

THE ROLE OF BRAND TRUST IN MEDIATING THE INFLUENCE OF E-WOM ON THE PURCHASE DECISION OF CULOT PANTS BY TEENAGERS IN CANDY PROJECT

Ni Nyoman Triana Prima Dewi ^{*a}

Management, Udayana University
trianaprima68@gmail.com

I Made Wardana

Management, Udayana University

Ni Ketut Seminari

Management, Udayana University

Ni Wayan Ekawati

Management, Udayana University

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the role of brand trust in mediating the influence of E-WOM on the decision to purchase culottes at the Candy Project. The population of this research includes consumers who bought culottes at Candy Project with a total of 100 samples. The sample was determined by purposive sampling. Data collection used survey and questionnaire methods which were measured using a 5point Likert scale. Data analysis was carried out using path analysis and the Sobel test. This research shows that E-WOM has significant positive effect on brand trust in culottes in the Candy Project. E-WOM and brand trust significant positive on the decision to purchase culottes at the Candy Project. Brand trust is able to mediate the influence of E-WOM on the decision to purchase culottes at the Candy Project. The practical implications of this research are as consideration and input for Candy Project management in marketing its products in sales to increase product purchases to consumers.

Keywords: E-WOM, Brand Trust, Purchase Decision

Introduction

The development of the era has resulted in increasingly tight competition in the business world. Technological developments bring changes to consumer behavior (Siregar, 2022). One of the technologies that supports these changes is the Internet (Rizkiyah et al., 2021).

Along with the growth and development of the economy, one of the bright spots of the new creative economy is the fashion industry. As a country with a wide variety of cultures, Indonesia has great potential in the creative industry sector (Sinurat, 2023). Fashion in Indonesia is developing quite rapidly. This is inseparable from the role of technology. Technology has become an easy-to-use interaction tool that allows people, especially teenagers, to follow the evolution of global fashion (Tyaswara et al., 2017). The

^a Correspondence author

fashion industry in Indonesia is currently multiplying, fashion as one of the sub-sectors of the creative industry has taken over most of the industry compared to other sub-sectors. (Arumsari et al., 2017). This is also in line with the increasing public awareness of fashion which is directed towards fulfilling lifestyle needs (Maharani and Hidayati, 2020). In addition, the effects of globalization in Bali, especially in Denpasar City, have had a major impact on the development of the technology and fashion industries (Pane et al., 2018).

Making patterns for clothing using the zero-waste method according to a designer from the United States by using the upcycling method to optimize the remaining waste from clothing production can be reprocessed as additional details on clothing to reduce textile waste so that it can contribute to preserving the ecosystem of the human environment and other creatures (Gadi et al., 2020). This method has been implemented by one of the MSMEs in Bali which operates in the fashion sector, namely Candy Project.

Candy Project is an MSME in the fashion sector that offers a unique and different style. Overall, its products follow market trends such as oversized clothes, culottes, crop tops, shirts, long dresses, cargo pants, jeans, t-shirts, sports bras, jackets, and perfumes. In addition, the materials used are also of high quality. Candy Project also utilizes the remaining fabric from making a product as an addition to other products or can be said to apply the up-cycling method. So that it can reduce losses and fabric waste. However, over time, some products have experienced a decline in sales, namely culottes, especially airflow culottes showed on Table 1.

Table 1.
Candy Project Store Sales Data Denpasar Branch 2021-2023

Product (Pcs)	Year		
	2021	2022	2023
Airflow Culottes	460	420	375
Shirt	496	465	474
Crop top	463	443	457
Shirt (Kemeja)	264	276	284
Long dress	184	197	207
Cargo Pants and Jeans	394	430	452
Sport Bra	116	102	107
Jacket	80	89	98
Parfume	77	59	63

Source: Owner Candy Project Store (2023)

Table 1 shows product sales data at the Candy Project store, Denpasar branch. In addition, the table also shows a decrease in sales of airflow culottes. The decrease in the purchase rate is influenced by the order of choices formed by consumers before deciding to buy a product. Purchasing decisions are very important for a company, this is because purchasing decisions made by consumers can be an important determinant that determines the existence of a company. Where this existence can be related to the amount of consumer demand for the product. When demand increases, the company's chances of surviving in the market also increase, and vice versa (Ernawati and Giovanni, 2023).

E-WOM that is created both positive and negative also influences someone in making a purchase. This happened to Candy Project. Several consumers gave negative

reviews of airflow culottes through online platforms. So that it affects the value of airflow culottes. Indirectly, negative consumer E-WOM influences purchasing decisions and also consumer trust in the brand.

A consumer's choice to acquire a good or service is known as a purchasing decision. Therefore, a consumer purchasing decision is a process of choosing one of several alternative solutions to a problem with accurate follow-up (Dirwan and Firman, 2023). Word of mouth (WOM) in these stages plays an important role when consumers decide to purchase a product (Padmawati and Suasana, 2020). Current technological advances affect the spread of WOM, which has changed to E-WOM by utilizing the internet and greatly influences purchase decisions (Padmawati and Suasana, 2020).

The experiences or reviews that other people provide can be used as information or input before making a purchasing decision (Ayunita and Muskita, 2021). According to Sanjaya and Budiono (2021), a product that has good reviews certainly has a good impact on the product and the company to build consumer trust. This affects consumers' short-term and long-term decisions to buy a product.

According to research conducted by Akbar and Sunarti (2018), E-WOM significantly positive on purchasing decisions. Andryana and Ardani (2021) also stated that E-WOM influences the extend of purchasing decisions, while contrast finding by Bahi et al., (2020) found that E-WOM does not have a significant influence on purchasing decisions.

Ruhamak and Rahmadi (2019) define brand trust as a sense of security that customers get from a brand during their interactions with it because they believe the brand is dependable and serves their needs and concerns about their safety. One of the most crucial aspects of purchasing decisions is E-WOM, will later reflect whether the brand trust is positively embedded in the consumer's memory.

Maulana (2018) found that purchasing decisions are positively and significantly influenced by brand trust, consistent with finding by Nasution and Kristaung (2022). However, Umar et al. (2023), there is no significant effect between brand trust on purchasing decisions.

Based on the description of the problems in the background of this research, the hypothesis is as follows:

H₁: E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust

H₂: E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase decision

H₃: Brand trust has a positive and significant influence on purchase decision

H₄: Brand trust mediates the influence of E-WOM on purchase decision

RESEARCH METHODS

Quantitative research with associative methods was used in this study. Sample selection is used by the purposive sampling technique of questionnaires (Google Forms), resulting 100 customer respondents who had bought culottes at the Candy Project Denpasar store. The analysis techniques used were path analysis and the Sobel Test.

Table 2.
Research Variable Indicators

No	Variable	Indicators	Source
1	E-WOM (X)	a) Frequency of accessing information	(Dewi and Sudiksa, 2019); (Padmawati and Suasana, 2020)
		b) Focus on other consumers	
		c) Expressing positive feelings	
2	Brand trust (M)	a) <i>Brand reliability</i>	Ruhamak and Rahmadi (2019)
		b) <i>Brand intention</i>	
3	Purchase decision (Y)	a) Recognition of a problem or need	Joesyiana (2018); (Ayunita and Mustika, 2021)
		b) Information search	
		c) Alternative evaluation	
		d) Consistency in a product	
		e) Purchase decision	
		f) Post-purchase behavior	

Table 3.
Validity Test Results

Variable	Instrument	Correlation coefficient	Information	Sig.
E-WOM (X)	E1	0,499	Valid	0,005
	E2	0,904	Valid	0,000
	E3	0,881	Valid	0,000
Brand trust (M)	KM1	0,798	Valid	0,000
	KM2	0,909	Valid	0,000
Purchase decision (Y)	KP1	0,768	Valid	0,000
	KP2	0,702	Valid	0,000
	KP3	0,641	Valid	0,000
	KP4	0,749	Valid	0,000
	KP5	0,697	Valid	0,000
	KP6	0,804	Valid	0,000

Source: data processed, 2024

According to Table 3, all of the indicators for the variables related to brand trust, purchase decision, WOM are valid because their correlation coefficient values > 0.30 with significance values < 0.05 .

Table 4
Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
E-WOM	0,682	Reliable
Brand trust	0,614	Reliable
Purchase decision	0,818	Reliable

Source: data processed, 2024

Table 4 shows that the research instrument of E-WOM variables, brand trust, and purchase decision are declared reliable because they have a reliability value > 0.60 , reflecting the measurement can provide dependable results if the measurement is carried out again on the same subject.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The criteria of the respondent are female, domiciled in Denpasar City, have a minimum education level of high school/vocational high school or equivalent, and have purchased culottes at the Candy Project Denpasar store. Thus, 100 respondents collected. Table 5 reflects the respondent characteristics.

Table 5.
Respondent Characteristics

No	Variable	Classification	Amount	
			(Person)	(Percentage)
1	Age	18-20 years	5	5
		21-23 years	73	73
		24-25 years	4	4
		> 25 years	18	18
		Total	100	100
2	Last education	High school/vocational school equivalent	72	72
		Associate's degree	12	12
		Bachelor	16	16
		Total	100	100
3	Work	Students	65	65
		Government employees	3	3
		Private employees	19	19
		Self-employed	12	12
		Others	1	1
		Total	100	100

Source: data processed, 2024

Table 5 presents the respondent characteristics, totaling 100 people. According to the data, the age of the respondents are majority 21-23 years old, as much as 73 percent. The last education of respondents who are high school/vocational high school graduates, dominating as much as 72 percent. When viewed from the occupation, the majority work as students as much as 65 percent.

Table 6.
Description of Respondents' Answers Regarding E-WOM Variables

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondents' Answers					Average	Criteria
		1	2	3	4	5		
		1	I researched as much information as possible about the culottes at Candy Project before making a purchase.	0	0	10		
2	I will actively encourage others	1	9	37	46	6	3,44	Good

	to purchase Candy Project culottes through my social media accounts.							
3	I was excited to comment on social media that I was wearing culottes from Candy Project.	1	8	42	46	3	3,42	Good
Average score of E-WOM variables							3,67	Good

Source: data processed, 2024

Table 6 reflects that E-WOM variable that has the highest average of all statements related to the E-WOM is "I searched for as much information as possible about culottes at Candy Project before making a purchase". This statement obtained an average value of 4.15 (good criteria), reflecting the general respondents assume that when they are going to buy culottes, searching for as much information as possible about the product, especially E-WOM, will be very helpful in making purchasing decisions.

The statement on the E-WOM variable that has the lowest average is "I am excited to comment on social media that I am wearing culottes from Candy Project", which obtained an average value of 3.42 (good criteria) but has the lowest average value compared to other statements. This means that in general respondents assume that not many consumers will comment that they are wearing culottes from Candy Project on social media.

Table 7.
Description of Respondents' Answers Regarding Brand Trust Variables

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondents' Answers					Average	Criteria
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	I am sure that the design of the culottes at Candy Project is able to compete with other fashion brands' products.	0	0	11	73	16	3,90	Good
2	I believe in the quality of Candy Project's culottes compared to the quality of other fashion products.	0	0	32	60	8	3,76	Good
Average score of brand trust variable							3,83	Good

Source: data processed, 2024

According to the Table 7, the statement on the brand trust variable that has the highest average is "I am sure that the design of culottes pants at Candy Project can compete with other fashion brand products". This statement obtained an average value of 3.90 (good criteria), reflecting the general respondents assume that consumers already have confidence in the design of culottes pants that can compete with other brands.

The statement on the brand trust variable that has the lowest average is "I believe in the quality of Candy Project culottes compared to the quality of other fashion products", which obtained an average value of 3.76 (good criteria) but has the lowest average value compared to other statements. This means that

respondents consider that they still have little confidence in the difference in quality of the culottes offered by Candy Project.

Table 8.
Description of Respondents' Answers Regarding Purchase Decision Variables

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondents' Answers					Average	Criteria
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	I bought culottes at Candy Project according to my needs.	0	1	12	53	34	4,20	Good
2	I bought my culottes at Candy Project because I was influenced by the surrounding environment.	0	8	40	46	6	3,50	Good
3	I bought culottes at Candy Project because I saw an ad on social media.	0	1	26	61	12	3,84	Good
4	Before buying culottes at Candy Project, I evaluated the product from all aspects.	0	1	19	59	21	4,00	Good
5	I bought culottes at Candy Project considering the benefits of the product.	0	0	22	58	20	3,98	Good
6	I recommend culottes at Candy Project through social media	1	9	28	56	6	3,57	Good
Average score of purchasing decision variables							3,85	Good

Source: data processed, 2024

Table 8 presents that the statement on the purchasing decision variable that has the highest average is "I bought culottes at Candy Project according to my needs". This statement obtained an average value of 4.20 (good criteria), indicating the respondents assume that purchasing decisions are made because of needs.

The statement on purchasing decision variable that has the lowest average is "I bought culottes at Candy Project because I was influenced by the surrounding environment", which obtained an average value of 3.50 (good criteria), but has the lowest average value compared to other statements. This means that respondents assume that the surrounding environment has little influence on the decision to buy culottes.

Table 9.
Direct influence and indirect influence and total influence

Influence of Variables	Direct Influence	Indirect Effect Through Mediation ($\beta_1 \times \beta_2$)	Total Influence
X → M	0,589	-	0,589
X → Y	0,345	0,266	0,611
M → Y	0,453	-	0,453

Source: data processed, 2024

According to the Table 9, is known to display the results that summarize the value of each direct and indirect influence path between variables, as well as the error value in each structural equation produced through path analysis. Furthermore, the meaning of the values listed in Table 7 will be explained, the results of E-WOM have a direct influence on brand trust of 0.589, the results of E-WOM have a direct influence on purchasing decisions of 0.345, the results of brand trust have a direct influence on purchasing decisions of 0.453 and the results of E-WOM have a direct influence on purchasing decisions of 0.453 and an indirect influence of 0.266.

$$Z = \frac{ab}{\sqrt{b^2 s_a^2 a^2 s_b^2 + s_a^2 s_b^2}}$$

$$Z = \frac{0,589 \times 0,453}{\sqrt{0,453^2 \times 0,044^2 + 0,589^2 \times 0,265^2 + 0,044^2 \times 0,265^2}}$$

$$Z = \frac{0,266}{0,024}$$

$$Z = 11,083$$

The calculation above shows that the calculated z value > the z table value (11.083 > 0.96), indicating E-WOM influences purchasing decisions with brand trust mediation, so brand trust is a mediating variable that has a significant effect between E-WOM and purchasing decisions on consumers of culottes at Candy Project, so H₄ is accepted.

The H₁ show that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. The more E-WOM increases, the more consumer trust in Candy Project culottes also increases, so the H₁ is accepted. This shows that E-WOM can be a bond between consumers and companies through brand trust. The results align with Lestari (2022), Pramadanti et al., (2023), and Putra & Sary (2024), which showed that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

The H₂ shows that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The more E-WOM increases, the more the decision to purchase culottes at Candy Project increases, so the H₂ is accepted. The results align with Yulindasari and Fikriyah (2022), Nst (2023), and (Apriliani and Setyawati, 2023), which showed that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

The H₃ shows that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The higher the brand trust, the higher the purchasing decision for culottes at Candy Project, so the H₃ accepted. This shows that brand trust created by Candy Project can influence purchasing decisions for culottes. The results align with Wadi et al., (2021), Gunawan & Wibowo (2022), and Hanaysha (2022), which revealed that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

The H₄ indicate that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions mediated by brand trust. It can be stated that strong E-WOM will increase purchasing decisions so that it can create brand trust in culottes at Candy Project. The results align with Padmawati & Suasana (2020) and Noviandini & Yasa (2021) which show that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on mediating the influence of E-WOM on purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The conclusion is E-WOM has significant positive effect on brand trust in culottes in the Candy Project. E-WOM and brand trust has significant positive effect on the

decision to purchase culottes at the Candy Project. Moreover, brand trust is able to mediate the influence of E-WOM on the decision to purchase culottes at the Candy Project. Through this study, in order to increase E-WOM, the Candy Project was suggested to escalate promotion on social media. Candy Project can improve the quality of its products compared to competitors or can be more aggressive in providing information about the quality of its products through social media so that it can increase brand trust that Candy Project has a different product quality and Candy Project prepares a promotional strategy so that information is not only spread through social media but can also be spread directly or by word of mouth which is expected to be able to increase the decision to purchase the culottes.

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