

# The Mediation Role of Review Helpfulness, Customers Trust, and Brand Attitude Towards Positive e-WOM and Purchase Intention in Cosmetic Shopping Experience

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This study aims to examine the effectiveness of positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) in influencing the purchase intention of the cosmetic retailer and the role of review helpfulness, customers' trust in e-WOM, and the role of brand attitude as a mediator in the relationship.

**Design/Methods/Approach:** This study adopts descriptive quantitative research methods. The populations are women who frequently buy cosmetic products and are selected using non-probability and purposive sampling techniques. The data collection used an online survey with 155 respondents. Afterward, Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses.

**Findings:** Findings indicate that positive e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on review helpfulness. Review helpfulness also positively and significantly affects customers' trust in e-WOM and brand attitude. This study also found that customers' trust in e-WOM and brand attitude positively and significantly affected purchase intention. In addition, this study also found that review helpfulness has a positive and insignificant effect on purchase intention. Moreover, results suggest that review helpfulness, customers' trust in e-WOM, and brand attitude positively and significantly mediate the effect of positive e-WOM on purchase intention.

**Originality:** This study contributes to the marketing literature by using the positive e-WOM variable to see its effect on review helpfulness, customers' trust in e-WOM, brand attitude, and purchase intention in the cosmetic retailing context.

**Practical/Policy Implications:** Given that positive e-WOM improves customers' purchase intention through review helpfulness, trust in e-WOM, and brand attitude, cosmetic retailers are recommended to encourage their customers to post a review on the retailers' websites or applications. In addition, Cosmetic retailers also recommend displaying the customers' reviews. Hence, the reviews may help other customers know about the products before buying.

**Keywords:** Brand attitude, Customers trust on e-WOM, Positive e-WOM, Purchase intention, Review helpfulness.

**JEL Classification:** M30, M31, M37



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20473/jmtt.v16i1.42345>

Received: (January 8, 2023) Revised: (February 21, 2023; March 9, 2023) Accepted: (April 2, 2023) Published: (April 18, 2023)

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Published by Universitas Airlangga, Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business

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## I. Introduction

Many factors can influence customers before buying or using a product or service. One is looking for various product or service information (Yang et al., 2019). This information search reduces customers' uncertainty about product or service quality (Yang et al., 2019). The information can be obtained through online reviews. An online review is an electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) that significantly impacts customers' purchase intention (Song et al., 2021).

A company must convey consistent information to make it easier for customers to understand the products sold (Solomon et al., 2018). According to Solomon et al. (2018), three marketing communication models can explain the process of delivering information to customers: one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many. Currently, the many-to-many marketing communication model is rapidly growing. Many-to-many is a marketing communication model in which customers disseminate information about the product to other customers (Solomon et al., 2018). Converting information from one person to another is word of mouth (WOM). WOM is a form of marketing communication that is hard for companies to control (Solomon et al., 2018). However, WOM is the most important factor for customers in determining the products they want to buy (Solomon, 2019). In addition, information on WOM usually customers get from people they know. Thus, consumers will trust information from WOM more than information conveyed in other, more formal marketing channels (Solomon, 2019).

E-WOM has developed significantly in consumer behavior (González-Rodríguez et al., 2016). E-WOM in the form of online review is important in facilitating information about products and the exchange of consumption experiences (Siering et al., 2018). EWOM in the form of online reviews can also help consumers to reduce the risk and uncertainty associated with their purchasing decisions (Xiang et al., 2018). Meanwhile, according to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), e-WOM is defined as all positive and negative statements about a product or service provided by potential customers, actual customers, or people who have previously been customers, delivered via the Internet and made available to many people and other institutions (Song et al., 2021).

Online customer reviews are the most effective e-WOM in marketing activities (Hu et al., 2014; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Customers will be looking for information about the product before they buy it, and e-WOM in the form of online reviews is information that customers frequently search for (Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti, 2020). In addition, customers will trust the testimonials from people who have had experience with a product more than information from marketing communication activities of the product itself (Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti, 2020). According to Rao et al. (2021), e-WOM can also form the exchange of experience and information between individuals with common interests so that they can evaluate any information and think carefully before finally deciding to purchase.

According to Hu & Ha (2015), e-WOM is divided into four categories: (1) specialized e-WOM refers to reviews made by customers and posts on a website to compare or give ratings on a product, but the website does not sell products; (2) affiliated e-WOM refers to the customer reviews found on the retailer's website; (3) social e-WOM refers to any information related to a product shared by users of social networking sites, such as Instagram, Twitter, and others; (4) miscellaneous e-WOM refers to information about products shared on other social media platforms, such as blogs. Affiliated e-WOM is the second most preferred e-WOM in customers' online shopping decisions (Hu & Ha, 2015). In addition, before deciding to buy a cosmetic product, females aged 20-39, which were the same as Sociolla's target market, tend to consider affiliated e-WOM as a credible source of information (Hu & Ha, 2015). Thus, this study used affiliated e-WOM on an Indonesian cosmetic retailer's website and application, Sociolla.

This study uses positive e-WOM to explain the overall content of the online review that will be examined. According to Rao et al. (2021), positive e-WOM can help customers with the same interest gain information about the product they want. Positive e-WOM in a website also allows people with the same preferences to build conversations. Thus, it allowed them to interact with other customers, share their experiences, discuss the products, create value for the product, and make a well-thought-out purchase decision by evaluating a large amount of information presented on the website (Sohn, 2014). Positive e-WOM also acts as a reference for customers, which can increase their familiarity with the product (Rao et al., 2021). According to Yang et al. (2019), e-WOM positively and significantly influence review helpfulness. EWOM acts as information that circulates from people who have information about a product to people who lack information (Yang et al., 2019). Then the dissemination of this information can make people who receive information feel helped and can influence their behavior (Yang et al., 2019). In addition, review helpfulness, known as the perceived usefulness of e-WOM, is also one of the best predictors of purchase intention (Ismagilova et al., 2020). According to Kunja et al. (2022) research, e-WOM had a direct and significant effect on purchase intention because e-WOM is user-generated content; thus, it can gain trustworthiness from the readers. Turulja & Činjurević's (2020) found that perceived helpfulness from online customer reviews (OCR) can affect trust and attitude so that it can bring out the intention of customers to do something. The context of this study is downloading a travel application. This research was inspired by Kudeshia & Kumar (2017), which stated that e-WOM significantly affected brand attitude and purchase intention.

Those, as mentioned earlier, examined the effect of positive e-WOM influence review helpfulness, the effect of review helpfulness on trust and brand attitude, and the effect of brand attitude on purchase intention. However, limited studies have examined how positive e-WOM, review helpfulness, customers' trust in e-WOM, brand attitude, and purchase intention are connected. Therefore, this study intends to investigate whether positive e-WOM directly

influences customers' purchase intention when shopping for cosmetic products. Do review helpfulness, customer trust in e-WOM, and brand attitude mediate the relationship between positive e-WOM and purchase intention in shopping for cosmetic products?

This study contributes to the marketing literature by using the positive e-WOM variable to see its effect on review helpfulness, customers' trust in e-WOM, brand attitude, and purchase intention in cosmetic retailing. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to benefit the cosmetic industry to consider positive e-WOM as an important source of information to help consumers decide before buying a cosmetic product.

The following section contains a literature review of each variable used to build the hypotheses. Subsequently, the method section provides information about this research's quantitative method. Then, the results and discussion section explains the description of the hypotheses testing. At last, the conclusion section summarizes the study's results, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

### 2.1 Positive Electronic Word of Mouth (Positive E-WOM)

According to González-Rodríguez et al. (2016), WOM can be delivered via the Internet, known as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Positive e-WOM is a positive statement by potential, actual, or former customers about a product available to many people on the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). According to Rao et al. (2021), positive e-WOM significantly influences purchase intention. With positive e-WOM, customers with the same interest can exchange their experiences and information. Thus, they can evaluate available information and think carefully before buying the product. Therefore, according to Rao et al. (2021), positive e-WOM must contain the following criteria: (1) can make customers sure to buy the products offered, (2) customers can see that the products offered to bring a good impression to the buyers, (3) can provide customers with helpful information about the products offered, and (4) can make customers confident to buy the products offered.

Review helpfulness refers to how e-WOM in online reviews can facilitate customers' purchase intention (Ren & Hong, 2019). With positive e-WOM, customers can be helped to make their choices through the experiences of others (Rao et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H1: Positive e-WOM positively influences review helpfulness.

### 2.2 Review Helpfulness

According to Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti (2020), customer trust in e-WOM is defined as customers' beliefs and expectations of e-WOM so that it can become a credible source of information for customers to make decisions. Therefore, trust is an important part of the online environment (Zainal et al., 2017; Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti, 2020). According to Ismagilova et al. (2020), the perceived usefulness of e-WOM also refers to review helpfulness. The strong influence of review helpfulness on purchase intention can be associated with the fact that online review is a way of peer-to-peer and non-commercial communication or a form of recommendation from an individual, where the interests of a brand do not drive information delivered. Thus, online reviews look more trustworthy than information conveyed directly by the brand itself (Lee et al., 2011; Turulja & Činjurević, 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H2a: Review helpfulness positively affects customer trust in e-WOM.

Brand attitude is defined as the customer's overall evaluation of a brand (Olson and Mitchell, 2000; Turulja & Činjurević, 2020). Brand attitude can also be defined as a customer's assessment of whether it is something that they like or dislike about stimuli associated with a brand (Murphy and Zajonc, 1993; Turulja & Činjurević, 2020). According to Bigne et al. (2020), a review of helpfulness is the extent to which online reviews are considered valuable by customers in their decision-making process. A study conducted by Turulja & Činjurević (2020) explains that review helpfulness acts as informational cues that can affect a person's trust and attitude, which are cognitive and affective reactions, and in the end, can affect their purchase intention as behavioral intention (Jacoby, 2002; Turulja & Činjurević, 2020). Thus, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H2b: Review helpfulness positively influences brand attitude.

Purchase intention occurs when customers are interested in buying a product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017). In their research, Turulja & Činjurević (2020) stated that online review helpfulness in the travel app usage context could increase trust and attitude and encourage a behavioral intention toward the product. The results of their research stated that online review helpfulness leads to higher trust and attitude, which further positively influences customer intentions in downloading travel apps. Therefore, the hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Review helpfulness positively influences purchase intention.

### 2.3 Customers' Trust in E-WOM

A trusted e-WOM will help customers decide (López & Sicilia, 2014). A trusted e-WOM will also help customers reduce risk when they want to buy a product. The more trusted a source, the more it can encourage a positive attitude (Lunardo & Mbengue, 2013; Turulja & Činjurević, 2020). In this study, researchers believe that when customers trust the product review, they will understand that the product had a good impression on the previous buyer. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H4: Better customer trust in e-WOM will increase brand attitude.

Customers who trust the information on e-WOM will be helped in purchasing decisions (Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti, 2020). According to Prasad et al. (2019), building customer trust is essential online. When consumers believe the information in e-WOM, their doubts and worries about online retailers will decrease because they already have enough information. Customers' desire to find alternative online retailers will also decrease (Prasad et al., 2019). Thus, the higher the trust of customers, the higher the purchase intention, and it will be easier for a company to retain customers (Prasad et al., 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5a: Customers' trust in e-WOM positively influences purchase intention.

### 2.4 Brand Attitude

According to Ho et al. (2022), attitude is an essential factor influencing consumers' behavioral intention, including purchase intention, in online shopping. A study proves that when consumers have a positive attitude towards a brand, it will affect the goal purchase and their readiness to pay a premium price (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). It means consumer purchase intention will be high when their brand attitude towards a product is good (Summers et al., 2006; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Kunja et al. (2022) study also stated that a positive brand attitude encourages customers to purchase a product. Marketers can leverage the customers' positive brand attitudes by creating strong consumer-brand relationships (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Kunja et al., 2022). It is because brand attitude results from customers' encounters with the brand. These encounters can be through direct experience or product-related information, which can be influenced by e-WOM (Kunja et al., 2022). Thus, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H5b: Brand attitude positively and significantly influences purchase intention.

### 2.5 Purchase Intention

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2017), before deciding to buy, customers will first look for information about a product, rank it, and form a purchase intention, meaning that interest begins to appear to buy the product. Information about a product can be obtained through various sources, and online review is one of them. According to Rao et al. (2021), positive e-WOM is also a factor that can influence purchase intention. Positive e-WOM allows individuals with the same interests to exchange experiences and information. This is considered more reliable and can make it easier for customers to evaluate any available information to think carefully before finally deciding to buy the products offered (Rao et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Positive EWOM positively influences purchase intention.

According to Rao et al. (2021), during the information search phase, e-WOM's role is to assist customers in making choices about the products they want to buy. According to Turulja & Činjurević (2020), review helpfulness obtained from the information on e-WOM can increase customers' trust in a product. Thus, customers can have a positive attitude and raise their interest in buying the product reviewed. According to Filieri et al. (2021), it is not easy to find useful information on online platforms; thus, e-WOM has to be mediated with review helpfulness to influence customers' purchase intention. In addition, Rao et al. (2021) research found that trust partially mediates the positive e-WOM and purchase intention indicating that positive e-WOM strengthens consumers' trust beliefs in a firm and increases their purchase intention. Kunja et al. (2022) study also claims that positive e-WOM associated with a product will lead to the positive evaluation of the brand, known as brand attitude, and subsequently to the strengthening of purchase intention. It has been confirmed empirically by Kudeshia and Kumar's (2017) study, which stated that brand attitude has a mediating role between e-WOM and purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H7: Review helpfulness, customer trust in e-WOM, and brand attitude positively mediate the relationship between positive e-WOM and purchase intention.

The research model is shown in Figure 1.

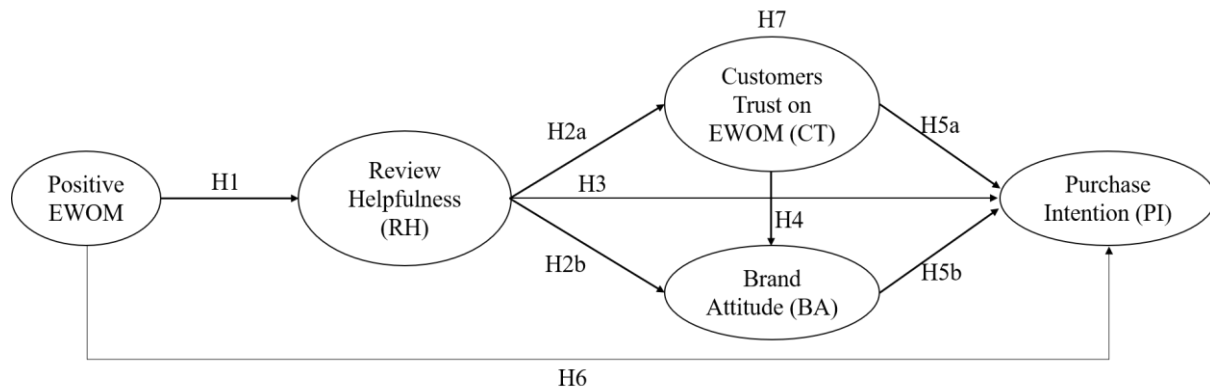


Figure 1. Research Model

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Sample and Data Collection

This study uses the cosmetic industry as the research object because, according to Euromonitor International, the growth of the beauty market in Indonesia is the fastest in Asia. In the cosmetic industry, e-WOM is also widely used. There is much e-WOM about makeup and skincare on social media and websites. Sociolla was chosen as the main object of the research because there are online reviews from Sociolla's customers on their website and application. Sociolla is a cosmetic retailer with the highest number of website visitors since Q4 2019 (Putri & Devita, 2021). In addition, Sociolla has been in the top 5 most downloaded applications on Play Store and Appstore since Q4 2020 (Putri & Devita, 2021).

The sample of this study is women who live in Indonesia, aged 18-32 years old, who frequently buy beauty products because people who frequently buy beauty products usually know Sociolla and have read reviews on the SOCO (Sociolla Connect) application or the Sociolla website. According to Hair Jr. et al. (2018), the number of samples to be collected to qualify is at least five times the number of indicators of the variables used in the study. There are 22 indicators in this study to represent all variables; thus, the number of samples needed is 110 samples. However, this study managed to collect up to 155 respondents. This study adopts a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The study used an online survey through Google Forms to collect the data. The survey was conducted in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabodetbek), Indonesia, from October 2022 until November 2022.

#### 3.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire in this study consists of several sections. The first section consists of questions about the respondent's demographic, such as age, location, current job, and monthly income. The second section consists of several screening questions to ensure that the respondents are matched the sample criteria. The following sections of the questionnaire consist of questions related to indicators of the variables used in this study. Each research instrument is measured using Likert 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, which 1 indicates that the respondent strongly disagrees, 2 indicates that the respondent does not agree, 3 indicates that the respondent is neutral, 4 indicates that the respondent agrees, and 5 indicates that the respondent strongly agrees.

There are five variables to be examined in this study. EWOM is the independent variable. While helpfulness reviews, customer trust, and brand attitude are the mediating variables. Purchase intention is the dependent variable. The variables operationalization in this study is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Variables Operationalization

Variables	Items	Source
Positive EWOM (EWOM)	<b>E-WOM1.</b> Online reviews can make customers sure to buy the products	Rao et al. (2021)
	<b>E-WOM2.</b> Customers can see that the product in online reviews gives a good impression to the buyers	
	<b>E-WOM3.</b> Online reviews can provide customers with useful information about the products	
	<b>E-WOM4.</b> Online reviews can make customers confident to buy the products	

Variables	Items	Source
Review Helpfulness (RH)	<b>RH1.</b> Online reviews are useful for customers to make decisions	Turulja & Činjarević (2020)
	<b>RH2.</b> Online reviews can help customers	
	<b>RH3.</b> Online reviews can affect customer preferences	
	<b>RH4.</b> Information in the online review contains positive aspects of the products sold	
	<b>RH5.</b> Information in the online review contains negative aspects of the product sold	
Customers' Trust in EWOM (CT)	<b>CT1.</b> Believe that the information on e-WOM is reliable.	Ardyan & Sudyasjayanti (2020)
	<b>CT2.</b> Believe that the information on e-WOM is credible.	
	<b>CT3.</b> Believe that the information on e-WOM does not have false claims.	
	<b>CT4.</b> Believe that the information on e-WOM is responsible.	
	<b>CT5.</b> Believe that the information on e-WOM is competent.	
Brand Attitude (BA)	<b>BA1.</b> Customers have a positive image of the product reviewed	Kudeshia & Kumar (2017)
	<b>BA2.</b> Make customers believe that the product reviewed has a good reputation	
	<b>BA3.</b> Can make customers prefer products that are reviewed compared to other products that are not being reviewed	
	<b>BA4.</b> Customers can well receive product reviewed	
Purchase Intention (PI)	<b>PI 1.</b> Customers will buy the product reviewed if they have the opportunity	Turulja & Činjarević (2020)
	<b>PI 2.</b> Customers are willing to buy the product reviewed soon	
	<b>PI 3.</b> Customers will buy the product reviewed if they need it	
	<b>PI 4.</b> Customers will buy the product reviewed in the future	

### 3.3 Data Analysis

This study employs the Partial Least Square–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the research model. PLS-SEM is used to explain the relationship between several variables simultaneously. PLS-SEM consists of two models, the measurement model, which represents how the measured variables represent the construct, and the structural model, which shows how the constructs are related (Malhotra et al., 2017). PLS-SEM does not require goodness-of-fit standards. PLS-SEM tests the model based on the structural model's ability to predict endogenous constructs.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Respondents' Profile

Research data were collected using a questionnaire distributed through social media. There are 155 respondents collected. The respondents' profile is presented in Table 2 below. The data in Table 2 shows that 52.30% of the respondents were women aged 23-27. As many as 76.10% of respondents live in Jabodetabek. Regarding the respondents' occupation, as many as 45.20% of respondents work as private employees. In addition, 23.90% of respondents have an income of 5.500.001 – 7.500.000 IDR.

Table 2. Respondents Profile

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
18 - 22 years old	27	17.40%
23 - 27 years old	81	52.30%
28 - 32 years old	47	30.30%
<b>Domicile</b>		
Jabodetabek	118	76.10%
Outside Jabodetabek	37	23.90%
<b>Occupation</b>		
College student	43	27.70%
Private employee	70	45.20%
BUMN employee	3	1.90%
Civil servant	12	7.70%
Entrepreneur	12	7.70%
Freelancer	3	1.90%
Housewives	12	7.70%
<b>Salary per month</b>		
1.500.000 - 3.500.000 IDR	27	17.40%
3.500.001 - 5.500.000 IDR	36	23.20%
5.500.001 - 7.500.000 IDR	37	23.90%
7.500.001 - 10.000.000 IDR	24	15.50%
> 10.000.000 IDR	31	20.00%

#### 4.2. Measurement Model

The measurement model is assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that tests convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent validity of the constructs is established through composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values. Indicators of a variable can be declared valid if it has an AVE value and factor loading value of more than 0.5 (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). In addition, a variable can be declared reliable if it has Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.6 and a CR value above 0.7 (Malhotra et al., 2017). The result of validity testing is as follows:

Table 3. Convergent Validity Testing Result

Variables	Indicators	Factor Loading	AVE	Conclusion	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
Positive E-WOM	EWOM1	0.782	0.656	Valid	0.826	0.884	Reliable
	EWOM2	0.841		Valid			
	EWOM3	0.787		Valid			
	EWOM4	0.829		Valid			
Review Helpfulness	RH1	0.822	0.587	Valid	0.823	0.876	Reliable
	RH2	0.723		Valid			
	RH3	0.785		Valid			
	RH4	0.783		Valid			
	RH5	0.710		Valid			

Variables	Indicators	Factor Loading	AVE	Conclusion	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
Customers' Trust in E-WOM	CT1	0.863	0.739	Valid	0.911	0.934	Reliable
	CT2	0.836		Valid			
	CT3	0.892		Valid			
	CT4	0.891		Valid			
	CT5	0.814		Valid			
Brand Attitude	BA1	0.805	0.638	Valid	0.809	0.875	Reliable
	BA2	0.831		Valid			
	BA3	0.719		Valid			
	BA4	0.833		Valid			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.839	0.590	Valid	0.76	0.849	Reliable
	PI2	0.784		Valid			
	PI3	0.575		Valid			
	PI4	0.842		Valid			

The result shows that all the research indicators are valid because they have an AVE value and factor loading value of more than 0.5. All the research indicators are also reliable because they have Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.6 and a CR value above 0.7.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Testing Result

	Brand Attitude	Customers Trust EWOM	Positive EWOM	Purchase Intention	Review Helpfulness
Brand Attitude	0.799				
Customers Trust EWOM	0.719	0.860			
Positive EWOM	0.564	0.503	0.810		
Purchase Intention	0.735	0.676	0.451	0.768	
Review Helpfulness	0.555	0.506	0.730	0.523	0.766

According to Hair et al. (2019), discriminant validity ensures that each indicator of the latent variable is not the same as that of other latent variables. The discriminant validity of a model can conclude as good if an indicator of the latent variable has a loading value greater than the loading value of the indicators on other latent variables. Discriminant validity can be done by looking at the test results of the Fornell-Larcker criteria. The results of the Fornell-Larcker criteria test above show that each variable has the highest value compared to others.

#### 4.3. Structural Model

The structural model testing was carried out to evaluate the accuracy level of the research model formed through several variables and their indicators. Measure the accuracy of exogenous variables' effect on endogenous variables in a research model can be seen in the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). In the 0-1 range, if the  $R^2$  value is 0.75, then it can describe as a strong level of accuracy. If the  $R^2$  value is 0.5, it can be described as a moderate level of accuracy, and the  $R^2$  value of 0.25 has a low level of accuracy (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). Following are the results of the coefficient of determination testing on the structural model:

Table 4 shows that the  $R^2$  value of the review helpfulness variable is 0.532, meaning that the exogenous variable, positive e-WOM, has a 53.2% contribution in influencing review helpfulness. Other variables outside the scope of the study determine the remaining 46.8%. Therefore, the influence contribution of exogenous variables to the helpfulness review in this study can be said to have a moderate level of accuracy.



Table 5. Coefficient of Determination Testing Result

Variables	Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )	Conclusion
Review Helpfulness	0.532	Moderate level of accuracy
Customers' Trust in E-WOM	0.256	Low level of accuracy
Brand Attitude	0.566	Moderate level of accuracy
Purchase Intention	0.599	Moderate level of accuracy

The customer trust variable has an  $R^2$  value of 0.256, meaning that exogenous variables such as positive e-WOM and reviews helpfulness have a 25.6% contribution in influencing customer trust. Other variables outside the scope of the study influence the remaining 74.4%. Therefore, the influence of contribution exogenous variables on customers' trust in e-WOM in this study can be categorized as a low level of accuracy.

The brand attitude variable has an  $R^2$  value of 0.566, meaning that the exogenous variables in this study have a 56.6% contribution to influencing brand attitude. Other variables outside the scope of the study influence the remaining 43.4%. Therefore, the influence contribution of exogenous variables on brand attitude in this study can be said to have a moderate level of accuracy.

The  $R^2$  value of the purchase intention variable is 0.599. That means that exogenous variables, namely positive e-WOM, review helpfulness, customers trust, and brand attitude, have contributed 59.9% to influencing purchase intention. Other variables outside the scope of the study influence the remaining 40.1%. Therefore, the contribution of the influence of exogenous variables on purchase intention in this study can be said to have a moderate level of accuracy.

#### 4.4. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses testing can be seen from the value of the path coefficient, t-value, and p-values. The hypothesis can be accepted if it has a path coefficient value close to +1 (Hair Jr. et al., 2018), a t-value  $>1.645$ , and a p-value  $<0.05$  (Lind et al., 2015). Based on the hypothesis testing result, from 9 hypotheses in this study, there are eight hypotheses accepted and one hypothesis rejected. Here are the details of the hypotheses testing result:

Table 6. Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficient	T-Value	P-Value	Conclusion
H1	Positive EWOM → Review Helpfulness	0.730	10.220	0.000	Accepted
H2a	Review helpfulness → Customers Trust	0.506	7.443	0.000	Accepted
H2b	Review Helpfulness → Brand Attitude	0.256	3.031	0.003	Accepted
H3	Review Helpfulness → Purchase Intention	0.181	1.695	0.091	Accepted
H4	Customers' Trust in EWOM → Brand Attitude	0.590	8.934	0.000	Accepted
H5a	Customers' Trust in EWOM → Purchase Intention	0.285	2.816	0.005	Accepted
H5b	Brand Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.485	5.706	0.000	Accepted
H6	Positive EWOM → Purchase Intention	-0.098	0.966	0.334	Rejected
H7	Positive EWOM → Review Helpfulness → Customers Trust in EWOM → Brand attitude → Purchase Intention	0.106	3.387	0.001	Accepted

The hypotheses testing result in Table 6 shows that positive e-WOM on review helpfulness is positive and significant because the path coefficient value is 0.730 and the p-value is 0.000. It also can be seen that the review

helpfulness has a positive and significant influence on customer trust because it has a path coefficient value of 0.506 and a p-value of 0.000. Besides affecting customer trust, review helpfulness has a positive and significant effect on brand attitude because it has a path coefficient value of 0.256 and a p-value of 0.003. The results of the hypotheses testing show that the review helpfulness positively and insignificantly influences purchase intention because it has a path coefficient value of 0.181 and a p-value of 0.091.

It also can be seen that the customer's trust in e-WOM positively and significantly influences brand attitude because it has a path coefficient value of 0.590 and a p-value of 0.000. Besides influencing brand attitude, customers' trust in e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention because it has a path coefficient value of 0.285 and a p-value of 0.005. The results of the hypothesis testing also show that the influence of brand attitude on purchase intention is positive and significant because it has a path coefficient value of 0.485 and a p-value of 0.000. It also shows that H6 is rejected because it has a path coefficient value of -0.098 and a p-value of 0.334. However, the mediation testing result shows that positive e-WOM positively and significantly affected purchase intention through other variables such as review helpfulness, brand attitude, and customer trust on e-WOM because it has a path coefficient value of 0.106 and a p-value of 0.001.

#### 4.5. Discussion

This study confirmed a relationship between positive e-WOM and purchase intention in the context of consumer shopping experience in a cosmetic retailer. This effect is mediated by review helpfulness, customers' trust in e-WOM, and brand attitude.

The hypothesis testing result shows that the effect of positive e-WOM on review helpfulness is positive and significant. This hypothesis supports Rao et al. (2021) research statement, which mentioned that e-WOM is an important factor in helping customers determine their choices through other people's experiences before buying a product. This hypothesis also aligns with Yang et al. (2019) finding, which stated that e-WOM is categorized as a signal that positively affects review helpfulness. It is also in line with Siering et al. (2018) finding that stated e-WOM has persuasive power, so it can provide certain information to customers and helps reduce information asymmetry.

The hypothesis testing result shows that review helpfulness positively and significantly influences customer trust. This hypothesis supports Turulja & Činjurević (2020) statement that there is a positive and significant positive helpfulness review effect on trust. It is because review helpfulness plays a role in providing information about the quality of a product. Thus, it reduces information asymmetry and uncertainty and makes customers believe the product is of good quality (Yang et al., 2019). Nguyen & Ha (2021) also finds that perceived usefulness is significantly associated with trust. Nguyen & Ha (2021) study stated that trust is one most important factors influencing e-commerce use. That is why customers' perceived usefulness can influence trust, which impacts the intention to use e-commerce. In addition, Khwaja et al. (2020) study stated that information usefulness is one of the core dimensions of e-WOM communications. Therefore, if the information on e-WOM is credible, it would be valuable to consider it as purchase intention influence (Khwaja et al., 2020).

Besides affecting customer trust, review helpfulness positively and significantly affects brand attitude. This hypothesis, in line with Turulja & Činjurević (2020), states that helpfulness reviews positively and significantly influence brand attitude. Review helpfulness makes customers believe and can create a positive brand attitude for them (Turulja & Činjurević, 2020). According to Ho et al. (2022), perceived usefulness is an important construct connected to beliefs in the technology acceptance model (TAM). It assumes that beliefs about the product reviewed on e-WOM influence attitudes and, in turn, lead to purchase intention (Ho et al., 2022). This hypothesis also aligns with Tobias-Mamina et al. (2021) research which found that the perceived usefulness of e-WOM impacted consumers' attitudes towards the product reviewed, as consumers tend to develop positive attitudes towards e-WOM because they believe it is functional. It also supports Gebsumbut & Ho's (2019) study that found perceived usefulness influences online shopping intention, which means that previous knowledge from online reviews can lead to the intention to use the product reviewed. In the context of this study, it means that after customers read the online reviews available on SOCO (Sociolla Connect) and the Sociolla website, they feel helped by the information provided and can generate a positive attitude toward the product reviewed.

The results of the hypothesis testing show that the review helpfulness positively and insignificantly influences purchase intention. It supports Turulja & Činjurević's (2020) finding, which states that review helpfulness review indirectly and positively affects purchase intention through the trust mediation variable. Ismagilova et al. (2020) research also found that e-WOM influences customers' evaluation of products. When e-WOM is helpful, it significantly affects the customers' purchase intention. This hypothesis also follows the results of Nguyen Thi et al. (2022) findings, which found that perceived usefulness positively impacted repurchase intention. Perceived usefulness refers to how consumers believe the Internet will enhance their shopping experience (Nguyen Thi et al., 2022). Consumers' repurchase intention will be higher if they know the perceived usefulness of the online shopping experience. This hypothesis testing result also aligns with Aji et al. (2020) findings, which stated that perceived usefulness is a strong predictor of intentional behavior. In the context of this research, it means that after customers read online reviews on SOCO (Sociolla Connect) and the Sociolla website and feel helped by the reviews, customers also need to believe the reviews and have a positive attitude towards the product reviewed first before finally showing their interest to buy.

It also can be seen that the customer's trust in e-WOM positively and significantly influences brand attitude. This hypothesis supported Tang's (2019) finding, which states that customer trust positively and significantly influences brand attitude. In an uncertain environment, especially in e-commerce and another environment that adopts a technology, customer trust is an important factor affecting consumer attitudes toward products (Tang, 2019). According to Xiao et al. (2018), trust is the most important factor when customers evaluate the information on e-WOM. It is because digital media platforms potentially provide false information so easily. Thus, genuine information would be cherished more by the customers who use e-WOM as their source of information. Xiao et al. (2018) research also found that when customers trust credible information, they would have a positive attitude toward the brand reviewed. This hypothesis also aligns with De Veirman & Hudders' (2020) findings, which state that trusted e-WOM is related to a positive brand attitude, and customers are more likely to be persuaded to use the product.

Besides influencing brand attitude, customers' trust in e-WOM also positively and significantly influences purchase intention. This hypothesis follows Rao et al.'s (2021) research, which states that consumer trust belief positively affects purchase intention. According to Rao et al. (2021), e-WOM can strengthen consumer beliefs in a brand and increase their purchase intention because e-WOM can reduce customer uncertainty about a product and increase their trust in the product. Customers who trust the information on e-WOM will also be assisted in purchasing decisions (Ardayan & Sudyasjayanti, 2020). This hypothesis is also reasonably consistent with Zhao et al. (2020) study, which believes that information in e-WOM forms a positive impression by reducing perceived risk and uncertainty in making purchase decisions.

The results of the hypothesis testing also show that the influence of brand attitude on purchase intention is positive and significant. This hypothesis is the same as Kudeshia & Kumar's (2017) finding, which states that brand attitude positively and significantly influences purchase intention. It means customer purchase intention will be higher when they have a positive brand attitude towards a product (Summers et al., 2006; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). When customers have a positive attitude toward a product, they will be interested in making a purchase and will be ready to pay a higher price (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

It also shows that positive e-WOM does not have a positive and significant direct effect on purchase intention. This result contradicts Kudeshia & Kumar's (2017) and Rao et al. (2021) findings, which state that e-WOM positively and significantly influences purchase intention. However, when viewed from the mediation testing results, the influence of e-WOM on purchase intention through review helpfulness, customer trust, and brand attitude has a path coefficient value of 0.106 and a p-value of 0.001. It means that in the context of a cosmetic shopping retailer, e-WOM in the form of an online review has no direct influence on purchase intention. The review helpfulness, customer trust, and brand attitude variable must mediate it. It means that customers need to feel helped and believe in the online review, so they have a positive brand attitude, thus their desire to buy the product reviewed arises.

The result shows that the positive effect of e-WOM on purchase intention is mediated by review helpfulness, customer trust, and brand attitude variables. It supports the opinion of Rao et al. (2021), who said that e-WOM's role is to help customers, in the information search phase, to make choices about the products they want to buy. This hypothesis also supports Kudeshia & Kumar's (2017) study. It said that review helpfulness obtained from information on e-WOM increases customer confidence in a product. Thus, customers can have a positive attitude and raise their interest in buying the product reviewed.

## 5. Conclusions

This study investigates the effect of positive e-WOM on purchase intention directly or indirectly through mediation variables such as review helpfulness, customer trust, and brand attitude. The findings indicate that positive e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on review helpfulness. The existence of positive e-WOM in the form of online reviews that provide information about a product will help customers understand the quality of the product reviewed. With positive e-WOM, customers can be helped to understand and choose the product to purchase. Moreover, the finding also indicates that the positive impact of positive e-WOM on purchase intention is mediated by review helpfulness, customer trust, and brand attitude variables. It means that in cosmetic shopping in the Sociolla context, positive e-WOM can make customers feel helped and increase customer confidence in a product. Thus, customers can have a positive attitude and show interest in buying the product reviewed.

The findings of this study bring several practical implications, such as: first, unlike the results of previous research, this study found that positive e-WOM does not directly affect purchase intention in the cosmetic shopping experience context. Mediating variables, such as review helpfulness, customer trust in e-WOM, and brand attitude, are needed for positive e-WOM to have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. It means that positive e-WOM can be useful for increasing purchase intention if it can provide useful information for customers to feel helped. Thus, it can increase their trust in a product and create a positive brand attitude towards the product reviewed, increasing their intention to buy it. Second, this research deepens our understanding that to increase review helpfulness, customer trust, and a positive brand attitude from a customer; it is necessary to have e-WOM in the form of an online review that contains a positive review. Positive reviews can make customers understand a product's positive attributes and

advantages compared to other products, which can influence their preferences. Positive reviews are also beneficial for them to make choices and make purchasing decisions in the future.

Moreover, this study finds that positive e-WOM is an important variable influencing purchase intention through review helpfulness, customer trust, and brand attitude. Therefore, for the practical implications, this study suggests that Sociolla and other cosmetic retailers encourage their customers to give positive online reviews on their website and application after they shop. So that other customers who are interested or planning to buy the same product can get information about the product. Sociolla can also display positive online reviews on their application and website so that customers can feel helped, trust, and have a positive brand attitude towards the product reviewed. Thus, it can encourage their intention to buy the product.

There are some limitations in this study. First, this research only examines e-WOM on the Sociolla website and application. E-WOM on other channels is beyond the scope of the study. Future research can examine e-WOM from other channels, such as social media and e-commerce because as communication technology continues to improve daily, social media and e-commerce will always be a part of society's daily life to fulfill their needs (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Second, this study only took samples of women aged 18-32 who fit Sociolla's target market. Most respondents also live in Jabodetabek and have a profession as private employees. Therefore, future research may use other objects like cosmetic, fashion, or food and beverage retailers. Future research may also use other sample criteria and regions according to their chosen research object. Finally, the future researcher can extend the model using other e-WOM and purchase intention indicators. Future research also can bring the current model to other contexts, such as different brands or industries.

### Author Contribution

Author 1: conceptualization, writing original draft, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology.

Author 2: supervision, validation.

### Financial Disclosure

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest in this research authorship and publication.

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