

THE INFLUENCE OF WORD OF MOUTH AND BRAND TRUST MARKETING STRATEGIES ON PURCHASING DECISIONS AND CONSUMER LOYALTY

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of Word of Mouth (WOM) marketing strategy and brand trust on consumer purchase decisions and loyalty. This study uses a systematic literature review to analyze various studies relevant to this topic. The results of the study show that WOM and brand trust are important factors in influencing purchasing decisions and consumer loyalty. WOM, as an informal communication containing experiences and recommendations, has proven to be more credible than traditional promotions, so that it can increase consumer trust, brand awareness, and product value perception. Meanwhile, brand trust, which is a consumer's belief in a brand's integrity and capabilities, builds a strong emotional connection with consumers, encourages repeat purchases, and reduces perceived risks when purchasing products. These two elements complement each other in creating consumer loyalty. Positive WOM not only strengthens brand trust but also increases loyalty through recommendations from satisfied consumers, while brand trust ensures consumers remain loyal even if there are other alternatives in the market. In today's digital context, social media plays an important role in expanding WOM's reach and building brand trust through transparent and authentic interactions. Overall, the study concludes that an effective marketing strategy should leverage WOM and focus on strengthening brand trust to build a loyal and sustainable consumer base.

Keywords: Word of mouth, brand trust, purchasing decisions, consumer loyalty, marketing strategy

Introduction

In an increasingly competitive marketing world, companies are required to find effective strategies to capture consumers' attention and build long-term relationships. One strategy that has proven effective is marketing through word of mouth (WOM). WOM refers to informal communication between consumers regarding a product or service, which can occur in person or through digital platforms. WOM is also an important thing that consumers consider because of the direct testimonials that they will influence them in making a purchase (Aqilah & Cahyono, 2020)

According to word of mouth, it is a marketing activity in providing information on a product or service from one consumer to another consumer to discuss, promote and want to sell a brand to others. According to , it is defined as the exchange and sharing of meaningful and timely information informally, between buyers and sellers (Priansa, 2017). With the advancement of technology and social media, WOM has grown to become one of the most influential forms of marketing, as consumers tend to trust recommendations from friends, family, or even strangers on the internet more than traditional advertising (Dimiyati & Mudjiono, n.d.).

On the other hand, brand trust is also a key factor in shaping consumer behavior. Brand trust reflects consumers' belief that a particular brand will meet their expectations, both in terms of the quality of products, services, and the values carried by the brand. The formation of brand trust will give birth to loyalty to consumers in the product, this is due to the superior factors possessed by the product (Mendrofa, 2021).

Brand trust is another crucial factor. Brand trust refers to the consumer's belief that a brand will keep its promises and be trustworthy. Brand trust is defined as the sense of security that the user of the product has, in its interaction with a brand that is based on the perception that the brand can be trusted, paying attention to the interests and welfare of consumers. Brand trust will drive consumers to buy products from that brand. This trust is built from the consumer's experience with the product or service, including interaction with customer service and consistency of product quality. This trust not only influences purchasing decisions, but also contributes to consumer loyalty. According to brand trust, consumers trust a product with all its risks because there are high expectations or expectations for the brand will give positive results to consumers so that it will cause loyalty and trust in a brand. An individual who has used the product and then followed by others, it has been proven that the quality of this product is guaranteed so that it gives rise to a sense of trust in the product (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

In this context, it is important to understand how WOM and brand trust interact with each other and influence purchasing decisions and consumer loyalty. This study aims to explore the relationship between WOM marketing strategy and brand trust, as well as their impact on consumer purchasing decisions and loyalty. By understanding these dynamics, companies can formulate more effective and consumer-oriented marketing strategies.

Through this research, it is hoped that it can provide deeper insights into the importance of WOM and brand trust in shaping consumer behavior. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for marketers in designing more effective marketing campaigns, as well as helping companies in building stronger relationships with their consumers. As such, the research is not only relevant for academics, but also for marketing practitioners looking to improve their brand's competitiveness in an increasingly complex market.

Literature Review

Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word of mouth (WOM) is one of the most powerful forms of communication in marketing. WOM occurs when consumers share their experiences about a product or service with others, either in person or through digital platforms. According to , WOM can be distinguished into two types: positive WOM and negative WOM. A positive WOM can improve a brand's image and attract new consumers, while a negative WOM can damage a brand's reputation and reduce buying interest.

According to , word of mouth is a conversation that naturally occurs between people. Word of Mouth is genuine consumer talk. According to Sernovitz, there are five dimensions or basic indicators of word of mouth known as 5T, namely: Talkers, Topics, Tools, Talkingpart and Tracking (Sernovitz, 2009).

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a form of communication in which consumers share their experiences, opinions, or recommendations about a product or service orally with others. This communication can happen in person, such as in everyday conversations, or through digital platforms such as social media, forums, and online reviews. WOM is considered one of the

most effective forms of marketing because it involves personal and authentic trust that is difficult to achieve through traditional advertising (Maulidiyah & Handoko, 2024).

Brand Trust

Brand Trust is the willingness of consumers to believe and bear risks in the hope of satisfactory and positive results. Consumers who have high confidence in the results offered by brands will always make a repeat purchase of products or services (Rahma et al., 2023). Brand trust is a key element in building a long-term relationship between consumers and brands. According to , brand trust consists of two main components: reliability and credibility. Reliability refers to a brand's ability to meet consumer expectations, while trust relates to consumers' belief that a brand will act in their interests.

Brand trust is defined as the sense of security possessed by product users, in their interaction with a brand based on the perception that the brand can be trusted and pays attention to the interests and welfare of consumers Brand trust is a behavior of willingness of consumers in general to depend on the brand's ability to describe the function of its product.

Explaining that brand trust is a trust involved in a transaction and risks related to expectations and behaviors in the selection of a product brand. Research by shows that brand trust has a positive impact on consumer loyalty. Consumers who have a high level of trust in a brand tend to be more loyal and willing to recommend the brand to others (Setyawan & Kussudiyarsana, 2015).

Purchase Decisions and Consumer Loyalty

Purchase decision is the process carried out by consumers to choose, buy, and use a product or service that is considered to meet their needs or desires. This process involves the stages of need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, decision to buy, and post-purchase evaluation (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Factors that influence purchase decisions include personal, social, psychological, and situational factors. In the modern context, digitalization also affects this process, such as the ease of access to information and the online shopping experience. Purchase decision is a form of consumer behavior in using or consuming a product. In buying or using a certain product to make a decision, consumers will go through a process where the process is an overview of how consumers analyze various inputs to make decisions in making purchases.

Purchase decisions are influenced by unforeseen circumstances. The expected revenue, expected costs, and anticipated benefits of a product are all factors that consumers can use to formulate their purchase intent (Nurfauzi et al., 2023).

Consumer loyalty, on the other hand, is a long-term commitment to buying a product from a particular brand. According to Oliver (1999), consumer loyalty consists of four stages: awareness, preference, commitment, and action. WOM and brand trust play an important role in building loyalty, where consumers who are satisfied with their experience are more likely to share positive experiences and remain loyal to the brand. Consumer loyalty is the commitment that consumers have to continue to repurchase a certain product or service even though there are alternatives available. This loyalty includes behavioral aspects (repeated purchases) and emotional (liking and attachment to the brand). Factors such as product quality, service, consumer satisfaction, and a positive shopping experience greatly affect consumer loyalty.. In the digital era, loyalty is also influenced by service personalization and interaction through social media (Zhang et al., 2023).

The Relationship Between WOM, Brand Trust, Purchase Decisions, and Consumer Loyalty

These four elements are intertwined in building a sustainable relationship between consumers and brands. WOM helps build brand trust, which in turn influences purchasing decisions. If consumers are satisfied, they tend to become loyal, which then results in a positive WOM to support the cycle. The findings of reinforce that the combination of these factors creates a sustainable marketing ecosystem (Chen et al., 2021).

Strong Brand Trust encourages consumers to make Purchase Decisions. Consumers who believe in a brand tend to find it easier to buy products or services from that brand. Repeated Purchase Decisions will ultimately shape Consumer Loyalty. Loyal consumers are more likely to continue to buy products or services from the same brand, and even recommend them to others, thus forming a positive WOM cycle.

Method

This research approach uses a systematic literature review to explore the influence of word of mouth (WOM) marketing strategies and brand trust on consumer purchase decisions and loyalty. A systematic literature review is a method used to identify, evaluate, and integrate findings from various studies that are relevant to the research topic. This method aims to provide a comprehensive and objective overview of the existing literature, as well as to identify research gaps that can be used as a basis for further research.

1. **Determination of Research Questions:** Clear and focused research questions are set to guide the review process. In this study, the question asked is: "How does WOM marketing strategy and brand trust affect consumer purchasing decisions and loyalty?"
2. **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria are established to determine which studies will be included in the review. The inclusion criteria include studies that address WOM, brand trust, purchase decisions, and consumer loyalty, published in leading academic journals over a specific time span. Exclusion criteria include studies that are irrelevant, not peer-reviewed, or not available in English.
3. **Literature Search:** Searches were conducted on various academic databases, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus, using relevant keywords such as "word of mouth," "brand trust," "purchase decision," and "consumer loyalty." This process results in a number of relevant articles to analyze.
4. **Study Quality Evaluation:** Each study found was evaluated based on methodology, validity, and relevance to the research question. Only studies that meet quality standards will be included in further analysis.
5. **Data Collection:** Data from selected studies are collected and organized. The information collected includes the research objectives, methodology, key findings, and conclusions of each study.
6. **Analysis and Synthesis:** The data collected is analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between WOM, brand trust, purchase decisions, and consumer loyalty. Synthesis is carried out to integrate the findings from various studies and provide a more holistic picture of the research topic.
7. **Results Reporting:** The results of a systematic literature review are compiled in the form of a narrative that explains the relationship between WOM, brand trust, purchase

decisions, and consumer loyalty. These findings are also linked to existing research gaps and recommendations for future research.

Table 1. Journal Mapping

No.	Researchers	Title of the study	Variable	Results
1.	Sigit Santosa, SE., MM and Purnama Putri Luthfiyyah (2020)	The Effect of Marketing Communication on Customer Loyalty at gamefield hong kong limited	Independent : Marketing Communication Dependency : Customer Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The results show that there is a positive and significant influence between Marketing Communication on Customer Loyalty in Game.ly application.
2.	Malva Nurina Tyagita, Silvana Maulidah, and Anisa Aprilia (2024)	The Influence of Getok Tular Brand and Marketing on Consumer Loyalty: Purchase Decisions as a Moderating Variable	Independent : Brand Trust, and Marketing (word of mouth) Dependency : Consumer Loyalty Moderation : Purchase Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand trust has a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions and loyalty. Word of Mouth showed a weak influence on purchase decisions (P-value = 0.09) and not significant on consumer loyalty (P-value = 0.33). Although word of mouth does not have a direct effect on consumer loyalty, there is an indirect influence through purchasing decisions and mediating variables such as trust and satisfaction user.
3.	Daniel i nyoman renatha cardia, i Wayan Santika, y ni ni nyoman	The Influence of Product Quality, Price, and Promotion on Customer Loyalty	Independent : Product quality, price, and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product quality has a positive and significant effect on the loyalty of Smartfren prepaid card customers in Denpasar City. Price also has a positive and significant effect

	Rsi Respati (2019)		Dependency : Customer Loyalty	customer loyalty. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotions have a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty. Good promotions can increase customer loyalty
4.	Asri Yanti Bali (2022)	The Effect of Product Quality and Price on Consumer Loyalty with Consumer Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable	Independent : Product Quality and Price Dependency : Consumer Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product quality and price have a significant influence on consumer loyalty. • Partially, product quality and consumer satisfaction have a significant positive effect on consumer loyalty, while price has a negative effect. • Product quality, price, and consumer satisfaction together affect consumer loyalty
			Intervening : Consumer Satisfaction	
5.	Nabilah Alya Insani and Putu Nina Madiawati (2020)	The Effect of Service Quality, Price and Promotion on GoFood Customer Loyalty in Bandung City	Independent : Influence of Service Quality, Price and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Quality has a significant effect on Customer Loyalty • Price has a Significant Effect on Customer Loyalty • Promotions show a significant positive influence • All variables (Quality of Service, Price, and Promotion) have a significant and simultaneous effect to Customer Loyalty.
			Dependency : Customer Loyalty	

6.	Suryani, R. & Andika, F. (2021)	The Effect of Price and Promotion on Consumer Loyalty in Online Stores	Independent : Pricing and Promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This research indicates that attractive prices and promotions have a significant influence on increasing loyalty consumers on Indonesian e-commerce platforms.
			Dependency : Loyalty user	
7.	Dika setiagraha, Ilham prawidi sakti, and Mail hilian batin (2023)	The Influence of Digital Mobile Banking Services and Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty of Bank Syariah Indonesia	Independent: Digital Services and Customer Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile Banking services have no effect on Customer Loyalty. Customer Satisfaction has a significant effect on Customer Loyalty. The R-Square value for customer loyalty is 0.693 or 69%, which shows that 69% of the variation in customer loyalty can be explained by digital mobile banking services and customer satisfaction. The remaining 31% can be explained by other factors not examined in this study.
			Dependency : Customer Loyalty	
8.	Nur Magfira and Ismunandar.	The Influence of Advertising Media and Brand Image on Consumer Loyalty on Sosro Bottled Tea Products (Case Study: Bima City Consumers)	Independent: Advertising Media and Brand Image. Dependency: Consumer Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can be concluded that advertising media has an effect on consumer loyalty Brand image also affects consumer loyalty Simultaneously, advertising media and brand image affect consumer loyalty
9.	Elijah Joel Mustamu & Ngatno (2021)	The Effect of Product Innovation on Consumer Loyalty with Consumer Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable in KFC Srongdol	Independent : Product Innovation Dependency: Consumer Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a significant positive influence between product innovation and consumer satisfaction The results of the study also show that

			Intervening: Consumer Satisfaction	consumer satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer Satisfaction affects Consumer Loyalty
10.	Alwinda Love (2020)	The Effect of Service on Customer Loyalty at Lideo Salon	Independent : Service Dependency: Customer Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service has a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty at Salon Lideo.

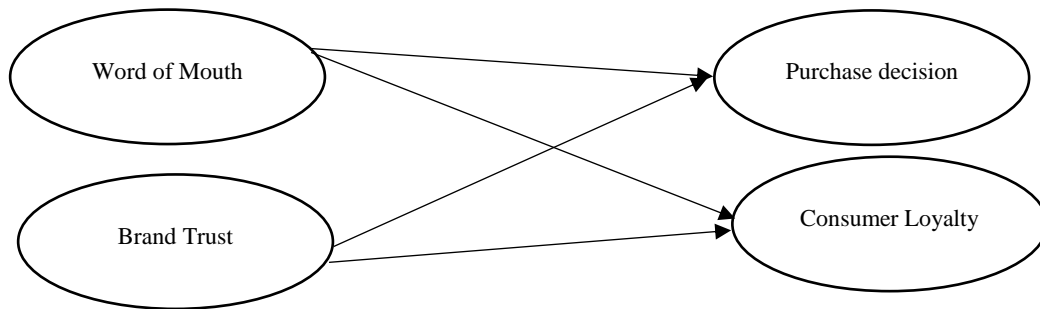


Figure 1. Research Outline

Result and Discussion

Result

Word of Mouth (WOM) and brand trust are two important elements in determining purchasing decisions and consumer loyalty. WOM is informal communication between individuals regarding experiences, opinions, or recommendations related to a product or brand. WOM, both positive and negative, has a significant influence on consumer perception because it is considered more credible than traditional promotion. A positive WOM increases consumer trust in the brand, while a negative WOM can damage the brand's reputation (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

1. The Influence of Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions

Word of Mouth (WOM) is one of the important elements in the consumer decision-making process. WOM includes informal communication between individuals about a particular product, service, or brand that can influence consumer perception and behavior. The influence of WOM on purchasing decisions is very significant because it is considered more credible compared to commercial promotion. This happens because WOM comes from sources that are considered trustworthy such as friends, family, or online communities (Chen et al., 2021).

Brand trust, which refers to consumer trust in a brand's capabilities and integrity, is a key factor in shaping purchasing decisions. This trust develops through the consumer's experience

with the product or service as well as through the brand's reputation. Consumers who believe in the brand will be more likely to buy the product compared to an unknown or untrusted brand (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

WOM's influence on Purchase Decisions is:

a. Increases Trust

Consumers tend to trust recommendations from people they know or online reviews from other users. This trust reduces uncertainty in decision-making (Hussain et al., 2020).

b. Increase Brand Awareness

WOM also helps in increasing consumer awareness of a brand or product. Information conveyed orally or through social media can expand the reach of marketing (Liu & Park, 2021).

c. Affects Product Value Perception

Positive reviews through WOM increase the perception of product value, which ultimately drives consumer purchasing decisions (Kim & Ko, 2020). Conversely, negative WOM can reduce consumer buying interest.

d. Accelerate the Purchase Process

Consumers who get complete and reliable information through WOM tend to make purchase decisions faster compared to consumers who only rely on advertising or other promotions (Zhang et al., 2023).

2. The Influence of Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions

Brand trust is one of the important factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions. Brand trust can be defined as consumers' confidence in a brand's reliability, honesty, and ability to deliver on its promises (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Consumers who have a high level of trust in a brand tend to be more comfortable in making decisions to buy the product, even in conditions of uncertainty (Habib et al., 2022).

Trust in the brand is built through consumer experience, quality consistency, and transparent communication from the company's part. When brands demonstrate a commitment to values that are relevant to consumers, such as sustainability or innovation, it reinforces consumer loyalty. Research shows that consumers with high trust in a brand are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend the brand to others (J. Kim & Lee, 2020).

Brand trust, which refers to consumer trust in a brand's capabilities and integrity, is a key factor in shaping purchasing decisions. This trust develops through the consumer's experience with the product or service as well as through the brand's reputation. Consumers who believe in the brand will be more likely to buy the product compared to an unknown or untrusted brand (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

3. The Influence of Word of Mouth on Consumer Loyalty

Word of Mouth (WOM) or word-of-mouth communication is a form of informal promotion that has a great influence on consumer decisions. WOM involves communication between individuals about a particular product or service, which is often considered more credible compared to formal advertising because it comes from personal experience (H. Kim & Kang, 2021). In the context of consumer loyalty, WOM plays an important role in creating an emotional connection between customers and brands. Consumers who are satisfied with a product or service tend to share their positive experiences with others, which can ultimately strengthen brand loyalty (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Positive WOM and strong brand trust synergistically increase consumer loyalty. Consumer loyalty is created when consumers feel satisfied with a product and believe in the brand, so they recommend the product to others. Studies also show that consumer loyalty is higher in brands that are able to maintain consistent WOM communication and build long-term trust (Ali et al., 2023).

WOM influences consumer loyalty through two main mechanisms: first, increasing trust in the brand, and second, strengthening social bonds among product users. A study by He et al. (2022) shows that positive WOM can encourage affective and behavioral loyalty, especially in the service industry such as hospitality and tourism. Meanwhile, negative WOM can damage a brand's reputation and lead to a decrease in loyalty (Park et al., 2021). Therefore, WOM management is a strategic element in maintaining consumer loyalty.

4. The Influence of Brand Trust on Consumer Loyalty

Brand trust is one of the main factors that affect consumer loyalty. Consumer trust in a brand is formed through brand consistency in fulfilling the promises given, both in product quality and service experience. When consumers feel confident that a brand is reliable and has integrity, they tend to stick with the brand even though there are other alternatives in the market. According to recent research, brand trust plays an important role in creating an emotional connection between consumers and brands. These relationships contribute to higher consumer loyalty, both in the form of behavioral loyalty (e.g. repeat purchases) and attitude loyalty (e.g. recommendations to others) (Loureiro et al., 2020). In addition, trust in brands can also reduce the risks that consumers feel when making a purchase, especially in the context of purchasing a new product or service (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2021).

Discussion

The results of this study support the theory that WOM and brand trust are important factors in influencing consumer purchase decisions and loyalty. These findings are in line with previous research that shows that a positive WOM can increase buying interest (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004) and that brand trust serves as a powerful mediator in building consumer loyalty.

WOM has an important role in consumer purchasing decisions because it is able to increase trust, brand awareness, and product value perception. For companies, understanding and utilizing WOM can be an effective marketing strategy.

Building brand trust is the main strategy for companies to improve purchasing decisions. With strong trust in the brand, consumers are more likely to ignore concerns, such as the risk of products not meeting expectations, and are more motivated to buy (Habib et al., 2022).

The importance of WOM is also reinforced by the role of social media in expanding the reach of communication between individuals. Consumers can now share their experiences with a wider audience, making the impact of WOM on consumer loyalty even more significant (Huang et al., 2023). This confirms that WOM is not only an indicator of consumer loyalty but also a catalyst for brand growth in a competitive market.

In the digital era, transparency and active interaction on social media also play a big role in increasing brand trust. Consumers tend to trust brands that actively respond to their feedback and demonstrate a commitment to certain social values (Jiang et al., 2022). Therefore, a strategy to build trust in a brand requires not only quality products, but also honest and ethical communication. In addition, the role of digital media in building brand trust is becoming increasingly significant. Interactions on social media, online reviews, and authentic digital

marketing campaigns have been proven to increase consumer trust in a brand (Zhou et al., 2021). In the context of e-commerce, brand trust is even one of the main determinants of purchase decisions because consumers cannot see or try the product directly (Nguyen et al., 2020).

WOM and brand trust play an important role in influencing purchasing decisions and consumer loyalty. WOM provides early information that drives purchases, while brand trust strengthens the long-term relationship between consumers and brands. The combination of the two is an effective strategy to build a loyal customer base.

The results of this study have practical implications for marketers. First, companies must utilize WOM as an effective marketing tool. Encouraging consumers to share their positive experiences can improve brand image and attract new consumers. Second, companies need to focus on building brand trust through transparency, product quality, and good service. By building trust, companies can increase consumer loyalty and create long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. (Arndt, 2023)

Conclusion

Word of Mouth (WOM) and brand trust have a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions and consumer loyalty. WOM, as an informal communication containing experiences and recommendations, has proven to be more credible than traditional promotions, so that it can increase consumer trust, brand awareness, and product value perception. Meanwhile, brand trust, which is a consumer's belief in a brand's integrity and capabilities, builds a strong emotional connection with consumers, encourages repeat purchases, and reduces perceived risks when purchasing products.

These two elements complement each other in creating consumer loyalty. Positive WOM not only strengthens brand trust but also increases loyalty through recommendations from satisfied consumers, while brand trust ensures consumers remain loyal even if there are other alternatives in the market. In today's digital context, social media plays an important role in expanding WOM's reach and building brand trust through transparent and authentic interactions. Overall, an effective marketing strategy should leverage WOM and focus on strengthening brand trust to build a loyal and sustainable consumer base.

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