The Effect of Product Quality and E-Wom on Purchase Intention Through Customer Trust at Toyota Company

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Article Info

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of product quality and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on purchase intention, with customer trust as a mediating variable in Toyota e-commerce in Indonesia. The study used a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey method. A total of 200 respondents, active users of the Toyota e-commerce platform, were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results showed that product quality and e- WOM had a positive and significant effect on customer trust and purchase intention. Customer trust was shown to act as a significant partial mediator. The research model had strong predictive power with an R^2 value of 0.612 for customer trust and 0.735 for purchase intention. Customer trust is a key mechanism that bridges the influence of product quality and e-WOM on purchase intention on automotive e-commerce platforms. The practical implications of this research emphasize the importance of an integrated digital strategy that prioritizes transparency of product quality information, active management of online reviews, and sustainable consumer trust building.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kualitas produk (product quality) dan electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) terhadap niat beli (purchase intention) dengan kepercayaan pelanggan (customer trust) sebagai variabel mediasi pada e-commerce Toyota di Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode explanatory survey. Sebanyak 200 responden yang merupakan pengguna aktif platform e-commerce Toyota dipilih dengan teknik purposive sampling. Data dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) dengan bantuan perangkat lunak SmartPLS 4.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kualitas produk dan E-WOM berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kepercayaan pelanggan dan niat beli. Kepercayaan pelanggan terbukti berperan sebagai mediator parsial yang signifikan. Model penelitian memiliki kekuatan prediksi yang kuat dengan nilai R^2 sebesar 0,612 untuk customer trust dan 0,735 untuk purchase intention. Kepercayaan pelanggan merupakan mekanisme kunci yang menjembatani pengaruh kualitas produk dan E-WOM terhadap niat beli di platform e-commerce otomotif. Implikasi praktis dari penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya strategi digital yang terintegrasi, yang memprioritaskan transparansi informasi kualitas produk, pengelolaan ulasan online secara aktif, dan pembangunan kepercayaan konsumen yang berkelanjutan.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation has changed consumer behavior globally, including in the automotive industry.Previously, consumers needed to go to dealers to purchase vehicles, but now the process has shifted to online platforms. The emergence of e-commerce platforms such as Auto2000.co.id, Tokopedia Otomotif, and Shopee AutoMall allows consumers to research, compare products, and complete transactions online. This transformation requires automotive companies to adapt by implementing a digital marketing strategy to maintain customer loyalty amidst increasingly tight competition.

Within the digital context, two key factors influencing purchasing decisions are product quality and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM). Product quality remains a primary indicator that determines consumer decisions. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), product quality is the ability of a product to meet consumer needs and create satisfaction. On the other hand, E-WOM has become an important factor in shaping brand perception and consumer purchase intent. Modern consumers rely not only on official company advertisements, but also on user reviews and online experiences.

However, in high-value online transactions such as car purchases, customer trust (trust of customers) emerged as a critical psychological factor that mediates the relationship between product quality and E-WOM toward purchase intent. According to Morgan & Hunt (1994), trust is the belief that business partners will act with integrity and fulfill commitments. In e-commerce automotive, trust forms from a combination of product reliability, transparency in information, and previous consumer experiences. Findings from Rahman & Khasanah (2024) and Mandala et al. (2025) confirm the role of customer trust as a mediating variable in the context of e-commerce.

Although important, research on the mechanism of forming purchase intent in e-commerce automotive in Indonesia is still limited. Most previous studies focused on retail, fashion, or cosmetics sectors, while the automotive industry has unique characteristics due to the high value of purchases, higher risks, and strong emotional and financial involvement from consumers. Based on these gaps, this study is designed to analyze the influence of product quality and E-WOM on purchase intention through customer trust in Toyota's e-commerce.

This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on consumer behavior in the context of Indonesian e-commerce automotive, and practically by serving as a foundation for developing a digital marketing strategy for Toyota focused on increasing customer trust and optimizing online reviews to drive purchase intent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Product Quality

Product quality is a fundamental element in marketing. Kotler & Keller (2016) define product quality as the ability of a product to deliver the promised benefits and meet customer needs. In the context of the automotive industry, quality encompasses technical aspects such as engine performance, fuel efficiency, durability, ergonomic design, and safety features. Additionally, Putri & Firdaus (2024) highlight that product quality also includes local value-added elements such as organic materials or unique cultural attributes. Product quality directly influences consumer purchasing partnerships and satisfaction.

Toyota is renowned for its high quality standards through the Toyota Production System (TPS), which emphasizes the principles of kaizen (continuous improvement) and jidoka (automation with a human touch). However, in the digital context, perceptions of quality are not only determined by technical specifications but also by how this information is communicated online and received by consumers.

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), E-WOM refers to informal communication between consumers through electronic media about products, services, or companies. Unlike traditional promotions, E-WOM is more personal, independent, and often perceived as more credible. Mandala et al. (2025) emphasize that positive E-WOM on social media platforms can enhance brand credibility and strengthen consumer trust. In the context of Toyota, E-WOM can manifest as testimonials on automotive forums, reviews on e-commerce sites, YouTube video reviews, and user posts on social media. Consumers tend to trust other users' experiences as they are seen as honest and free from commercial interests. Therefore, managing Toyota's digital reputation through customer review monitoring is a strategic priority.

Customer Trust

Customer trust refers to the belief that a product and company will fulfill the promises made. According to Morgan & Hunt (1994), trust is the foundation of long-term relationships between companies and customers. In e-commerce, trust relates to the belief that the digital system is secure, product information is accurate, and sellers are responsible. Rahman & Khasanah (2024) found that customer trust serves as a crucial mediating variable between digital promotions and purchase intention. In the context of Toyota, trust is formed through three main dimensions: brand integrity, product reliability, and customer experience. Toyota must ensure that every digital interaction reflects the same level of reliability as in physical dealerships.

Purchase Intention

In principle, numeracy literacy encompasses four main psychological components for solving problems, evaluating benefits, and assessing risks. Kotler & Keller (2016) explain that purchase intention is the final stage before an actual purchase decision, influenced by trust, perceived value, and past experiences. Research by Saputra et al. (2025) found that product quality and E-WOM directly affect purchase decisions, with brand image acting as a mediator. In the context of Toyota, purchase intention can be measured through product information seeking, desire for test drives, and readiness to make purchases through digital platforms.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Purchase Intention

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding the formation of purchase intention. TPB posits that behavioral intention is influenced by three key factors:
1. Attitude Toward the Behavior – individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior,
2. shaped by beliefs about outcomes.
3. Subjective Norm – perceived social pressure from significant others or reference groups to perform or not perform the behavior.
4. Perceived Behavioral Control – perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, based on past experiences and anticipated obstacles.

In the context of online automotive purchases:
1. Attitude is largely shaped by perceptions of product quality and trust in the brand.
2. Subjective Norm is influenced by E-WOM, where reviews and recommendations from other users create social validation and normative pressure.
3. Perceived Behavioral Control is enhanced by customer trust, which reduces perceived risks and increases confidence in completing online transactions.

Thus, purchase intention in Toyota's e-commerce platform can be understood as a function of these TPB components, mediated by customer trust. This study adapts TPB by positioning customer trust as a key enhancer of perceived behavioral control, while product quality and E-WOM contribute to attitude and subjective norms, respectively.

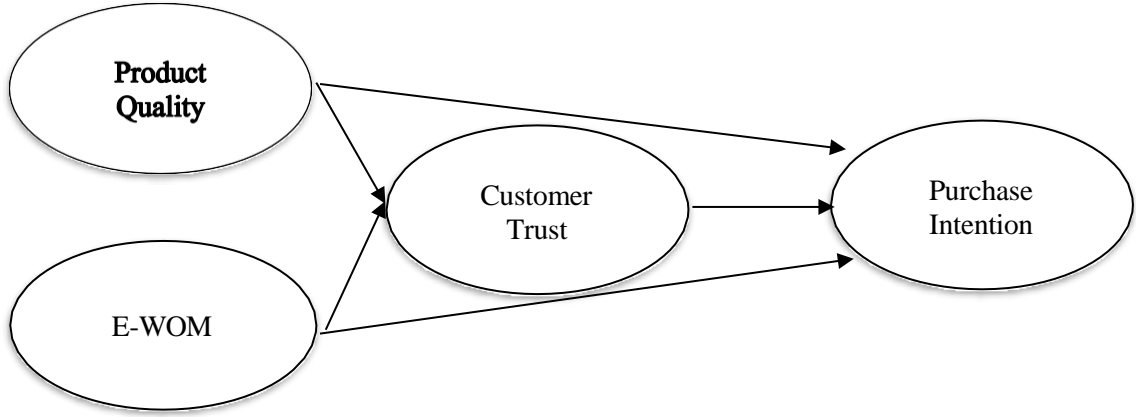**Conceptual model of the research:**

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Description:

1. Product Quality and e-WOM influence Customer Trust.
2. Customer Trust influences Purchase Intention.
3. Product Quality and e-WOM also have a direct influence on Purchase Intention.
4. Theoretically, Customer Trust acts as a mediator that strengthens the Perceived Behavioral Control component of the TPB.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey method to test the causal relationship between independent variables, namely product quality and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), on the dependent variable, namely purchase intention , with customer trust as a mediating variable. This approach was chosen because it allows objective hypothesis testing through numerical data analyzed with statistical software, so that the results can be measured and generalized (Sugiyono, 2018). The conceptual model of the study was adapted from previous studies such as Mandala et al. (2025), Rahman & Khasanah (2024), and Saputra et al. (2025), which have tested similar relationships in the context of e-commerce, and then adapted to the characteristics of the automotive industry, specifically the Toyota Indonesia e-commerce platform.

The population in this study is all consumers who have interacted with the Toyota e-commerce platform (Auto2000.co.id or Toyota Official Store), either to search for information, simulate purchases, or make actual transactions. Based on Toyota's internal data (2024), this population includes more than 500,000 visits per month. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling , with the criteria for respondents aged 20–55 years, having accessed Toyota e-commerce in the last 12 months, having potential purchasing power, and having experience reading or writing online reviews about automotive products. Referring to the recommendations of Hair et al. (2010) for PLS- SEM analysis, the minimum sample size is five times the number of indicators. With a total of 20 indicators, the minimum sample required is 100 respondents. However, to increase reliability, this study involved 200 respondents, in accordance with practices in similar studies.

The data types used consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire (Google Form) that measured respondents' perceptions of the four research variables. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from scientific journals, automotive industry reports, and Toyota's official website to support contextual analysis. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into four sections: respondent identity, statements about product quality (adapted from Kotler & Keller, 2016), statements about E-WOM (based on Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and statements about customer trust and purchase intention (referring to Rahman & Khasanah, 2024 and Mandala et al., 2025). Before being distributed, the questionnaire was piloted on 30 respondents to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analysis stage began with the validity and reliability test of the instrument, which included the outer loading test (>0.7), Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.5), and reliability test with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR >0.7). Next, the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) was carried out by looking at the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2). Hypothesis testing was carried out using the bootstrapping method with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). The hypothesis was declared accepted if the t-statistic value >1.96 or p-value <0.05. In addition, the mediation test used the Sobel Test to determine whether customer trust acts as a partial or full mediator between the independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research explores the general overview of respondents involved in Sedekah Bumi, an e-commerce platform by Toyota, through harmonious social interactions and official store presence. The demographic profile of respondents shows a diverse distribution, with 56% male and 44% female. Of these, 72% already own vehicles, while 28% are potential future buyers. Geographically, 65% of respondents reside in urban areas (Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Medan), and 35% are from secondary cities. Initial data reveals that 80% of respondents actively read product reviews for Toyota online, and 70% use digital platforms to compare Toyota products with competing brands.

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

The descriptive statistical analysis of the research variables indicates a positive consumer perception. As shown in Table 1, the variable product quality received the highest average score (4.38), with indicators of vehicle safety and reliability being the best-rated (4.55). Meanwhile, the variable purchase intention had the lowest score (4.18), although it still falls within the high category.

Table 1.
Criteria Descriptive Statistics Results of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Higher Indicator	Score
Product Quality	4.38	Vehicle Safety and Reliability	4.55
E-WOM	4.24	Positive Recommendations from Other Users	4.41
Customer Trust	4.36	Brand Integrity and Information Honesty	4.48
Purchase Intention	4.18	Interest in Searching for Product Information	4.46

Results of Model and Hypothesis Testing

Model testing using SmartPLS 4.0 produced strong coefficient of determination (R^2) values. The variable customer trust can be explained by product quality and E-WOM to a degree of 61.2% ($R^2 = 0.612$), while the variable purchase intention is explained by all variables in the model to a degree of 73.5% ($R^2 = 0.735$). The full results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Variable	Path Coefficient T-Statistic		P-Value	Result
H1	Product Quality → Customer Trust	0.48	7.84	0.000	Diterima
H2	E-WOM → Customer Trust	0.41	6.91	0.000	Diterima
H3	Customer Trust → Purchase Intention	0.53	9.03	0.000	Diterima
H4	Product Quality → Purchase Intention	0.32	4.76	0.000	Diterima
H5	E-WOM → Purchase Intention	0.28	5.15	0.000	Diterima

Testing of Mediation Effects

The mediation effects were tested using the bootstrapping method, revealing that customer trust acts as a significant partial mediator. The results of the mediation effect testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Mediation Effect Testing

Hypothesis	Variable	Indirect Effects T-Statistic		P-Value	Types of Mediation
H6	Product Quality → Customer Trust → Purchase Intention	0.25	6.02	0.000	Partial Mediation
H7	E-WOM → Customer Trust → Purchase Intention	0.22	5.73	0.000	Partial Mediation

These findings confirm that although product quality and E-WOM have direct effects on purchase intention, the presence of customer trust as a mediator actually strengthens the indirect effects of the independent variables on purchase intention.

Discussion

According to Soerjono Soekanto, social institutions are organized systems of behavior and relationships centered on activities aimed at fulfilling customer needs. This study confirms that product quality, which is based on customer trust and purchase intention, is consistent with the findings of Putri & Firdausy (2024), who state that quality perception is a key factor in forming purchase interest for high-value products. In the context of Toyota, high-quality perception includes engine performance, comfort, and satisfactory after-sales services.

Furthermore, E-WOM has been found to significantly influence customer trust and purchase intention. This aligns with Mandala et al. (2025), who discovered that positive user reviews serve as social validation that enhances brand credibility. In the context of Toyota, positive reviews from users in automotive communities (such as forums, social media, or YouTube) form a strong positive perception of the brand.

An interesting finding is the partial mediating role of customer trust. The Sobel Test results indicate that customer trust strengthens the relationship between product quality and E-WOM on purchase intention. In other words, although product quality and online reviews directly influence purchase intention, their impact becomes stronger when consumers feel confident in the Toyota brand.

Practically, these findings highlight the importance of building trust on digital platforms. Toyota can enhance trust through honest product information, improved digital interaction quality, and optimized customer testimonial content.In conclusion, this study shows that product quality advantages and positive digital reputation will create customer trust, ultimately driving purchase intention in Toyota's e-commerce platform.

These findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Product quality shapes positive attitudes, while e-WOM creates subjective norms through social validation. Customer trust plays a role in strengthening perceived behavioral control, thereby increasing purchase intentions. Thus, trust is not only a mediator but also a catalyst that integrates the components of the TPB in the context of automotive e-commerce.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis and discussion, this study concludes that product quality and electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) have significant effects on purchase intention, both directly and indirectly through customer trust in Toyota's e- commerce platform. Specifically, product quality is found to be the dominant factor in building customer trust, followed by E-WOM acting as social validation from other users. Customer trust not only directly affects purchase intention but also serves as a partial mediator strengthening the indirect effect of product quality and E-WOM. Thus, in the context of automotive e-commerce, customer trust becomes a key element bridging perceived quality and online reviews influencing purchase decisions.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:
1. For Toyota Management: It is recommended to continuously maintain and communicate product quality transparently on digital platforms by providing detailed information on safety, reliability, and after-sales service. Additionally, the company should actively monitor and manage online reviews by responding to customer feedback and promoting positive testimonials from experienced users.
2. For Future Research: It is recommended to add other variables that may influence purchase intention, such as brand image, risk perception, or online promotions. Research can also be expanded by involving a more diverse sample or comparing multiple automotive brands to enrich comparative analysis.

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