

The Effectiveness of Digital Product Reviews and Word of Mouth on Gadget Purchase Decisions Among Students in Cirebon City

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of digital product reviews on gadget purchasing decisions among students in Cirebon City. The research methodology used is quantitative, employing a survey questionnaire as a data collection tool. The sample was selected using purposive sampling with a total of 382 respondents. Data processing was performed using SPSS. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the respondents, while multiple linear regression analysis was applied to test the relationship between variables. Based on the t-test results, it was found that the digital product review variable had a significant effect on purchasing decisions with a t-value of 18.433, which exceeded the t-table value of 1.985. The word of mouth variable had a relatively weak and statistically insignificant effect on purchasing decisions with a t-value of -0.955, which did not exceed the t-table value of 1.966. This study provides empirical evidence of the role of digital product reviews and word of mouth in influencing gadget purchasing decisions among students.

Keywords: digital product reviews, word of mouth, purchasing decisions.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, attention to the issue of consumer behavior transformation has increased, especially with the development of digital technology and changes in the dynamics of the gadget and electronics retail sector. The gadget market, with its rapid innovation cycle, requires marketing to no longer rely solely on product quality, but also to master communication strategies based on consumer experience. International studies such as those conducted by (Khwaja et al., 2020) show that in the context of accelerated digital marketing, e-WOM, which is digital reviews, influences consumer trust and information adoption, which is ultimately crucial for purchase intent. However, in Indonesia, particularly in the context of gadget purchasing decisions by students, research comparing the effectiveness of verbal information sources (WOM) and digital sources such as video/TikTok reviews still requires specific validation.

This phenomenon is reinforced by the role of social media as the primary channel for marketing and interaction. Activities such as live streaming on TikTok are now not only a means of entertainment, but also a trigger for instant purchases, proven to have a strong influence on purchasing decisions, even when paired with price incentives such as discounts (Wijaya et al., 2023). This shift places digital product reviews in the form of video reviews on YouTube, TikTok, or comments on e-commerce sites as one of the dominant factors in shaping brand perception and purchase intent. The role of digital reviews in marketing is now even greater, surpassing direct marketing by companies in creating awareness and trust (Komala Sari et al., 2025)

Furthermore, this study focuses on two main independent variables: Digital Product Reviews and Traditional Word of Mouth (WOM). Although digital reviews dominate, traditional WOM, namely face-to-face communication, remains a determining force, mainly because of the credibility of sources based on strong social bonds, such as family or peers (Bakir & Atalik, 2021).

Communication at the consumer level is a determining factor, whether it is traditional WOM or its digital form (e-WOM), which refers to online reviews (Saehu et al., 2025). Digital reviews, categorized as e-WOM, have been proven to influence customer loyalty, even for specific products targeting the Cirebon market (Intan Pramita Dewi, Siti Juleha, Mohamad Zaenal Abidin, 2021)

The primary target of this study is students in the city of Cirebon. As a highly active segment in the digital world, their purchasing behavior is driven not only by the functional needs of gadgets, but also by social lifestyle factors that demand up-to-date gadgets. Purchasing decisions among students are highly sensitive to external influences (Rokima et al., 2023). Additionally, research on Cirebon students has identified that online reviews and digital marketing have a significant influence on purchasing decisions, even though the initial context was beauty products (Intan Pramita Dewi, Siti Juleha, Mohamad Zaenal Abidin, 2021)

Although previous studies have addressed this topic, most have focused on the effectiveness of digital marketing in general (Komala Sari et al., 2025) or separately tested the influence of brand image or product quality on smartphone purchases (Yulyanti & Sitorus, 2025), while comparative research on the effectiveness specifications between Traditional Word of Mouth and Digital Product Reviews, such as video reviews, has not been extensively studied in the context of the gadget market and students in Cirebon City. This opens up opportunities for further research to understand how these two consumer communication channels, which differ in format and source proximity, jointly and partially influence gadget purchasing decisions in the academic environment of Cirebon.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of Word of Mouth theory, particularly in comparing the validity of traditional sources with digital visual sources. In addition, this study provides practical implications for gadget sellers and marketers in Cirebon City to formulate more targeted strategies by allocating resources efficiently to utilize the most effective and dominant WOM channels in shaping students' purchasing decisions.

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Product Reviews

Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953): his theory explains that the effectiveness of a message (digital review) is highly dependent on the characteristics of its source (reviewer/content creator). Source credibility is influenced by the factors of Expertise and Trustworthiness. In digital reviews, the credibility of the source is assessed based on students' perceptions of the reviewer's competence in gadgets.

Word of Mouth

Classic Word of Mouth Theory (Arndt, 1967): A basic theory that explains that verbal communication between consumers (face-to-face) about a product is the most effective form of marketing communication because it is considered more credible and independent than corporate advertising.

Purchase Decision

Theory (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019): consumer purchase decisions are the result of a decision-making process that includes recognizing needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making purchase decisions, and evaluating post-purchase. In the digital context, information search becomes a very dominant stage because consumers rely on online reviews and other users' experiences as a basis for assessment before making a purchase.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

1. The Effect of Digital Product Reviews (X_1) on Purchase Decisions (Y)

This Digital Product Review is based on the Source Credibility Theory proposed by (Hovland et al., 1953). According to this theory, the effectiveness of a message, including digital product reviews, is highly dependent on the characteristics of the source, where source credibility is formed by Expertise and Trustworthiness. In the digital context, even though the source is not always personally known, the perception of credibility is still formed based on the quality of the content and the reputation of the content creator. For example, research by (Dellarocas., 2003) in Management Science (Scopus Q1 Journal) confirms that in the digital era, online feedback mechanisms play a crucial role in building source reputation, which significantly influences buyer decisions.

To measure this credibility, the Digital Product Review variable is operationalized through empirical indicators that focus on two main dimensions: Information Quality and Source Credibility. The Information Quality dimension is measured by looking at the completeness and clarity of the reviews provided, while the Source Credibility dimension is assessed based on the reviewer's

expertise and the level of trust that students have in them. Furthermore, this theory asserts that the level of trust students have in the expertise of gadget reviewers, especially on YouTube or TikTok, and their perception of the honesty of reviews without commercial bias, will determine the strength of their influence on Purchase Decisions among students in Cirebon City.

Hypothesis H1: Digital Product Reviews (X₁) have a positive effect on Purchase Decisions (Y).

2. The Effect of Word of Mouth (X₂) on Purchase Decisions (Y)

This variable is based on the Classical Word of Mouth Theory developed by (Arndt, 1967) . This theory explains that verbal communication between consumers, namely face-to-face communication, about a product is the most effective form of marketing communication because it is considered more credible and independent than advertisements sponsored by companies. Traditional WOM often operates in social circles with strong ties (Granovetter, 2018), so that the messages conveyed have a very high emotional weight and level of trust.

Traditional WOM variables are operationalized through empirical indicators that cover key aspects of interpersonal communication. Measurements focus on Tie Strength, which assesses the closeness and intensity of interactions with information sources, as well as assessments of Message Content and Intent to Talk, which reflect a positive urge to recommend products. The relevance of Classic WOM is increasingly evident in the digital realm; despite the shift in platforms, verbal discussions about product value remain important as a counterbalance. This is reinforced by research focusing on consumer behavior on Shopee, where price perception and e-WOM are strong determinants of purchase decisions (Kartawinata, Santoso, Yusuf, & Maulany, 2021). Therefore, the Classic WOM Theory is highly relevant as it provides a framework for understanding how Traditional Word of Mouth, rooted in closeness and trust, influences Purchase Decisions through the mechanisms of perceived risk reduction and social confirmation among students.

Hipotesis H2: Word of Mouth (X₂) has a positive effect on Purchase Decision (Y).

3. The Effect of Digital Product Reviews (X₁) and Word of Mouth (X₂) on Purchase Decisions(Y).

Variable Y in this study is Purchase Decision, which acts as a dependent variable or a variable influenced by independent variables. The conceptual basis of this variable is derived from the Consumer Purchase Model (EKB Model) developed by (Engel et al., 1968). This model explains that Purchase Decision is not a single action, but a complex multi-stage process, starting from Need Recognition, followed by Information Search, Alternative Evaluation, Purchase Decision, and Post-Purchase Behavior. Previous research by (Intan Pramita Dewi, Siti Juleha, Mohamad Zaenal Abidin, 2021) found that Online Customer Reviews and Digital Marketing have a significant effect on Purchasing Decisions among students in Cirebon.

To measure this variable, Purchase Decisions are measured through indicators that include the Information Search Stage, Alternative Evaluation Stage, Decision Stage, and Post-Purchase Stage. The relevance of this model is even stronger in the context of e-commerce and Cirebon students, where price, which is often a major consideration, has been shown to influence consumer satisfaction with smartphone purchases (Maulana, Musyaffa, Yusuf, & Mushiarsih, 2025). Therefore, the EKB Model Theory is highly relevant as it provides a framework for understanding how Digital Product Reviews and Traditional WOM influence Purchase Decisions through the mechanisms of information enrichment and attitude formation during the evaluation stage, ultimately leading to the purchase of the gadget.

Hipotesis H3: Digital Product Reviews (X₁) and Word of Mouth (X₂) simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions (Y).

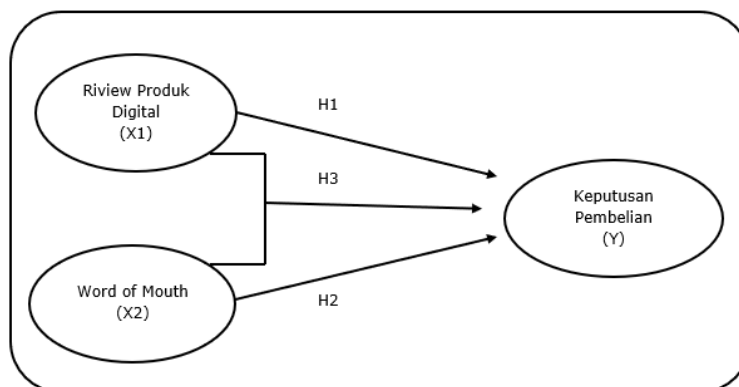


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with an associative research design, which aims to analyze the influence of digital product reviews and word of mouth on the decision to purchase gadget products among students in Cirebon City. A quantitative approach was chosen because this study tests the relationship between variables empirically through the collection of numerical data analyzed using statistical methods..

The population in this study consisted of all active students enrolled in various public and private universities in the city of Cirebon. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method, which is a technique for determining samples based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. The number of samples used in this study was 382 respondents, which was determined based on Table (Morgan, 1970), assuming that the population of students in Cirebon City was large ($N > 75,000$) and the confidence level was 95%.

Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression analysis with the help of SPSS software. The analysis stages included descriptive statistical tests, instrument validity and reliability tests, and hypothesis testing using t-tests and F-tests. In addition, the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) was used to determine the contribution of independent variables to dependent variables. (Sugiyono, 2023).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Description

Data Demografi Responden		F	%
Tingkat	Baru	88	23,00%
	Madya	208	57,10%
	Akhir	76	20,00%
Jenis Kelamin	Laki-Laki	183	47,90%
	Perempuan	199	52,10%

Table IV.1 Gender Percentage of Respondents

The respondents in this study were students in Cirebon City who had purchased gadget products and been exposed to digital product reviews and word of mouth. There were 382 respondents, which was considered representative of the research population.

Based on gender, the respondents consisted of 199 female students (52.10%) and 183 male students (47.90%), indicating a relatively balanced composition. In terms of study level, the majority of respondents were second- and third-year students, totaling 218 people (57.10%), followed by first-year students totaling 88 people (23.00%) and fourth-year or higher students totaling 76 people (20.00%). This composition reflects the characteristics of students with adequate digital literacy and is relevant to the study of purchasing decisions for gadget products.

Validity and Reliability Test

Variabel	Pernyataan	R Hitung	R Tabel	Keterangan
Riview Produk Digital	1	0.619	0.100	Valid
	2	0.730	0.100	Valid
	3	0.636	0.100	Valid
	4	0.733	0.100	Valid
	5	0.629	0.100	Valid
	6	0.763	0.100	Valid
	7	0.591	0.100	Valid
	8	0.735	0.100	Valid
Word of Mouth	1	0.918	0.100	Valid
	2	0.832	0.100	Valid
	3	0.890	0.100	Valid
	4	0.843	0.100	Valid
	5	0.895	0.100	Valid
	6	0.832	0.100	Valid
	7	0.896	0.100	Valid
	8	0.823	0.100	Valid
	9	0.893	0.100	Valid
Keputusan Pembelian	1	0.609	0.100	Valid
	2	0.716	0.100	Valid
	3	0.628	0.100	Valid
	4	0.726	0.100	Valid
	5	0.625	0.100	Valid
	6	0.691	0.100	Valid
	7	0.603	0.100	Valid
	8	0.722	0.100	Valid
	9	0.620	0.100	Valid
	10	0.705	0.100	Valid
	11	0.627	0.100	Valid
	12	0.728	0.100	Valid

Table IV.2 Validity Test

In the table above showing the validity test results, all statement items in the Digital Product Review (X1), Word of Mouth (X2), and Purchase Decision (Y) variables have a calculated r value greater than the table r (0.100) with a significance level of < 0.05, so all indicators are declared valid.

Variabel	Nilai Alpha	Keterangan
Riview Produk Digital	0,835	Realiabel
Word of Mouth	0,959	Realiabel
Keputusan Pembelian	0,887	Realiabel

Table IV.3 Cronbach's Alpha Test

In the table above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha value for the Digital Product Review variable (X₁) is 0.835, the Word of Mouth variable (X₂) is 0.959, and the Purchase Decision variable (Y) is 0.887. All Cronbach's Alpha values are above the minimum threshold of 0.70, so the research instrument is considered reliable and suitable for use in the next stage of analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	14,717	2,354		6,252	,000
Riview Produk Digital	1,093	,059	,737	18,433	,000
Word of Mouth	-,027	,028	-,038	-,956	,340

a. Dependent Variable: Keputusan Pembelian

Table IV.4 Multiple Linear Regression

The table above shows a constant value of 14.717, a Digital Product Review coefficient (X_1) of 1.093, and a Word of Mouth coefficient (X_2) of -0.027 , resulting in a multiple linear regression model of $Y = 14.717 + 1.093X_1 - 0.027X_2$.

T-test (Partial Test)

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	14,717	2,354		6,252	,000
Riview Produk Digital	1,093	,059	,737	18,433	,000
Word of Mouth	-,027	,028	-,038	-,956	,340

a. Dependent Variable: Keputusan Pembelian

Table IV.5 T-test (Partial Test)

The partial test results show that the Digital Product Review variable (X_1) has a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that Digital Product Review has a significant effect on Purchase Decision. Thus, hypothesis H1 is accepted.

Meanwhile, the Word of Mouth variable (X_2) has a significance value of 0.340 (>0.05), indicating that Word of Mouth does not have a significant effect on Purchase Decision. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is rejected.

F Test (Simultaneous Test)

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4847,225	2	2423,613	257,177	.000 ^b
Residual	3571,657	379	9,424		
Total	8418,882	381			

a. Dependent Variable: TotalY

b. Predictors: (Constant), Word of Mouth, Riview Produk Digital

TableIV.6 F Test (Simultaneous Test)

The simultaneous test (F test) results show a calculated F value of 257.177 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that the variables of Digital Product Reviews and Word of Mouth together have a significant effect on the decision to purchase gadget products among students in Cirebon City, so hypothesis H₃ is accepted.

Uji Koefesien Determinassi (R)

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.759 ^a	.576	.574	3,070

a. Predictors: (Constant), Word of Mouth, Riview Produk Digital

b. Dependent Variable: Keputusan Pembelian

Table IV.7 Determination Coefficient (R) Test Table

Based on the coefficient of determination (R) test table, an R Square value of 0.576 was obtained. This means that 57.6% of the dependent variables can be explained by digital product reviews and Word of Mouth, while 42.4% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study. An R value of 0.759 indicates a strong relationship between the variables.

The Effect of Digital Product Reviews on Purchasing Decisions

Based on the results of partial testing (t-test), the digital product review variable was proven to have a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of gadget products among students in Cirebon City. This is indicated by a significance value of 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05, and a regression coefficient value of 1.093. A positive regression coefficient value indicates that every increase in the quality of digital product reviews will be followed by an increase in the decision to purchase gadget products.

These findings show that students who obtain information about gadget products through clear, complete, and credible digital reviews are more likely to make purchasing decisions. The existence of digital reviews helps students evaluate product quality, compare various available alternatives, and minimize the risk of making mistakes when purchasing gadget products. Digital product reviews serve as an external source of information that provides a strong basis for consideration before consumers decide to make a purchase.

Theoretically, the results of this study support the concept proposed by (Kotler & Keller, 2016) which states that pre-purchase information plays a crucial role in the consumer decision-making process. Digital reviews serve as an external source of information that influences consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. These findings are also consistent with various previous studies that confirm that digital product reviews have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, thereby further strengthening the empirical evidence that digital product reviews are a determining factor in increasing purchasing decisions for gadget products. Based on the results of this test, the first hypothesis (H₁), which states that digital product reviews have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, is accepted

The Effect of Word of Mouth on Purchasing Decisions

Based on the results of partial testing (t-test), the word of mouth variable showed a significance value of 0.340, which was above the significance level of 0.05 with a regression coefficient value of -0.027. These results indicate that word of mouth does not have a significant effect on the purchase decisions of gadget products among students in Cirebon City. The negative and very small regression coefficient shows that changes in the intensity of word of mouth communication do not have a significant impact on increasing or decreasing purchase decisions.

This finding indicates that students do not entirely rely on recommendations from friends or their surroundings as the main basis for determining their purchase of gadget products. The results of the study show that interpersonal information sources are beginning to be replaced by digital information sources, where students rely more on online reviews from many users than on the opinions of specific individuals. This condition causes the influence of word of mouth to be relatively weak in the context of purchasing gadget products among students in Cirebon City.

Theoretically, the results of this study are in line with changes in consumer behavior in the digital age, where consumers tend to trust information based on digital platforms more than verbal communication. This shift occurs because digital information is considered more objective, easily accessible, and comes from various sources that can be compared. Thus, word of mouth is not a major factor influencing purchasing decisions in the context of this study. Based on these findings, the second hypothesis (H₂) stating that word of mouth has a significant effect on purchasing decisions is rejected..

The Influence of Digital Product Reviews and Word of Mouth on Purchasing Decision

Based on the simultaneous test results (F test), a calculated F value of 257.177 was obtained with a significance level of 0.000, which is far below the significance level of 0.05. These results indicate that digital product reviews and word of mouth together have a significant effect on the purchase decisions of gadget products among students in Cirebon City. These findings indicate that students' purchase decisions are not only influenced by one factor separately, but are the result of a combination of various complementary sources of information in the decision-making process.

Based on the results of the coefficient of determination test, an R Square value of 0.576 was obtained, indicating that 57.6% of the variation in purchasing decisions can be explained by digital product reviews and word of mouth, while the remaining 42.4% is influenced by other variables outside this research model. The results of this study emphasize that digital product reviews and word of mouth are two complementary factors that influence purchasing decisions. Digital reviews serve as a dominant factor that provides technical information and user experiences, while word of mouth acts as a supporting factor in shaping consumer confidence. Based on these findings, the third hypothesis (H₃), which states that digital product reviews and word of mouth simultaneously have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, is accepted..

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion regarding the influence of digital product reviews and word of mouth on the decision to purchase gadget products among students in Cirebon City, it can be concluded that digital product reviews have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. This is evidenced by a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a regression coefficient of 1.093, which indicates that an increase in the quality of digital product reviews can increase students' purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that students tend to rely on information from digital reviews as the main source in evaluating and determining the purchase of gadget products..

Meanwhile, word of mouth partially had no significant effect on purchasing decisions, with a significance value of 0.340 (> 0.05) and a regression coefficient of -0.027. However, the simultaneous test results show that digital product reviews and word of mouth together have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, as evidenced by a calculated F value of 257.177 and a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). The coefficient of determination (R Square) value of 0.576 indicates that 57.6% of the variation in purchasing decisions can be explained by these two variables, while the remaining 42.4% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. These findings confirm that although digital product reviews are a dominant factor, the combination of both variables still makes an important contribution to shaping students' purchasing decisions.

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