

The Role of eWOM Credibility, Valence, Brand Attitude, and Perceived Brand Quality through Online Engagement Intention

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Received: 02/09/2025 | Revised: 08/12/2025 | Accepted: 22/03/2026 | Published: 30/03/2026

Abstract: This study examines the mechanism linking electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and online purchase intention through online engagement intention in the Indonesian digital commerce context. The model integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and the Brand Equity Theory to explain how informational and evaluative factors shape behavioral outcomes. Data were collected from 304 online consumers with prior experience in reading online reviews and conducting online purchases. Analysis employed Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling. The results indicate that eWOM credibility has a positive and significant effect on online engagement intention. eWOM valence shows a negative, significant effect, indicating increased consumer skepticism toward directional tone. Brand attitude and perceived brand quality have positive, significant effects on engagement intention. Online engagement intention strongly influences online purchase intention and acts as a full mediating mechanism between all antecedent variables and purchase intention. The model explains 66.6% of the variance in engagement intention and 61.1% of the variance in purchase intention, indicating substantial explanatory power. These findings confirm that engagement represents a critical behavioral activation stage that transforms perception into intention. The study provides empirical evidence that credibility dominates informational influence, while evaluative constructs stabilize consumer behavior under uncertainty. The research addresses a gap in digital environments through a structured mediation mechanism. The findings highlight the importance of trust formation and evaluative consolidation in consumer behavior in emerging digital markets.

Keywords: *eWOM credibility, eWOM valence, brand attitude, perceived brand quality, online engagement intention, online purchase intention*

How to Cite: Hartono, Rahmawati, N. F., Maulina, A., Prihadini, D., & Supriyono (2026). The Role of eWOM Credibility, Valence, Brand Attitude, and Perceived Brand Quality through Online Engagement Intention. *Journal of Economics and Management*, 4(1), 90-106. <https://doi.org/10.70716/ecoma.v4i1.600>

INTRODUCTION

Consumer shopping in Indonesia reflects an adaptive shift driven by digital connectivity, with a generally positive Consumer Confidence Index (CCI). Social media functions as a dominant information source shaping purchase decisions through influencer endorsements, user-generated content, and brand interactions. Preferences are strengthening with a growing proportion of consumers willing to pay premium prices for environmentally responsible products, support local products, and adopt

biodegradable packaging. Indicating an integrated behavioral pattern combining digital reliance, selective consumption, and ethical orientation.

Indonesia's e-commerce market, valued at approximately 65 billion U.S. dollars, represents the largest in Southeast Asia and has experienced accelerated growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, with projections indicating a gross merchandise value (GMV) of around 150 billion U.S. dollars by 2030 and an expanding user base expected to reach about 99 million by 2029. Platform dominance is concentrated among Shopee Indonesia, Tokopedia, and Blibli, while digital wallets accounted for over 40% of total e-commerce payments in 2024.

Despite the rapid expansion of digital commerce, a persistent gap remains between consumers' exposure to online information and their actual purchase behavior (Sharma et al., 2023). Many consumers actively engage with digital content (Qu et al., 2023), yet only a small number proceed to transactional decisions (Kang et al., 2022). This conversion inefficiency (Xu et al., 2025), also documented in Indonesia by the e-Conomy SEA framework (Google et al., 2025), suggests the presence of an intermediate psychological mechanism linking attention to action.

Within this context, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) serves as a dominant informational stimulus shaping consumer evaluation. Consumers rely on digital reviews to reduce uncertainty (Qiu & Zhang, 2024), but the effectiveness of eWOM varies (Li et al., 2023). Credibility enhances information acceptance and trust, whereas valence, the directional tone of reviews, shows unstable effects due to growing consumer skepticism toward overly positive content (Ngo, Bui, et al., 2024). This inconsistency suggests that eWOM's influence requires a more nuanced explanatory mechanism beyond a direct effect on purchase intention.

Brand attitude and perceived brand quality act as cognitive anchors in digital decision environments. These evaluative judgments reduce perceived risk and uncertainty (Erdem & Swait, 2016), consolidating prior experiences into heuristics that guide consumer-brand interaction (Zarantonello et al., 2020). However, transforming these evaluations into behavioral outcomes requires an additional mechanism. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) posits intention as the immediate antecedent of behavior. Extending this to digital contexts, online engagement intention reflects a state of behavioral readiness, as well as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with brand activities (Ebrahim, 2022; Erdem & Swait, 2016). As a multidimensional construct, online engagement strengthens the link between perception and action (Dong et al., 2024).

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), behavioral intention is the most immediate antecedent of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Within this framework, beliefs derived from external information shape evaluative information, which, in turn, shapes behavioral intentions. eWOM serves as a primary source of such beliefs. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) clarifies how these beliefs are constructed through cognitive processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Credibility influences via argument quality and trustworthiness, while valence operates through evaluative judgments (Heinonen, 2017; Moradi & Zihagh, 2022). Together, brand attitude (affective) and perceived brand quality (cognitive) reflect consumers' evaluative judgments, thereby reducing perceived risk and increasing decision confidence under uncertainty (Montecchi et al., 2024; Shamim & Mohsin Butt, 2013; Spry et al., 2011). The conceptual integration among eWOM credibility, eWOM valence, brand attitude, perceived brand

quality, online engagement intention, and online purchase intention is illustrated in Figure 1.

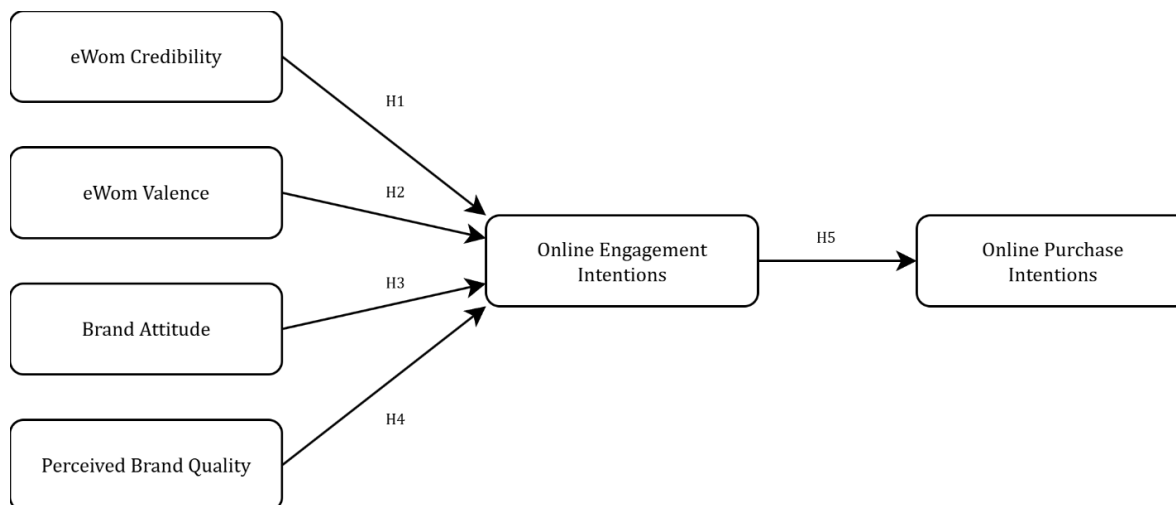


Figure 1. Research Framework. Source: Author's Own Works

Credibility determines how consumers accept and learn from information (Herzallah et al., 2025). When information is perceived as credible, consumers find it more useful, adopt it in decision-making, and engage more actively (Gkikas et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2024). (; Haq et al., 2024). Credibility also enhances trust and reduces skepticism (Chen et al., 2023). Conversely, low credibility leads to avoidance (Syamsuar & Witarsyah, 2025), and higher eWOM credibility increases online engagement intention. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: eWOM credibility positively affects online engagement intention.

eWOM valence reflects the directional tone of consumer opinions (positive, negative, or neutral) (Hancock et al., 2022). Positive valence signals satisfaction, reinforces favorable perceptions, and strengthens evaluative judgments, while negative valence increases uncertainty (Hajli, 2019; Heinonen, 2017; Xiao & Li, 2019). Therefore, positive valence is expected to enhance the intention to engage online. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: eWOM valence, positive, negative, or neutral, affects online engagement intention.

External stimuli shape attitudes, which in turn drive intentions and actions (Ajzen, 1991). External stimuli affect customers' perceptions during their navigation and, ultimately, engagement (Katsifaraki & Theodosiou, 2024). A positive brand attitude increases consumers' tendency to interact with and engage in brand-related digital activities (Haq et al., 2024; Panggati et al., 2023; Yousaf et al., 2023). Other research also shows that a positive brand attitude can encourage consumer interaction behavior with the brand and strengthen engagement (Sandi & Sihombing, 2023). Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H3: Brand attitude positively affects online engagement intention.

Perceived brand quality, formed through digital experiences, influences how consumers assess and respond to brand activities (Chavadi et al., 2023). Higher perceived quality increases consumer interest (Kothari et al., 2025; Oktavia & Mariam, 2024), trust, and engagement with online brand content (Bazi et al., 2023; Vo Minh et al., 2022). Perceived brand quality is positively associated with online engagement intention (Haq et al., 2024). Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H4: Perceived brand quality positively affects online engagement intention

Online engagement intention is a consumer's measurable intent to interact with brand-related content. Defined as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with brand activities (Hollebeek et al., 2023), engagement enhances consumer understanding, trust, and brand awareness (Onofrei et al., 2022). Engaged consumers obtain richer information and form stronger brand relationships, making them more likely to develop purchase intentions (Dauhan & Langi, 2024; Han & Jo, 2025). Hence, higher online engagement intention increases online purchase intention (Haq et al., 2024). Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H5: Online engagement intention positively affects online purchase intention

Accordingly, this study proposes an integrated model examining the influence of eWOM credibility and valence, along with brand attitude and perceived brand quality, on online purchase intention, with online engagement intention as a mediating variable. This study contributes by positioning engagement intention as a behavioral mechanism that links informational and evaluative stimuli to purchase decisions. In addition, this study provides empirical evidence within the Indonesian digital commerce context, where high digital adoption coexists with evolving patterns of consumer trust and evaluation.

RESEARCH METHODS**Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative research approach, using a cross-sectional survey design, to empirically test hypothesized relationships among latent constructs. Quantitative design is appropriate for examining causal relationships and theory testing (Creswell, 2013). Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the data.

Measurement

All constructs in this study were operationalized using multi-item measurement scales adapted from prior well-established studies to ensure content validity. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). eWOM credibility was measured using items adapted from Cheung et al. (2009), further supported by Haq et al. (2024) and Vuong et al. (2024), which emphasize factual, accurate, and perceived credibility. eWOM valence was operationalized based on the conceptualization of positive and negative evaluative tone proposed by Hajli (2019), Anastasiei & Dospinescu (2019), and further supported by Haryono (2022). Brand attitude was measured using scales adapted from Spry et al. (2011), further supported by Haq et al. (2024) and García-Salirrosas et al. (2024), the attitudinal framework (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived brand quality was assessed using items derived from Spry et al. (2011) and further supported by Haq et al. (2024), which capture consumers' overall perspective of product excellence and reliability. Online engagement intention was measured by adapting engagement dimensions proposed by Sprott et al. (2009) and further supported by Haq et al. (2024), reflecting consumers' willingness to interact, participate, and contribute in online brand activities. Finally, online purchase intention was measured using scales adapted from Tingchi Liu & Brock (2011), further supported by Haq et al. (2024), which conceptualize purchase intention as a consumer's conscious plan to buy products through digital platforms.

Sample and Data Collection

The target population of this study consists of online consumers who have experience reading online reviews (eWOM) and purchasing products through online platforms. Consumers are deemed appropriate respondents because they are directly exposed to eWOM information and actively engaged in digital purchasing environments. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents met these criteria, and data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms and online consumer communities. To ensure data quality, screening questions and response consistency checks were applied, and incomplete or invalid responses were excluded from the analysis. After data cleaning, 304 valid responses were retained for further analysis. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirements for PLS-SEM analysis and is considered adequate for estimating complex structural models with multiple constructs and indicators (Hair et al., 2022). Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondent.

Category	N	%
Gender		
Male	128	42.1
Female	176	57.9
Age		
17–22 years	71	23.4
23–28 years	124	40.8
29–34 years	62	20.4
35–40 years	31	10.2
> 40 years	16	5.3
Last Educational Attainment		
Senior High School (SMA/SMK)	78	25.7
Diploma	53	17.4
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	149	49
Master's Degree (S2)	18	5.9
Doctoral Degree (S3)	6	2
Occupation		
Student (Undergraduate)	89	29.3
Private Sector Employee	103	33.9
Civil Servant	31	10.2
Entrepreneur	52	17.1
Other	29	9.5
Monthly Income		
< IDR 2,000,000	85	28
IDR 2,000,000 – IDR 3,000,000	71	23.4
IDR 3,000,001 – IDR 4,999,999	58	19.1
IDR 5,000,000 – IDR 9,999,999	63	20.7
IDR 10,000,000 – IDR 19,999,999	20	6.6
> IDR 20,000,000	7	2.3
Most Frequently Used Online Shopping Platform		

Shopee	138	45.4
Tokopedia	91	29.9
Lazada	32	10.5
Blibli	24	7.9
Other	19	6.3
Online Purchase Frequency per Month		
1–2 times	82	27
3–5 times	121	39.8
6–10 times	67	22
> 10 times	34	11.2
Total	304	100

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3 software. The analysis followed a two-step approach: assessment of the measurement model (outer model) followed by assessment of the structural model (inner model) (Hair et al., 2022).

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment covers internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR). Convergent validity is evaluated through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicator multicollinearity is examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), as reported in Table 2 and Figure 2. Discriminant validity is assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion to confirm that each construct demonstrates adequate conceptual distinction, as presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct		Mean	SD	Loading	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE	VIF
Brand Attitude	BA1	3.852	0.824	0.802	0.899	0.904	0.921	0.624	2.293
	BA2	3.812	0.84	0.841					2.644
	BA3	3.753	0.836	0.808					2.178
	BA4	3.809	0.821	0.775					1.979
	BA5	3.632	0.94	0.808					2.134
	BA6	3.793	0.925	0.78					2.043
	BA7	3.776	0.926	0.711					1.756
eWom Credibility	EC1	3.655	0.908	0.882	0.864	0.868	0.917	0.787	2.343
	EC2	3.605	0.922	0.913					2.619
	EC3	3.641	0.949	0.865					1.975
eWom Valence	EV1	4.197	0.807	0.718	0.834	0.853	0.888	0.665	1.989
	EV2	4.234	0.775	0.754					2.154
	EV3	4.02	0.831	0.717					1.697
	EV5	4.069	0.798	0.809					1.874
Online Engagement Intentions	OE1	3.757	1.039	0.713	0.941	0.942	0.951	0.71	1.802
	OE2	3.444	1.053	0.774					2.259
	OE3	3.401	1.037	0.882					3.454
	OE4	3.099	1.168	0.895					4.48
	OE5	2.984	1.231	0.869					4.01

	OE6	3.385	1.15	0.876					3.536
	OE7	3.299	1.1	0.849					3.138
	OE8	3.431	1.077	0.865					3.318
Online Purchase Intentions	OPI1	3.724	0.998	0.874	0.919	0.925	0.939	0.755	2.903
	OPI2	3.641	1.013	0.9					3.38
	OPI3	3.803	0.96	0.82					2.246
	OPI4	3.553	0.965	0.886					2.982
	OPI5	3.599	0.982	0.864					2.57
Perceived Brand Quality	PBQ1	3.579	0.911	0.874	0.818	0.822	0.892	0.734	1.99
	PBQ3	3.773	0.869	0.823					1.654
	PBQ4	3.73	0.839	0.872					1.923

Source: SmartPLS 3.

Table 2 shows Brand Attitude (CA: 0.899; rho_A: 0.904; CR: 0.921; AVE: 0.624), indicating excellent reliability with loadings between 0.711 and 0.841. eWOM Credibility (CA: 0.864; rho_A: 0.868; CR: 0.917; AVE: 0.787) shows strong reliability and high indicator loadings between 0.865 and 0.913. eWOM Valence (CA: 0.827; rho_A: 0.894; CR: 0.870; AVE: 0.572) meets minimum thresholds with loadings between 0.773 and 0.841. Online Engagement Intentions (CA: 0.941; rho_A: 0.942; CR: 0.951; AVE: 0.710) exhibit excellent reliability, with loadings ranging from 0.713 to 0.895. Online Purchase Intentions (CA: 0.919; rho_A: 0.925; CR: 0.939; AVE: 0.755) also demonstrates strong reliability with loadings ranging from 0.820 to 0.900. Perceived Brand Quality (CA: 0.818; rho_A: 0.822; CR: 0.892; AVE: 0.734) meets all reliability and validity criteria, with loadings ranging from 0.823 to 0.874. Indicator VIF values range from 1.638 to 4.480, indicating no critical multicollinearity issues. Furthermore, all constructs achieve Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, while all AVE values exceed the minimum criterion of 0.50. These results indicate that the constructs satisfy the established requirements for internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity. In addition, all indicator loadings remain above the minimum acceptable level of 0.70, providing further support for the adequacy of the measurement items in representing their respective latent constructs.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity. Source: SmartPLS 3.

	BA	OEI	OPI	PBQ	EC	EV
Brand Attitude	0.790					
Online Engagement Intentions	0.764	0.843				
Online Purchase Intentions	0.786	0.782	0.869			
Perceived Brand Quality	0.845	0.738	0.789	0.857		
eWom Credibility	0.560	0.607	0.529	0.535	0.887	
eWom Valence	0.553	0.339	0.473	0.496	0.343	0.815

Note: BA: Brand Attitude; OEI: Online Engagement Intentions; OPI: Online Purchase Intentions; PBQ: Perceived Brand Quality; EC: eWOM Credibility; EV: eWOM Valence.

The Fornell–Larcker criterion indicates that the square root of each construct's AVE generally exceeds the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

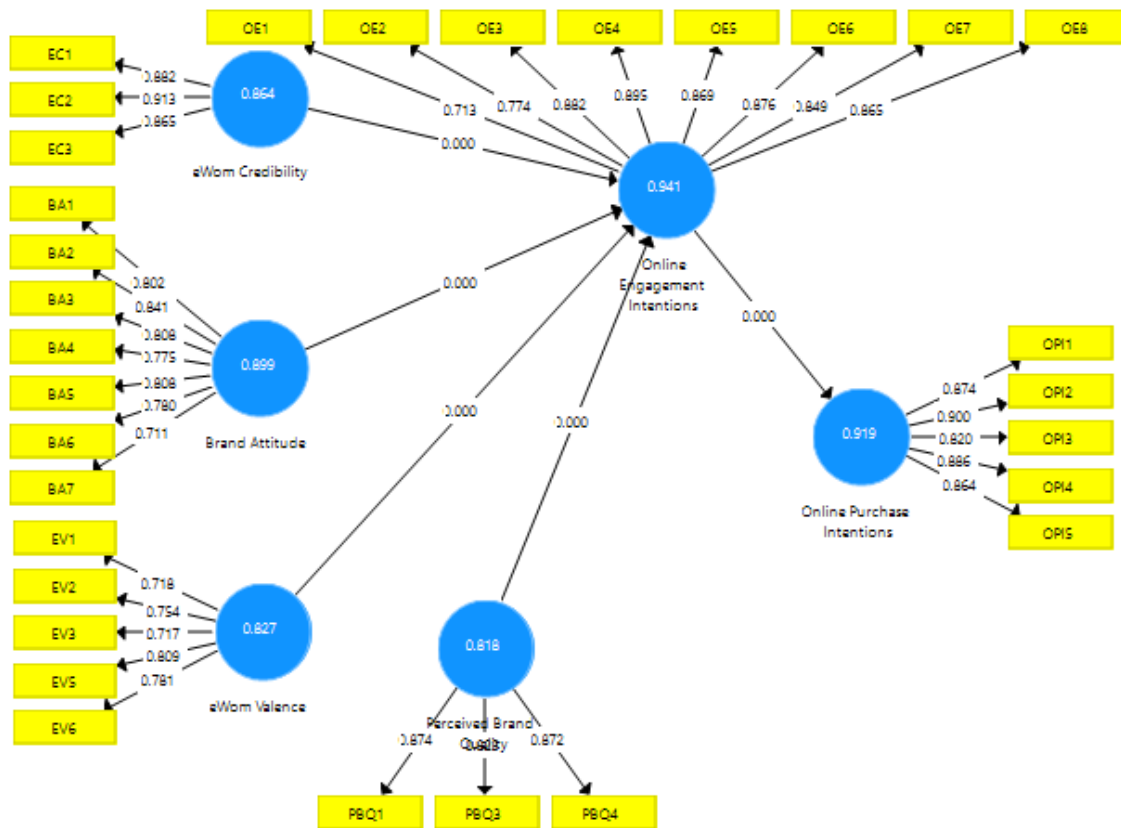


Figure 2. Measurement Model Assessment. Source: SmartPLS 3.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model evaluation includes the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the model's explanatory power. Effect size (f^2) is used to examine the contribution of each exogenous construct. Multicollinearity is assessed using the VIFs. Predictive relevance (Q^2) is evaluated using the blindfolding procedure. The results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 3.

Table 4. Structural Model Assessment. Source: SmartPLS 3.

Construct	R^2	R^2 Adj.	Q^2	SSO	SSE
Online Engagement Intentions	0.666	0.661	0.457	2432	1319.81
Online Purchase Intentions	0.611	0.61	0.453	1520	831.14

Note: BA: Brand Attitude; OEI: Online Engagement Intentions; OPI: Online Purchase Intentions; PBQ: Perceived Brand Quality; EC: eWOM Credibility; EV: eWOM Valence.

The structural model assessment shows that Online Engagement Intentions (OEI) explain 66.6% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.661$) with a moderate predictive relevance ($Q^2 = 0.457$). Online Purchase Intentions (OPI) explain 61.1% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.610$) with a similarly moderate predictive relevance ($Q^2 = 0.453$). Regarding effect sizes (f^2), Brand Attitude ($f^2 = 0.139$) and eWOM Credibility ($f^2 = 0.114$) exert small-to-medium effects on OEI, while Perceived Brand Quality ($f^2 = 0.064$) and eWOM Valence ($f^2 = 0.011$) show weak effects. The effect of OEI on OPI is very large ($f^2 = 1.572$). All inner VIF values are below the common threshold of 5 (ranging from 1.000 to 4.132), indicating no critical multicollinearity issues.

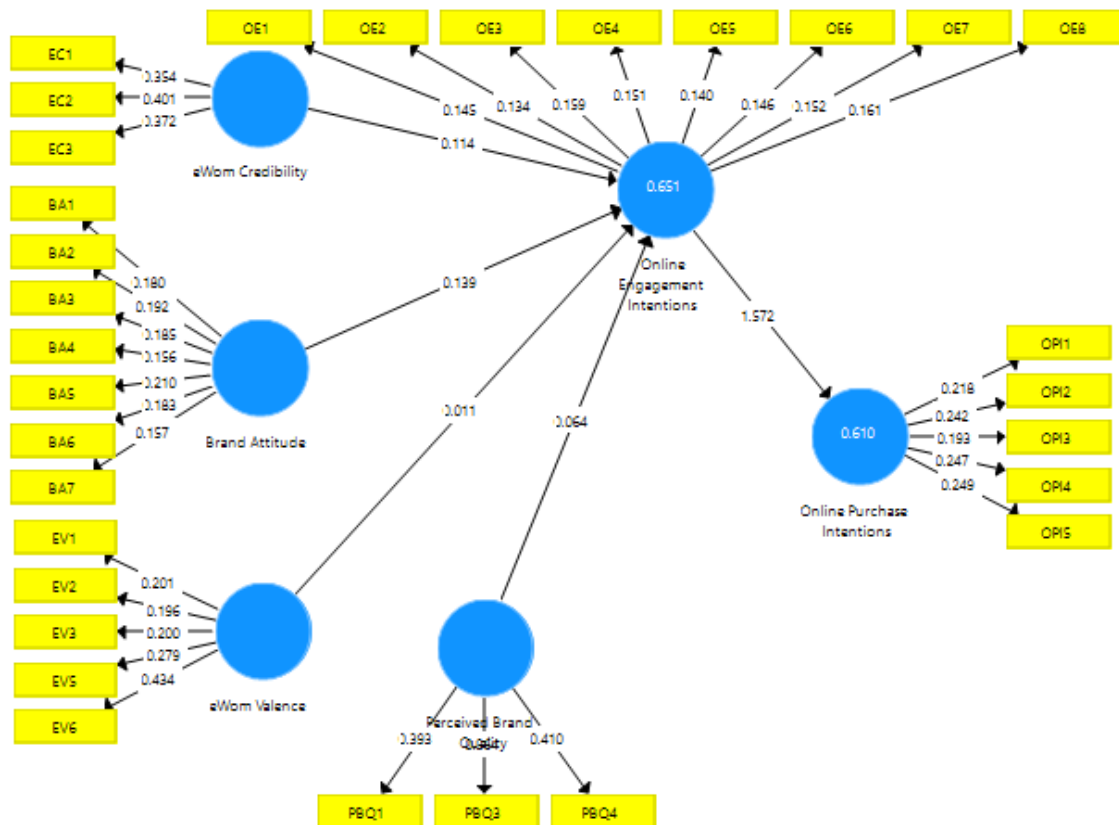


Figure 3. Structural Model Assessment. Source: SmartPLS 3.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 and Figure 4 present the path coefficients and specific indirect effects with bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from bootstrapping using 5,000 subsamples. Statistical significance is determined using a t-statistic threshold of ≥ 1.96 and a p-value threshold of ≤ 0.05 at the 95% confidence level.

Table 5. Bootstrapping Result. Source: SmartPLS 3.

Path Coefficient	B	Sample Mean	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Bias	2.50%	97.50%
EC → OEI	0.242	0.246	0.049	4.958	0	0.004	0.149	0.34
EV → OEI	-0.145	-0.144	0.044	3.31	0.001	0	-0.231	-0.062
BA → OEI	0.469	0.467	0.079	5.941	0	-0.002	0.321	0.63
PBQ → OEI	0.283	0.283	0.071	3.974	0	-0.001	0.145	0.428
OEI → OPI	0.782	0.782	0.024	32.093	0	0.001	0.728	0.823
Indirect	B	Sample Mean	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Bias	2.50%	97.50%
EC → OEI → OPI	0.189	0.192	0.038	5.041	0	0.003	0.117	0.265
EV → OEI → OPI	-0.113	-0.113	0.034	3.36	0.001	0	-0.178	-0.049
BA → OEI → OPI	0.367	0.366	0.065	5.676	0	-0.001	0.248	0.504
PBQ → OEI → OPI	0.222	0.221	0.056	3.926	0	0	0.116	0.339

The results indicate that eWOM credibility has a positive and significant effect on online engagement intention ($\beta = 0.242$, $t = 4.958$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.149–0.340]), supporting H1. The relationship between eWOM valence and online engagement intention is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.145$, $t = 3.310$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.231–

-0.062]), indicating that H2 is not supported in the proposed positive direction. Brand attitude shows a positive and significant effect on online engagement intention ($\beta = 0.469$, $t = 5.941$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.321–0.630]), supporting H3. Perceived brand quality also has a positive and significant effect on online engagement intention ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 3.974$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.145–0.428]), supporting H4. Furthermore, online engagement intention has a strong positive and significant effect on online purchase intention ($\beta = 0.782$, $t = 32.093$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.728–0.823]), supporting H5.

The indirect effects demonstrate that online engagement intention functions as a mediating mechanism. The indirect effect of eWOM credibility on online purchase intention through online engagement intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.189$, $t = 5.041$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.117–0.265]). The indirect effect of eWOM valence on online purchase intention through online engagement intention is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.113$, $t = 3.360$, $p = 0.001$, CI 95% [-0.178--0.049]). The indirect effect of brand attitude on online purchase intention through online engagement intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.367$, $t = 5.676$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.248–0.504]). The indirect effect of perceived brand quality on online purchase intention through online engagement intention is also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 3.926$, $p < 0.001$, CI 95% [0.116–0.339]). These results indicate that online engagement intention consistently transmits the influence of all antecedent variables toward purchase intention.

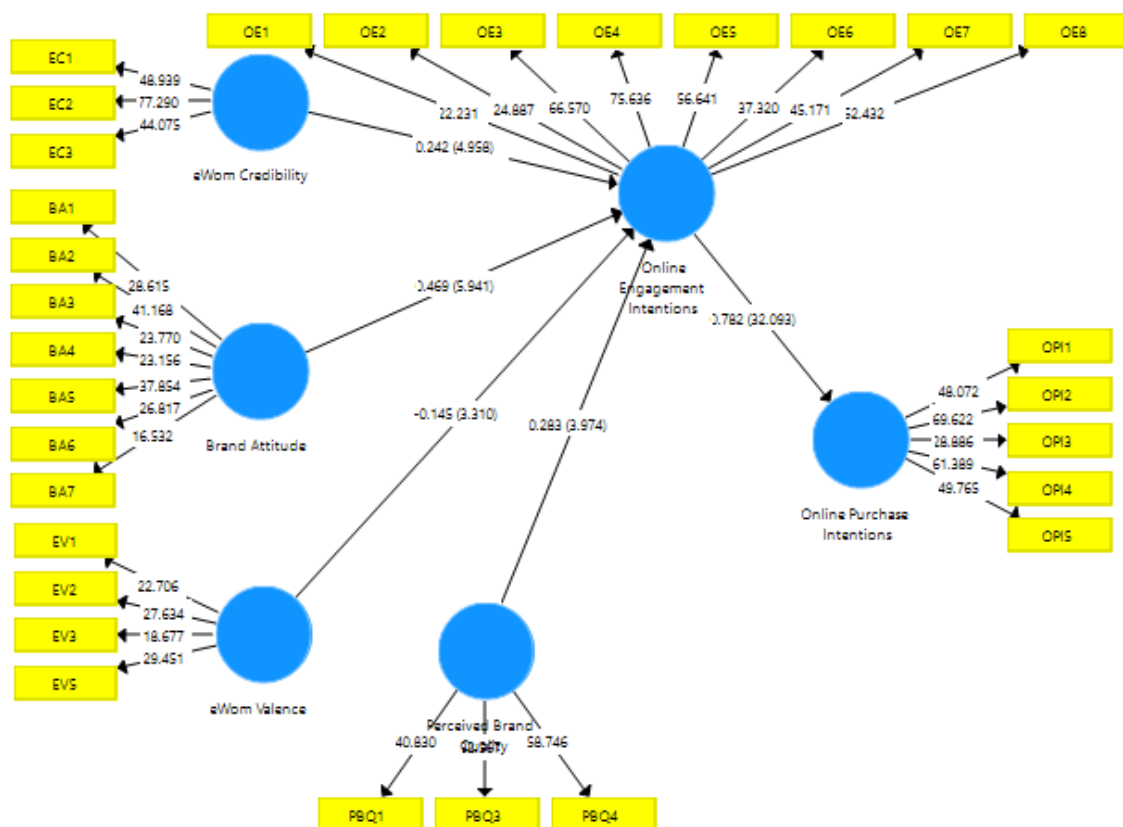


Figure 4. Path Coefficient. Source: SmartPLS 3.

The findings indicate that online engagement serves as a central behavioral mechanism for transforming consumer evaluations into action intentions in digital environments. This is consistent with Brodie et al. (2011), who emphasize that engagement represents a multidimensional psychological state encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. As digital interaction is deeply embedded in

everyday consumption activities (Sharma et al., 2023), engagement becomes a necessary condition for converting passive exposure into active decision-making (Hollebeek et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2019). These results suggest that consumer behavior is driven by a process that strengthens the linkage between perception and action (Haq et al., 2024). The results show that it explains 61% of the variance in purchase intention, absorbing most of the influence from both informational (eWOM) and evaluative (brand attitude, perceived brand quality) antecedents. This suggests that in digital environments, engagement intention operates as a proximal mediator; consumers must first form an intention to interact with brand content before developing purchase intentions.

Brand attitudes and perceived brand quality are key drivers of consumer engagement on digital platforms (Haq et al., 2024). This aligns with findings from Chang et al. (2019), Islam & Singh (2020), Medina-Molina et al. (2021), and Papadopoulou et al. (2023) that brand attitude and quality act as intangible resources for consumers under uncertainty. Accumulated knowledge and prior experiences reduce risk and increase confidence in interacting with brands (Islam & Singh, 2020). Consequently, consumers may integrate affective and cognitive evaluations into a unified perception of brand value (Fang et al., 2021). This convergence, as noted by Zhang et al. (2024), indicates that in highly competitive digital markets, consumers rely on simplified evaluative heuristics.

eWOM in this study reflects a dual processing mechanism (Haq et al., 2024; Ngo, Vuong, et al., 2024). Credibility consistently shows a positive and significant effect on engagement intention. Evidence from Gkikas et al. (2022) shows that credibility plays a critical role in shaping how consumers interpret and utilize online information. Consumers increasingly evaluate the reliability and authenticity of information before engaging with it (Sansome et al., 2025), particularly in environments characterized by information overload and promotional saturation. From an ELM perspective, credibility operates through the central route of persuasion: consumers who perceive online reviews as factual and trustworthy engage in deeper cognitive processing, leading to stronger engagement intentions.

In contrast, eWOM valence exhibits a negative and significant coefficient. This does not mean that consumers reject all positive reviews. Rather, in the Indonesian e-commerce context (where fake and incentivized positive reviews are widespread), consumers may perceive uniformly positive valence as less authentic. As a result, positive valence triggers peripheral processing or skepticism, reducing engagement intention (Chen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). Thus, valence effects are not inherently positive or negative; they depend on perceived authenticity and contextual familiarity with promotional content. This finding introduces a boundary condition to eWOM literature: positive valence does not guarantee positive engagement when consumers doubt its genuineness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings confirm that online engagement intention partially mediates the relationship between informational or evaluative antecedents and purchase intention in digital commerce. Specifically, eWOM credibility, brand attitude, and perceived brand quality consistently positively affect engagement intention. In contrast, eWOM valence shows a negative effect, suggesting that consumers may respond unfavorably to the prevailing evaluative tone, likely due to the perceived inauthenticity of overly positive reviews. Online engagement intentions strongly influence purchase intentions,

confirming their role as a key behavioral driver. The model explains 66.6% of the variance in engagement intention and 61.1% in purchase intention, indicating that consumer behavior follows a sequential process of information evaluation, psychological activation, and intention formation.

This study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by introducing online engagement intention as a pre-behavioral construct in digital environments. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) clarifies how eWOM credibility and valence shape belief formation. The findings support an integrated TPB–ELM framework in which informational processing, evaluative consolidation, and behavioral activation are linked sequentially. The negative effect of valence also introduces a boundary condition to eWOM literature: positive valence does not guarantee positive engagement when consumers doubt its authenticity.

For managers, several practical implications emerge. First, prioritize eWOM credibility by encouraging authentic, verifiable customer reviews and avoiding exaggerated claims. Second, monitor overly positive messaging; it may backfire in contexts where consumers are skeptical of promotional content. Third, strengthen brand attitude and perceived brand quality through consistent product and service delivery, as these evaluative judgments directly boost engagement intention. Fourth, design digital strategies with online engagement as the primary goal before conversion; interactive content, community building, and participatory features are effective tactics. Finally, integrate engagement metrics (e.g., likes, shares, time spent) into performance evaluation systems.

This study has limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes strong causal inference. The sample is restricted to Indonesian consumers, so generalization to other markets requires caution. Future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to test causal mechanisms. Additional variables (such as trust, perceived risk, and platform characteristics) should be incorporated to extend the model. Moreover, refinements to the measurement of eWOM valence are needed, given the weak loading of one indicator.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses gratitude to Institut Ilmu Sosial dan Manajemen STIAMI, Indonesia, for institutional support during the completion of this study.

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