

THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (E-WOM) USING MICRO INFLUENCERS ON REPURCHASE INTENTION AND TRUST (CASE STUDY OF INSTAGRAM USERS IN INDONESIA)



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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of micro influencers on repurchase intention and trust with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as an intervening variable. Using a quantitative approach and the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method, this study involved 384 respondents who were followers of micro influencers on Instagram social media. The results of this study show that micro influencers have a positive and significant influence on buying intent ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$) and trust ($\beta = 0.523$, $p < 0.001$). E-WOM proved to be a significant intervening variable in the relationship between micro influencers and buying intent ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$) and trust ($\beta = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that micro influencers are more effective in building personal relationships with audiences than macro influencers, so they can increase credibility and engagement. The practical implication of this study is the need for a marketing strategy that focuses more on collaboration with micro influencers to increase the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Micro Influencer, Repurchase Intention, Trust, Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM), Social Media Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital communication have reshaped contemporary marketing practices by enabling brands to engage consumers through interactive online platforms rather than relying solely on conventional promotional channels. This shift has accelerated the adoption of influencer marketing, with micro influencers becoming an increasingly preferred choice due to their ability to foster genuine connections and meaningful interactions with followers. Unlike macro influencers or celebrity endorsers, whose influence is often driven by audience size, micro influencers derive their effectiveness from their niche expertise, perceived authenticity, and higher engagement within smaller online communities. As noted by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), micro influencers generally maintain between 1,000 and 100,000 followers, making them well positioned to deliver credible recommendations that can shape consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions.

The rapid expansion of social media usage in Indonesia has created a favorable environment for the growth of influencer marketing. With internet users increasingly relying on Instagram to discover products and brands, micro influencers have emerged as influential opinion leaders who are capable of shaping consumer perceptions and encouraging purchasing behavior. According to We Are Social (2023), social media adoption in Indonesia reached 68.9% of the population, while Instagram recorded approximately 99.15 million active users. Existing studies also indicate that the effectiveness of influencer marketing is closely associated with factors such as trust, credibility, and word-of-mouth communication, all of which contribute to consumers' purchase decisions (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Despite the growing body of literature on influencer marketing, the pathways through which micro influencers shape consumer responses remain insufficiently understood. In particular, empirical evidence examining the mediating function of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) in connecting micro influencers with consumer trust and purchase intention is still limited. As a form of consumer-to-consumer online communication, e-WOM enables information, opinions, and personal experiences about products or brands to spread rapidly through social media interactions, including reviews, comments, likes, and content sharing (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). These interactions may strengthen or weaken the persuasive impact of micro influencers on consumer decision-making.

This study develops and empirically tests a conceptual framework that explains the role of micro influencers in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions by incorporating trust and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as key mechanisms. The findings are intended to broaden the understanding of consumer responses to influencer marketing while offering evidence-based recommendations for companies to improve the effectiveness of their digital communication and promotional activities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Micro Influencer

Rather than relying on a large follower base, micro influencers generate influence through meaningful interactions and strong connections with their online communities. Their content is often perceived as more genuine and relatable, allowing them to build higher levels of audience trust and engagement than larger-scale influencers. As a result, brands

increasingly collaborate with micro influencers to reach niche markets and encourage more effective consumer responses (Markerly, 2016; Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

The measurement of the micro influencer construct in this study was adapted from the frameworks proposed by Ohanian (1990) and Lou and Yuan (2019). Four dimensions were used to evaluate the construct: expertise, reflecting knowledge and skills; trustworthiness, indicating perceived honesty and credibility; attractiveness, referring to the influencer's appeal; and authenticity, representing the extent to which the influencer is viewed as genuine and sincere.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention describes a consumer's readiness to consider acquiring a product after evaluating available information and recommendations. A stronger intention reflects a greater probability that the individual will proceed with an actual purchase. Within the influencer marketing context, persuasive content and credible product endorsements can positively shape consumers' buying decisions.

The present study assessed purchase intention using measurement items adapted from Ajzen (1991) and Spears and Singh (2004). The construct was reflected by three indicators: intention to buy, planned future purchase, and probability of purchasing.

Trust

Consumer trust represents the willingness to rely on information or recommendations because they are perceived as honest, credible, and dependable. Within influencer marketing, higher levels of trust increase consumers' confidence in the promoted products, making them more likely to consider or purchase the recommended brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The formation of trust is commonly associated with the influencer's credibility, including perceived expertise and trustworthiness.

To operationalize this construct, the present study adopted measurement items from Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Trust was assessed through four dimensions, namely reliability, integrity, competence, and benevolence, which collectively represent consumers' overall confidence in the influencer and the information provided.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) refers to consumer-generated information shared through digital platforms that can influence the opinions and decisions of other consumers. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), e-WOM includes both positive and negative online communications regarding products or services and is commonly expressed through reviews, comments, likes, and content sharing.

In this study, e-WOM was measured using indicators adapted from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Chu and Kim (2011), covering four dimensions: volume, valence, credibility, and usefulness.

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research strategy was adopted to investigate the proposed relationships among the study variables. Data were collected at a single point in time using a cross-sectional survey administered through an online structured questionnaire. The target population consisted of Indonesian Instagram users who followed one or more micro

influencers. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on several eligibility requirements: (1) using Instagram regularly by accessing the platform at least three times per week, (2) following a micro influencer with an audience ranging from 1,000 to 100,000 followers, (3) being between 18 and 45 years of age, and (4) having engaged with micro influencer content within the previous three months.

Based on the Slovin formula with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 5%, the minimum sample size required is 384 respondents. Perform data analysis using *Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)* with AMOS 24.0 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A descriptive assessment of the sample revealed several notable demographic and behavioral patterns. Women constituted the largest proportion of participants, accounting for 68.2% of the total sample, while respondents aged 18–25 years formed the most represented age group (45.8%). More than half of the participants had completed undergraduate education (52.1%), and students were identified as the dominant occupational category (38.5%). The findings also indicate a high level of Instagram engagement, with 72.4% of respondents spending over two hours per day on the platform. In addition, following three to five micro influencers was the most common pattern among participants.

Based on the results of the validity and reliability test, it was shown that all indicators had a factor loading value of > 0.7 , Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 , and Composite Reliability (CR) > 0.7 . Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables > 0.8 , as well as with the loading factor and composite reliability tables showing good reliability, while the normality test showed that the data were normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values in the range of ± 2.58 . The multicollinearity test showed no problems with the VIF value < 10 . Outlier detection using Mahalanobis Distance showed no significant outliers.

Table 1.
Validity and Reliability Test Result

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Micro Influencer	0.892	0.614	0.888
e-WOM	0.867	0.587	0.853
Purchase Intention	0.845	0.643	0.842
Trust	0.881	0.621	0.876

Source: Data analyzed in 2026

Table 2.
Factor Loading Dan Composite Reliability

Konstruk	Indikator	Factor Loading	t-value	p-value	CR	AVE
Micro Influencer					0.888	0.614
	MI1 (Expertise)	0.784	-	-		
	MI2 (Trustworthiness)	0.792	14.567	0.000***		
	MI3 (Attractiveness)	0.769	14.089	0.000***		
	MI4 (Authenticity)	0.789	14.456	0.000***		
e-WOM					0.853	0.587
	eWOM1 (Volume)	0.756	-	-		
	eWOM2 (Valence)	0.781	13.234	0.000***		
	eWOM3 (Credibility)	0.761	12.987	0.000***		
	eWOM4 (Usefulness)	0.766	13.089	0.000***		
Purchase Intention					0.842	0.643
	PI1 (Willingness)	0.801	-	-		
	PI2 (Planning)	0.794	14.234	0.000***		
	PI3 (Likelihood)	0.809	14.567	0.000***		
Trust					0.876	0.621
	TR1 (Reliability)	0.789	-	-		
	TR2 (Integrity)	0.792	14.678	0.000***		
	TR3 (Competence)	0.784	14.456	0.000***		
	TR4 (Benevolence)	0.786	14.523	0.000***		

***p < 0.001

Source: Data analyzed in 2026

To evaluate the structural relationships among the research variables, path analysis was conducted using AMOS. This analytical procedure allows the decomposition of causal effects into direct, indirect, and total effects, thereby providing a comprehensive assessment of the proposed model. The estimated path coefficients are illustrated in the following figure:

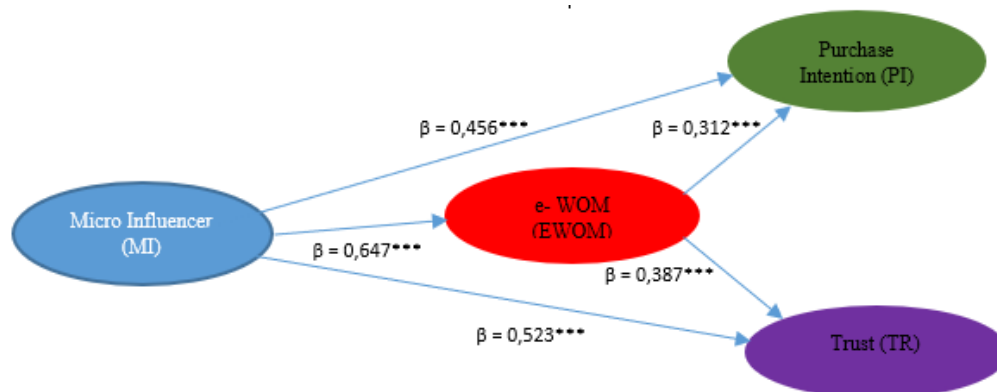


Figure 1.
Structural Model Evaluation

Source : (Ajzen, 1991; Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, 2020, 2020; Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, 2001; Chu, S. C., & Kim, 2011; Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, 2017; Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, 2004)

The evaluation of both the measurement and structural models demonstrates that the proposed model satisfies the required goodness-of-fit criteria. The CFA results confirm that the observed indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs, indicating an acceptable overall model fit.

Table 3.
Goodness of Fit – Measurement Model

Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Hasil	Keterangan
Chi-square	-	298.756	-
df	102	102	-
Chi-square/df	≤ 3.00	2.929	Good Fit
p-value	≥ 0.05	0.000	-
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.911	Good Fit
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.878	Good Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.935	Good Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.918	Good Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.071	Good Fit
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.058	Good Fit

Source: Data analyzed in 2026

Table 4.
Result of Structural Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	R ²	Decision
H1	MI → PI	0.456	0.058	7.862	0.000***	0.542	Supported
H2	MI → TR	0.523	0.057	9.175	0.000***	0.598	Supported
H3	eWOM → PI	0.312	0.055	5.673	0.000***		Supported
H4	eWOM → TR	0.387	0.057	6.789	0.000***		Supported
H5	MI → eWOM	0.647	0.056	11.554	0.000***	0.419	Supported

***p < 0.001; S.E. = Standard Error; C.R. = Critical Ratio

MI = Micro Influencer. eWOM = Electronic Word of Mouth. PI = Purchase Intention. TR = Trust

Source: Data analyzed in 2026

Table 5.
Result of Mediation Test with Bootstrap (n=2000)

Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Conclusion
MI → eWOM → PI	0.456***	0.202***	0.658***	0.134	0.289	Partial Mediation
MI → eWOM → TR	0.523***	0.250***	0.773***	0.178	0.334	Partial Mediation

***p < 0.001; CI = Confidence Interval

*VAF = Variance Accounted For = (Indirect Effect / Total Effect) × 100%

*VAF 20%-80% = Partial Mediation; VAF > 80% = Full Mediation

Source: Data analyzed in 2026

Table 6.
Sobel Test Result

mediation	Sobel Z	p-value	Conclusion
MI → eWOM → PI	4.897	0.000***	Significant
MI → eWOM → TR	5.234	0.000***	Significant

***p < 0.001

Source: Data analyzed in 2026

The Influence of *Micro Influencers* on Repurchase Intention

The structural model demonstrates that purchase intention is positively associated with micro influencer marketing activities ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that consumers are more inclined to purchase products when promotional content is delivered by influencers perceived as authentic and trustworthy. The result corroborates the findings of Lou and Yuan (2019), highlighting that influencer-based communication enhances the persuasive appeal of brand messages and increases consumers' intention to buy.

Micro influencers have the advantage of building a more personal and authentic relationship with their *audience*. With a relatively small number of followers, *micro influencers* can provide more personalized responses to comments and questions from followers. This creates a sense of community and emotional closeness that can increase consumer purchase intention.

The Influence of *Micro Influencers* on Trust

The results indicate that micro influencers significantly and positively affect consumer trust ($\beta = 0.523$, $p < 0.001$). This evidence is consistent with Source Credibility Theory, which argues that the perceived credibility of a communication source plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' trust toward the information or recommendations they receive (Ohanian, 1990).

Micro influencers are often considered more credible and trustworthy than *macro influencers* or *celebrity endorsers* because they are considered more "*relatable*" and less

commercial. Followers feel that micro influencers use the product because they really like it, not just because they get paid to promote it.

Peran Mediasi Electronic Word of Mouth

The findings further reveal that electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) functions as a significant partial mediator linking micro influencers with repurchase intention and consumer trust. This result suggests that the effectiveness of micro influencers extends beyond their direct persuasive role, as their influence is also transmitted through consumers' electronic interactions and information-sharing behaviors. Activities such as posting comments, expressing preferences through likes, sharing content, and engaging in online discussions amplify the credibility of influencer-generated messages, thereby reinforcing consumers' trust and increasing their intention to repurchase.

When *micro influencers* post content about a product, the interactions that occur (positive comments, high number of likes, content sharing) can reinforce the message conveyed and increase the credibility of the recommendation. Positive E-WOM can create social proof that affects consumer perception of products and brands.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that micro influencers significantly affect consumers' repurchase intention and trust, with electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) partially explaining these relationships. The key findings are as follows:

- a. Micro influencers have a positive and statistically significant effect on repurchase intention, indicating that stronger engagement with micro influencers increases consumers' willingness to repurchase.
- b. Micro influencers positively and significantly influence consumer trust, suggesting that their credibility enhances consumers' confidence in the promoted products or brands.
- c. Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) partially mediates the relationship between micro influencers and both repurchase intention and consumer trust, strengthening the overall influence of micro influencers on these outcomes.

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