

# The Influence of E-Wom on Purchase Intention of Mixue Products with Brand Awareness as a Mediating Variable

Mahyuddina Almas <sup>1\*</sup>, Bambang Irawan <sup>2</sup>, Mochammad Farid <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Jember, Indonesia 1;  
e-mail : [mahyuddinaalmas@gmail.com](mailto:mahyuddinaalmas@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Jember, Indonesia 2;  
e-mail : [bambang.irawan@uncj.ac.id](mailto:bambang.irawan@uncj.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup> Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Jember, Indonesia 3;  
e-mail : [m\\_faridafandi@uncj.ac.id](mailto:m_faridafandi@uncj.ac.id)

\* Corresponding Author : Mahyuddina Almas

**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the influence of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) specifically its quality, quantity, and credibility on purchase intention, with brand awareness as a mediating variable for Mixue products in Jember Regency. The research employed a quantitative explanatory method using purposive sampling involving 160 respondents. The findings indicate that e-WOM quality, quantity, and credibility significantly influence purchase intention. However, only e-WOM credibility has a significant impact on brand awareness and is proven to mediate the relationship between e-WOM credibility and purchase intention. In contrast, e-WOM quality and quantity do not significantly affect brand awareness, and thus brand awareness does not mediate their relationship with purchase intention. These findings highlight the importance of information credibility in building brand awareness and enhancing consumers' purchase intention.

**Keywords:** Brand awareness; E-WOM; Purchase intention

## 1. Introduction

Mixue is a multinational franchise chain specializing in ice cream and tea as its core products, established in 1997. Founded by a university student named Zhang Hongcao, the company officially became an independent business in 2010 and expanded its franchise model across China. To date, Mixue operates 21,582 franchise outlets across various Asian countries, including Indonesia. Through PT Zhisheng Pacific Trading, Mixue launched its first Indonesian outlet at Cihampelas Walk shopping center in Bandung in 2020. The number of outlets has since grown to over 1,000, spread across malls, traditional markets, and vacant shop lots (Momentum Works, 2022). One of Mixue's key strategies to dominate the food and beverage market is utilizing Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) as a communication tool to interact with consumers.

E-WOM serves as a communication tool that enables users to actively participate in the communication process, in contrast to the passive role commonly associated with conventional media. E-WOM facilitates two-way communication both between individuals and between individuals and companies. Consumers are free to give reviews, leave comments, and share their experiences about a product online through E-WOM (Maria et al., 2019:107). According to Lin et al. (2013), E-WOM consists of three dimensions: First, E-WOM quality refers to the persuasive power of other consumers' comments regarding a product, which influences perceptions through the quality of information received and impacts purchase

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decisions. Second, E-WOM quantity refers to the volume of consumer reviews; the popularity of a product, as reflected by the number of online comments, is considered indicative of product performance. Third, E-WOM credibility refers to the trust that recipients place in previous consumer reviews, meaning that E-WOM credibility reflects the extent to which other consumers rely on online product reviews. This study examines the role of these three E-WOM dimensions on brand awareness and purchase intention.

The phenomenon of E-WOM in marketing communication is considered crucial in building and enhancing brand awareness. According to Aaker (1991), one of the expected outcomes of marketing activities is to build awareness of a product, ideally making it a top-of-mind brand for customers. E-WOM is also expected to be a factor in increasing and maintaining brand awareness, whereby customers become more familiar with and recall the brand, ultimately fostering brand loyalty. Therefore, brand awareness plays a significant role in influencing customers' purchase decisions (Hermawan, 2012). A study by Pebrianti, Arweni, and Muhammad Awal (2020) showed that E-WOM significantly influences brand awareness. This is because E-WOM plays an essential role in communicating product-related information, such as customer satisfaction, which affects brand awareness.

A research gap was identified in the study by Tamrin & Huda (2021), which found that E-WOM does not significantly affect brand awareness. This discrepancy motivates the present study to re-examine the issue and either confirm or challenge previous findings. Brand awareness also affects purchase intention. Purchase intention is a key concept in consumer behavior. According to Sam & Tahir (2009:9), purchase intention refers to the probability that a consumer will buy a product. A high level of interest indicates a high probability of purchase, and vice versa. Similarly, Simamora (2002:131) defines purchase intention as an individual's personal attitude driven by a strong desire to act in fulfilling a need for a specific object. Purchase intention arises from stimuli both positive and negative that motivate a person to make a purchase. As the foundation of any transaction, purchase intention is the focus of competition among industries vying for consumer interest.

Research by Vincent Leonard et al. (2021) found that brand awareness positively and significantly affects purchase intention. This means that the greater the consumer's brand awareness, the stronger their intention to make a purchase. These findings align with research by Komariah Ulan et al. (2022), which also confirmed that brand awareness positively and significantly influences purchase intention. Strong brand awareness provides a competitive edge by increasing the likelihood that a product will be selected and purchased. E-WOM also influences purchase intention by shaping consumer trust and perceptions about products or services (Pramudya, 2020). According to Choi (2020:19), E-WOM such as reviews and ratings is a key factor in consumer purchase decisions. This view is supported by Lily Purwianti (2021), who reported that E-WOM positively and significantly affects purchase intention. Consumers tend to search for and gather information before making a purchase decision, making E-WOM a crucial factor in shaping purchase intention.

However, another research gap was identified in the study by Tjhin & Aini (2019), which found that E-WOM does not significantly affect purchase intention. This gap warrants further research to explore whether differing or consistent results can be obtained. Based on the phenomena and concepts discussed above, this study aims to investigate the influence of E-WOM quality, E-WOM quantity, and E-WOM credibility on purchase intention, with brand awareness as a mediating variable. The inclusion of brand awareness as a mediating variable is novel, particularly when combined with the three E-WOM dimensions in the context of food and beverage (F&B) products. It is expected that this research will contribute new findings to the existing literature.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study is designed as an explanatory research to examine the influence of the variables e-WOM quality, e-WOM quantity, and e-WOM credibility on purchase intention, mediated by brand awareness. The unit of analysis in this study is Mixue consumers who made purchases at eight (8) locations in Jember Regency. The population in this study consists of consumers who have purchased Mixue Ice Cream and Tea at the eight (8) Mixue outlets, located both within and outside the city of Jember. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where only certain members of the population are selected as samples based on specific criteria determined by the researcher.

Questionnaires were distributed using a hybrid research technique. In this study, the researcher selected eight (8) Mixue Ice Cream and Tea outlets in Jember Regency as sample collection sites, with 20 respondents selected from each outlet, resulting in a total of 160 respondents. The criteria for respondents in this study are: Individuals who have previously purchased Mixue Ice Cream and Tea products in Jember Regency. Aged at least 17 years. Data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires during the research period. The questionnaire was designed to gather responses regarding the main variables, including perceptions of e-WOM, purchase intention, and brand awareness of Mixue Ice Cream and Tea products. The use of a hybrid research method in distributing the questionnaire is intended to increase accessibility and reach a broader range of respondents.

## **3. Results And Discussion**

### **3.1 The Influence of e-WOM Quality on Purchase Intention**

The hypothesis testing results indicate that e-WOM quality has a significant effect on purchase intention, with a significance value of 0.008. The influence is shown to be positive, meaning that the higher the quality of e-WOM, the greater the increase in purchase intention (H1 is accepted). Based on the findings, the significant influence of e-WOM quality on purchase intention demonstrates that the quality of information on social media serves as a key source in attracting consumer interest. High-quality information enables consumers to easily gather, store, and compare information with other sources, as well as share it to influence others. e-WOM leverages digital platforms for individuals to interact, share opinions and shopping experiences, review products, and recommend specific products or services.

Thus, e-WOM becomes an effective alternative channel for providing information that can influence consumer purchase intention. The rapid growth of e-WOM has been strategically utilized by Mixue Ice Cream & Tea as part of their product marketing strategy. Since its emergence in 2020, there has been an abundance of positive reviews from consumers regarding Mixue's taste, price, and quality of service, making the brand increasingly well-known to the public. Up-to-date information and positive consumer experiences create a powerful effect in building trust among potential customers, resulting in consistently high foot traffic at Mixue outlets. This proves that through social media, Mixue has succeeded in building a positive brand image and gaining broad exposure, which in turn leads to increased interest and visits from consumers.

These results are consistent with previous studies by Uwais et al. (2020), Vi Truct et al. (2021), Anis et al. (2023), Anna et al. (2021), Choi Meng et al. (2022), and Annisah et al. (2020), all of which show that e-WOM quality has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that the completeness of information and positive reviews about a brand on social media are among the key factors that can trigger consumers to purchase the product.

### **3.2 The Influence of e-WOM Quantity on Purchase Intention**

The hypothesis testing results show that e-WOM quantity has a significant effect on purchase intention, with a significance value of 0.000. The influence indicated by the coefficient value is positive, meaning that the higher the e-WOM quantity, the greater the increase in purchase intention (H2 is accepted). Based on the findings, the significant effect of e-WOM quantity on purchase intention demonstrates that the volume of e-WOM contributes to the frequency and completeness of product information that can be received by consumers. In the context of e-WOM, product completeness, the number of reviews, and continuous recommendations are consistently shared to increase consumer awareness and purchase interest.

The more frequently the information appears, the more valuable the product becomes, and the better the audience understands it (Ismagilova et al., 2020). This aligns with the present study, where factors such as the frequency of information appearance combined with informative narratives about Mixue products play a crucial role in ensuring that consumers not only receive detailed product information but also learn from the purchasing experiences and recommendations of previous consumers. As a result, the information shared by Mixue can enhance engagement among potential consumers, ultimately motivating them to make a purchase.

These research findings are in line with previous studies conducted by Anis et al. (2023), Anna et al. (2021), Annisah et al. (2020), Fikri et al. (2020), Hamzah et al. (2020), Tissa et al. (2023), Michell (2022), and Asif et al. (2022), all of which indicate that e-WOM quantity has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that

the completeness of information, perceived product value, reviews, and recommendations regarding a brand on social media are key factors that can trigger consumer purchase behavior.

### **3.3 The Influence of e-WOM Credibility on Purchase Intention**

The hypothesis testing results indicate that e-WOM credibility has a significant effect on purchase intention, with a significance value of 0.001. The influence shown by the coefficient value is positive, meaning that the higher the e-WOM credibility, the more purchase intention will increase (H3 is accepted). Based on the results, the significant effect of e-WOM credibility on purchase intention confirms that e-WOM credibility impacts consumer loyalty and the development of trust. One of the key determinants of e-WOM credibility is the level of trust that previous consumers or recipients have in the product. Therefore, e-WOM credibility refers to the degree to which people rely on reviews shared via social media. It also reflects how much a person perceives shared recommendations as trustworthy.

If recipients consider the reviews to be credible, they are more likely to use them in their purchase decisions. Conversely, if the information is perceived as less credible, consumers tend to ignore it. In this context, Mixue effectively utilizes social media to share product information including product variety, price, and trustworthy customer reviews. This study found that Mixue consumers provide honest and positive reviews based on their real purchasing experiences, which in turn attracts new potential customers to try and purchase the product. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Salsabira & Albilari (2023), Anis et al. (2023), Anna et al. (2021), Annisah et al. (2020), Choi Meng et al. (2022), Fikri et al. (2020), Galuh et al. (2022), Dessy et al. (2020), Hamzah et al. (2020), and Tissa et al. (2023), which demonstrate that e-WOM credibility has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. Thus, it can be concluded that a credible source of information one that is reliable, competent, and trustworthy can significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions.

### **3.4 The Influence of e-WOM Quality on Brand Awareness**

The hypothesis testing results show that e-WOM quality does not have a significant impact on brand awareness, with a significance value of 0.406. The effect indicated by the coefficient value is negative, meaning that hypothesis four confirms there is no influence of e-WOM quality on brand awareness (H4 rejected). Generally, the quality of information is considered very important in influencing brand awareness. The completeness of product information shared with consumers can help them recognize and remember the Mixue product. The information shared on social media to attract consumer attention can include images, videos, and other media. Complete information can help consumers understand the product and provide added value in the form of information that makes consumers feel connected to the brand, which should increase brand awareness.

Complete, up-to-date, and unique information can attract attention, stimulate purchase interest, and have a significant impact on brand awareness. However, the timing of posts, the number of interactions, and reviews on Mixue's social media do not play a significant role in forming brand awareness. These results are inconsistent with previous studies by Anang et al. (2023), Natalia (2020), and Gavin et al. (2022). Therefore, this study does not align with

existing theories and prior research, as field results show that the quality of product information for Mixue is not sufficient to create brand awareness among respondents.

### **3.5 The Influence of e-WOM Quantity on Brand Awareness**

The hypothesis test results show that e-WOM quantity does not have a significant impact on brand awareness, with a significance value of 0.429. The effect indicated by the coefficient value is negative, meaning that hypothesis five confirms there is no influence of e-WOM quantity on brand awareness (H5 rejected). The quantity of information should reflect a detailed description of the product to help consumers understand Mixue's products. If the information shared fails to communicate the product details effectively, it will affect consumers' memory and awareness of the product's existence, which in turn impacts their purchase decisions. The reviews shared may be perceived as insufficiently persuasive by consumers.

Consistency in the information shared also helps create a strong impression in consumers' memories, making the brand easier to recall. Consumers' understanding of the product, interest in reviews, and relevance of information contribute to forming brand awareness. These results are inconsistent with previous studies by Seo et al. (2020), Natalia (2020), and Park & Eun (2020). Therefore, this study does not align with existing theories and prior research because field findings demonstrate that the quantity of Mixue's product information is not sufficient to generate brand awareness among respondents.

### **3.6 The Influence of e-WOM Credibility on Brand Awareness**

The hypothesis test results show that e-WOM credibility has a significant effect on brand awareness with a significance value of 0.000. The influence indicated by the coefficient value is positive, meaning that the higher the e-WOM credibility, the greater the brand awareness (H6 accepted). Based on the research results, e-WOM credibility significantly influences brand awareness, proving that the presence of social media provides opportunities for companies to build brand awareness. Information and interactions carried out by consumers through reviews and recommendations on social media are key factors in enabling consumers to recognize or recall product categories.

Consumers tend to understand product information shared by previous consumers because such information is considered to provide a more objective picture. Through social media, Mixue can share information about product quality as well as product values. Credible information can shape consumer perceptions of the product, thereby influencing their purchase decisions.

Thus, interaction via social media plays an important role in creating brand awareness for Mixue. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Natalia et al. (2022), Iwan et al. (2020), Galuh et al. (2022), and Dessy et al. (2020), which show that e-WOM credibility positively and significantly affects brand awareness. Therefore, it can be concluded that the source of information is trustworthy, competent, and reliable, enabling consumers to recognize and remember the existence of a product.

### **3.7 The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Intention**

The hypothesis test results show that brand awareness has a significant effect on purchase intention with a significance value of 0.000. The influence indicated by the coefficient value is positive, meaning that the higher the brand awareness, the higher the purchase intention (H7 accepted). Based on the analysis results, it shows that brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention among consumers who have previously purchased Mixue products in Jember Regency. In other words, the higher the brand awareness of a product, the greater the purchase intention.

Mixue recognizes that positive brand awareness provides a competitive advantage, which can influence consumers' purchase intentions. In this case, Mixue creates new innovations to differentiate itself from competitors and to build positive emotional connections with consumers.

One way Mixue creates brand awareness is by interacting with consumers through its social media platforms. The content and reviews shared are able to make consumers aware of the existence of Mixue products. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Gavin et al. (2022), Galuh et al. (2022), Aprilianti et al. (2023), Amitay et al. (2020), and Dessy et al. (2020), which show that brand awareness positively and significantly affects purchase intention. Thus, it can be concluded that accurate sources of information can influence consumers in recognizing, remembering, and being aware of the product's existence, leading to purchase.

### **3.8 The Influence of e-WOM Quality on Purchase Intention Through Brand Awareness**

Based on the results of the mediation effect test, e-WOM quality has not been able to increase purchase intention even though brand awareness acts as a mediator, with a significance value of 0.402 (H8 rejected). In this study, brand awareness does not have a positive relationship between e-WOM quality and purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that brand awareness is not a mediator of the effect of e-WOM quality on purchase intention.

Brand awareness is generally formed through the quality of information shared. In other words, high-quality information that presents complete, timely, accurate, and effective content can fully help consumers understand the product quality and service level of Mixue, thus influencing awareness and the level of trust in making appropriate purchase decisions. Brand awareness is tied to the information and impressions stored in consumers' minds and reflects consumers' ability to remember and recognize Mixue products. Building brand awareness means providing detailed information to understand the product category. The quality of information, seen from the completeness of product details shared such as brand logo, name, design, and color greatly influences consumer awareness even without purchasing the brand.

Moreover, brand awareness provides product differentiation from similar products and competitors. Therefore, strong brand awareness will lead to higher preference and purchase decisions. However, the Mixue product information considered to be of good quality is not

a determinant for consumers in realizing and making future purchases. These results are inconsistent with previous research by Maria et al. (2022). Thus, this study does not align with previous theories and research, as the field results show that brand awareness is not proven to mediate the creation of purchase decisions for Mixue products.

### **3.9 The Influence of e-WOM Quantity on Purchase Intention Through Brand Awareness**

Based on the results of the mediation effect test, e-WOM quantity has not been able to increase purchase intention even though brand awareness acts as a mediator, with a significance value of 0.433 (H9 rejected). In this study, brand awareness does not have a positive relationship between e-WOM quantity and purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that brand awareness is not a mediator of the effect of e-WOM quantity on purchase intention. Generally, e-WOM quantity plays an important role in influencing purchase intention through brand awareness. By creating consumer understanding of a brand, it forms an imagination of awareness toward a particular brand.

Quantity of information refers to the number of product reviews shared by previous consumers on the Mixue platform. Through the information and reviews provided, consumers can obtain references that strengthen their trust in a product. Additionally, the number of reviews shared can also represent the popularity and importance of the product. In other words, consumers may perceive that the more reviews there are, the higher the popularity and importance of the product (M. Lee & Youn, 2009). The large amount of information and reviews shared online by individuals is a communication effect of word-of-mouth, which forms consumer awareness of the existence of Mixue products and potentially leads to consumer purchases. However, the number of consumer information and reviews on the Mixue platform does not have a significant role in forming brand awareness. This result is inconsistent with previous research by Friana et al. (2022). Therefore, this study does not align with previous theories and research, as field results demonstrate that brand awareness is not proven to mediate the formation of purchase decisions for Mixue products.

### **3.10 The Influence of e-WOM Credibility on Purchase Intention Through Brand Awareness**

The hypothesis test results show that brand awareness is proven to mediate the influence of e-WOM credibility on purchase intention with a significance level of 0.043. The coefficient value indicates a positive effect, meaning that the better the brand awareness, the stronger the mediation effect of e-WOM credibility on purchase intention (H10 accepted). The rapid development of social media is utilized by Mixue as a platform to create and modify promotional content, share reviews, and discuss knowledge and information about a product. Brand awareness can mediate e-WOM credibility on purchase intention when consumers are aware of positive and detailed reviews of Mixue products shared from previous consumer experiences. Furthermore, Mixue's attractive logo, brand name, and advertisement design make consumers interested and inclined to purchase or even subscribe to the products.

Consumer awareness of Mixue products and trust in the information and reviews shared influence product understanding and purchase decision-making. This research result aligns with previous studies conducted by Ababil et al. (2023) and Galuh et al. (2022), which show that brand awareness positively and significantly mediates the influence of e-WOM credibility on purchase intention. Therefore, it can be concluded that consumer awareness of Mixue products is sufficiently strong, thereby providing a positive relationship between information credibility and purchasing decisions.

#### 4. Conclusion

- a. e-WOM quality (X1) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- b. e-WOM quantity (X2) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- c. e-WOM credibility (X3) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- d. e-WOM quality (X1) does not have a positive and significant effect on brand awareness (Z) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- e. e-WOM quantity (X2) does not have a positive and significant effect on brand awareness (Z) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- f. e-WOM credibility (X3) has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness (Z) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- g. Brand awareness (Z) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- h. e-WOM quality (X1) does not have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) through brand awareness (Z) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- i. e-WOM quantity (X2) does not have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) through brand awareness (Z) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.
- j. e-WOM credibility (X3) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (Y) through brand awareness (Z) for Mixue products in Jember Regency.

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