive roles in shaping Generation Z's purchasing decisions in Indonesia. Although both variables were proven to be strong predictors, influencer marketing exhibited a greater impact compared to E-WOM, indicating that Generation Z responds more strongly to content that is attractive, credible, and relatable—especially on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Influencers function not only as content creators but also as digital opinion leaders whose endorsements reduce uncertainty and foster purchase intention. Meanwhile, E-WOM also contributes substantially by offering accessible, credible, and experience-based information through online reviews, product ratings, consumer comments, and testimonials. These peer-generated inputs assist Generation Z in evaluating alternatives and making informed decisions. However, because anonymous reviews lack personal connection, their influence—while meaningful—is slightly lower than the emotionally engaging content produced by influencers.

Overall, the results highlight the central role of digital interactions in the consumer journey of Generation Z in Indonesia and underscore the need for brands to integrate influencer partnerships with robust online review management. Marketers should collaborate with influencers who

embody authenticity, trustworthiness, and expertise, while encouraging consumers to provide honest feedback across digital platforms. By strategically leveraging both E-WOM and influencer marketing, companies can strengthen digital visibility, enhance consumer trust, and increase purchase intentions among Generation Z. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior in

emerging markets. Practically, the findings offer actionable guidance for brand managers in designing effective digital communication strategies. Future studies may expand the demographic scope, incorporate additional variables such as brand image or trust, or employ advanced analytical methods like SEM-PLS to generate deeper insights into digitally driven purchasing behavior.

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