The Role of Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth in the Consumer Purchase Decision Process of Kopi Tuku (A Case Study of Consumers in Jabodetabek)

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Abstract

Introduction/Main Objectives: This study explores the role of Word of Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) in consumer purchase decisions for Kopi Tuku, focusing on how WOM triggers initial awareness and how E-WOM functions as a tool for evaluation, social validation, and risk reduction prior to purchase.

Background Problems: Previous research on E-WOM is predominantly quantitative, measuring its influence without exploring how consumers perceive and interpret it in specific social contexts. Additionally, WOM and E-WOM are often treated as separate variables, overlooking their interrelationship and continuity within a single decision-making process.

Research Methods: A qualitative descriptive-exploratory design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Kopi Tuku consumers, social media observations, and documentation of digital reviews. Purposive sampling was used, and data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Finding/Results: E-WOM significantly shapes consumer trust and confidence by serving as a source of information and social validation. Its influence is strengthened by positive sentiment, narrative authenticity, and alignment with consumer identity. WOM and E-WOM operate sequentially and complementarily WOM sparks interest, while E-WOM reinforces confidence before purchase.

Conclusion: E-WOM is a strategic element in local coffee marketing, building trust, social legitimacy, and emotional connection. Marketing success depends not on promotional intensity, but on a brand's ability to generate authentic consumer experiences that stimulate organic, integrated WOM and E-WOM for sustainable brand growth.

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Keywords: Word of Mouth, Electronic Word of Mouth, Purchase Decision, Kopi Tuku, Digital Era

Introduction

The coffee industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth, driven by an evolving urban coffee culture where consumption extends beyond product quality to encompass social interaction, identity expression, and community bonding. Within this context, consumer purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by social factors, particularly Word of Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM). These informal communication channels are perceived as more credible than formal marketing due to their basis in real consumer experiences.

While prior research has established that E-WOM significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchase intentions particularly through social media and online reviews most studies adopt quantitative approaches that treat E-WOM as a direct predictor of purchase outcomes. Such approaches often overlook the complex, multi-stage nature of decision-making, where WOM and E-WOM function not only as information sources but also as mechanisms for social validation, trust reinforcement, and perception formation.

Moreover, existing research predominantly focuses on global brands or large digital platforms, leaving a gap in understanding how local brands operate within WOM and E-WOM ecosystems. Local brands like Kopi Tuku an Indonesian coffee brand that has grown through community closeness, personal recommendations, and authentic narratives offer a unique context for examination. In the Jabodetabek region, where social media penetration is high and coffee culture is closely tied to social gatherings, WOM and E-WOM dynamics are particularly relevant yet underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by employing a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how consumers interpret and utilize WOM and E-WOM in their purchase decisions for Kopi Tuku. Through in-depth interviews with consumers, the research explores how these communication forms function within a local context and shape purchasing behavior. The findings aim to contribute to more targeted marketing strategies that enhance the competitiveness of local brands by leveraging social networks, authentic consumer experiences, and culturally resonant narratives.

Research Methods

This study employs a **qualitative approach** with a descriptive-exploratory research design, selected to address existing research gaps by providing an in-depth understanding of how consumers interpret, experience, and meaning to Word of Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) within their purchase decision processes an area predominantly examined through quantitative methods in prior literature.

Research Location and Participants
The research focuses on Kopi Tuku consumers in the Jabodetabek region (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi), selected due to the area's high intensity of social interactions, strong social media penetration, and established coffee culture where consumption is closely tied to social gatherings and community activities. Participants are recruited using purposive sampling, ensuring variation in consumption experience, level of involvement in E-WOM activities (e.g., reading or writing online reviews, following social media discussions), and intensity of interaction with the Kopi Tuku brand.

Data Collection Techniques
Data are collected through three complementary methods:

1. **In-depth interviews** with Kopi Tuku consumers to explore their personal experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they attach to WOM and E-WOM in their purchase decisions.

2. **Observation** of consumer interactions on social media platforms to understand how E-WOM conversations unfold naturally.

3. **Documentation** of relevant digital reviews and online content related to Kopi Tuku.

Data Analysis

Data are analyzed using **thematic analysis techniques**, involving systematic stages of data reduction, coding, theme categorization, and conclusion drawing. This approach ensures interpretive consistency and analytical depth, enabling the research to capture the complex emotional and cognitive dimensions of how WOM and E-WOM function as social validation mechanisms, trust-building tools, and perception-forming processes within the local coffee brand context.

Result

This study surveyed 44 Kopi Tuku consumers in the Jabodetabek region to examine the role of Word of Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) in purchase decisions. The findings are organized into four main themes.

Respondent Demographics

The majority of respondents were private-sector employees (47.7%), followed by students (15.9%), entrepreneurs (13.6%), and stay-at-home parents (13.6%). This indicates Kopi Tuku's broad demographic appeal. TikTok (27.3%) and Instagram (25%) were the most frequently used platforms for brand-related interactions. Within the past three months, 61.4% of respondents purchased Kopi Tuku 1–3 times, while 20.5% purchased 4–6 times, indicating consistent repeat purchasing behavior.

Initial Discovery and Digital Content Exposure

Consumers predominantly discovered Kopi Tuku through personal social circles, particularly Instagram Stories shared by friends and recommendations in WhatsApp groups, underscoring the critical role of WOM and E-WOM in brand awareness. Digital discovery also frequently occurred through TikTok's For You Page (FYP). The most commonly encountered content was product photos featuring the iconic cup sticker (45%), followed by digital images of menus and price lists, suggesting that visually appealing content effectively attracts consumer attention.

Trust and Credibility of E-WOM

Respondents consistently expressed higher trust in user-generated content over official brand advertisements. Peer reviews were perceived as honest experiences without commercial intent, while brand advertisements were viewed as biased "selling tools." Positive reviews functioned as a form of "quality assurance," with 100% of respondents emphasizing that honesty in reviews is essential to avoid post-purchase disappointment. These findings confirm that credibility is a critical factor in purchase decisions.

Brand Narrative and Perception

The "Kopi Tetangga" (Neighborhood Coffee) narrative resonated strongly with respondents, who described it as "simple," "humble," and "non-arrogant." Strong E-WOM narratives shaped consumer perceptions of Kopi Tuku as offering "premium quality without premium pricing," highlighting the importance of precise, emotionally resonant product positioning.

Purchase Decision Process

After viewing reviews and digital content, respondents typically proceeded to check food delivery applications (GoFood/GrabFood), seek confirmation from friends, or search for nearby outlets via Google Maps. While respondents acknowledged they might make impulse purchases when near an outlet, they would not intentionally seek out Kopi Tuku without prior validation obtained through digital WOM or E-WOM. This demonstrates that purchase decisions are highly dependent on digital information and social validation.

Table 1 Key Findings Summary

Variable	Key Trend Results
Primary Source	Friends' Social Media & TikTok FYP
Dominant Content	Product Photos (Iconic Cup) & Menu Listings
Trust Factor	Peer Authenticity > Official Advertisements
Brand Perception	Simple, Relatable, "Smart Value"
Conversion Trigger	Social validation through a high volume of reviews

Source: Researcher Data, 2025

Discussion

The findings reveal that Kopi Tuku's growth in Jabodetabek is significantly driven by organic Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Instagram and TikTok. This aligns with previous research on digital algorithms amplifying social proof and accelerating consumer recommendations. On Instagram, visually appealing content such as product photos with personal narratives captures attention and increases purchase intention through emotional connection. TikTok's short-video format generates viral effects, reaching broader and more diverse audiences.

A key finding is that consumers trust peer-generated reviews more than official advertising, reinforcing source credibility in E-WOM. Authentic experiences are perceived as more trustworthy due to the absence of commercial motives, enabling companies to leverage consumer voices for more effective marketing strategies.

In the coffee industry, which relies heavily on sensory experiences, honest digital reviews reduce perceptual risk. Consumers use E-WOM as a validation tool before purchase, minimizing post-consumption dissatisfaction. Positive reviews build confidence, demonstrating E-WOM's function as a risk-reduction mechanism.

The "Kopi Tetangga" narrative resonates strongly with urban consumers' social identity, functioning as symbolic emotional closeness that strengthens brand relationships. Kopi Tuku becomes a reflection of lifestyle and values, fostering brand loyalty when consumers perceive themselves as part of a broader community. This aligns with the perspective that WOM and E-WOM serve as social mechanisms shaping brand meaning through shared experiences.

In Jabodetabek's competitive coffee market, E-WOM functions as a primary filter in purchase decisions. Consumers rely on digital reviews and peer validation, creating a snowball effect where recommendations trigger multiple purchase decisions and reinforce social influence.

In conclusion, E-WOM plays a significant role in Kopi Tuku's growth through organic social media mechanisms. The higher trust in peer reviews highlights credibility's strategic importance. Strong narratives like "Kopi Tetangga" foster emotional connections, while E-WOM acts as a critical filter in competitive markets. Understanding E-WOM's influence is essential for brand success in the digital era.

Conclusion

This study highlights the synergy between strong social narratives and digital social proof as key drivers of organic brand growth in the digital era. The "Kopi Tetangga" phenomenon demonstrates that authentic narratives emerging from consumer interactions rather than brand-constructed stories shape brand identity, build trust, and foster emotional attachment. Consistent digital social proof, manifested through consumer posts, comments, and reviews, reinforces these narratives by attracting new consumers while strengthening existing loyalty, creating a positive cycle of engagement and recommendation.

A critical challenge for the food and beverage industry lies in maintaining consistency between digital promises and physical realities. Brands must ensure all offerings from product quality to service reflect promoted values, as misalignment rapidly damages reputation. Such consistency builds trust and fosters positive E-WOM cycles that expand market influence.

Kopi Tuku's success exemplifies an authentic, consumer-centered approach. By building deeper relationships through in-store and digital participation, the brand cultivates community, enhances loyalty, and increases market share. This success depends not solely on product quality but on adapting to consumer behaviors increasingly reliant on digital platforms for purchase decisions.

In conclusion, authenticity, consumer engagement, and consistency between digital and physical experiences are essential for sustainable brand growth. Industry players must invest in compelling narratives while prioritizing consumer experience to thrive in competitive markets and generate broader positive impacts within communities and society.

Acknowledgement

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