



The influence of social media usage and electronic word-of-mouth on Hot Wheels purchase intention in West Sumatra: The mediating role of brand equity

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media usage (SMU) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on purchase intentions for Hot Wheels diecast collectibles in West Sumatra, using brand equity (BE) as a mediating variable. An online survey was conducted, gathering data from 168 Hot Wheels collectors and enthusiasts in West Sumatera, Indonesia. Data analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the relationships between variables. Results demonstrate that social media usage, electronic word of mouth, and brand equity each significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions. Additionally, brand equity is found to be positively impacted by social media usage and electronic word of mouth. Finally, brand equity partially mediates the relationship between social media usage, electronic word of mouth, and purchase intentions for Hot Wheels.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has reshaped multiple facets of life, including business and marketing practices. A pivotal change has been the integration of social media as a core platform for marketing strategies. Social media serves not only as a tool for communication and social interaction but also as a channel for seeking information and influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Modern marketing has leveraged social media to facilitate direct interactions with consumers, foster communities, build brand awareness, and, notably, shape purchase intentions through mechanisms like Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM).

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is a crucial component in driving online shopping behavior in Indonesia. Research by Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) emphasizes that eWOM on social media, including reviews and recommendations, can significantly impact purchase intentions. Supporting this, recent data from Databoks (2024) shows that 48.2% of internet users in Indonesia view consumer reviews as a primary factor in their online shopping decisions. This trend underscores the influential role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions and driving purchase behavior.

In the context of collectible diecasts, Hot Wheels by Mattel has emerged as an iconic brand since its inception in 1968. Initially designed to revolutionize toy vehicles, Hot Wheels has evolved over five decades into a globally recognized brand, beloved by children and adult collectors alike. The brand's detailed designs and limited editions have garnered a large community of enthusiasts, especially in Indonesia, where Hot Wheels has become more than just toys but also valuable collectibles.

However, the collectible diecast market faces significant challenges, particularly in Indonesia. Issues such as scarcity due to reseller practices and negative eWOM on social media have impacted purchase intentions. These challenges underscore the need for effective brand reputation management to maintain strong brand equity and positively influence consumer purchasing decisions. Thus, this study aims to investigate how social media usage and eWOM affect purchase intentions for Hot Wheels in West Sumatra, with brand equity as a mediating factor.

This research addresses the pressing need to understand the dynamics between social media, eWOM, and brand equity in influencing consumer behavior within a competitive market environment. Through this analysis, the study intends to provide insights that could guide marketing strategies, emphasizing the value of engaging social media and eWOM in building and sustaining brand equity for Hot Wheels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as a consumer's deliberate plan to buy a particular product or service, shaped by cognitive evaluations and emotional responses to brand exposure (Kotler et al., 2022; Solomon, 2018). It acts as a predictor of purchasing behavior, influenced by brand perception, prior experiences, and marketing efforts. Kotler and Keller (2018) connect purchase intention to brand equity, suggesting that strong brand equity increases the likelihood of purchase.

According to Khan et al. (2024), the indicators used to measure purchase intention in this study is:

1. Purchase Likelihood
2. Brand Preference
3. Future Purchase Intention

Social Media Usage

Social media usage includes content creation, interaction with brands, and peer-to-peer communication, playing a crucial role in consumer engagement and brand connection (Zeqiri et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024). Social media channels allow companies like Hot Wheels to foster relationships, build communities, and influence consumer attitudes. Key factors influencing usage include ease of use, critical mass, and perceived usefulness, which amplify user interaction and brand engagement (Weerasinghe & Hindagolla, 2018).

According to Khan et al. (2024), the indicators used to measure social media usage in this study is:

1. Relationship Improvement
2. Brand Communication
3. Enhanced Relationships
4. Overall Relationship Enhancement

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

EWOM refers to online consumer communication about products and services. It includes reviews, recommendations, and discussions on social platforms, significantly impacting brand perception and consumer trust (Solomon, 2018; Kotler et al., 2022). Positive eWOM fosters favorable brand attitudes, while negative eWOM may damage brand reputation. Studies highlight eWOM's importance in influencing consumer decision-making, particularly within online communities like diecast collectors. According to Khan et al. (2024), the indicators used to measure EWOM in this study is:

1. Decision Assurance
2. Impression Awareness
3. Information Gathering
4. Confidence in Decision

Brand Equity

Brand equity is the perceived value of a brand, derived from consumer awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and loyalty (Aaker, 2014; Keller, 2013). Strong brand equity enhances customer loyalty and the perceived worth of the brand, increasing the likelihood of purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2018). Hot Wheels, with its established global reputation, serves as an example where brand equity shapes both brand preference and purchase consistency.

According to Khan et al. (2024), the indicators used to measure brand equity in this study is:

1. Brand Preference
2. Perceived Superiority
3. Choice Consistency
4. Rational Purchase Decision

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

The Relationship between Social Media Use and Purchase Intention

Smith and Gallicano (2015) define social media use as "various online activities that individuals can perform." Zhao et al. (2019) found that social media use directly affects consumer attitudes and purchase intention. Frequent social media users are more likely to make online purchases (Pucci et al., 2018). Both businesses and consumers have adopted social media, influencing purchase decisions and online buying behavior (Rajput et al., 2022). Previous research shows that social media use significantly impacts purchasing decisions (Hu & Zhu, 2022).

H1: Social media use positively influences the purchase intention of Hot Wheels diecasts in West Sumatra.

The Relationship between EWOM and Purchase Intention

The effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) on purchase intention has been widely studied (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Saleem & Ellahi (2017) found that EWOM significantly and positively affects purchase intentions on social networking sites. EWOM includes informal communication about product features and usage, shared with consumers online (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Reviews and recommendations can boost or reduce purchase intentions, depending on the information shared (Esparza-Huamanchumo et al., 2024).

H2: EWOM positively influences the purchase intention of Hot Wheels diecasts in West Sumatra.

The Relationship between Social Media Use and Brand Equity

Social media use positively affects brand equity, which in turn influences consumer purchase intentions. Due to internet accessibility and social media's growth, its potential to increase brand equity is widely recognized (Stojanovic et al., 2018). Marketing on social media has become crucial, with studies showing a significant impact on brand equity (Kian Yeik et al., 2021; Masa'deh et al., 2021). Through social media, marketers engage with customers, share content, and build brand equity (Noubar et al., 2020; Maskuroh et al., 2022).

H3: Social media use positively influences Hot Wheels brand equity in West Sumatra.

The Relationship between EWOM and Brand Equity

Online reviews, also known as EWOM, are recognized for enhancing brand equity (Mahrinasari et al., 2017). Positive and negative online feedback shapes consumer perceptions, impacting brand equity (Brzozowska-Woś & Schivinski, 2019). Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) found that social platform

communication significantly affects brand equity and brand attitudes. EWOM has been shown to impact brand equity in various industries, such as airlines and higher education (Sagynbekova et al., 2020; Masa'deh et al., 2021).

H4: EWOM positively influences Hot Wheels brand equity in West Sumatra.

The Relationship between Brand Equity and Purchase Intention

Brand equity has become crucial in influencing purchase intentions. Strong brand equity impacts consumer purchase intention, with positive online interactions strengthening it, while negative interactions can damage brand equity and reduce purchase intention (Majeed et al., 2021). Research also confirms that high brand equity boosts purchase intentions, emphasizing the need to manage and promote brand equity to drive consumer decisions (Khan et al., 2024).

H5: Brand equity positively influences the purchase intention of Hot Wheels diecasts in West Sumatra.

The Mediating Effect of Brand Equity between Social Media Use, EWOM, and Purchase Intention

In the social media era, brand equity presents both challenges and growth opportunities for businesses. Social media boosts brand reputation and engagement, enhancing purchase intentions (Koay et al., 2020; Minh & Ha, 2022). Studies show that brand equity mediates the influence of social media efforts on customer trust and partially mediates its effect on customer response (Minh & Ha, 2022; Majeed et al., 2021; Verma & Yadav, 2021b). Additionally, brand equity mediates EWOM's impact on willingness to pay in various sectors (Augusto & Torres, 2018; Godey et al., 2016).

H6: Brand equity mediates the impact of social media use on the purchase intention of Hot Wheels diecasts in West Sumatra.

H7: Brand equity mediates the impact of EWOM on the purchase intention of Hot Wheels diecasts in West Sumatra.

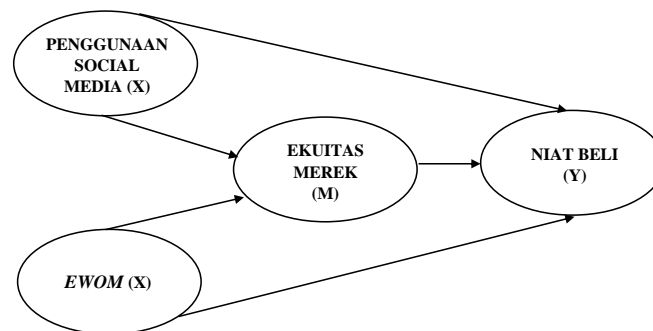


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach to analyze how social media usage and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) impact the purchase intention of Hot Wheels in West Sumatra, with brand equity as a mediating variable. To accurately capture this effect, a purposive sample of more than 168 active social media users and diecast enthusiasts in West Sumatra was selected, following Hair et al. (2022).

A structured questionnaire measured responses on social media usage, eWOM, brand equity, and purchase intention using a five-point Likert scale. Data was gathered through an online Google Form survey to reach a broad respondent base and ensure efficient data collection. Descriptive statistics profiled the sample, while structural equation modeling (SEM) tested the hypothesized relationships and mediation effects.

To ensure validity and reliability, questionnaire items were adapted from validated literature sources indicators, with reliability confirmed through Cronbach's alpha (threshold of 0.7) and validity

tested through SEM. Standard statistical tests were used, and assumptions of normality and linearity were checked to support SEM's robustness.

This study is limited to diecast enthusiasts in West Sumatra, which may impact generalizability, and online distribution may introduce self-selection bias. The methodology provides detailed steps for replicability and robust examination of the study's variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In evaluating the estimation model (external model), both reliability and validity are assessed to ensure that the instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. Validity evaluates the quality of the instrument and the extent to which the measured concept can be applied. However, not all measurement aspects are determined by specific metrics (Hair et al., 2019). An average variance extracted (AVE) value greater than 0.5 and factor loadings above 0.7 are considered to satisfy the validity requirements. In this study, the validity test indicates that the instruments used meet the minimum criteria for construct validity. The results of these tests are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Outer Loading

	BE (M)	SMU (X1)	EWOM (X2)	PI (Y)
BE 1	0,816			
BE 2	0,722			
BE 3	0,804			
BE 4	0,858			
SMU 1		0,827		
SMU 2		0,734		
SMU 3		0,825		
SMU 4		0,801		
EWOM 1			0,872	
EWOM 2			0,783	
EWOM 3			0,856	
EWOM 4			0,798	
PI 1				0,836
PI 2				0,848
PI 3				0,908

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on the table 1, the outer loading values for all indicators obtained results above 0.7. Therefore, the convergent validity of all indicators is considered valid.

Table 2. Output AVE

Average variance extracted (AVE)	
Penggunaan media sosial	0,636
EWOM	0,686
Ekuitas merek	0,642
Niat pembelian	0,748

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that the AVE value for all variables in the table is above 0.5. Therefore, convergent validity is considered valid.

Table 3. Cross Loading

	EM (M)	PSM (X1)	EWOM (X2)	NP (Y)
BE 1	0.816	0,526	0,617	0,574
BE 2	0.722	0,546	0,547	0,524
BE 3	0.804	0,576	0,586	0,531
BE 4	0.858	0,614	0,684	0,634
EWOM 1	0.659	0,872	0,699	0,695
EWOM 2	0.578	0,783	0,623	0,615
EWOM 3	0.612	0,856	0,576	0,657
EWOM 4	0.472	0,798	0,576	0,636
PI 1	0.555	0,636	0,836	0,604
PI 2	0.744	0,634	0,848	0,607
PI 3	0.667	0,677	0,908	0,689
SMU 1	0.552	0,669	0,594	0,827
SMU 2	0.477	0,552	0,563	0,734
SMU 3	0.666	0.645	0,633	0,825
SMU 4	0.546	0.638	0.542	0.801

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on Table 3 the variables show a stronger correlation with the indicators compared to the correlation with other indicators. All indicators evaluated in this study are declared to have discriminant validity.

Table 4. Fornell Lacker Criterion

	BE	EWOM	PI	SMU
BE	0,801			
EWOM	0,706	0,828		
PI	0,762	0,751	0,865	
SMU	0,708	0,787	0,733	0,798

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on table 4, The validity of discrimination can also be analyzed using the Fornell Lacker value, the results of which are also in accordance with cross loading.

Table 5. Cronbach Alpha

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Keterangan
Brand Equity	0,813	0,820	Reliable
Social Media Usage	0,809	0,816	Reliable
EWOM	0,847	0,855	Reliable
Purchase Intention	0,831	0,836	Reliable

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on table 5, A variable is considered to have good reliability or is able to measure the construct correctly if it has a Cronbach alpha value > 0.6 and Composite Reliability > 0.7 (Ghozali, 2014).

Table 6. R-Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Equity	0,560	0,555
Purchase Intention	0,686	0,680

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Based on table 6, it was found that the Brand Equity (M) variable has an R square value of 0.560. This shows that Brand Equity is explained by 56%, In addition, the R Square value of the Purchase Intention (Y) variable is 0.686, which means Repurchase Intention is explained by 68,6%,

Table 7. Path Coefficient

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
BE -> PI	0,397	0,400	0,074	5,379	0,000
SMU -> BE	0,400	0,400	0,077	5,181	0,000
SMU -> PI	0,215	0,210	0,082	2,617	0,009
EWOM -> BE	0,392	0,380	0,099	3,966	0,000
EWOM -> PI	0,301	0,298	0,080	3,753	0,000

Source: Primary Data, 2024

H₁: Social media usage (X₁) has a positive and significant effect on Brand Equity (M).

Based on the social media usage variable table, a t-statistic value of 5.181 with a P-value of 0.000 and an original sample value of 0.400 was obtained. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study results indicate that the first hypothesis (H₁) on social media usage has a positive and significant effect on Brand Equity, thus H₁ in this study is accepted.

H₂: Social media usage (X₁) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y).

Based on the social media usage variable table, a t-statistic value of 2.617 with a P-value of 0.009 and an original sample value of 0.215 was obtained. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study results indicate that the second hypothesis (H₂) on social media usage has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, thus H₂ in this study is accepted.

H₃: EWOM (X₂) has a positive and significant effect on Brand Equity (M).

Based on the EWOM variable table, a t-statistic value of 3.966 with a P-value of 0.000 and an original sample value of 0.392 was obtained. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study results indicate that the third hypothesis (H₃) on EWOM has a positive and significant effect on Brand Equity, thus H₃ in this study is accepted.

H₄: EWOM (X₂) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y).

Based on the EWOM variable table, a t-statistic value of 3.753 with a P-value of 0.000 and an original sample value of 0.301 was obtained. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study results indicate that the fourth hypothesis (H₄) on EWOM has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, thus H₄ in this study is accepted.

H5: Brand Equity (M) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y).

Based on the Brand Equity variable table, a t-statistic value of 5.379 with a P-value of 0.000 and an original sample value of 0.397 was obtained. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study results indicate that the fifth hypothesis (H5) on Brand Equity has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention, thus H5 in this study is accepted.

Table 8. Indirect effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
SMU -> BE -> PI	0,159	0,161	0,048	3,288	0,001
EWOM -> BE -> PI	0,156	0,151	0,045	3,478	0,001

Source: Primary Data, 2024

H6: Social Media Usage (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention (Y) mediated by Brand Equity (M).

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the relationship between the Social Media Usage variable (X1) and Purchase Intention (Y), mediated by Brand Equity (M), is positive and significant. This is evidenced by the results of the hypothesis testing shown in the table, with an original sample value of 0.159, a t-statistic of 3.288, and a p-value of 0.001. Therefore, it can be concluded that H6 in this study is accepted.

H7: Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Repurchase Intention (Y) mediated by Brand Trust (M).

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the relationship between the Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) variable (X2) and Purchase Intention (Y), mediated by Brand Equity (M), is positive and significant. This is evidenced by the results of the hypothesis testing shown in the table, with an original sample value of 0.156, a t-statistic of 3.478, and a p-value of 0.001. Therefore, it can be concluded that H7 in this study is accepted.

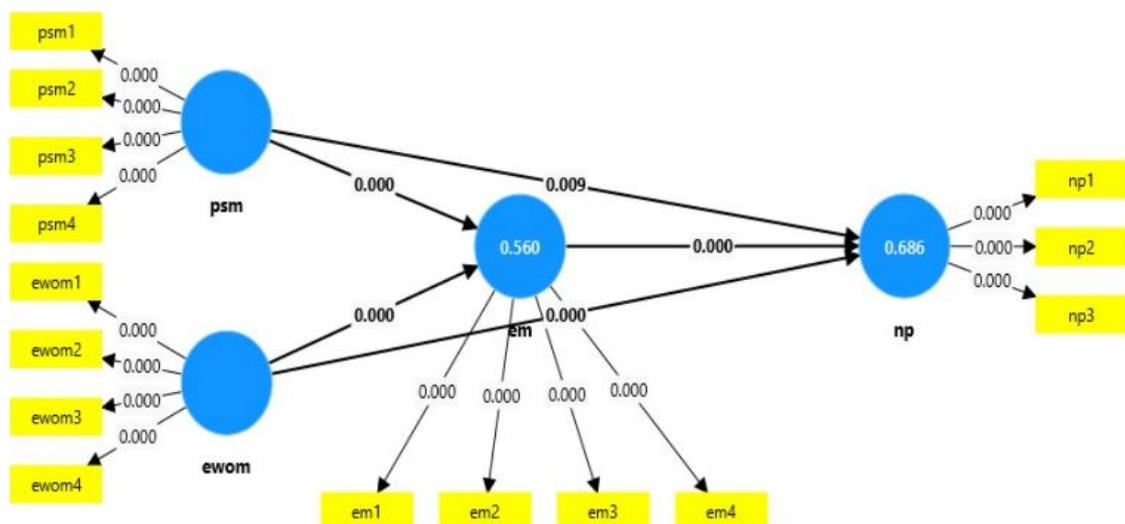


Figure 2. Final PLS Model Output

DISCUSSION

After applying the PLS-SEM analysis method to examine the data, the following findings are observed:
Influence of:

- 1. The influence of Social Media Usage on Brand Equity**
Social media usage significantly boosts Hot Wheels' brand equity by enhancing its image and fostering consumer loyalty. This is supported by Lim et al. (2020), who highlight that social media interactions strengthen brand perception and value.
- 2. The influence of Social Media Usage on Purchase Intention**
Engaging with consumers on social media positively impacts their intent to purchase Hot Wheels. This is supported by Khan et al. (2024), who emphasize that consistent, engaging social media content can directly increase consumers' buying intent.
- 3. The Influences of EWOM on Brand Equity**
EWOM plays a crucial role in enhancing Hot Wheels' brand equity by building positive perceptions through consumer reviews. This is supported by Perera et al. (2021), who confirm that customer-shared experiences increase brand value and trust.
- 4. The influences of EWOM on Purchase Intention**
Positive EWOM significantly influences consumers' intent to buy Hot Wheels by boosting their confidence in purchasing decisions. This is supported by Alwan & Alshurideh (2022), who note that EWOM connects customer experiences with potential buyers, solidifying trust.
- 5. The influence of Brand Equity on Purchase Intention**
Strong brand equity increases consumers' purchase intentions for Hot Wheels. This is supported by Vo Minh et al. (2022), who suggest that well-established brand equity enhances consumer preference and competitive advantage.
- 6. The influence of Social Media Usage on Purchase Intention Mediated by Brand Equity**
Social media not only impacts purchase intention directly but also strengthens it indirectly by building brand equity. This is supported by Torres et al. (2018), who indicate that social media interactions reinforce brand image, boosting purchase likelihood.
- 7. The influence of EWOM on Purchase Intention Mediated by Brand Equity**
EWOM positively affects purchase intentions for Hot Wheels, with brand equity acting as a partial mediator. This is supported by studies by Khan et al. (2024) and Farzin et al. (2021), which show that positive reviews enhance brand reputation, strengthening buying intent.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis performed, it can be concluded several things as follows:

- 1. Social Media Usage and Brand Equity:** Social media usage significantly enhances the brand equity of Hot Wheels, strengthening its image and consumer loyalty in West Sumatra.
- 2. Social Media Usage and Purchase Intention:** Social media usage positively influences purchase intention by helping consumers learn about and interact with the product.
- 3. eWOM and Brand Equity:** eWOM enhances the brand equity of Hot Wheels through consumer recommendations and reviews, fostering trust and loyalty.
- 4. eWOM and Purchase Intention:** eWOM significantly boosts purchase intention, as consumers rely on reviews to make informed decisions.
- 5. Brand Equity and Purchase Intention:** Positive brand equity directly influences purchase intention, highlighting the importance of brand perception.
- 6. Social Media Usage on Purchase Intention (Mediated by Brand Equity):** Social media usage improves purchase intention by enhancing brand equity through positive content.
- 7. eWOM on Purchase Intention (Mediated by Brand Equity):** eWOM increases purchase intention via brand equity, as trusted information enhances consumer confidence.

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