

# DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF COVID-19 PURCHASING DECISION RELATED TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-WOM

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## Abstract

*The COVID-19 pandemic that occurred all across the globe affected the economy. The firm is responsible for promotions, and clients use different types of technology to make purchases. Digital marketing employs social media to promote a product using electronic communication tools, which assist customers in making better-educated buying choices and persuade them to purchase a product or service. This study used purposeful sampling to acquire data, and the sample size was computed using answers from 441 participants who completed online surveys. Participants must be at least 20 years old and active purchasers in the retail internet industry. The suggestion indicates that customers may obtain a product or service via social media or e-WOM. Our SEM-based analysis revealed conformity with the value CFI is 0.954, the value RFI is 0.918, the value NFI is 0.931, and the value RMSEA is 0.066. Consequently, advertising using digital marketing on social media during the COVID-19 epidemic has substantially influenced consumers' purchasing decisions.*

**Keywords:** covid-19, e-wom, media social, purchase decision, trust, usefulness

## INTRODUCTION

Due to online transactions through social media and e-commerce platforms, purchasing and selling are less complicated in this digital marketing era. The communication process between sellers and buyers in the product or service promotion mission is also essential for online transactions. The development of sales promotions that do run often has problems developing the sales business, but behind it, there is a solution to maintain the sales business so that it can still run well from time to time. For example, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, many sales businesses experienced an impact that impacted the development of the sales business. As a result, all regions must conduct sales promotion efforts at home or Work from Home (WFH) with the imposition of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). For example, during the operational sales promotion, Mitsubishi and Nisan dealers in the Jakarta area stopped operating at many dealers (Sudarwan, 2020). The effect of the epidemic of Covid-19 on the retail sales of Mitsubishi vehicles, often known as sales made by dealers directly to customers, has been reduced. In February 2020, sold via transactions up to 8,163 units; sales plummeted to 5,450 units in March (Purnama, 2020).

Our study focuses on the measures manufacturers and businesses took to enhance sales during the COVID-19 epidemic. Digital marketing is a purchase decision solution for customers that need WOM or e-WOM promotion using social media technologies.

Rapid technological development and internet use have allowed marketing experts to promote goods or services via the website, and the practice is known as "e-marketing" in certain circles. With an internet-based marketing communication approach, namely social media networks, businesses may sell more items and incur fewer marketing expenses. For example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Line are all examples of social media sites that may be used to promote products. As a consequence, consumers have a more critical and selective approach to product consumption.

To successfully market a product, the company needs a plan incorporating interest and content and deploying it inside a digital structure that can interface directly with customers (Abler, 2015). For instance, customers will research a product using social media platforms before purchasing that product. This preference influences the sentiments held by customers, which in turn affects their purchase decisions.

Our research approach is to survey respondents using quantitative data collection techniques as primary data for buying decision-making. Data collection employs questionnaires by submitting or offering a series of questions for respondents to complete using a Google form. The data collection results will be submitted to data validation and analysis of choice using the hypothesis and SEM to recommendations by social media or e-WOM for buying a product or service.

During the pandemic, our research results assume that several major cities in Indonesia have shifted towards buying and selling transactions to new adaptations to digital marketing and take advantage of social media for sales and promotions. Another reason for customers is to trust the source of information from social media; the risk of contracting the coronavirus can infect, and customers are now suggested to acquire information about a product or service while researching on social media platforms.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The fact acknowledged in the past is that promoting goods and services via word-of-mouth (WOM) might affect how information is disseminated and occurs in offline and digital settings. Therefore, experts presume that word-of-mouth promotion of goods and services falls within the category of communication (WOM). Word of Mouth refers to the transmission of information from one person to another or from one speaker to another via the natural process of verbal communication among individuals (Ghosh, Varshney, & Venugopal, 2014). A fundamental aspect of every communication enables the sender to impact the recipient and the recipient's future purchasing decisions. A study examined social media WOM's causes and effects on luxury brand buying intent (An, Chung, & Muk, 2020; Park, Hyun & Thavisay, 2021).

Meanwhile, with the technology internet, called electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), the research by Yan, Zhou, Zhang, and Li, (2019), e-WOM is a negative or positive announcement produced through actual, potential or customary consumers concerning merchandise or firm. The information is available to people or organizations through internet media. Therefore, communication of e-WOM has become essential for consumers in stating their opinion (Mentoh & Suki, 2017). E-WOM is perceived to be more beneficial than a traditional presentation of WOM since it is more easily accessed. In addition, it has more extensive outreach.

Other research has also revealed that communication with WOM methods has a more significant effect than other sources of communication, such as providing editorial recommendations or showing an advertisement of a product/service (El-Baz, Elseidi, &

El-Maniaway, 2018). Furthermore, based on the source of communication information with WOM, present products/services can provide relatively truthful and reliable data (Oraedu, Izogo, Nnabuko, & Ogba, 2021; Pasternak, 2017). Therefore, the variety of communication to introduce products/services has strong persuasive power through the credibility of information and a higher level of trust (Weitzl, Zniva, & Beldad, 2016). However, the advancement of information technology and the practice of advertising products or services and then disseminating information via interpersonal contact has been revolutionized due to the rise of social media. As a result, the ease of access to information in promoting products or services has become a trend and phenomenally easy today to influence consumer purchasing decisions (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

A real-time feedback loop is necessary for the promotion plan that uses several marketing tools Bishop, (2017) that helps give a Likert scale to brands. For example, a product makes an impression, and digital interaction is more intelligent to customers than conventional promotion. As suggested by Dulek and Aydin (2020), the platform of media-social influences customer behavior, as seen by brand purchases and marketing efforts. The consumer-brand relationships for purchase activity on three different nations' social media platforms (France, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have been indicated positively (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2015).

In 2014 Balakrishnan, Dahnil, and Yi, (2014), the study findings indicated that 81 percent of customers in Indonesia are influenced by social media when determining which things to purchase and when acquiring them. Of all applications of social media, Facebook is at the first rank in influencing consumers' purchase decisions (44%), followed by Instagram (29%) and WhatsApp (8%). Another study indicated that internet marketing channels influence customers' purchasing intent (Masodah, Musa, Pratiwi, & Murtiasih, 2019), suggest doing a study in Indonesia to evaluate the degree to which gender, socio-economic status, and the existence of multiple generations modify the relationship between purchasing decisions and media-social platforms.

The rapid advancement of social media has improved marketing professionals' benefits. More than one-third of firms have applied social media to market their goods and services (Ma, Sun, & Kekre, 2015). Social media can spread information extensively and transparently. It enables firms to monitor and analyze websites to measure customer perception. Therefore, firms become proactive in providing services to consumers. Social media has grown to be the most prevalent factor throughout the environment and has affected consumers' responses since social media can provide essential information from anywhere in the globe at any moment. It also allows users or customers to compare different data and have mutual and effective interaction or communication with the sellers. Furthermore, social media enables everybody to access shops and restrooms within every time limit via electronic apparatus such as a computer, smartphones, etc. (Yudhistira, 2018).

Confidence in buyers represents a vital task in a business transaction connecting buyers and merchants. The absence of direct human contact is a drawback of online buying (Nurjaman, 2021). Previous research on the significance of trust in online business has revealed that consumers' confidence in information will positively improve the purchase transaction. Also, minimize risk since some consumers have stated their previous experience with the same goods or services (Georgi, Ducu, & Tuzovic, 2016) and enhances repeated purchase intentions (Matute, Polo-Redondo, & Utrillas, 2015). Consumers can have a different positive approach to online shops because numerous buyers have given their past experiences. Therefore, a considerable number of users

promoting merchandise will lead to more considerable confidence and more risk perceived in a transaction (Pradhana, Suliantoro, & Susanty, 2021).

Furthermore, consumer analysis is more credible than sellers' information (Yeap, Ignatius, & Ramayah, 2014). Therefore, consumers who perceive the study as credible will feel more self-confident in buying because they can minimize risk in e-commerce. In addition, permanent comments on websites positively affect the vendors' self-confidence since they give a virtual forum for buyers to share their ideas. Therefore, the credibility of e-WOM can influence the readers' perception of online merchants (Arta & Yasa, 2019). Keeping this in mind, we could suggest the following:

H1: Trust acts as a moderator between the effect of e-WOM and the final decision to purchase.

H2: Trust acts as a moderator between the influence of social media on the ultimate choice to buy and the impact of using social media.

According to Davis (Hua, Ramayah, Ping, & Jacky, 2017), perceived usefulness refers to how much an individual is sure that using technology will improve performance. When individuals perceive that the media of information is valid, they will use it. Perceived usefulness is proven to strongly determine consumers' behavior intent since it can encourage individuals to have another visit to the online shop to have a repeated purchase. When other buyers note that the website can improve their production, they make buying decisions (Ibrahim & Wella, 2020; Penz, Zablocki, & Simbrunner, 2018). Therefore, buyers acknowledge comments on an online store to make a purchasing choice.

One of the most significant advantages of using the internet is that it enables customers to access a significant amount of data concisely. In addition, websites may include comments that might assist customers in making purchasing decisions on a specific product. Consequently, customers may get a great deal more information on the qualities of items and the experiences that other customers have had while buying the same things. Consumers should also consider that the quantity of comments posted on an online company's website is symbolic of the utility customers believe the website possesses.

Much information from e-WOM represents the availability of different information for customers. For example, the customers can enhance the perceived utility and aid in the buying decision-making. When users revisit a website, many recommendations will boost their benefits (Luo, Wang, Wu, Liang, & Guo, 2014). Online shopping offers additional information to different buyers (Asghar & Mahmud, 2020). Consequently, the communication content is an essential component of the reliability of e-WOM. With that in mind, we could propose that:

H3: Perceived utility moderates the influence of e-WOM on the purchasing decision.

H4: Perceived utility moderates social media usage's impact on a purchasing choice.

H5: The influence of perceived usefulness on self-assurance.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The approach utilized in this research is based on scientific principles in a quantitative descriptive procedure to investigate populations or samples. The determination of target population of the research target is the buyers or consumers who are seeking information. The study emphasizes the dissemination of questionnaires with surveys of respondents who wish to gather information to choose between acquiring

products or services. Data factors were studied on many such as Social Media Usage (SMU), Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), Trust (Tr), Perceived Usefulness (PUs), and Purchase Decisions (PD). The data validation method for collecting sample respondents is at least the respondent's profile is 20 years old and actively acquiring goods and services.

Primary data obtained through instruments or measuring equipment are used to distribute questions on the google form platform to broaden the reach of respondents. These respondents use information technology in social media and e-WOM. The responders were provided a scale of Likert with five possible outcomes, ranging from "1 vehemently opposes this position (disagree)" to "5 of these statements are quite accurate (agree)". They were given the directive to provide a score on that scale for everything they presented. In order to gather information from respondents and serve as a measure for evaluating hypotheses, we distributed questionnaires. The researchers used a method known as Structural Equation Modeling, or SEM, to investigate the assumptions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Purposeful sampling was used to acquire the samples and collect data. A total of 441 people responded to the survey. The questionnaires were distributed to Indonesian respondents who made online purchases and used social media. Most responses were 29 years old, which was the median age. Most of the people who answered the survey are in their millennial years. On average, they use social media for 2.5 days every week. The table below contains the questions on the questionnaire used for this investigation. Table 1 provides a summary of the questions that were posed.

Table 1. Variables and items of the measurement

Variables	Codes	Items
SMU	SMU <sub>1</sub>	I like the brand more because of social media.
	SMU <sub>2</sub>	I see other customers' behavior using social media.
	SMU <sub>3</sub>	I get information about sales and promotions through social media.
	SMU <sub>4</sub>	I know a brand from social media.
	SMU <sub>5</sub>	I utilize communication to improve my ties with a variety of different companies via the use of the media-social platform.
	SMU <sub>6</sub>	I utilize social media to communicate with vendors/firms.
e-WOM	e-WOM <sub>1</sub>	I talk about the goodness of products through social media.
	e-WOM <sub>2</sub>	I talk about positive matters of products through social media.
	e-WOM <sub>3</sub>	I recommend that other people purchase products/brands through social media.
	e-WOM <sub>4</sub>	I frequently read a review of products/brands to identify an excellent impression of the products/brands.
Tr	Tr <sub>1</sub>	Using social media is an exciting experience for me.
	Tr <sub>2</sub>	I get helpful information on products/brands through social media.
	Tr <sub>3</sub>	Social media gives information about reliable and safe products/brands.
	Tr <sub>4</sub>	I can easily trust someone/something through social media.
PUs	PU <sub>s1</sub>	Social networking facilitates the acquisition of purchase-related information.
	PU <sub>s2</sub>	Social media permits me to purchase merchandise and services.
	PU <sub>s3</sub>	Social media permits me to recognize and purchase merchandise and services quickly.
	PU <sub>s4</sub>	Social media makes my time-seeking and purchasing products/services more effective.
PD	PDI <sub>1</sub>	I am cautious in selecting brands/ products in the market.
	PDI <sub>2</sub>	Selecting appropriate products is very important to me.
	PDI <sub>3</sub>	In selecting products, I consider the consequences of my choice.

The reliability of the analytical equipment may be evaluated by applying a statistical formula called Cronbach's alpha. Conversely, calculating the instrument as the extracted variance average (AVE) may determine the instrument's validity. The models have been put to use, the measurements are shown in Table 2, and as a direct result, they comprise five latent variables.

**Table 2. The result of variables and units of measurement**

Variable	Codes	Mean	SD	Loading	Cronbach $\alpha$	AVE	CR
SMU	SMU <sub>1</sub>	3.472	1.02 9	0.744	0.943	0.807	0.944
	SMU <sub>2</sub>	3.692	0.94 6	0.737			
	SMU <sub>3</sub>	4.116	0.89 8	0.749			
	SMU <sub>4</sub>	3.995	0.88 4	0.745			
	SMU <sub>5</sub>	3.558	1.03 4	0.776			
	SMU <sub>6</sub>	3.789	1.01 9	0.721			
e-WOM	e- WOM <sub>1</sub>	3.433	1.03 1	0.916	0.881	0.556	0.883
	e- WOM <sub>2</sub>	3.490	1.02 7	0.917			
	e- WOM <sub>3</sub>	3.492	1.02 5	0.772			
	e- WOM <sub>4</sub>	4.061	0.94 6	0.625			
Tr	Tr <sub>1</sub>	4.154	0.83 9	0.796	0.878	0.667	0.887
	Tr <sub>2</sub>	4.141	0.85 5	0.896			
	Tr <sub>3</sub>	3.780	0.98 1	0.760			
	Tr <sub>4</sub>	3.921	0.82 3	0.774			
PUs	PU <sub>s1</sub>	4.073	0.84 4	0.894	0.790	0.546	0.819
	PU <sub>s2</sub>	4.122	0.84 1	0.935			
	PU <sub>s3</sub>	4.109	0.84 6	0.899			
	PU <sub>s4</sub>	4.127	0.85 7	0.865			
PD	PDI <sub>1</sub>	4.302	0.77 9	0.750	0.849	0.670	0.859
	PDI <sub>2</sub>	4.492	0.67 8	0.888			
	PDI <sub>3</sub>	4.329	0.73 1	0.804			

According to the research findings on the measurement model, the questionnaire questions have high reliability and validity. This conclusion is reached based on the aggregate value of reliability that AVE delivers. In addition, the internal reliability of all scales is significant, with an average value of more than 0.8 (Lages, Jap, & Griffith, 2008). Despite this, each of the constructions has a Cronbach alpha higher than the minimum acceptable value of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Before further investigation, exhaustive statistical testing of the SEM model is required. The test aims to assess the overall acceptability of the model for the sample data presently available and the degree to which the observable variables may be used to explain the hidden variable. Table 3 displays the goodness-of-fit statistics generated by the SEM output.

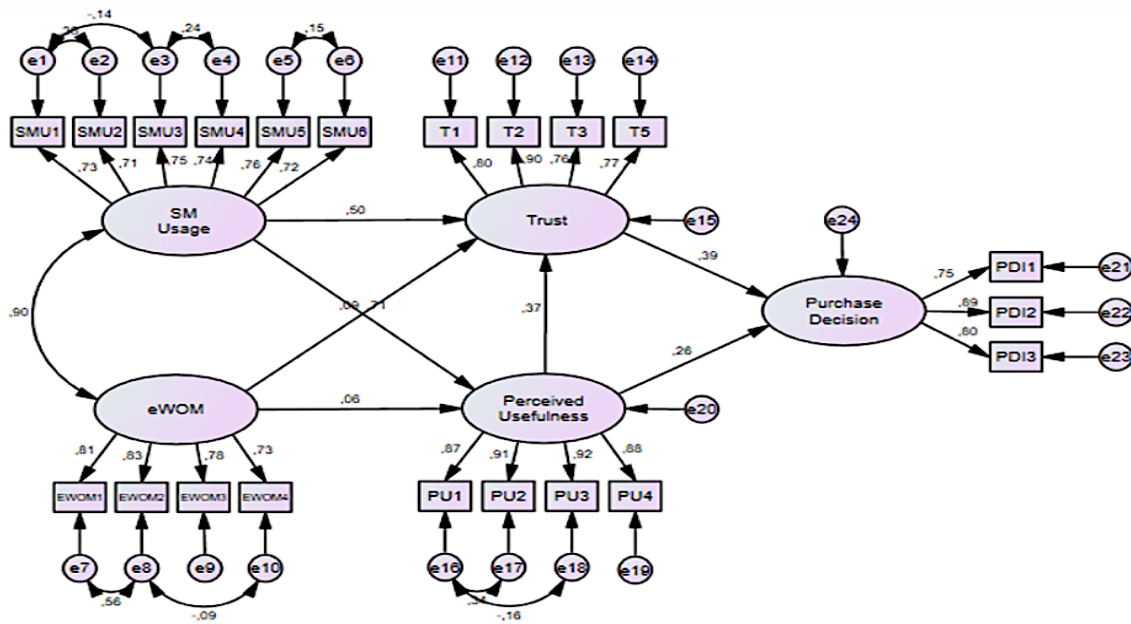
**Table 3. Model Fit**

<b>Statistics on How Well the Model Fits</b>	<b>Independence Model</b>	<b>Default Model</b>	<b>Saturated Model</b>
X <sup>2</sup> /df	35.644	2.932	-
Normed Fit Index	0	0.931	1
Comparative Fit Index	0	0.954	1
Relative Fit Index	0	0.918	-
Tucker-Lewis Index	0	0.944	-
Incremental Fit Index	0	0.954	1
Root Means the Square Error of Approximation	0.281	0.066	-

Table 3 shows that model of the SEM is applicable and constructed in this research utilizing the AMOS 22 program is valid based on output goodness of fit statistics and explanations. The normed fit index (NFI) value of 2.932, which is more than 0.05, demonstrates the goodness of fit. The importance of the model fit of comparative (CFI), the model fit of relative (RFI), the model fit of incremental (IFI), and the model fit of Tucker-Lewis (TLI) are all more than 0.9, indicating a solid match. The term "root" refers to the square inaccuracy in the approximate value, or the model fit of RMSEA has a value of 0.66, which suggests that the fit is satisfactory since it falls between the range of 0.05 and 0.08 for RMSEA. Consequently, the model developed to explore the influence of media-social and e-WOM on consumers' decision-making, which is mediated by an individual's perceived utility and degree of trust, is deemed a Good Fit for the data.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) examines each correlation parameter's relevance in the SEM model. Figure 1 illustrates the association between the observable and latent variables. According to Hair (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), a beneficial aspect is that The loading factor must exceed 0.5. Ideally, the value should exceed 0.7.

Figure 1 indicates that all loading factors correlating the indicators with the latent construct have a value greater than 0.70. This finding implies that the indicators and latent constructs are highly correlated. In addition, the architectural model, inclusive of the analytical hypotheses and routes, was evaluated using the maximal reasonableness evaluation method. As seen in Table 4, the structural model demonstrates sufficient period goodness with the data.



**Figure 1. Path Analysis of SEM Model**

The pandemic will significantly influence GDP growth throughout the globe—the social or economic effect known as the COVID-19 global recession wreaks havoc on many sectors and businesses. One of the effects is marketing, and there is a possibility that using cutting-edge, recently conceived advertising techniques focused on the media-social application using the internet on sites like Facebook and Twitter may aid in improving consumers' thoughts of the worth and dependability of a product.

**Table 4. The results of the hypothesis**

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Perceived Usefulness	<= Social Media Usage	0.698	0.140	4.990	***
Perceived Usefulness	<= e-WOM	0.057	0.120	0.476	0.634
Trust	<= e-WOM	0.069	0.086	0.807	0.420
Trust	<= Social Media Usage	0.450	0.113	3.991	***
Trust	<= Perceived Usefulness	0.336	0.051	6.656	***
Perceived Usefulness	<= Trust	0.337	0.079	4.260	***
Perceived Usefulness	<= Perceived Usefulness	0.210	0.070	3.003	0.003

Analyzed using the SEM model, the influence of social media platforms on consumers' purchasing choices because consumers are more likely to have faith in a business if given accurate and up-to-date information. Businesses must provide high-quality services in order to accomplish this goal. In other words, digital marketing on social media platforms can influence customers' purchase decisions (for instance, by warranting a product or offering attractive discounted prices and prizes).

The research analyzes how people use online forums and communities (like a media-social platform) and Word of Mouth on the internet (called e-WOM) to make purchasing decisions about a product/service and the impact of the pandemic as part of the digital marketing strategy. According to the study, e-WOM spread via social media substantially impacts consumer decision-making through perceived usefulness and trust. However, the most important takeaway from our research is that marketing via social



media is effective. Even better, social media is an interactive marketing tool that can give services and develop solid relationships with existing and new customers. Marketing professionals often utilize YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to successfully convey product and service information to consumers and prospective customers, particularly millennials. Due to their familiarity with online shopping and participation in social media, most millennials in Indonesia are prospective purchasers. Our study adds to improved product/service sales; thus, we may advise businesses to boost social media by massively disseminating client information.

The study's findings aimed at disproving a hypothesis about the relationship between social media use and a more favorable perception of value, as well as the relationship between a more favorable perception of value and a change in buying behavior. In addition, the relationship between trust and purchasing decisions has a p-value lower than 0.01. The suggestions of both hypotheses (hypotheses 1 and 3) are considered reasonable and valid. Those models anticipate the impact of media-social usage on purchasing choices through perceived utility and trust. On the other hand, the p-value for e-WOM concerning perceived usefulness and trust is more than 0.01, which both hypotheses 2 and 4 can consequently be rejected. However, perceived usefulness to trust also has a p-value of  $< 0.01$ , meaning hypothesis 5 is accepted.

In this instance, e-WOM suggests that the more a consumer trusts a brand or product, the more likely they are to purchase. Consumers prefer to purchase things from businesses they trust; trust is crucial. In addition to fostering confidence, social media usage may affect purchase decisions through utilities. Utility refers to the advantages, or added value customers get from utilizing a specific product or brand. Suppose social media usage can assist customers in locating things that meet their wants and preferences or give helpful information about products. In that case, the utility of social media will improve, and trust and utility will affect consumers' purchase decisions. Suppose customers believe the information they get from social media is reliable and valuable. In that case, they will be likelier to choose items or brands recommended on social media.

The results of this investigation are consistent with previous studies and investigations using various methods, which show that customers' buying choices are influenced by internet marketing media. In addition, in Prasad's survey (Prasad, Gupta, & Totala, 2017), according to the findings presented, using social media platforms supported by the trust has a beneficial influence on online sales. According to research Sanjaya and Budiono, (2021), using social media, e-WOM, and trust positively affects customers' purchase choices for a product or shoe brand in the Jabodetabek region. The research results Rusli and Mulyandi, (2019) indicate that social media influences purchasing decisions directly but insignificantly, whereas e-WOM influences purchasing decisions directly. However, using social media mediated by trusts positively impacts purchasing decisions, so electronic word of mouth mediated by trusts positively impacts purchasing decisions. Social media usage may lead to the development of e-WOM; with the advent of social media and greater access to information, user trust has become more vital.

The survey findings reveal consumers' sensitivity regarding using various social media platforms to collect purchase information. As a result, consumers can make purchases more efficacy based on their perceived usefulness and faith in the goods or services they desire.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Efforts have been made to implement sales campaigns that stimulate buying interest during the COVID-19 epidemic. The research findings corroborate the theoretical framework of the positive effect social media usage has on the involvement of consumers making buying decisions, particularly millennials. In the other instance of purchasing choice, the e-WOM does not impact purchase choices mediated by a product's perceived utility and reliability. Moreover, consumers' judgments are influenced by the effect of e-WOM on perceived utility and reliability.

The findings of the research point to the potential role that trust and perceived utility play as mediators in the connection between the usage of social media and consumer participation in the purchase decision-making process. Social media's relevance can also influence consumer participation in purchasing decision-making. However, suppose social media have low levels of trust and utility. In this case, consumer participation in the buying decision-making process may decline, and the use of social media can also influence consumers' perceptions of brands and products that receive a great deal of criticism or negative reviews on social media. As a result, people may be cautious about acquiring these items.

The validation in our research obtained a more significant number of responses from people in their millennial years but not many responses from older people. Because respondents of older ages are less likely to have social media accounts, the research findings from those respondents provide fewer limits. Consequently, controlling the validation results in forecasting the product or service sales outcomes is feasible. In future research, we propose to find users of social media who fall into the group of older ages, and utilizing social media to promote goods and services is something that our study findings and proposes for the following research.

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