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ADDRESSING ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH IN DETERMINING MUSLIM INTENTION TO PURCHASE ISLAMIC PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

[The increasing reliance on digital communication platforms has amplifies the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) on consumer decision making, particularly in the Islamic products market. However, limited research exists on how eWoM directly shapes the purchasing intentions of Muslim consumers, leaving a critical gap in understanding its role within ethical driven markets. This study aims to answer the question, ‘How does eWoM affect the purchasing intentions of Muslim consumers regarding Islamic products?’. This study identifies a strong positive relationship eWoM and intention to purchase, suggesting that favorable online reviews and recommendations significantly enhance consumers, likelihood of engaging with Islamic products. This relationship is particularly pronounced among younger consumers who are more active on social media platforms. These results underscore the transformative potential of eWoM in promoting Islamic products. This study also is substantial for marketers and businesses targeting Muslim consumers. By recognizing the power of eWoM, brands can develop strategies that leverage positive online narratives and encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences. This approach not only fosters trust but also enhances brand credibility, ultimately driving sales in the competitive market for Islamic products. The research underscores the necessity for businesses to actively manage their online reputation and engage with consumers through effective eWoM strategies.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth, Intention to Purchase, Islamic Products, Social Media Influence

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1 INTRODUCTION

The advent of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has transformed consumer behavior research, particularly in the context of Islamic product markets. As globalization promotes the proliferation of digital communication, consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and recommendations, significantly impacting their purchasing decisions, especially in Islamic finance and product sectors. This shift necessitates a deeper examination of how eWOM influences Muslim consumers' intentions to purchase Islamic products, as traditional forms of marketing may not resonate well with this demographic, which seeks alignment with specific ethical and religious values (Purwantini et al., 2020).

Research indicates that eWOM enhances the flow of information among consumers, enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions based on collective opinions shared on social media and other digital platforms (Sari & Yulianti, 2019). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) have been effectively utilized to explain consumer intentions in adopting Islamic financial technology services, highlighting the importance of social influences and perceived ease of use (Purwantini et al., 2020). Moreover, studies have shown that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that align with their beliefs and values, particularly within Islamic marketing, where the principles of halal and Sharia compliance govern consumer preferences (Khalid et al., 2020).

Understanding the dynamics of brand image in conjunction with eWOM is essential for marketers aiming to reach Muslim consumers. Research evidences a positive correlation between eWOM, brand image, and purchase intention, suggesting that favorable online discussions can significantly enhance brand perception and customer loyalty in the Islamic market (Wongso & Mulyandi, 2019). Additionally, as consumers express their experiences and recommendations online, these interactions shape the brand narrative, further influencing purchase decisions (Grubor et al., 2019). The role of eWOM in marketing Islamic products is pivotal for consumer awareness and fostering trust, which is a paramount factor in Muslim purchasing behavior (Ahmad & Febrina, 2018).

To further elucidate the impact of eWOM on Muslim consumers, it is crucial to explore the psychological motives behind their sharing behaviors. Studies reveal that motivations such as altruism, social interaction, and personal gratification drive consumers to engage in eWOM, amplifying the reach of marketing messages (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Understanding these motives can assist marketers in crafting tailored messages that resonate with the values and expectations of Muslim consumers, ultimately steering their purchase intentions towards Islamic products.

In conclusion, eWOM represents a significant influencer of Muslim consumers' purchasing intentions, particularly within the context of Islamic products. The integration of digital marketing strategies that exploit the potency of eWOM can lead to improved understanding and engagement with this unique consumer segment. As the landscape of digital marketing continues to evolve, ongoing research is essential to uncover the nuances of eWOM's impact on Islamic purchasing behaviors to enhance the effectiveness of marketing practices within this domain.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Intention to Purchase

The concept of intention to purchase has evolved significantly over the decades, shaped by various theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. Early research primarily focused on behavioral theories, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in the 1970s, which posited that individual intentions are influenced by attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms. This foundational theory laid the groundwork for subsequent models, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which introduced perceived behavioral control as a critical factor influencing

intentions (Ajzen, 2020). In recent years, the landscape of intention to purchase research has expanded to include various contextual factors, particularly in niche markets such as Islamic finance. The integration of cultural and religious dimensions into purchasing intentions has gained traction, particularly with the rise of Islamic consumerism. Recent studies have employed mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to explore how eWoM affect Muslim consumers' purchasing intentions for Islamic products. For instance, the application of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) has been instrumental in understanding how observational learning and social influences shape consumer behavior in this context (Ghazwani et al., 2022). This theoretical framework emphasizes the role of self-efficacy and vicarious reinforcement, suggesting that consumers who observe positive behaviors related to Islamic products are more likely to intend to purchase them.

The term intention to purchase has been defined variably across scholarly works, reflecting diverse perspectives on consumer behavior. According to Ajzen (2020), intention is an indication of how hard an individual is willing to try to perform a behavior, which directly correlates with actual purchasing behavior. Similarly, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) describe it as a consumer's likelihood to buy a product influenced by external factors such as brand image and eWoM. In synthesizing these definitions, a common theme emerges, intention is fundamentally linked to consumer motivation and perceived control over purchasing decisions. The definitions often highlight factors such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as pivotal components influencing intentions. In the context of Muslim consumers purchasing Islamic products, additional dimensions such as religious beliefs and cultural values become significant. This synthesis indicates that while traditional definitions provide a solid foundation, they must be contextualized within the unique frameworks of Islamic consumer behavior.

Recent trends in the study of intention to purchase have seen a shift towards integrating modern constructs such as eWoM into traditional models. The influence of eWoM has become increasingly prominent due to the rise of digital platforms where consumers share experiences and opinions. Research indicates that positive eWoM can enhance consumers' trust and reduce perceived risks associated with purchasing Islamic products (Weismueller et al., 2020). Factors contributing to intention include perceived product quality, social influence from peers, and alignment with personal values. Collectively, these constructs highlight a complex interplay between knowledge, social dynamics, and personal beliefs in influencing purchasing behaviors among Muslim consumers.

Recent trends in research methods related to intention to purchase have moved towards more sophisticated quantitative analyses combined with qualitative insights. Surveys remain a prevalent tool for gathering data on consumer attitudes and intentions; however, there's an increasing emphasis on using structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze relationships between variables such as eWoM and intention to purchase. Additionally, qualitative methods such as focus groups are being utilized to gain deeper insights into consumer motivations and cultural influences that shape their purchasing decisions. These mixed-method approaches allow researchers to triangulate data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors at play. Looking ahead, these trends suggest that future research will benefit from further integration of advanced statistical techniques alongside qualitative explorations that consider cultural nuances in consumer behavior.

Previous studies on the intention to purchase have yielded significant insights but also highlighted various limitations. For instance, many studies have focused on eWoM independently rather than exploring their combined effects on purchasing intentions for Islamic products. This gap suggests a need for integrated models that consider both factors simultaneously. Methodologically, while surveys have provided valuable quantitative data, they often lack depth regarding the underlying motivations driving consumer behavior. Furthermore, studies frequently overlook demographic variables such as age and susceptibility to eWoM. Future research should aim to address these gaps by employing comprehensive models that incorporate eWoM while considering cultural contexts unique to Muslim consumers. Additionally, exploring longitudinal studies could provide insights into how these factors evolve within changing market conditions.

2.2 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWoM) plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior in contemporary markets, particularly given its ability to rapidly disseminate information and influence perceptions. Hennig-Thurau et al. define eWoM as any consumer-generated statement about a product or company that is available online, indicating its expansive reach and potential impact on decision-making processes (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Ngarmwongnoi et al. further refine this concept, emphasizing that eWoM significantly influences consumer behavior throughout their customer journey, from pre-purchase to post-purchase (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020; Jalilvand and Samiei link eWoM explicitly to brand image and consumer intentions, positioning it as a strategic tool in marketing (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Collectively, these definitions highlight key dimensions of interactivity, credibility, and influence, revealing how eWoM fuels consumer engagement and informs purchase decisions, especially in sensitive markets where ethical considerations are paramount, such as Islamic products (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020; (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; .

The effectiveness of eWoM in influencing purchase intentions is mediated by various factors, with source credibility being a significant concern for consumers. Studies indicate that messages from trusted sources—such as verified influencers—tend to be more impactful due to their perceived authenticity (Hossain et al., 2019; (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017; The valence of eWoM (i.e., positive or negative tone) also profoundly affects consumer attitudes; positive reviews often enhance trust and encourage purchases, while negative feedback can deter prospective buyers (Yan et al., 2018; (Fu et al., 2011). Furthermore, social media amplifies eWoM's effectiveness, providing avenues for swift information dissemination that is reinforced by peer influence (Nguyen et al., 2021). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic products, where favorable eWoM can enhance consumers' perceptions of ethical reliability and product quality (Abubakar et al., 2017) Phan et al., 2020).

Research suggests a well-established relationship between eWoM and purchase intention, with trust acting as a critical mediator in this dynamic. Studies affirm that trust plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes towards products (Abubakar et al., 2017). Additionally, Jalilvand and Samiei illustrate how eWoM enhances brand image and drives purchase behavior (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Empirical evidence indicates that social media engagement boosts consumer confidence especially towards products that align with their ethical and religious values, such as Islamic products (Fu et al., 2011). However, existing studies often exhibit constraints, frequently concentrating on generalized consumer behaviors without specific attention to culturally nuanced contexts such as Islamic markets. Many studies utilize cross-sectional designs that limit longitudinal understanding of eWoM's impacts and often suffer from demographic limitations, which restricts the broader applicability of findings (Yan et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2015).

The manifestation of eWoM in driving purchase intentions is particularly apparent in the context of products that align with consumers' ethical and religious values. eWoM fosters trust by offering authentic insight from peers, serving as a valuable resource for informed decision-making (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019). Positive eWoM significantly heightens purchase intention by reinforcing consumer confidence and mitigating perceived risks associated with purchasing decisions. This dovetails with the understanding that individuals exposed to favorable eWoM are more likely to adopt product recommendations when trust and social validation mediate their choices, accentuating eWoM's efficacy as a critical instrument in digital marketing strategies (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Wu & Wang, 2011).

In summary, eWoM represents a vital component of contemporary consumer decision processes, influenced significantly by source credibility, valence, and social dynamics. Future research should not only delve deeper into culturally specific contexts but also employ diverse methodological approaches to better understand the complexities and longitudinal impacts of eWoM across various market environments.

2.3 Research Framework

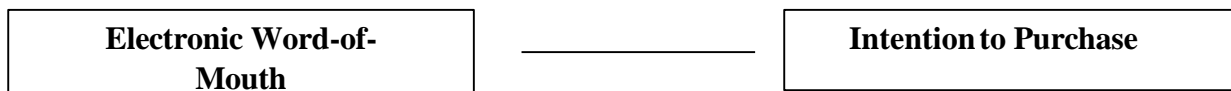


Figure 1: Hypotheses between eWoM and intention to Purchase

2.4 Hypotheses Between Electronic Word-Of-Mouth and Intention to Purchase

The relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) and purchase intention has been extensively explored in marketing literature, highlighting eWoM as a significant driver in consumer decision-making processes. Positive eWoM influences consumer perceptions by establishing trust and enhancing brand image. This is particularly critical in culturally sensitive markets, such as those focusing on Islamic products, where trust plays a vital role in shaping consumer behavior (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

Research indicates that consumers heavily rely on the credibility of online reviews and recommendations when making purchasing decisions, especially in uncertain environments like the market for Islamic products (Le-Hoang, 2020). For instance, individuals with a higher propensity to trust are more likely to be influenced by positive eWoM, thereby enhancing their purchasing intentions (Wang & McCarthy, 2021). In the context of Islamic products, consumers seek not only quality but also a congruence with their values, which heightens their trust in credible eWoM sources (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

The dynamic nature of eWoM, particularly through social media platforms, accentuates its role in shaping consumer behaviors. Consumers increasingly seek guidance from online communities, with positive eWoM acting as a powerful tool for building trust (Ali et al., 2018). Structured and timely eWoM has been shown to decrease perceived risks associated with unknown products, thus making consumers more inclined to purchase (Fu et al., 2011). With the growth of the global Islamic product market, understanding the role of eWoM in fostering trust is essential for marketers aiming to effectively engage Muslim consumers (Park & Lee, 2009).

Moreover, businesses can benefit significantly from strategically leveraging eWoM to cultivate favorable online conversations and utilize user-generated content for brand enhancement (Cheung et al., 2008). By understanding how eWoM operates within specific cultural frameworks, including Islamic values, marketers can foster stronger connections with target audiences, leading to increased sales and customer loyalty. Studies support the idea that eWoM characteristics, such as volume, credibility, and perceived usefulness, strongly influence repurchase intentions by shaping consumer trust (Matute et al., 2016). Thus, by integrating eWoM insights into their marketing strategies, businesses can refine their approaches to meet the unique needs of their customers, particularly in culturally sensitive sectors like Islamic products (Park et al., 2007).

3 METHODOLOGY

Research Design	This study employs a quantitative research design, utilizing structured surveys to systematically gather data on the influence of eWoM on the purchasing intentions of Muslim consumers regarding Islamic products. A questionnaire was used to collect data for this study, and a cross-sectional design was used for analysis.
Target Population	The target population consists of 33 respondents from final year students in Bachelor Business Administration (HONS) from University Poly-Tech Malaysia (UPTM).
Sample Size	A sample size of 33 respondents is determined to ensure sufficient statistical power and representativeness of the target population, allowing for meaningful analysis of the data.
Data Collection	The survey was collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms, enabling participants to respond conveniently.
Validity And Reliability	The research instrument includes a validated questionnaire that measures participants' perceptions of eWoM and their intention to purchase Islamic products. It incorporates Likert-scale items (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree) for quantitative analysis. The measurement tools (questionnaire) were validated through content validity, ensuring the items accurately reflect the constructs of eWoM and purchase intention. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which measures internal consistency.
Data Analysis	Data analysis is conducted using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression techniques to explore the relationship between eWoM and purchasing intentions, while also checking for assumptions such as normality and multicollinearity.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

[This study employed Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to evaluate the relationships between and intention to purchase Islamic products. Using statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis, the results evaluate the significance and impact of these factors on purchasing behavior. This section aims to provide insights into how eWoM influence consumer decisions, offering valuable implications for marketers and policymakers targeting the Islamic product market. This approach provides a comprehensive framework for testing the hypotheses and understanding the impact of eWoM on purchase intentions.

Descriptive Information of Respondents

A total of 33 final-year students in the Bachelor of Business Administration (HONS) from University Poly-Tech Malaysia (UPTM) fully completed questionnaires through Google Forms. Most participants were young adults aged 22-23, comprising approximately 87.9% of the total respondents, while a smaller group (12.1%) fell within the 24 -26 age range. Gender distribution revealed a significant skew, with females representing 84.8% of the sample compared to 15.2% males. These demographic trends suggest a predominantly young and female audience, which may influence their perspectives and behaviors eWoM in the context of purchasing Islamic products. Understanding these characteristics is crucial for interpreting the data and drawing relevant conclusions about consumer intentions within this specific demographic group.

Table 1: Demographics

DEMOGRAPHIC: AGE	FREQUENCY	%
22-23	29	87.9
24-26	4	12.1
TOTAL	33	100
DEMOGRAPHIC: GENDER		
MALE	5	15.2
FEMALE	28	84.8
TOTAL	33	100

Missing Value

Table 2: Missing Value for eWoM

		Statistics							
		Engage	Rely	Acceptable	Affect	Reviews	Read	Recommend ed	Deter
N	Valid	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3: Missing Value for intention to purchase

		Statistics			
		Intent	Promotion	Purchase	Reputation
N	Valid	33	33	33	33
	Missing	0	0	0	0

There are no missing values in the data for both eWoM and intention to purchase variables. This is indicated by the "0" values in the "Missing" rows of both tables. This suggests that the data collection process was successful in obtaining complete responses for all participants included in the study, ensuring that the analysis can be conducted without concerns about missing data.

Cronbach's Alpha

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	0.905	8
Intention to Purchase	0.614	4

Cronbach's alpha is a statistical measure used to assess the internal consistency reliability of a set of items within a scale. It evaluates how well the items work together to measure a single construct. A higher Cronbach's alpha indicates better internal consistency, suggesting that the items in the scale are highly correlated and consistently measure the same underlying concept. In the table above, the eWOM scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.905, exhibits excellent internal consistency, making it a reliable measure of eWOM. The intention to purchase scale, with a moderate Cronbach's alpha of 0.614, suggests that its items may not be as strongly related, potentially impacting its reliability as a measure of intention to purchase.

Finding: Hypothesis

Table 5: Findings for Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Finding	Justification
H1: The relationship between eWoM and intention to purchase	support	Related to the previous study, this finding is similar to that of Widyastuti et al. (2021); there is a significant relationship between eWoM and Intention to purchase

Table 6: Correlation between Electronic word-of-mouth and intention to purchase

	eWoM	Intention to Purchase
Pearson Correlation	0.70	0.70

The correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between eWOM and intention to purchase, indicated by a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.70$, $p > 0.05$. This suggests that as eWOM increases, the intention to purchase also tends to rise, implying that positive online reviews and recommendations can influence consumer behavior.]

5 CONCLUSION

The findings from this study confirm the hypothesized relationship between eWoM and the intention to purchase Islamic products, albeit with variations in significance. The findings underscore the significant positive correlation between favorable eWoM and consumers' likelihood to purchase Islamic products, highlighting the importance of online reviews and recommendations in shaping consumer behavior. Moreover, the research identifies demographic factors that may influence this relationship, particularly among younger consumers who are more engaged with digital platforms. By emphasizing the role of eWoM, the study suggests that businesses targeting Muslim consumers should strategically manage their online presence and encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of eWoM's role in shaping purchase intentions, particularly in ethical and religiously sensitive markets. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of leveraging eWoM to build trust and brand credibility among Muslim consumers. For marketers, the focus should be on fostering positive narratives and engaging credible influencers to amplify eWoM's impact. However, the study's limitations, such as the small sample size (33 respondents) and the predominantly young, female demographic, restrict the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the weak correlation indicates a potential need to explore other factors, such as financial literacy or personal values, as mediators of eWoM's effectiveness. Future research should adopt a more diverse and larger sample size, include longitudinal designs to capture changes over time, and investigate the interplay of eWoM with other variables to enhance the robustness of findings and applicability to broader consumer segments.]

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