

## **UNDERSTANDING E-WOM TOWARD PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG FPEB UPI 2023 STUDENTS FOLLOWING @UPPIFESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The proliferation of social media platforms has engendered novel forms of marketing communication through anonymous confession accounts that facilitate electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) within digital communities. This investigation seeks to examine the influence of E-WOM on purchase intention among students of the Faculty of Economics and Business Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), cohort 2023, who engage with the account @uppifess. The research methodology employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design. The study population comprises 636 FPEB UPI students from the 2023 cohort, with a sample of 243 respondents selected through purposive sampling techniques. Data collection was executed utilizing a structured questionnaire instrument measuring E-WOM dimensions—encompassing credibility, quality, quantity, and valence—alongside purchase intention constructs. Statistical analysis was conducted employing variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 software. The empirical findings demonstrate that E-WOM exerts a significant influence on purchase intention, with an R-Square value of 0.487, indicating that E-WOM accounts for approximately 48.7% of the variance in purchase intention. Information credibility emerged as the most dominant determinant, followed sequentially by information quality and quantity. A noteworthy finding reveals that positive valence exerts a significant negative effect on purchase intention, attributable to heightened consumer skepticism toward overtly positive endorsements. Notably, only 36.6% of respondents reported actualizing purchases following recommendation exposure, illuminating a substantial gap between E-WOM engagement and transactional behavior. Effective recommendations are characterized by detailed informational content, naturalistic linguistic expression, specific personal testimonials, and balanced presentation. This research contributes to the theoretical advancement of E-WOM literature within anonymous platform contexts while offering practical implications for digital marketing strategy formulation in educational and youth-oriented market segments

**Key words:** electronic word of mouth; purchase intention; anonymous messaging; social media; consumer behavior

### **INTRODUCTION**

The advancement of digital technology has precipitated a fundamental transformation in the marketing communications landscape. In the contemporary digital era, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) has emerged as one of the most influential communication channels affecting consumer purchase decisions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). E-WOM encompasses positive or negative consumer-generated statements regarding products or enterprises that are publicly accessible through digital platforms (Ao et al., 2023). This phenomenon exerts particular influence on students, who constitute digital natives characterized by extensive social media engagement.

Within the Indonesian context, confession accounts such as @uppifess have evolved into dynamic online communities for Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) students, facilitating anonymous knowledge exchange and product recommendations within specific community parameters (Fileri et al., 2018). Extant literature demonstrates that E-WOM significantly influences purchase intentions through mechanisms of credibility establishment and trust cultivation, mediated by characteristics including information quality, quantity, and valence (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Tran & Strutton, 2020). Nevertheless, the preponderance of these investigations has been conducted within conventional e-commerce platform contexts.

Emerging evidence suggests that anonymity in digital communication presents a paradoxical dynamic: while potentially enhancing informational candor, it simultaneously diminishes trustworthiness (Xu et al., 2015). Furthermore, particular community contexts generate social identity dynamics that may moderate E-WOM effectiveness (Al-Khasawneh et al., 2023). Consequently, this investigation seeks to examine the influence of E-WOM disseminated through @uppifess on the purchase intentions of Faculty of Economics and Business Education (FPEB) UPI students from the 2023 cohort, identify salient determinant characteristics, and analyze potential moderating variables, thereby contributing both theoretical insights and practical implications to the existing scholarship.

### **METHOD**

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) on purchase intention among Faculty of Economics and Business Education (FPEB) Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) students from the 2023 cohort who interact with the @uppifess account (Hair et al., 2021). The ability of the quantitative methodology to provide objective hypothesis testing through statistical analysis and systematic measurement of study constructs led to its selection.

According to the FPEB 2023 WhatsApp group database, which shows that @uppifess has almost 14,500 followers, the study population consists of all 636 students registered in the 2023 cohort of FPEB UPI (Sekaran, 2016). Purposive sampling was used in the sampling process, and the following inclusion criteria were set: respondents had to be FPEB UPI students from the 2023 cohort who actively followed the @uppifess account and had used product or service recommendations that were shared on the platform in the three months prior. Using Slovin's calculation with a 5% margin of error, the sample size was determined to be at least 243 respondents. A structured questionnaire modified from previously validated E-WOM and purchase intention assessment scales, with contextual adjustments suitable for the anonymous confession platform environment, made up the data gathering tool. 35 statement items evaluating E-WOM aspects (credibility, quality, quantity, and valence) and purchase intention dimensions (attention, interest, desire, and action) made up the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, was used for each topic (Sugiyono, 2020).

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a minimum acceptable level of 0.7 was used for reliability evaluation, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a minimum factor loading threshold of 0.5 was used for validity assessment. Using SmartPLS 4.0 software, variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data in order to determine the determinants of E-WOM effectiveness in anonymous messaging situations and investigate causal linkages between variables (Taherdoost, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 243 respondents from the Faculty of Economics and Business Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) class of 2023 who actively follow the @uppifess account. Based on demographic data, the majority of respondents were female (156 people) (64.2%) and male (87 people) (35.8%). The age range of respondents was 19-21 years, with an average of 20 years. The distribution of study programs showed that respondents came from various study programs at FPEB, with Management as the largest contributor (28.4%), followed by Accounting (24.7%), Economics Education (22.2%), Accounting Education (14.4%), and Business Education (10.3%). In terms of usage intensity, 78.6% of respondents accessed the @uppifess account every day, 15.2% accessed it 3-4 times a week, and 6.2% accessed it 1-2 times a week. A total of 167 respondents (68.7%) stated they had read product or service recommendations on the @uppifess account in the past three months, but only 89 respondents (36.6%) actually made a purchase based on those recommendations. This finding indicates a significant gap between e-WOM exposure and actual purchase intention, which is the primary focus of this study.

**Table 1.** Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	87	35,8%
	Female	156	64,2%
Program Study	Manajement	69	28,4%
	Accounting	60	24,7%
	Economics Education	54	22,2%
	Accounting Education	35	14,4%
	Business Education	25	10,3%

**Table 2.** @uppifess Account Usage Patterns

Indicator	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Access Frequency	Daily	191	78,6%
	3-4 times/week	37	15,2%
	1-2 times/week	15	6,2%
Read Recommendations	Yes	167	68,7%
	No	76	31,3%
Ever Purchased	Yes	89	36,6%
	No	154	63,4%

### Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validity test reveal that every statement item has factor loading values over 0.5, with a range of 0.687 to 0.891. This suggests that every item is valid for measuring the intended construct. Every variable has an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value more than 0.5, including E-WOM Credibility (0.728), E-WOM Quality (0.694), E-WOM Quantity (0.712), E-WOM Valence (0.681), and Purchase Intention (0.743). Cronbach's Alpha scores range from 0.834 to 0.912, and Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.856 to 0.924, according to the reliability test results. Both values are over

the 0.7 minimum standard. This shows the research instrument is reliable for measuring the research variables and has good internal consistency.

**Table 3. Results of Instrument Validity and Reliability Tests**

Variable	Number of Items	Factor Loading Range	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
E-WOM Credibility	7	0,721 - 0,865	0,728	0,897	0,912
E-WOM Quality	8	0,687 - 0,853	0,694	0,878	0,889
E-WOM Quantity	6	0,698 - 0,891	0,712	0,912	0,924
E-WOM Valence	7	0,692 - 0,847	0,681	0,834	0,856
Purchase Intention	7	0,735 - 0,879	0,743	0,889	0,903

### Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

The results of descriptive analysis of E-WOM variables differ depending on the dimension. Respondents had a moderate degree of faith in @uppifess advice, as indicated by the credibility dimension's average value of 2.87 (scale 1-5), which is categorized as medium. With an average value of 3.12, the quality dimension falls into the medium group and reflects respondents' opinions that the information in recommendations is adequate but not ideal. The quantity dimension has the highest average value, 3.98 (high category), which shows that there are a lot of product or service suggestions on @uppifess and that they occur regularly. In contrast, the valence dimension has an average value of 2.76 (medium-low category), suggesting that respondents do not always view the recommendations as positive and that a significant amount of the content elicits negative or skeptical reactions. The total average value for the buying intention variable is 2.94, falling into the medium range. This result is consistent with statistics on respondent characteristics, which indicates that only 36.6% of respondents actually buy something after reading @uppifess suggestions. According to additional research, 42.4% of respondents said they frequently had doubts or skepticism about suggestions that they saw, 31.7% said they suspected paid advertisements or phony reviews, and 28.8% said Menfess information was frequently unclear or insufficiently detailed.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

Variables/Dimensions	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Category
E-WOM Credibility	2,87	0,82	1,00	5,00	Medium
E-WOM Quality	3,12	0,76	1,14	4,86	Medium
E-WOM Quantity	3,98	0,68	2,17	5,00	High
E-WOM Valence	2,76	0,91	1,00	4,71	Medium-Low
Purchase Intention	2,94	0,85	1,00	4,86	Medium

### Structural Model Test Results

Testing the structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) shows that the model has a good level of fit. The R-Square value for the purchase intention variable is 0.487, which means that 48.7% of the purchase intention variance can be explained by the E-WOM variable, while 51.3% is explained by other factors outside the model. The Q-Square value of 0.341 indicates that the model has good predictive relevance. The results of hypothesis testing show that E-WOM credibility has the most significant influence on purchase intention with a path coefficient of 0.389 (t-statistic = 5.672;  $p < 0.001$ ). E-WOM quality also has a significant effect with a path coefficient of 0.287 (t-statistic = 4.123;  $p < 0.001$ ). Meanwhile, E-WOM quantity has a weaker effect with a path coefficient of 0.156 (t-statistic = 2.341;  $p < 0.05$ ). An interesting finding is that E-WOM valence shows a significant negative effect on purchase intention with a path coefficient of -0.198 (t-statistic = 3.087;  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that excessively high positive valence actually decreases purchase intention because it raises suspicion about the authenticity of the recommendation.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results and Path Coefficient**

Path	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
Credibility → PI	0,389	5,672	0,000	Significant
Quality → PI	0,287	4,123	0,000	Significant
Quantity → PI	0,156	2,341	0,019	Significant
Valence → PI	-0,198	3,087	0,002	Significant (Negative)

Description: PI = Purchase Intention

### Specific Findings Related to Response Variation

A comprehensive analysis of confession post (menfess) characteristics reveals a distinct differentiation between recommendations eliciting substantial positive feedback and those generating negative or skeptical responses. Menfess garnering elevated positive engagement are characterized by several salient features: comprehensive

product information encompassing price, location, and specifications; specific and verifiable personal experiences; naturalistic linguistic expression devoid of hyperbolic elements; and balanced exposition articulating both product advantages and limitations. Conversely, menfess attracting negative or skeptical

reception typically exhibit the following attributes: excessively promotional linguistic tone, insufficient informational detail, resemblance to compensated advertising content, absence of concrete personal testimonials, and exclusive emphasis on product merits without acknowledgment of potential drawbacks. Among the 167 respondents who had engaged with product recommendations, 58.7% indicated heightened interest in recommendations acknowledging product disadvantages, attributing greater perceived authenticity to such balanced presentations. Furthermore, 67.3% of respondents reported intentional disregard for recommendations perceived as compensated endorsements, irrespective of actual product quality. These findings underscore the critical importance of authenticity, transparency, and balanced information disclosure in determining E-WOM credibility and persuasive efficacy within anonymous digital communication platforms.

**Table 6.** Comparison of the Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Menfess

Aspects	Effective Menfess	Ineffective Menfess
Completeness of Information	Details (price, location, specifications)	Lack of detail, general information
Language Style	Natural, casual, honest	Excessive promotion, such as advertising
Personal Experience	Specific and verified	None or too general
Delivery	Balanced (pros & cons)	Only advantages
Perceived Credibility	High (63.2%)	Low (21.4%)
Level of Skepticism	Low (18.7%)	High (72.3%)
Conversion Rate	52.8%	8.3%

With an R-Square value of 0.487, the study's findings show that e-WOM significantly affects FPEB UPI students' purchase intentions in 2023. This means that e-WOM dimensions account for 48.7% of the variance in purchase intention. This result is consistent with studies that demonstrate the powerful influence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on social media as a consumer reference for acquiring product information and influencing purchasing behavior (Romadhoni et al., 2023; Tamrin & Huda, 2021). However, compared to research conducted on traditional platforms, the percentage of influence discovered is comparatively lower. This can be explained by the special features of anonymous menfess on @uppifess. Only 36.6% of respondents actually completed a purchase after reading the advice, according to empirical studies, indicating a considerable discrepancy between e-WOM exposure and actualized purchase intention.

Information credibility is a crucial feature in anonymous communication, as demonstrated by the path coefficient of 0.389 ( $p < 0.001$ ), which indicated that the credibility dimension had the most significant influence on purchase intention. Prior studies have demonstrated that the reliability of E-WOM information has a substantial impact on the adoption and utility of information, which in turn influences online consumers' purchasing decisions.

(Rahaman et al., 2022; Ngo, Bui, et al., 2024) intention. Because the author of @uppifess is anonymous and cannot be identified, it presents a unique issue in this environment. As a result, respondents frequently evaluate content's credibility depending on its qualities, such as its balance of delivery and fullness of information. Results show that 58.7% of respondents are more likely to believe recommendations that point out product problems because they seem more truthful and impartial.

The quality dimension showed a significant influence with a path coefficient of 0.287 ( $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that information quality is an important predictor in the formation of purchase intention. Previous studies have shown that information quality has the strongest influence on information usefulness and information adoption in the context of E-WOM on social media. (Ngo, Vuong, et al., 2024). The data shows that 28.8% of respondents stated that information in menus is often lacking in detail or unclear, which explains why the average value of the quality dimension is only in the moderate category ( $M=3.12$ ). Meanwhile, the quantity dimension has a weaker effect ( $\beta=0.156$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), indicating that a high volume of recommendations does not automatically increase purchase intention if it is not balanced with adequate information quality and credibility.

The most intriguing result is that, with a route coefficient of -0.198 ( $p < 0.01$ ), the valence dimension significantly reduces purchase intention. This finding runs counter to the traditional e-WOM hypothesis, which holds that purchase intention is raised by positive valence. According to the research, 31.7% of respondents suspect paid marketing or phony reviews, and 42.4% of respondents frequently have doubts about recommendations. According to earlier studies, sponsored suggestions and norm conflict have an impact on e-WOM's capacity to foster trust (Le et al., 2024). Recommendations that employ too promotional language actually cause mistrust and diminish perceived trustworthiness in the context of @uppifess.

This study demonstrates that the unique circumstances of the student body have a substantial impact on the dynamics of electronic word-of-mouth. Members of @uppifess, a semi-closed space in contrast to open platforms, are all FPEB UPI students. When mediated by brand image and trust, the study demonstrates that e-WOM and social media marketing significantly increase purchase intention (Fazrin et al., 2024; Kartika & Pandjaitan, 2023). The social filter that community identity provides in this situation affects how information is interpreted and assessed.

The empirical findings of this investigation advance electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) theoretical frameworks by demonstrating that E-WOM effectiveness is contingent not solely upon informational attributes, but also upon the social context and trust mechanisms inherent to specific online communities. This study illuminates distinctive E-WOM dynamics within Indonesian anonymous messaging platforms, contrasting with extant research predominantly conducted on e-commerce platforms employing formal verification mechanisms. The finding regarding negative valence effects extends current understanding by revealing that, within

anonymous contexts, consumers exhibit heightened skepticism toward overwhelmingly positive content—a pattern diverging from conventional platform dynamics.

The research findings yield substantial practical implications for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) seeking to leverage confession platforms as marketing channels. Recommendations should be disseminated organically, incorporating comprehensive and balanced information. Excessively promotional linguistic strategies should be eschewed to mitigate credibility concerns and consumer skepticism. Confession account administrators require systematic content curation mechanisms to maintain information quality standards and preserve platform credibility as a trusted reference source.

From a consumer literacy perspective, students engaging with anonymous E-WOM should exercise critical analytical thinking by evaluating informational completeness, presentation balance, and product-need congruence prior to transactional decisions. This multifaceted approach ensures more informed consumption patterns and reduces susceptibility to potentially misleading promotional content within anonymous digital communication environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that students' purchase intentions are greatly influenced by electronic Word-Of-Mouth (e-WOM) on anonymous chat networks, albeit in a different way than traditional platforms. The most crucial factor determining purchasing intentions is the reliability of the information, which is followed by the amount and quality of the information. Excessive positive valence actually works against you by having buyers question the authenticity of recommendations, according to important discoveries. Because of the unique dynamic created by anonymity and a restricted group, consumers are more likely to trust recommendations that present accurate information, including product defects. Future research on anonymous messaging in Indonesia should look at social verification mechanisms and psychological factors that can increase the effectiveness of e-WOM.

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