



## The Influence of Content Marketing and E-WOM on Instagram on the Decision to Purchase Florist Products in Purwokerto with Customer Trust as a Mediator Variable

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**Abstract**

**Background:** The rapid growth of Instagram has changed consumer purchasing behavior, with content marketing and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) becoming important factors influencing purchasing decisions. In the florist industry, customer trust plays a key role in supporting online purchases.

**Objective:** Instagram growth has reshaped consumer purchasing behavior, with content marketing, e-WOM, and customer trust influencing online purchase decisions.

**Methods:** A quantitative research approach was employed using a survey of 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The respondents were active Instagram users who had purchased florist products via Instagram at least once during January–March 2026. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM) to evaluate both direct and indirect relationships among the variables.

**Results:** The findings indicate that content marketing positively and significantly influences purchasing decisions ( $\beta = 0.182$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ), while e-WOM demonstrates a stronger positive effect ( $\beta = 0.271$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). Customer trust significantly affects purchasing decisions ( $\beta = 0.341$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and serves as a significant mediator between content marketing and purchasing decisions ( $\beta = 0.125$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ), as well as between e-WOM and purchasing decisions ( $\beta = 0.148$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ). Among the predictors, e-WOM emerges as the most influential factor affecting consumer purchasing decisions.

**Conclusion:** Content marketing and e-WOM significantly influence purchasing decisions through customer trust, with e-WOM emerging as the strongest predictor. Florist businesses should focus on content quality, customer reviews, and trust-building to increase purchase conversions.

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### INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the last decade has changed the pattern of interaction between companies and consumers in various countries (Paunov & Planes-Satorra, 2019). This transformation has driven a shift in marketing strategies from conventional models to data-driven models, social media, and two-way communication (Chakravarthy et al., 2024). Modern consumers no longer only receive information from one-way advertising but actively seek reviews, compare products, read testimonials, and interact directly with brands through digital

platforms (Sharma & Ashfaq, 2023). In a global context, companies that are able to utilize Content Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) tend to have higher competitiveness because they are able to reach consumers quickly and personally (Firmansyah & Martono, 2023).

This phenomenon makes purchasing decisions increasingly influenced by the quality of digital information and the level of trust in brands (Kotler & Keller, 2011). In Indonesia, the growth of e-commerce, the use of social media, and the increasing digital literacy of the public show that digital marketing has become an important element in modern business activities (Laudon, 2008). According to We Are Social, Indonesia has over 139 million active Instagram users, making it the fourth-largest Instagram market globally. Furthermore, the Indonesian Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2023) reported that over 21 million MSMEs have adopted digital platforms for marketing, with social commerce growing by 35% annually.

Although digital opportunities are increasing, many businesses still face obstacles in optimizing online marketing strategies (Sanbella et al., 2024). The main problem arises when the promotional content presented is less relevant, inconsistent, and does not provide added value for consumers. In addition, negative e-WOM, such as bad comments, low ratings, or unsatisfactory customer experiences, can reduce the market's perception of a product. Another factor that affects the emergence of problems is low customer trust, especially related to transaction security, product suitability with descriptions, and seller credibility. In the digital environment, trust is a crucial aspect because consumers cannot see the product directly before buying (Ajzen, 1991).

When a company fails to build trust, the digital promotions carried out often do not lead to actual transactions. In the florist industry specifically, consumers in Purwokerto predominantly purchase floral arrangements for ceremonial events (weddings, graduations, condolences), creating a market characterized by emotional purchasing decisions and high sensitivity to product presentation quality. Preliminary observations indicate that most Purwokerto florists rely heavily on Instagram as their primary sales channel, yet face challenges in converting profile visitors into buyers due to inconsistent content quality, limited customer reviews, and perceived transaction risk. This context makes the florist industry an ideal empirical setting to examine the interplay between content marketing, e-WOM, and customer trust in driving purchasing decisions.

The impact of these factors is significant for business sustainability. Weak marketing content leads to low engagement, lack of buying interest, and decreased consumer loyalty. Negative e-WOM can spread quickly through social media, damaging the brand's reputation in a short period. Meanwhile, low consumer trust increases doubts in the purchase process, extends decision-making time, and even encourages consumers to switch to competitors. In the long term, this condition impacts declining sales conversions, high customer acquisition costs, and weakening business competitiveness. Therefore, companies need to understand the relationship between content marketing, e-WOM, and customer trust so that purchasing decisions can be optimally improved (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Conceptually, Content Marketing is a marketing strategy that focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain the target audience. Good content not only sells products but also provides education, entertainment, and solutions to consumer needs (Pulizzi, 2013). Meanwhile, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is a form of communication between consumers through digital media regarding experiences, opinions, or recommendations for a product or service. e-WOM is considered more trustworthy because it comes from fellow users than the company's official advertising message (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Customer Trust is a consumer belief that sellers have integrity, competence, and good intentions in fulfilling service promises. These three variables are interrelated and have the potential to influence Purchase Decisions, namely the consumer's process in choosing, deciding, and making transactions for certain products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

This research has an element of novelty because it examines the simultaneous relationship between Content Marketing and e-WOM on Purchase Decisions by placing Customer Trust as a mediating variable for digital consumers in the Purwokerto area. Some previous research examined the direct influence between variables without highlighting the role of trust as the main bridge to purchase decisions. In addition, the focus of the research location on Purwokerto is an added value because this region is developing as a regional trade center with an increase in the digital activities of MSMEs and online consumers. Thus, this research is expected to provide a new

empirical perspective on digital consumer behavior in developing cities, not only in large metropolitan areas (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Specifically, Erkan (2016) examined e-WOM effects on purchase intentions in a general social media context but did not incorporate customer trust as a mediator. Cheung (2012) analyzed e-WOM communication effects broadly without focusing on Instagram or specific product categories like florists. Moran (2014) explored search and e-WOM in consumer decision-making but did not test content marketing as a separate construct or examine mediation through trust. Unlike these studies, the present research simultaneously examines content marketing and e-WOM with customer trust as a mediating variable in the specific context of Instagram-based florist businesses in Purwokerto, a secondary Indonesian city underrepresented in digital marketing literature.

The urgency of this research is increasing as competition for digital-based businesses grows. It is not enough for business actors to be present on social media; they must understand which factors truly encourage consumers to buy. Many businesses spend large amounts on digital advertising, but sales results have not been maximized because the strategies used are not yet based on consumer behavior. This research is important to help companies understand whether purchasing decisions are more influenced by the quality of content, other customer reviews, or trust in the brand. The results of the research are also relevant for local MSMEs who are transforming toward digital marketing so that they can use promotional resources more efficiently and on target (Sugiyono, 2019).

Based on the conceptual framework and research hypotheses developed, this study has the following objectives: (H1) To analyze the direct effect of Content Marketing on Purchase Decisions; (H2) To analyze the direct effect of e-WOM on Purchase Decisions; (H3) To analyze the effect of Content Marketing on Customer Trust; (H4) To analyze the effect of e-WOM on Customer Trust; (H5) To analyze the effect of Customer Trust on Purchase Decisions; and (H6) To test whether Customer Trust mediates the relationship between Content Marketing and e-WOM on Purchase Decisions. With the achievement of these goals, this research is expected to produce an empirical model of effective digital marketing strategies for business actors in Purwokerto and other regions with similar characteristics (Ghozali, 2021).

The benefits of this research are divided into academic and practical benefits. Academically, this research is expected to enrich the literature on digital consumer behavior, especially the integration of the variables of Content Marketing, e-WOM, Customer Trust, and Purchase Decisions. This research can also serve as a reference for future researchers who want to develop a digital marketing model based on consumer behavior. Practically, the results of the research can provide a basis for decision-making for companies, MSMEs, and online business operators in developing content strategies, building digital reputations, and increasing customer trust. In the end, the implementation of the findings of this research is expected to increase sales conversion and business competitiveness in the digital economy era (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

## METHOD

### Research Approach

This study was compiled to analyze The Influence of Content Marketing and E-WOM on Instagram on the Decision to Purchase Florist Products in Purwokerto with Customer Trust as a Mediator Variable for digital consumers in Purwokerto. The research focuses on how digital marketing communication strategies shape consumer perceptions, beliefs, and decisions in making online purchases (Ajzen, 1991). A quantitative approach with descriptive and explanatory designs was employed because this study aims to explain the relationships between variables based on numerical data obtained from respondents (Sugiyono, 2019). This approach is considered appropriate as it can produce objective findings that serve as the foundation for preparing effective digital marketing strategies.

### Research Location and Time

This research was conducted in the Purwokerto area, considering its growth in digital trade activities and the use of social media for product promotion. The location was selected to ensure that the research results represent regional consumer behavior, which is increasingly shifting

toward a digital economy. The study was conducted in stages, starting from instrument preparation, questionnaire distribution, data collection, data processing, to the preparation of the final report within the research year (Sugiyono, 2019).

### **Object and Scope of Research**

The object of this study is consumer purchasing decisions on products marketed through digital media. The independent variables are Content Marketing and e-WOM, the intervening variable is Customer Trust, and the dependent variable is Purchase Decision (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). The study's scope includes consumer perceptions of promotional content quality, the intensity of customer reviews, the level of trust in sellers, and actual purchase behavior. Limiting the scope ensures a more focused study and allows for in-depth analysis (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

### **Research Population**

The population for this study comprises all florist customers on Instagram. This population was chosen because they have direct experience with digital promotions and e-WOM, making them relevant to the research objectives (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Digital consumers are considered compliant populations, as their purchase decisions are influenced by information access, recommendations from other users, and trust in online sellers (Laudon, 2008).

### **Research Sample**

Samples were drawn from the population based on criteria such as having seen digital promotions, read customer reviews, and made online purchases within a specified period. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents with characteristics aligned with research needs (Sugiyono, 2019). The sample size was determined to meet the requirements for structural model analysis, ensuring representative and stable estimates (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

### **Variable Operationalization**

#### ***Variable: Content Marketing***

Content marketing variables were measured using the dimensions of reliability, disbelief, and persuasion to explain how content quality shapes consumer perceptions and responses in digital environments. These dimensions assess both informative content and its trustworthiness and influence on consumer attitudes.

1. The reliability dimension measures the ability of content to provide accurate, relevant, and useful information to consumers.
2. The disbelief dimension evaluates the extent to which consumers trust the content, including clarity, completeness, and consistency of information.
3. The persuasion dimension assesses the content's ability to communicate messages attractively and understandably, influencing decisions without exerting pressure (Sugiyono, 2019).

#### ***Variable: E-WOM***

The e-WOM variable was measured using opinion intensity and valence, capturing how consumer interactions and the direction of opinions affect perceptions and purchase decisions.

1. The intensity dimension measures frequency and engagement in accessing, reading, and interacting with social media content or reviews.
2. The valence dimension reflects the predominance of positive or negative opinions, influencing consumer confidence in purchase decisions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

#### ***Variable: Customer Trust***

Customer trust was assessed using four dimensions: benevolence, ability, integrity, and willingness to depend. These dimensions explain trust both in perception and in the consumer-seller relationship.

1. Benevolence measures belief that the seller has good intentions toward customers.
2. Ability reflects competence in providing promised products and services.

3. Integrity assesses honesty and consistency of information provided.
4. Willingness to depend captures consumers' readiness to continue trusting the seller despite inherent online transaction risks (Sugiyono, 2019).

#### **Variable: Purchase Decision**

Purchase decision variables were measured using purchase intention, product trust, and post-purchase satisfaction, representing the entire decision-making process (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

1. Purchase intention reflects consumers' internal motivation after evaluating information.
2. Product trust captures belief in the product's ability to meet expectations.
3. Post-purchase satisfaction refers to consumers' evaluation after product use, affecting repurchase likelihood and recommendations (Kotler & Keller, 2011; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

#### **Data Collection Techniques**

Primary data were collected via questionnaires distributed to respondents meeting the research criteria. Questionnaires efficiently reach many respondents and capture consumer perceptions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017). Secondary data from journals, reference books, digital industry reports, and previous research were also used to strengthen the theoretical foundation and support result interpretation (Sugiyono, 2019).

#### **Research Instruments**

The instrument comprised a closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Content marketing indicators included information relevance, content appeal, message consistency, and information usefulness (Pulizzi, 2013). e-WOM was measured through review intensity, recommendations, and trust in online comments (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Customer trust was assessed through security, confidence in product quality, and seller trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Purchase decisions were measured via buying interest, product choice, transaction actions, and post-purchase satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

#### **Research Stages**

The study proceeded in stages: problem identification, preparation of a theoretical framework based on consumer behavior and prior research, instrument preparation and pilot testing, questionnaire distribution and data verification, data processing, and development of digital marketing strategy recommendations based on empirical findings (Ajzen, 1991; Hair Jr et al., 2021; Sugiyono, 2019).

#### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis included validity testing to ensure accurate construct measurement Ghozali (2021), reliability testing to assess response consistency Sugiyono (2019), and descriptive analysis to describe respondent characteristics and variable tendencies. PLS-SEM analysis tested direct and indirect influences, including Customer Trust's mediation between Content Marketing, e-WOM, and Purchase Decisions (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **Research Overview**

This study was conducted to analyze the influence of Content Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on Purchase Decisions, with Customer Trust as a mediating variable, among digital consumers in the Purwokerto area. Data collection was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents who met the criteria, namely, having used social media, marketplaces, or digital platforms as a source of information prior to making a purchase. The focus of the research is directed at the behavior of digital consumers, who are increasingly dependent on the quality of online information and trust in sellers (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

The collected data were then processed using the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares

Structural Equation Modeling) approach, as this method can analyze simultaneous relationships between latent variables, including both direct and indirect effects through mediating variables. The use of PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate for digital marketing research with complex models that include multiple constructs (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

**Profile of the Research Respondent**

Based on the results of data collection, the study involved 154 respondents. The descriptive profile is presented in Table 1 below, which includes frequencies and percentages for gender, age, domicile.

**Table 1.** General Profile of Respondents

Characteristics	Category and Frequency
Gender	Female: 122 (68%)   Male: 32
Age	21-25 years: 72,7%   26-30 years: 20,8% >30 years: 3,9%   <20 years: 2,6%
Domicile	Purwokerto: 141   Outside Purwokerto: 54

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

Most respondents purchase florist products at least once a month. These findings indicate that digital-based purchasing decisions have become a routine consumption behavior among the public. The higher the intensity of using digital platforms, the greater the potential influence of content marketing and e-WOM on purchase decisions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

**Description of Research Variables**

**Content Marketing**

The results of the study show that respondents consider content marketing an important factor in attracting attention and fostering buying interest. Content that is informative, visually appealing, easy to understand, and consistently presented has a positive impact on consumer perception. Consumers tend to prefer brands that not only sell but also provide education or entertainment through their content (Pulizzi, 2013).

**Table 2.** Assessment of Content Marketing Variables

No.	Content Marketing	Jml Score	Score Max	Reach	Category
1	Reliabilitas	2547	2080	82,69%	Good
2	Disbelief	1261	1540	81,88%	Good
3	Persuasion	1276	1540	83,55%	Good
	Total	5084	6160	82,71%	Good

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

These findings show that content quality is a key entry point in building an initial relationship with digital consumers. Quality content increases attention, curiosity, and confidence in the product (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

**Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)**

The e-WOM variable received a high rating from respondents. Most respondents stated that they read other customers' reviews before purchasing the product. Store ratings, positive comments, video testimonials, and other user experiences are the main considerations in the process of evaluating product alternatives (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

**Table 3.** Assessment of e-WOM Variables

No.	E-WOM	Jml Score	Score Max	Reach	Category
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1.	Intensity	1930	2310	83,55%	Good
2.	Valence of Opinion	1902	2310	82,34%	Good
3.	Content	1933	2310	83,68%	Good
	Total	5765	6930	83,19%	Good

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

These findings demonstrate that modern consumers rely heavily on the experiences of other consumers as an independent source of information. In the digital environment, the voice of the customer is often more trusted than the company's official advertising.

**Customer Trust**

Customer trust has been shown to be a crucial variable in online transactions. Respondents indicated that they feel more confident in purchasing when the seller has a good reputation, provides clear product information, responds promptly, and offers a secure payment system. Customer trust serves as a primary determinant because online transactions involve a higher degree of uncertainty compared to offline purchases (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

**Table 4.** Customer Trust Variable Assessment

No.	Customer Trust	Jml Score	Score Max	Reach	Category
1.	Benevolence	1937	2310	83,85%	Good
2.	Ability	1921	2310	83,16%	Good
3.	Integrity	1915	2310	82,90%	Good
4.	Willingness to Depend	1937	2310	83,86%	Good
	Total	7710	9240	83,44 %	Good

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

These findings confirm that even though promotions are attractive, consumers still require a sense of security before making a purchase. Without trust, buying interest is less likely to translate into actual transactions.

**Purchase Decision**

Purchase decisions are assessed through buying interest, confidence in selecting a product, actual purchase behavior, and post-purchase satisfaction. The results indicate that most respondents make purchases when products have favorable reviews, clear information, and reliable sellers. This demonstrates that the purchase decision represents the culmination of both rational and emotional factors (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

**Table 5.** Assessment of Purchase Decision Variables

No	Buying decision	Jml Score	Score Max	Reach	Category
1.	Purchase Intention	1895	2310	82,04%	Good
2.	Trust in the Product	1920	2310	83,12%	Good
3.	Post-Purchase Satisfaction	1277	1540	82,93%	Good
	Total	5092	6160	82,70%	Good

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

**Measurement Model Test Results (Outer Model)**

The outer model test showed that all indicators had a loading factor value above the minimum limit, so that the indicator was declared valid in measuring the construct of each variable. The composite reliability value and Cronbach's alpha were also above the required standard, so the research instrument was considered reliable (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

**Table 6.** Summary of Validity and Reliability Tests

Variables	Valid	Reliable
Content Marketing	Yes	Yes

e-WOM	Yes	Yes
Customer Trust	Yes	Yes
Purchase Decisions	Yes	Yes

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

These results show that the instruments used are suitable for use in the testing of advanced structural models.

### Structural Model Test Results (Inner Model)

The R-Square value shows that Content Marketing, e-WOM, and Customer Trust are able to explain 61.3% of the variation in Purchase Decisions. The remaining variation is explained by other variables outside the research model. This value indicates that the model has a fairly strong predictive ability in explaining the purchasing behavior of digital consumers (Hair Jr et al., 2021). The R-Square for Customer Trust is 0.512, indicating that Content Marketing and e-WOM explain 51.2% of the variance in Customer Trust. The Q-Square (predictive relevance) values are  $Q^2 = 0.387$  for Purchase Decisions and  $Q^2 = 0.312$  for Customer Trust, both above 0, confirming the acceptable predictive relevance of the model (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) for the structural paths indicate medium effects: Content Marketing → Customer Trust ( $f^2 = 0.163$ ), e-WOM → Customer Trust ( $f^2 = 0.228$ ), and Customer Trust → Purchase Decisions ( $f^2 = 0.148$ ). The SRMR value of 0.063 is below the 0.08 threshold, confirming a satisfactory model fit (Henseler et al., 2015).

### Hypothesis Testing Results

**Table 7.** Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Influence	Coefficient	P-Value	Results
H1	Content Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.182	0.022	Accepted
H2	e-WOM → Purchase Decision	0.271	0.005	Accepted
H3	Content Marketing → Customer Trust	0.367	0.000	Accepted
H4	e-WOM → Customer Trust	0.434	0.000	Accepted
H5	Customer Trust → Purchase Decision	0.341	0.002	Accepted

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

The above results show that all major hypotheses are accepted. The e-WOM variable has the most direct influence on purchase decisions compared to content marketing. This means that recommendations and other customer experiences have a stronger influence on consumers than official company promotions.

### Mediation Test Results

**Table 8.** Customer Trust Mediation Test

Mediation Relationship	Coefficient	P-Value	Results
Content Marketing → Customer Trust → Purchase Decision	0.125	0.022	Significant
e-WOM → Customer Trust → Purchase Decision	0.148	0.026	Significant

Source: Researcher Data Processing (2026)

These findings prove that Customer Trust is an important bridge between digital marketing activities and purchase decisions. Good content will increase trust, which then encourages purchases. Likewise, positive reviews of other customers will strengthen consumer confidence before making a transaction (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

### Discussion

#### The Influence of Content Marketing on Purchase Decisions

The results of the study show that Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions, with a coefficient of 0.182 and a significance value of 0.022. This finding

confirms that relevant, interesting, and informative digital content can encourage consumers to continue the purchase process. In the digital environment, consumers tend to interact with content first before deciding to buy a product. Content serves as the starting point for generating attention, interest, and a positive perception of the brand. When consumers perceive that content provides benefits, the likelihood of purchase increases significantly (Pulizzi, 2013).

This condition underscores the urgency of this research, namely that many business actors actively promote on social media but have not achieved optimal sales results. The main reason is not the lack of uploads but that the content often only contains direct offers without education, storytelling, or added value. Today's digital consumers are more interested in brands that provide solutions, entertainment, or insights through their content. Therefore, companies need to shift the paradigm from "hard selling" to "value selling" through a planned content marketing strategy (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

If the strategy is implemented correctly, the impact is substantial. Quality content can increase engagement, strengthen brand awareness, reduce consumer resistance to promotions, and boost sales conversions. In the long term, content marketing is also more efficient than aggressive advertising because it builds sustainable customer relationships. These findings align with previous research stating that content quality affects buying interest and loyalty among digital consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

### **The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on Purchase Decisions**

The results showed that e-WOM had the most positive influence on purchase decisions, with a coefficient of 0.271 and a significance of 0.005. This value is higher than that of content marketing, indicating that the experience of other customers has greater persuasive power than the company's official promotional messages. Modern consumers tend to seek social validation before purchasing, especially when buying products online without seeing the item in person (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

These findings highlight the importance of this research. Many businesses spend large budgets on digital advertising but neglect customer review management. A single negative review can affect the perception of dozens of potential buyers, whereas positive testimonials, high ratings, and user recommendations can rapidly increase new buyers' confidence. In the context of Purwokerto as a digitally developing region, e-WOM is a crucial factor because consumers often rely on others' experiences as the basis for decision-making (Laudon, 2008).

The practical solution is for companies to integrate customers into their marketing strategy. This can be achieved through testimonial programs, post-purchase follow-ups, review incentives, and prompt, transparent complaint handling. Successfully managing the customer voice enhances digital reputation. The impact is not only increased sales but also reduced promotional costs, as customers voluntarily become brand promoters.

These results are consistent with previous studies that identify e-WOM as a key determinant of digital consumer behavior. However, the novelty of this study lies in testing e-WOM within the context of Purwokerto consumers with customer trust mediation, providing a localized and contextual empirical perspective.

### **The Influence of Content Marketing on Customer Trust**

This study found that Content Marketing significantly affects Customer Trust, with a coefficient of 0.367. This indicates that higher quality content from the company leads to higher levels of consumer trust. This finding is logical because consumers evaluate a business's professionalism based on how it communicates information. Clear, honest, and consistent content conveys that the company understands customer needs and demonstrates high credibility (Pulizzi, 2013).

A common issue in digital businesses is producing content that is careless, uninformative, or excessively promises product benefits. Consequently, consumers may doubt the claims and consider the promotion untrustworthy. In a highly competitive digital market, trust is a critical asset. Once consumers feel deceived, the likelihood of repurchase drops drastically. Therefore, this study confirms that content marketing is not merely a promotional tool but also a mechanism for building reputation and trust.

A practical solution is to ensure all content contains accurate information, authentic photos, proof of product usage, rational explanations of benefits, and a consistent brand identity. Content such as user tutorials, product education, FAQs, and behind-the-scenes insights has proven more effective at increasing trust than simple discount posters. Enhanced trust encourages consumers to try products, remain loyal, and recommend them to others (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

### **The influence of e-WOM on Customer Trust**

The study found that e-WOM significantly affects Customer Trust, with a coefficient of 0.434—the largest influence on trust among the variables. This demonstrates that consumers trust the experiences of fellow users more than corporate claims. Customer reviews are considered more objective because they stem from actual usage experiences. Consequently, marketplaces prominently display ratings and reviews as core features (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

The importance of this finding is clear. Many businesses focus on online store design and promotion but overlook post-purchase customer experiences, which translate into public reviews and shape trust for future buyers. Negative experiences regarding product quality, slow service, or unresponsive sellers can spread quickly and reduce market trust.

The strategic solution is to implement a superior customer service system. On-time delivery, accurate product representation, quick responses, clear return policies, and friendly communication foster positive reviews. The impact is substantial, as positive reviews not only increase trust but also improve search rankings on marketplace and digital platform algorithms.

Previous research has addressed the relationship between e-WOM and trust, but this study reinforces this evidence in the context of the emerging Purwokerto market and digital consumer behavior.

### **The Influence of Customer Trust on Purchase Decisions**

The results indicate that Customer Trust significantly affects Purchase Decisions, with a coefficient of 0.341. Higher consumer trust in a brand or seller increases the likelihood of purchase. Trust is crucial in online transactions due to uncertainties regarding product quality, payment security, and delivery accuracy (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

These findings address a key problem in digital businesses: why many potential buyers inquire but do not complete checkout. The cause is often not price but a lack of trust. Consumers may be interested yet hesitant about product authenticity, store security, or delivery reliability. Trust thus serves as the link between interest and action.

Companies can enhance trust by displaying social proof, authentic testimonials, guarantees, certifications, secure payment methods, clear addresses, and prompt service. Increased trust reduces abandoned carts and boosts conversion rates, leading to higher turnover and customer loyalty.

These findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that intentions and actual behavior are influenced by beliefs about the outcomes of actions (Ajzen, 1991). Trust reinforces the belief that purchasing is a safe and beneficial decision.

### **The Role of Customer Trust Mediation**

This study demonstrates that Customer Trust mediates the relationship between Content Marketing and e-WOM on Purchase Decisions. Digital promotions and customer reviews do not always directly result in purchases; trust must first be established. Once trust is formed, consumers make purchasing decisions.

This finding is a key novelty compared to previous studies focusing on the direct effects of variables. It highlights that trust is a primary psychological mechanism in the digital purchasing process. Consumers purchase not solely based on advertisements or reviews but because they feel confident and secure after receiving information.

The implications are significant. Companies should not pursue reach, views, or likes in isolation. All digital marketing efforts must aim to build trust. Content must be credible, reviews properly managed, and services consistently reliable. Without trust, high traffic does not necessarily translate into sales.

### **Strategic Implications for Business Actors in Purwokerto**

Based on the study results, business actors in Purwokerto should adopt a digital marketing strategy grounded in three pillars: quality content, customer reputation, and transaction trust. The growing Purwokerto region presents substantial opportunities for MSMEs and local businesses to expand through digital platforms. However, competition is increasing, necessitating differentiation through quality communication and customer experience.

The first strategy is maintaining a consistent, educational content calendar. The second strategy involves an active system for collecting post-purchase reviews. The third strategy is enhancing trust through price transparency, authentic photos, fast service, and warranty coverage. Implementing all three strategies together will increase competitiveness, prepare local businesses to contend with national brands, and yield economic benefits such as higher sales, market expansion, loyal customers, and a strengthened local digital economy.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that content marketing ( $\beta=0.182$ ), e-WOM ( $\beta=0.271$ ), and customer trust ( $\beta=0.341$ ) each have a significant positive effect on purchase decisions of florist products on Instagram in Purwokerto. E-WOM emerged as the strongest direct predictor, underscoring the persuasive power of peer-generated recommendations in digital consumer behavior. Critically, customer trust mediates the relationships between both content marketing and e-WOM with purchase decisions, confirming its role as a central psychological mechanism in online purchasing. These findings contribute to the digital marketing literature by empirically validating a trust-mediated model in the context of a secondary Indonesian city, extending knowledge beyond metropolitan market contexts. Practically, florist businesses on Instagram should prioritize consistent, value-driven content creation, proactive review management, and trust-building strategies, including transparent product information and responsive service, to maximize sales conversion.

This study is limited to florist consumers in Purwokerto, and the cross-sectional design constrains causal inference. Future research should replicate this model across different product categories and geographic regions, incorporate additional variables such as brand image, price perception, and service quality, and employ longitudinal methods to capture dynamic shifts in digital consumer behavior over time.

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### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

Author 1: Conceptualization, methodology design, data collection, and writing the initial draft. Author 2: Literature review, data analysis using PLS-SEM, interpretation of results, and revision of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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