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MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of e-WOM on Customer Engagement, Purchase Intention, and Purchase Decision in Online Transportation Services

Muhammad Rahadian Nur Jabbar Rahman[1], Jono Mintarto Munandar[1*)], Istiqlaliyah Muflikhati[2]

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Author Affiliation:
[1]Department of Management, Faculty of Economy and Management, IPB University, Jln. Agatis Kampus IPB Darmaga, Bogor 16680, Indonesia

[2]Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Human Ecology, IPB University, Jl. Lingkar Akademik, Kampus IPB University Dramaga, Bogor 16680, Indonesia

*Corresponding author:
jonomu@apps.ipb.ac.id

Abstract:

Background: Online transport services have significant growth potential in Indonesia. Therefore, online transportation companies need to implement appropriate strategies, such as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), to seize this opportunity. e-WOM is a crucial factor in increasing customer engagement, interest, and the likelihood of using online transportation services.

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the influence of e-WOM on customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision to use online transportation services.

Method: The data were collected through questionnaires with 230 respondents, using non-probability, purposive sampling. The criteria included people residing in Jabodetabek, aged 18 or older, who used online transportation services and had seen reviews of such services. The study used SEM-PLS to examine the impact of e-WOM on customer engagement, purchase intention, and the decision to use online transportation services.

Findings: The study found that e-WOM usefulness and credibility significantly enhanced e-WOM, which, in turn, positively affected customer engagement, purchase intention, and the decision to use online transportation services. Although customer engagement did not significantly influence purchase intention, purchase intention strongly drove purchase decision.

Conclusions: The e-WOM adoption variable was proven to be the dominant factor that significantly influenced, both directly and indirectly, customer engagement, purchase intention, and decision in online transportation services. Social media users accepted information from reviews perceived as credible and useful.

Research implication: This study highlighted the importance of content-based marketing strategies and credible, helpful forums, with an emphasis on e-WOM. Therefore, companies should build online communities, integrate e-WOM into their digital marketing strategies, and improve the quality of online transportation services.

Keywords: adoption of electronic word of mouth, credibility of electronic word of mouth, customer engagement, online transportation, purchase decision, purchase intention, usefulness of electronic word of mouth

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Jono Mintarto Munandar

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Muhammad Rahadian has completed his bachelor degree at Bandung institute of technology in chemistry program. He is a master student in Management in IPB University in Bogor since 2023, he can be reached via njrrahadian@apps.ipb.ac.id

Jono Mintarto Munandar is a professor in marketing management, Department of Management, Faculty of Economy and Management, IPB University. He obtain a bachelor degree in Agricultural Socioeconomics, IPB University and a master degree in Community Development, University of the Philippines at Los Banos (UPLB) and also become a doctor in Agricultural Economics, University of the Philippines at Los Banos (UPLB). Current research interest focus on areas Digital Marketing, Political Marketing, Smes/Entrepreneurial Marketing, Service Marketing. He can be reached via jonomu@apps.ipb.ac.id

Istiqlaliyah Muflikhati is a lecturer at Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Human Ecology, IPB University. She obtained a bachelor degree in Socio Economics of Fisheries, IPB University and a master degree in Agricultural Economics, IPB University and also become a doctor in Community Nutrition and Family Resources, IPB University. Current research interest focus on areas Economy and Family Welfare. She can be reached via istiqlaliyah@apps.ipb.ac.id

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The use of public transportation, including online transportation, is expected to be an alternative solution to traffic congestion. In Indonesia, online transportation is growing rapidly. This growth potential can be optimized by online transportation service providers in Indonesia, particularly through the implementation of eWOM.

This study has limitations, questionnaire was distributed online, so detailed information about the respondents' actual conditions is limited. Furthermore, the lack of data on the number of online transportation users and social media users based on their residence in Jabodetabek influenced the choice of research method. However, the findings of this study still provide valuable insights into how consumer interest and decisions in using online transportation.

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1. Introduction

In 2024, traffic congestion remained a major urban problem, with Jakarta listed as one of the cities with the highest levels of congestion in Indonesia (Tomtom, 2025). The rapid growth of online transportation is expected to help address congestion, with the Digital 2025 April Global Statshot report showing that 66.7% of internet users used such services monthly, making Indonesia the world's largest market for online transportation (Yonatan, 2025). However, the vast transportation market has created a highly competitive field for online transportation service providers, making appropriate marketing strategies essential (Rifazka, 2024). e-WOM is an important factor in social media marketing (Malarvizhi et al., 2022). It can consist of positive or negative reviews from potential, current, or past customers, and is accessible online (Ismarizal & Kusumah, 2023). Marketers who understand the various benefits of e-WOM increasingly regard it as an essential part of their strategies (Nadroo et al., 2024).

The Stimulus Organ Response (SOR) framework can be used to map e-WOM (Anggara et al., 2025). In this context, e-WOM usefulness is defined as the degree to which recipients perceive e-WOM as helpful in facilitating decision-making (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Factors such as information quality (Chen et al., 2021), information quantity (Hung et al., 2023), need for information (Leong et al., 2021), and attitude toward information (Abedi et al., 2020) tend to foster positive perceptions among recipients. Meanwhile, e-WOM credibility also influences consumer opinions (Bueno & Gallego, 2021). Factors such as perceived persuasiveness (Tien et al., 2019), source expertise (Siddiqui et al., 2021), source trustworthiness (Ikhsan et al., 2025), and valence (Tardin & Pelissari, 2021) also contribute strongly. Therefore, the usefulness and credibility of e-WOM in the framework function as the stimuli in the SOR model, as both are external factors that trigger cognitive and affective processes in consumers (Bui et al., 2025). e-WOM adoption is the extent to which individuals accept information after thoroughly evaluating its content and perceiving it as both credible and useful (Hung et al., 2023). The organism in the SOR model is represented by e-WOM adoption, as it refers to the internal processes that transform external stimuli into behavioral outcomes (Anggara et al., 2025).

Customer engagement can be defined as interactions between brands and their consumers on social media (Jayasingh et al., 2025). e-WOM also influences online purchase intention (Indrajaya et al., 2025). Moreover, several empirical studies have confirmed that e-WOM significantly influences purchase decisions (Abd Elaziz et al., 2015; Prasad et al., 2017). Therefore, customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision represent the response in the SOR framework, referring to the final behavioral outcomes generated by the organism's internal processes based on individuals' reactions to stimuli (Bui et al., 2025; Busalim et al., 2024; Malarvizhi et al., 2022).

No prior research has specifically examined online transportation services in Indonesia. Most existing studies discuss the importance of e-WOM across sectors, serving as a reference for this research. Moreover, previous studies have not fully integrated all the variables used in this study, particularly customer engagement, which has rarely been linked to e-WOM and online transportation services.

This study aims to analyze the influence of e-WOM usefulness and e-WOM credibility on e-WOM adoption, and to examine the influence of e-WOM adoption on customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision. This research also analyzes the influence of customer engagement on purchase intention, the influence of purchase intention on purchase decision, and the dominant factors that affect online transportation services.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Stimulus Organism Response

The stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model describes how people react to stimuli, in which external inputs activate internal processes that lead to behavioral responses. In this model, information serves as the stimulus, which is then cognitively and emotionally processed by the individual (organism) before being converted into actual behavior (response) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1976). In this research, stimulus is represented by e-WOM usefulness and credibility. The organism aspect is reflected in e-WOM adoption, while the response element encompasses customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision to use online transportation as a behavioral response.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media is a marketing tool that offers extensive opportunities for brands and consumers alike to exchange information, experiences, and opinions (Ismarizal & Kusumah, 2023). Social media marketing is a direct or indirect marketing activity that uses social media resources such as websites, advertising, and content sharing to increase and encourage consumer action. (Meliawati et al., 2023).

2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Traditionally, word of mouth is considered a form of customer-to-customer (C2C) communication and is characterized by its voluntary, noncommercial nature (Liu et al., 2024). Previously, it primarily occurred through face-to-face interactions (Jeljeli et al., 2022). However, with the advancement of digital technologies, this communication has shifted online, particularly via social media platforms (Huang et al., 2024). Therefore, effective marketing strategies are essential for communicating trust and fostering positive relationships with consumers (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019).

The swift growth and widespread use of Web 2.0 have given rise to online word of mouth communication, commonly known as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Ismagilova et al., 2017). e-WOM is an ongoing, interactive exchange of information among prospective, existing, and former consumers about a product, service, brand, or company via the internet (Danniswara et al., 2017). e-WOM refers to a type of communication in which individuals share experiences, post reviews, and engage with other consumers on social media platforms (Indrajaya et al., 2025). Such interactions have taken on digital forms such as e-newsletters, blogs, online discussions, reviews, and social networking sites. (Ikhsan et al., 2025).

2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) Usefulness

e-WOM usefulness refers to consumers' perceptions of online reviews, which are seen as valuable, informative, and helpful (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Indrawati et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2018; Thuy et al., 2024). It is influenced by the quality (completeness, clarity, relevance, comprehensibility, and detail) and amount of information provided. It also plays a critical role in the consumers' purchase decision process (Erkan & Evans, 2018).

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2.5 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) Credibility

e-WOM credibility is the extent to which consumers perceive the review as reliable, accurate, and truthful (Dana et al., 2023). The reliability and consistency of e-WOM shape consumers' decisions to purchase the product following their assessments of the reviews (Roy et al., 2023). However, the use of paid or fake reviews to manipulate product or service feedback has increased skepticism (Ballantine & Yeung, 2015; Kim et al., 2019).

2.6 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) Adoption

Information adoption is the process by which individuals accept information from external sources to acquire knowledge and support their decision-making (Indrawati et al., 2023). The Information Adoption Model (IAM) is a framework that explains how individuals adopt information and how this, in turn, affects their behavior and intentions through computer-mediated communication (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). e-WOM can be defined as the process by which individuals accept, internalize, and use information or recommendations derived from social media reviews (Tien et al., 2019).

2.7 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is related to how consumers interact with brands and other consumers on social media platforms (Busalim et al., 2024). It represents the degree of consumer motivation toward a brand, expressed through distinct cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities during direct interactions (Kanje et al., 2019). Moreover, customer engagement is defined as the targeted expression of consumer behavior that goes beyond transactions, motivated by underlying impulses (Yusuf et al., 2018). It reflects the nature of non-transactional engagement beyond transactional behavior (Winell et al., 2023).

2.8 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a stage in the purchase decision process (Kohler et al., 2023). It reflects how planned behavior translates to future purchasing action (Tardin & Pelissari, 2021). Purchase intention indicates a consumer's readiness to purchase a particular product or service in the future, shaped by external influences and consumer emotional reaction to the product, reflecting their desire to proceed with the purchase (Thomas et al., 2019).

2.9 Purchase Decision

The purchase decision is a process in which an individual chooses one option from multiple available alternatives when making a product purchase (Danniswara et al., 2017). It is the consumer's decision to purchase a product (Dana et al., 2023). This process occurs in stages, starting with problem recognition, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, leading to a purchase decision, and finally the post- purchase experience (Rahmah & Satyaninggrat, 2023).

2.10 e-WOM Usefulness and e-WOM Adoption

A 2021 study in England explored e-WOM on Instagram in the cosmetics industry. The study involved 341 respondents aged 18-29 residing in England and found that information quality positively and significantly influenced information usefulness, which, in turn, affected information adoption (Kohler et al., 2023). Another study in 2022 investigated e-WOM on TikTok and its influence on purchase intention for skincare products.

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The study collected data from 403 Indonesian TikTok users. The result revealed that information quality positively influenced information usefulness, which, in turn, affected information adoption (Indrawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, research in Vietnam investigated the impact of e-WOM on purchase intention among Generation Z. The study involved 280 respondents with online shopping experience. The finding showed that information needs significantly influenced information usefulness, consequently affecting information adoption (Thuy et al., 2024). Another study examined the influence of e-WOM on purchase intention for local commercialized fruit products in Zimbabwe. The research involved 242 respondents aged 20-50 and revealed that attitude toward information significantly affected information usefulness, which, in turn, affected information adoption (Nyagadza et al., 2023).

H1: e-WOM usefulness has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM adoption

2.11 e-WOM Credibility and e-WOM Adoption

A study in Taipei investigated the influence of E-WOM on the purchase intention of 314 university students towards skincare products. The research found that perceived persuasiveness, source expertise, and source trustworthiness significantly affected e-WOM credibility, thereby affecting e-WOM adoption (Tien et al., 2019). Another study explored entrepreneurial strategies on social commerce platforms. The research involved 342 respondents and focused on consumers who often make purchasing decisions after interacting with e-WOM reviews. The result showed that e-WOM valence, both positive and negative, had significant effects on e-WOM credibility (Dana et al., 2023).

H2: e-WOM credibility has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM adoption

2.12 e-WOM Adoption and Customer Engagement

A study in Malaysia examined the conscious use of secondhand clothing by investigating the roles of e-WOM, consumer attitudes, and engagement. The study involved 178 respondents, and the results indicated that e-WOM significantly enhanced consumer engagement (Mohammad et al., 2020). Similarly, another study on secondhand fashion products in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, surveyed 222 respondents aged 18-24 who were familiar with and interested in used clothing. This study also confirmed that e-WOM had a significantly positive effect on consumer engagement (Kristia, 2021).

H3: e-WOM Adoption has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement

2.13 e-WOM Adoption and Purchase Intention

A study in Vietnam examined how e-WOM on social networking sites shapes online purchase intention. The research involved 280 respondents, aged 18 and above, who are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok users. The result showed that information adoption had a significant effect on online purchase intention (Ngo et al., 2024). Another study conducted in South Africa with 203 respondents required participants to have purchased at least one of the beauty products examined and to be familiar with at least one of the social media influencers included. The result demonstrated that e-WOM had a significant effect on purchase intention (Macheka et al., 2024).

H4: e-WOM Adoption has a positive and significant effect on purchase Intention

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2.14 e-WOM Adoption and Purchase Decision

A study investigated entrepreneurial strategies on social commerce platforms and involved 342 respondents. This research focused on consumers who frequently make purchasing decisions after engaging with e-WOM reviews. The findings revealed that e-WOM had a significantly positive impact on online purchase decisions (Dana et al., 2023). Another study collected data from 252 respondents, comprising Generation Y or millennials who actively used social media. The findings indicated that e-WOM significantly influenced the purchase decision of these demographics (Prasad et al., 2017).

H5: e-WOM Adoption has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

2.15 Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention

A study explored influencer credibility driven by artificial intelligence, involving 414 respondents aged 18-37 in India. The finding revealed that consumer engagement affected purchase intention (Jayasingh et al., 2025). Another study in China on tourism brand communities found that customer engagement within these communities significantly affected purchase intention for the products and services offered on the platform (Prentice et al., 2019).

H6: Customer Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention

2.16 Purchase Intention and Purchase Decision

A study of China's organic food market involved 306 respondents who had purchased organic food at least once from stores in Beijing's Chaoyang district. The study discovered that purchase intention positively and significantly affected purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly through e-WOM as a mediating factor (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021). Another study focused on respondents who had purchased a product from Zalora, the largest fashion retailer in Southeast Asia, operating across eight countries. The result revealed that purchase intention significantly influenced purchase decision (Dapas et al., 2019).

H7: Purchase Intention has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

3. Conceptual Framework

The high growth potential of online transportation services presents an opportunity that companies can leverage. The ultimate objective is to influence consumers' decisions to use online transportation. Based on the literature review, this study hypothesizes that the usefulness and credibility of e-WOM will influence e-WOM adoption. In turn, e-WOM adoption impacts customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision. Additionally, customer engagement is expected to affect purchase intention, which, in turn, affects purchase decisions. This study's conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

Based on Figure 1, this study will test the following hypotheses:
H1: e-WOM Usefulness has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM Adoption
H2: e-WOM Credibility has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM Adoption
H3: e-WOM Adoption has a positive and significant effect on Customer Engagement
H4: e-WOM Adoption has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention
H5: e-WOM Adoption has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

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H6: Customer Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention
H7: Purchase Intention has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

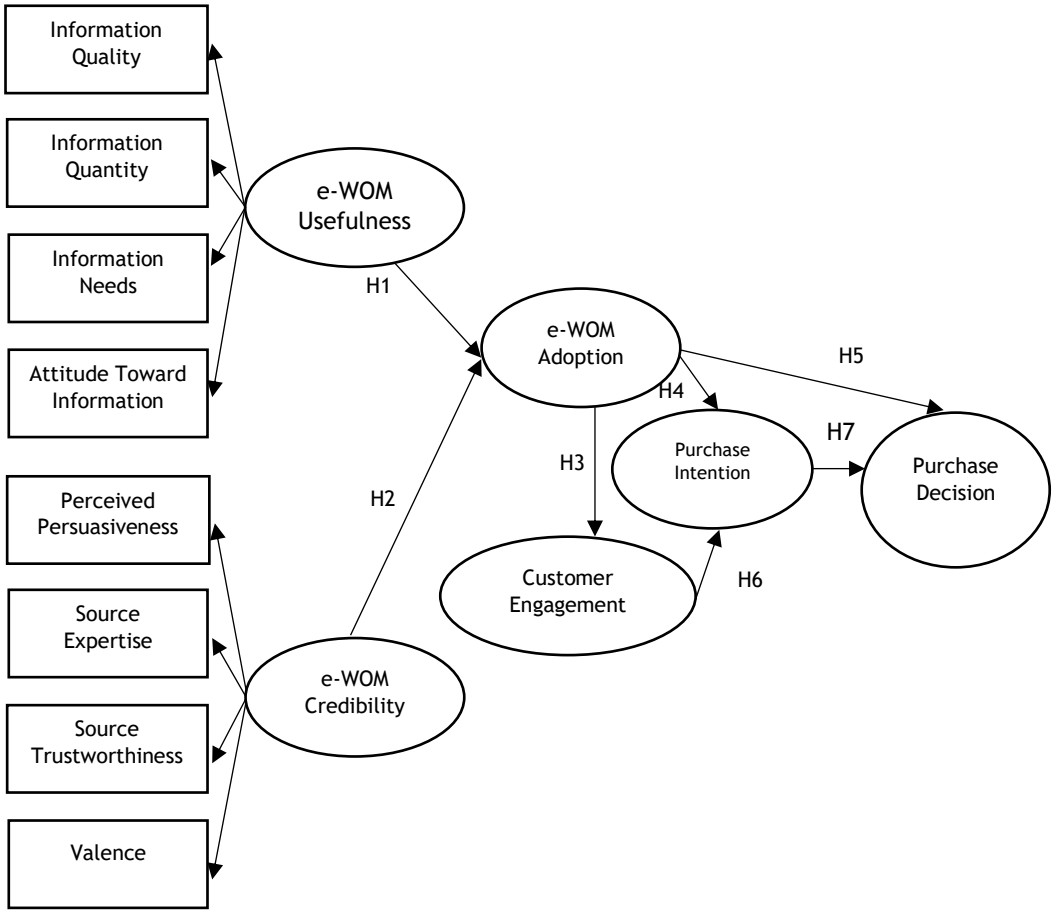

Figure 1. Conceptual framework incorporating e-WOM usefulness, credibility, adoption, as well as customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision

4. Methods

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts an explanatory approach, aiming to test hypotheses and explain the relationships among the variables. The research was analyzed using PLS-SEM to determine the impact of e-WOM on customer engagement, purchase intention, and the decision to use online transportation services. The researcher employed PLS-SEM rather than CB-SEM because the research is predictive rather than confirmatory, aiming to determine the extent to which one variable influences the other.

4.2 Sampling

The study population consisted of consumers who had previously used online transportation services. Sampling was conducted using a nonprobability sampling technique, which does not give every member of the population an equal chance of being selected into the sample. The purposive sampling approach was used, selecting samples based on specific considerations. The first inclusion criterion was that respondents in this study were 18 years old, as this is considered an adult age at which individuals can make their own decisions and is the minimum age to create an account on online transportation service platforms. Next, respondents must reside in Jabodetabek, as a survey by Litbang Kompas found that most residents of Jabodetabek

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use online transportation services (Farhan, 2025). The third criterion is having previously used online transportation services and having seen social media reviews of those services. In line with the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory, if the respondent has never seen the review, then there is no stimulus, and therefore the model cannot operate properly.

The sample size was determined using the formula by Hair et al. (2021), which suggests the number of respondents using the inverse square root method. This study used a significance level of 5% and an assumed minimum path coefficient of 0.2, resulting in a minimum sample size of 155 respondents. A total of 279 respondents were obtained. However, during the data review stage, 49 respondents were excluded for suspicious response patterns, such as straight-lining. Data from individuals who did not meet the respondent criteria were also excluded. Consequently, only 230 respondents were used in further analysis.

4.3 Measurement

This study involved both independent (exogenous) and dependent (endogenous) variables. The variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with statements rated on a range of 1-5. The e-WOM usefulness variable was assessed using an instrument adapted from previous research (Erkan & Evans, 2016, 2018; Hong & Kim, 2016; Indrawati et al., 2023; Leong et al., 2022; Nyagadza et al., 2023) and modified to comprise 12 items. Similarly, the e-WOM credibility variable was measured with an instrument adapted from previous studies (Anastasiei et al., 2021; Mohamed et al., 2015; Nyagadza et al., 2023; Tien et al., 2019) also to comprise 12 items. The e-WOM adoption variable was evaluated using an instrument adapted from multiple studies (Indrawati et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024), comprising 3 items.

The customer engagement variable was measured using an instrument adapted and modified from several previous studies (Kanje et al., 2019; Vinerean & Opreana, 2021), comprising 10 items. Next, the purchase intention variable was measured using an instrument adapted from previous studies (Chen et al., 2023; Erkan & Evans, 2016; I. Kim et al., 2021; Pienwisetkaew et al., 2022; Yu & Lee, 2019), and modified to comprise 3 items. The purchase decision variable was measured using an instrument adapted from several studies (Hanaysha, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2015; Prasad et al., 2017) and modified to comprise 3 items. The operational definitions and indicators are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational definitions and indicators of e-WOM regarding online transportation

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicators
e-WOM Usefulness	e-WOM Usefulness refers to consumers' perceptions of online reviews. Useful reviews are considered informative and beneficial.	1) The information is understandable. (IQ1) 2) The information is relevant to the consumers' needs. (IQ2) 3) The information is detailed. (IQ3) 4) There is a lot of information available about online transportation services. (IT1) 5) The amount of information available is sufficient to understand online transportation service features. (IT2) 6) The amount of information available is sufficient to help users use online transportation services. (IT3)

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Table 1. Operational definitions and indicators of e-WOM regarding online transportation (Continue)

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicators
e-WOM Usefulness	e-WOM Usefulness refers to consumers' perceptions of online reviews. Useful reviews are considered informative and beneficial.	7) Gathering information before using online transportation services. (NI1) 8) Using the available information when considering new online transportation services. (NI2) 9) Choosing the best alternative online transportation service based on the available information. (NI3) 10) Always read reviews when using an online transportation service. (AT1) 11) The reviews help in choosing alternatives when using an online transportation service. (AT2) 12) The reviews build confidence in using online transportation services. (AT3)
e-WOM Credibility	e-WOM Credibility refers to consumers' perceptions of the extent to which online reviews (e-WOM) are considered trustworthy, accurate, and fact- based. e-WOM Credibility is an important first step in the persuasion process, as information can only be regarded as persuasive if it is deemed credible. When consumers perceive e-WOM information as credible, their confidence in accepting reviewers' recommendations will increase.	1) The review is convincing. (PP1) 2) The review is well delivered. (PP2) 3) The review provided is accurate. (PP3) 4) The reviewer is an expert in the field of online transportation services. (SE1) 5) The reviewer is qualified to give recommendations regarding online transportation services. (SE2) 6) The reviewer has experience in using online transportation services. (SE3) 7) The reviewer is honest. (ST1) 8) The reviewer is sincere in conveying information. (ST2) 9) The reviewer is trustworthy. (ST3) 10) Relying on consistent reviews, whether positive or negative. (VA1) 11) The more positive reviews are shared, the greater the interest in online transportation services. (VA2) 12) The more negative reviews are shared, the lower the interest in online transportation services. (VA3)
e-WOM Adoption	e-WOM Adoption is the process by which individuals accept, internalize, and utilize information or recommendations obtained from e-WOM messages on social networking platforms. This process involves cognitive acceptance of reviews deemed relevant or compatible.	1) Learning something new about online transportation services through e-WOM information on social networking sites. (EA1) 2) Accepting e-WOM information about online transportation services on social networking sites. (EA2) 3) Accepting e-WOM recommendations about online transportation services on social networking sites. (EA3)

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Table **1.** Operational definitions and indicators of e-WOM regarding online transportation (Continue)

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicators
Customer Engagement	Customer Engagement is the manifestation of customers' non-transactional behaviors that reflect strong emotional interactions with a brand or company, driven by individual motivation.	1) Paying close attention to everything related to online transportation services on social media. (KE1) 2) Using social media to learn more about the features and services of online transportation. (KE2) 3) Time seems to pass quickly whenever visiting social media that discusses online transportation. (KE3) 4) Feeling very positive when using social media that discusses online transportation services. (AE1) 5) Feeling happy when using social media to discuss online transportation services. (AE2) 6) Feeling very enthusiastic when interacting on social media to discuss online transportation services. (AE3) 7) Feeling proud to use social media to discuss online transportation services. (AE4) 8) Always visit social media related to online transportation services when needed. (BE1) 9) Actively interacting with content related to online transportation services. (BE2) 10) Actively interacting with forums related to online transportation services. (BE3)
Purchase Intention	Purchase intention is the consumer's intention to buy a particular product or service in the future after conducting an evaluation. It is influenced by external factors and consumers' emotional responses to the product, reflecting their desire to make a purchase.	1) Considering using online transportation services in the future. (PI1) 2) Using online transportation services when the need arises. (PI2) 3) Intending to recommend online transportation services to others. (PI3)
Purchase Decision	Purchase decision is the process by which consumers combine all the information they have obtained to evaluate various product alternatives and ultimately decide to make a purchase. This process includes recognizing needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, and making the final decision.	1) The decision to use online transportation services is based on need. (PD1) 2) The decision to use online transportation services is based on desire. (PD2) 3) Recommending online transportation services to others. (PD3)

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4.4 Data Collection

This study employed a quantitative approach, using data collected via an online questionnaire distributed on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and WhatsApp. These social media platforms were used for sampling because they are the most frequently used in Indonesia (Rainer, 2024). The survey was conducted over two months (April-May 2025).

4.5 Data Analysis

This study tested the hypotheses using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS SEM). The PLS SEM approach enables a systematic assessment of both the measurement and structural models, represented by the outer and inner models, respectively (Hair et al., 2021). Following the two-step approach proposed by Hair et al. (2021). In the first stage, indicator reliability was assessed using outer loadings, while construct reliability was examined by Composite Reliability (CR≥ 0.70) and Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.70). Convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE> 0.50), whereas discriminant validity was assessed by the HTMT ratio (HTMT< 0.90).

In the second stage, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the structural relationships among the latent constructs. Bootstrapping by 5,000 subsamples was conducted to assess the significance of the path coefficients. Effects were considered statistically substantial when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96, and the p-value was below 0.05. In addition, predictive relevance (Q^2), Goodness of Fit, effect sizes (f^2), and Variance Inflation Factor also evaluated.

5. Findings

5.1 Respondents' Characteristics

The study shows that most respondents were between 20 and 24 years old (32.17%), and that most were female (59.57%). The majority of respondents were unmarried (58.26%) with a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education (34.78%). All respondents were residents of Jabodetabek, with the highest percentage living in Jakarta (28.26%). A large proportion were students (40%), and most had a monthly income ranging from IDR 5,000,000 to IDR 10,000,000 (35.22%).

The study also found that most respondents viewed reviews on Instagram (35.65%). These reviews were considered useful because they provided detailed information about digital services (50%). Real experiences shared by other users (33.04%) were a key factor in respondents' trust in social media reviews. Social media reviews were most often used to compare options before making a decision (46.96%). In addition, the respondents exhibited an emotional attachment to digital service platforms (online transportation) because the platforms consistently met their needs and expectations each time they were used (46.52%). The respondents also reported reading reviews at least once a week (46.09%). Moreover, the study revealed that respondents typically used online transportation services one to five times per month (44.78%). Monthly spending on online transportation was less than IDR 300.001 (56.96%), with the majority using digital wallets as the payment method (66.52%). The respondents had also been using online transportation services for four to six years (50%). The most frequently used online transportation platform was Gojek (66.52%), and the most ordered service type was motorcycles (79.57%). The primary reason for choosing online transportation was convenience (34.35%).

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5.2 PLS-SEM Analysis

5.2.1 Outer Model

The first stage of the PLS-SEM analysis was to assess convergent validity for each research construct. A research construct is considered valid if its loading factor value is greater than 0.7. Table 2 shows that all indicators have loading factor values greater than 0.7. Therefore, all indicators are valid representations of their respective variable.

Table 2. Convergent validity outer model values

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Average Variance Extracted
e-WOM Usefulness	IQ	0.909	0.780
	IT	0.863	
	NI	0.897	
	AT	0.863	
e-WOM Credibility	PP	0.901	0.705
	SE	0.716	
	ST	0.894	
	VA	0.833	
Customer Engagement	KE	0.874	0.768
	AE	0.916	
	BE	0.837	
e-WOM Adoption	EA1	0.866	0.807
	EA2	0.911	
	EA3	0.917	
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.867	0.714
	PI2	0.871	
	PI3	0.795	
Purchase Decision	PD1	0.860	0.713
	PD2	0.878	
	PD3	0.794	

Next, the variables, Cronbach's Alpha, rho_a, and composite reliabilities were determined. A variable is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than or equal to 0.6, while its rho_a and composite reliability values must be greater than or equal to 0.7. The Cronbach's Alpha, rho_a, and composite reliability values shown in Table 3 indicate that all constructs have good reliability.

Table 3. Composite reliability outer model value

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_a	Composite Reliability
e-WOM Usefulness	0.906	0.906	0.934
e-WOM Credibility	0.860	0.886	0.904
e-WOM Adoption	0.881	0.884	0.926
Customer Engagement	0.850	0.869	0.908
Purchase Intention	0.799	0.799	0.882
Purchase Decision	0.798	0.801	0.882

The discriminant validity in this study was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The results show that certain indicators needed to be removed at the dimension level (IT1, AT1, PP1, IT3, SE3, and KE3) and at the variable level (PI3 and PD1) to ensure that the HTMT evaluation met the required standards. Table 4 presents the HTMT values after reducing the number of indicators.

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Table 4. Discriminant validity using HTMT values

	Customer Engagement	Purchase Decision	Purchase Intention	e-WOM Adoption	e-WOM Credibility	e-WOM Usefulness
Customer Engagement						
Purchase Decision	0.862					
Purchase Intention	0.696	0.852				
e-WOM Adoption	0.819	0.854	0.874			
e-WOM Credibility	0.837	0.872	0.777	0.854		
e-WOM Usefulness	0.719	0.861	0.878	0.867	0.853	

5.2.2 Inner Model

The inner model testing began by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2). Figure 2 shows that the R^2 value for the purchase decision construct indicating 51% of the purchase decision is explained by e-WOM adoption and purchase intention. This R^2 value falls into the moderate category. The results showed that all path coefficients were positive, indicating that increases in the exogenous variables correspond to increases in the endogenous variables.

Based on the Predictive relevance (Q^2) calculations, the results showed that the values for e-WOM adoption (0.528), customer engagement (0.465), purchase intention (0.381), and purchase decision (0.388) are relevant. The Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) value is 0.650, indicating a high goodness of fit. The Effect size (F^2) calculations revealed that e-WOM credibility (0.188) and e-WOM usefulness (0.247) had a medium effect on e-WOM adoption, and e-WOM adoption had a large effect on customer engagement (1.110) and purchase intention (0.452), but a medium effect on purchase decision (0.164). Additionally, although customer engagement had almost no effect on purchase intention (0.017), purchase intention had a small effect on purchase decision (0.108).

The study found that the VIF values for all constructs were < 3, with 2.562 for e-WOM credibility and e-WOM usefulness on e-WOM adoption, and 1.000 for e-WOM adoption on customer engagement, 2.110 for purchase intention, and 2.223 for purchase decision. Meanwhile, the VIF values for customer engagement were 2.110 and 2.223 for purchase intention and purchase decision, respectively. The results indicate no multicollinearity issues in the structural model. PLS-predict was used to assess whether the PLS-SEM model could predict new values outside the data used for model estimation. The Q^2 predicted value is > 0, and the majority of PLS RMSE values are lower than those of the LM model, indicating that the model has moderate to high predictive ability.

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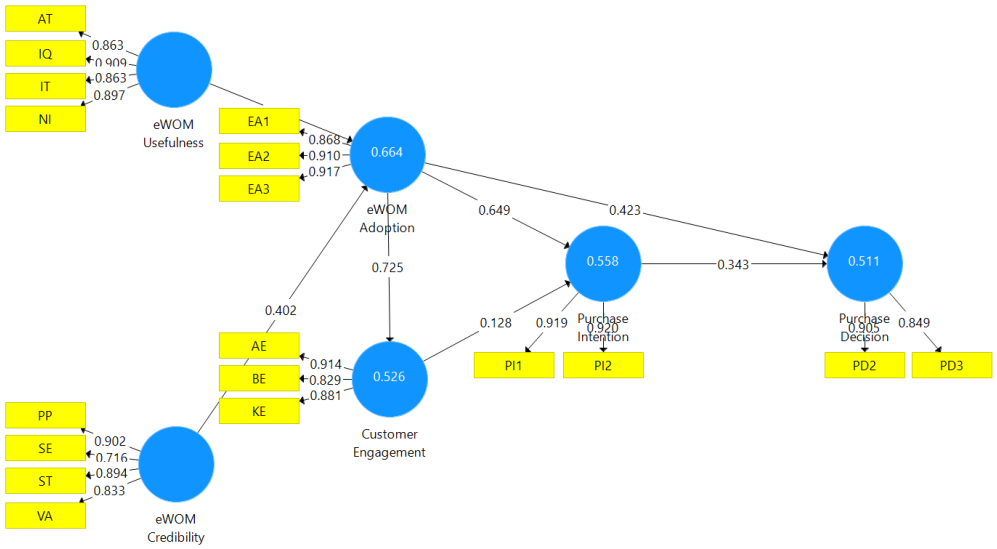

Figure 2. PLS-SEM Output of e-WOM in online transportation

5.3 Hypothesis Testing

In the final stage, the hypothesis testing for the relationships between the constructs was conducted by examining p-values and t-statistics using a bootstrapping procedure. In this study, bootstrapping was performed using 5,000 re-samples. Hypothesis testing was conducted to estimate the path coefficients and assess the extent to which each independent construct predicts its corresponding dependent construct.

Table 5 shows that both e-WOM usefulness and credibility significantly influence e-WOM adoption. Moreover, e-WOM adoption significantly affects customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decisions. However, customer engagement does not significantly affect purchase intention, whereas purchase intention significantly influences purchase decisions. Significance is indicated by a t-statistic value greater than 1.96 and a p-value less than 0.05.

Table 5. Path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values for direct effects

Paths	Path coefficient	t-statistics	p-values	Conclusion
e-WOM Usefulness → e-WOM Adoption	0.461	5.733	0.000	H1 Significant
e-WOM Credibility → e-WOM Adoption	0.402	5.089	0.000	H2 Significant
e-WOM Adoption → Customer Engagement	0.725	18.791	0.000	H3 Significant
e-WOM Adoption → Purchase Intention	0.649	8.092	0.000	H4 Significant
e-WOM Adoption → Purchase Decision	0.423	5.121	0.000	H5 Significant
Customer Engagement → Purchase Intention	0.128	1.724	0.085	H6 Not Significant
Purchase Intention → Purchase Decision	0.343	4.131	0.000	H7 Significant

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6. Discussion

6.1 The Effect of e-WOM Usefulness on e-WOM Adoption

This research has demonstrated that e-WOM usefulness has a positive and significant impact on e-WOM adoption in the context of online transportation, as evidenced by the acceptance of H1 aligning with several research (Indrawati et al., 2023; Kohler et al., 2023; Nyagadza et al., 2023). Therefore, this study's results show that e-WOM affects not only the cosmetics, beauty, and FMCG sectors but also the transportation sector. Align with the SOR theory, where e-WOM usefulness is a stimulus that influences e-WOM adoption, consumers can more easily adopt and understand information about online transportation if it is detailed and relevant to their needs (Hanaysha, 2018). The quality and quantity of information perceived by social media users will stimulate users who need transportation, especially in areas that are often congested (Ismagilova et al., 2017). Information needs also reflect an individual's motivation to search for, gather, and use information to meet their needs when travelling to work, school, or vacation (Jiménez-Barreto & Campo-Martínez, 2018).

6.2 The Effect of e-WOM Credibility on e-WOM Adoption

As the results support H2, e-WOM credibility positively and significantly affects e-WOM adoption in the online transportation context, consistent with Tien et al. (2019) and Ngo et al. (2024). In line with the SOR theory, the credibility of e-WOM acts as a stimulus, information sourced from a qualified expert (Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019), as well as a trusted source of information, referring to the honesty of the information provider in a review (Ismagilova et al., 2020), will increase a person's stimulus to adopt e-WOM. The number of likes, dislikes, and feedback, both positive and negative, also stimulates e-WOM adoption, especially real experiences shared by online transportation users on social media (Yuan et al., 2016).

6.3 The Effect of e-WOM Adoption on Customer Engagement

This study demonstrates that e-WOM adoption significantly and positively affects customer engagement in the online transportation context. Therefore, H3 is accepted. The findings align with those of Mohammad et al. (2020). In line with SOR theory, e-WOM adoption impacts an individual's internal state and influences customer engagement as a response. Customer engagement to social media makes individuals always look for information about online transportation services even before using the service (Amankona et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2018). Therefore, the large number of positive reviews of online transportation services makes individuals feel happy and enthusiastic when using social media (Amer & Rakha, 2022).

6.4 The Effect of e-WOM Adoption on Purchase Intention

The results show that e-WOM adoption positively and significantly affects purchase intention. Thus, H4 is accepted. The findings align with those of Thuy et al. (2024). In line with SOR theory, e-WOM adoption influences an individual's purchase intention. When individuals perceive reviews as positive, they tend to develop stronger purchase intentions, as they perceive e-WOM from previously satisfied customers of online transportation services as trustworthy (Macheka et al., 2024). Clear and relevant information from e-WOM helps consumers interpret objects such as online transportation services, thereby increasing consumers' purchase intentions (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

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6.5 The Effect of e-WOM Adoption on Purchase Decision

This research reports that e-WOM adoption positively and significantly affects purchase decisions. Thus, H5 is accepted. The findings are consistent with those of Mohamed et al. (2015) and Prasad et al. (2017). In line with SOR theory, e-WOM adoption influences purchase decisions as a response. An individual's purchase decision is driven by their needs and desires. Individuals will read and rely on e-WOM to reduce uncertainty and risks, such as excessive fees and unprofessional drivers (unilateral cancellation of transportation, drivers who ask for more money, and reckless driving), regarding online transportation services. Therefore, credible information from trusted websites, when properly adopted, can affect individual purchasing decisions (Dana et al., 2023).

6.6 The Effect of Customer Engagement on Purchase Intention

The results indicate that customer engagement does not have a significant effect on purchase intention, which is consistent with H6. The results of this study contrast with those of Jayasingh et al. (2025) and Duffett and Maraule (2024). However, other studies may explain the lack of an effect of customer engagement on purchase intention. Firstly, although social media reviews may influence an individual's engagement with an object, this engagement does not necessarily affect their intention to purchase a product (Verma, 2021). According to Amer and Rakha (2022), engagement is generally a non-transactional behavior that occurs through social media. Moreover, engagement reflects social participation rather than purchase intention, suggesting that frequent social participation, such as someone who frequently likes and comments on social media, does not always result in a purchase. Such behavior may also explain why social media users may feel connected to online transportation services even if they have never used them before (Brodie et al., 2011). In the context of online transportation, intention to use a service doesn't arise directly from interactions with the service on social media. A mediating or moderating variable is needed to explain the added or perceived value of the service compared to other forms of public transportation, which leads consumers to use online transportation (Hayuningtyas & Hermawan, 2022).

6.7 The Effect of Purchase Intention on Purchase Decision

The study shows that purchase intention significantly affects consumers' purchase decisions, consistent with H7. The findings of this study align with those of Li & Jaharuddin (2021). Purchase intention is an important measure of consumer behavior because it signals the probability of purchasing a specific product (Khan et al., 2021). However, the purchase decision is still influenced by the prospective consumer's circumstances. According to Ajzen (1991), intention does not always lead to behavior. Therefore, consumers' intention to buy a product or use a service may not necessarily result in an actual purchase or use (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021). In the context of online transportation services, individual interest in using online transportation services leads to purchases because of their affordable prices, safety and comfort for transportation users, as well as better speed in reaching their destination.

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6.8 Managerial Implication

The research findings yield several managerial implications for the online transportation sector to enhance customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decisions. The managerial implications are presented in an Input-Process-Output (IPO) diagram (Figure 3). The study's results indicate that e-WOM adoption is the dominant factor in this research model, and the analysis revealed that e-WOM adoption has both direct and indirect effects on customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision. Therefore, managerial strategies for online transportation services should primarily focus on increasing e-WOM adoption.

6.8.1 Building an Online Community

The study shows that e-WOM adoption is a significant factor that influences customer engagement. If the SOR theory is applied in this context, e-WOM adoption is influenced by stimuli, primarily reviews. However, these reviews must be credible so that individuals can effectively adopt the information. Therefore, it is recommended that online transportation service companies create or participate in forums or online groups where users can share experiences and tips related to online transportation services (Figure 3). Research indicates that individuals can gather information from reviews, explore alternative services, and make decisions to use online transportation through established online communities. The reviews in these online communities are generally more trustworthy because they are typically written by users who offer recommendations or share their experiences with others in the community. In line with SOR theory, the increased user engagement with online transportation services through online communities is also a form of response.

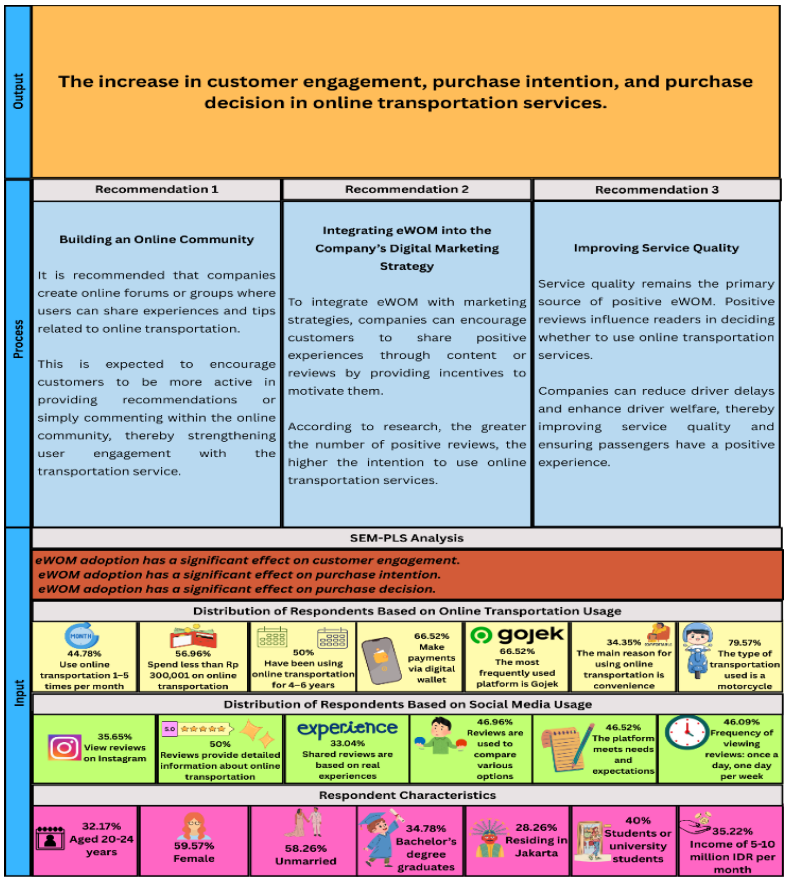

Figure 3. IPO diagram of managerial implications

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6.8.2 Integrating e-WOM into the Company's Digital Marketing Strategy

This research shows that purchase intention is influenced by e-WOM adoption. Based on the SOR theory, e-WOM adoption by an "organism" is influenced by stimuli, specifically e-WOM usefulness and credibility. e-WOM is generally organic, meaning it is created directly by customers without prompting from the company. However, in practice, online transportation service companies can strategically manage and utilize e-WOM to increase consumer interest. For example, online transportation platforms can respond quickly to negative reviews. According to research, the more negative reviews a person reads about an online transportation service, the less likely they are to use it. Therefore, stimuli play a crucial role in shaping consumer responses, particularly their future intention to use online transportation. The more effectively companies integrate and manage e-WOM, the stronger consumers' intention to use online transportation becomes.

6.8.3 Improving Service Quality

This research shows that e-WOM adoption is a significant factor influencing purchase decisions. In line with SOR theory, e-WOM adoption by an "organism" is influenced by the stimuli, e-WOM. Service quality remains the primary driver of positive e-WOM, and positive reviews influence readers' decisions to use online transportation. According to responses to the open-ended questionnaire, customers or passengers experience difficulties in finding drivers, especially during peak hours or rainy weather (35.65%). Additionally, the respondents reported experiences with unprofessional drivers, including unilateral cancellations, drivers requesting extra payment, reckless driving, and discrepancies between app information and reality (16.09%).

Poor internet connectivity also made it difficult for respondents to use online transportation applications (13.91%), while high fares (3.91%) and misplaced location to pick up the customer (9.13%) were other reported issues. Nevertheless, some respondents reported experiencing no obstacles (21.30%). These factors tend to lead passengers to leave negative reviews on social media. Drivers are a key factor influencing consumers' decisions to use online transportation, as they can positively or negatively influence the stimuli. Thus, companies can reduce driver delays by offering additional incentives to drivers who are available during high-demand periods, addressing application issues, and setting optimal trip fares. By improving service quality, passengers can have a positive experience, thus generating a positive stimulus in the form of positive reviews and generating a response in the form of a decision to use online transportation.

6.9 Theoretical Contribution

This study reinforces the theoretical foundation of the Information Adoption Model (IAM), which has been extensively applied in information systems and marketing research to explain how persuasive information is formed (Sussman & Siegel, 2003). It also validates the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) framework. IAM, which draws on the elaboration likelihood model and the technology acceptance model, offers a solid basis for explaining the mechanisms of e-WOM adoption and its influence. In this context, the stimulus is represented by e-WOM usefulness and e-WOM credibility, which cause the "organism" to adopt e-WOM and elicit the response of customer engagement, purchase intention, and a purchase decision to use online transportation.

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Moreover, this study provides a theoretical contribution by examining the role of e-WOM adoption as a mediator for e-WOM usefulness and e-WOM credibility as "stimuli" that influence "responses" in the form of customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision to use online transportation services in Indonesia. The greater the usefulness and credibility of the information adopted, the better the resulting response in terms of engagement, interest, and decision to use online transportation.

6.10 Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the questionnaire was distributed online, which provided limited information about respondents' actual conditions. The lack of data on the number of online transportation users and social media users by residence in Jabodetabek also influenced the choice of research method. Additionally, the study did not differentiate among various social media platforms, even though the impact of e-WOM may vary across platforms.

7. Conclusions

The research findings indicate that both the usefulness and credibility of e-WOM affect its adoption. Subsequently, e-WOM adoption impacts customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision to use online transportation services. However, customer engagement does not significantly influence purchase intention, while purchase intention has a notable effect on purchase decision.

Among the variables studied, e-WOM adoption emerged as the most influential factor, exerting substantial direct and indirect effects on customer engagement, purchase intention, and purchase decision. Therefore, the effectiveness of online transportation service strategies largely depends on how well users perceive and use credible, helpful reviews on social media.

8. Recommendation

Online transportation service companies can enhance customer engagement, interest, and the decision to use their services by paying attention to social media reviews, particularly on Instagram. Companies are encouraged to build online communities, integrate e-WOM into their digital marketing strategies, and improve the overall quality of their transportation services. For future researchers, it is recommended to use different research objects beyond the online transportation industry and expand the study population beyond the Jabodetabek area. Future studies can also explore other variables that may influence or be influenced by e-WOM, such as repurchase intention.

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