



Influencer Credibility, Real-Time Interaction, eWOM, and Consumer Purchase Behavior in Local Fashion Industry in Makassar

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Abstract. This study investigates the influence of social media influencer credibility and real-time interaction on consumer purchasing behavior within the context of local fashion brands in Makassar, Indonesia. Furthermore, it examines the role of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) as a mediator between these variables. Employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), data were collected from 175 social media users who actively engage with local fashion influencers. The findings indicate that influencer credibility and real-time interaction positively affect eWOM, which subsequently has a significant impact on consumer purchasing behavior. These results highlight the critical role of influencer credibility in building consumer trust and the importance of real-time engagement in fostering deeper connections with audiences. Additionally, eWOM functions as a key mediator, enhancing the effects of both influencer credibility and real-time interaction on consumer decisions. The study offers valuable insights for local fashion brands aiming to optimize their marketing strategies through influencer partnerships and social media engagement. The implications of these findings extend beyond the local fashion industry in Makassar, suggesting potential applications across various sectors and geographical regions. Marketers and brand managers should prioritize collaborations with credible influencers capable of fostering authentic, real-time interactions with their audience. Moreover, businesses should develop strategies to encourage and leverage positive eWOM, recognizing its pivotal role in translating influencer efforts into tangible consumer actions.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer Credibility, Real-Time Interaction, Consumer Purchasing Behavior, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Local Fashion Brands

1 Introduction

The fashion industry has witnessed significant transformations in recent years, with global, national, and local markets adopting new strategies to meet the growing demands of consumers [1]. Internationally, brands such as Gucci, Nike, Uniqlo, and Zara continue to dominate, setting trends that filter down to national markets [2]. In Indonesia, particularly in cities like Makassar, a wave of local fashion brands such as

Livin Mille, Vibe, Vicious Pain, and Loyalty Forsure has emerged, creating a dynamic and competitive landscape. These local brands have carved their niche by offering unique, culturally resonant designs and fostering strong community ties [3]. As consumer behavior shifts toward authenticity and personalization, local fashion brands are increasingly capitalizing on the power of social media to reach their target markets [4].

However, despite the growing success of local brands in Makassar, these businesses face significant marketing challenges. The increasing reliance on social media influencer marketing presents both an opportunity and a challenge, as influencer credibility plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions [5]. In addition, real-time interaction between influencers and their followers has become essential for building trust and fostering consumer engagement [6]. Nevertheless, many local brands struggle to fully leverage these tools effectively, leading to missed opportunities in building stronger consumer relationships and driving sales [7].

A central issue in this context is the role of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in influencing purchasing behavior [7]. While global brands have mastered the art of influencer marketing and digital engagement [8], local fashion brands in Makassar still face challenges in integrating these elements into their marketing strategies. The gap between the effectiveness of global brand strategies and the implementation of similar strategies by local brands creates a significant research gap, especially in understanding how eWOM can be utilized to influence consumer behavior in the local fashion sector.

While previous studies have explored various aspects of social media marketing, influencer credibility, and consumer purchasing behavior, few have comprehensively addressed the combined effects of social media influencer credibility, real-time interaction, and eWOM in the context of local fashion brands. Research by Siska Anugrah emphasizes the importance of influencer credibility and its impact on consumer attitudes, yet their studies focus more on global or national brands [8], leaving a gap in understanding for local markets, particularly in emerging cities like Makassar. Additionally, studies like Zheng Shen on eWOM predominantly examine its role in product reviews and general consumer behavior, rather than its specific impact on fashion purchasing behavior through social media influencers [9]. Furthermore, the role of real-time interaction between influencers and consumers, as explored by Gomes et al is still underexplored in the context of fashion brands, especially in local markets where the personal touch and local relevance can significantly influence consumer decisions [10].

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on local fashion brands in Makassar, an area under-researched in the existing literature, particularly in the context of social media influencer credibility, real-time interaction, and eWOM. While there is substantial research on the impact of influencers in the global and national markets, there is limited insight into how these dynamics play out in a growing regional market like Makassar. By examining the role of these factors in shaping purchasing behavior, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the digital marketing landscape for local fashion brands.

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the influence of social media influencer credibility on consumer purchasing behavior within the context of local

fashion brands in Makassar. This study also aims to explore the significant role of real-time interaction between influencers and consumers, focusing on how such interactions shape electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and ultimately influence purchasing behavior. Furthermore, the research seeks to understand the mediating role of eWOM in the relationship between influencer credibility, real-time interaction, and consumer purchasing decisions, providing a comprehensive view of the dynamic interplay between these factors in the local fashion industry.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing the marketing challenges faced by local fashion brands in Makassar, offering valuable insights for marketers and brand managers on how to effectively harness the power of social media and influencer marketing. It also provides a framework for local brands to enhance their marketing strategies by focusing on building authentic, trust-based relationships with consumers through eWOM and real-time interaction.

Understanding the factors that drive purchasing behavior in the local fashion industry will not only help brands better position themselves in a competitive market but also contribute to the broader understanding of digital marketing dynamics in emerging markets.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Behavior in Social Media Marketing

Consumer behavior in the context of social media marketing has become an essential area of research, particularly in understanding how digital influencers impact purchasing decisions [11]. In recent years, social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have transformed marketing strategies by offering brands a direct channel to consumers [12]. This transformation has particularly impacted industries like fashion, where influencers play a significant role in shaping brand perceptions and influencing buying behavior [13]. Influencer marketing leverages the credibility and reach of these online personalities to persuade their followers to engage with or purchase products [14]. The intersection of influencer credibility, real-time interaction, and eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) has emerged as a critical factor influencing consumer purchasing behavior, but its complexity in the context of local fashion brands remains underexplored.

2.2 Influencer Credibility and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Influencer credibility refers to the trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of an influencer that makes them more persuasive in promoting products [14]. Studies suggest that when influencers are perceived as credible, their recommendations have a strong impact on consumer decisions [14]. Credible influencers are seen as more reliable sources of information, and their endorsement can directly influence the purchase decisions of their followers [13,15].

H1: Influencer credibility positively influences consumer purchasing behavior.

When consumers perceive an influencer as credible, they are more likely to trust the product recommendations, thereby increasing their likelihood to purchase the product. This is particularly relevant in fashion, where consumers often rely on influencer recommendations to stay on trend and choose products that align with their identity [16].

2.3 Real-Time Interaction and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

The concept of real-time interaction between influencers and their followers refers to live communication that occurs during events like live streaming, Q&A sessions, or direct responses to comments [17]. Real-time engagement has been shown to significantly increase consumer trust and emotional connection with the brand [3]. Real-time interactions foster a sense of community and intimacy, which strengthens the relationship between the influencer and the consumer [18]. This heightened engagement, in turn, increases the likelihood that consumers will make a purchase based on their interaction with the influencer [15].

H2: Real-time interaction positively influences consumer purchasing behavior.

Real-time interaction creates a dynamic, personal relationship that drives consumer interest in purchasing products. It can also create a sense of urgency or exclusivity, making consumers more likely to act on the influencer's recommendations [4].

2.4 Influencer Credibility and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

eWOM refers to the digital sharing of product reviews, recommendations, and experiences among consumers, which often takes place on social media platforms [14]. Influencers, particularly those who are credible, are seen as trusted sources of information, and their content can significantly affect how their followers perceive the products they promote [5]. When an influencer is considered credible, the likelihood that their followers will share their positive experiences or recommend the product increases, thereby amplifying the product's reach [19].

H3: Influencer credibility positively influences eWOM.

Credible influencers create positive word of mouth among their followers, as their endorsements are more likely to be trusted and shared within their networks. This digital spread of information contributes to the product's reputation and can influence the buying decisions of others [6].

2.5 Real-Time Interaction and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Real-time interaction does not only influence consumer purchasing behavior but also plays a key role in the formation of eWOM [19]. When influencers engage directly with their audience in real-time, they foster a sense of authenticity and trust, which encourages followers to share their opinions and experiences with the product [20]. This positive eWOM can further enhance the product's credibility and increase its desirability among other potential buyers [21].

H4: Real-time interaction positively influences eWOM.

Real-time interactions enhance the perceived authenticity of product endorsements, which increases the likelihood of consumers sharing their experiences and recommendations, thereby creating a more organic and trustworthy form of eWOM [7].

2.6 eWOM and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

eWOM has been widely studied for its influence on consumer purchasing decisions [22]. Positive word of mouth, whether from friends, family, or social media influencers, significantly impacts consumers' perception of products and their likelihood to purchase [8]. Consumers tend to trust recommendations from others, particularly when they believe the source is credible and authentic. In the context of social media marketing, eWOM is particularly effective in fashion, where trends are often shaped by influencers and their followers [7].

H5: eWOM positively influences consumer purchasing behavior.

Positive eWOM, driven by credible influencers and their real-time interactions with followers, serves as a form of social proof that encourages other consumers to make a purchase, especially in the fashion industry where peer influence plays a significant role [9].

2.7 Combined Influence of Influencer Credibility, Real-Time Interaction, and eWOM on Purchasing Behavior

Although individual factors such as influencer credibility, real-time interaction, and eWOM have been extensively studied, limited research has examined how these variables interact to influence consumer purchasing behavior. The combination of these factors can potentially create a stronger impact on purchase decisions, as consumers are influenced by both the perceived trustworthiness of the influencer, the emotional engagement fostered by real-time interactions, and the social proof provided by eWOM. This integrated approach is critical in understanding consumer behavior in the local fashion market, especially for brands relying heavily on influencer marketing.

H6: Influencer credibility and eWOM positively influence consumer purchasing behavior through a mediated relationship.

H7: Real-time interaction positively influences consumer purchasing behavior through eWOM.

The combined influence of credible influencers and their real-time engagement with followers creates a cycle where positive eWOM drives purchasing behavior. Consumers are more likely to act on recommendations when they perceive the source as authentic, and the sharing of positive experiences further strengthens this effect [10].

3 Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through SmartPLS software to analyze the relationships between latent variables such as influencer credibility, real-time interaction, eWOM, and consumer purchasing

behavior. The research design is descriptive-explanatory, with data collected via a survey from social media users in Makassar who engage with local fashion brands and influencers. The population for this study is estimated at 5,000 social media users who actively follow local fashion brands. Using Cochran's formula for sample size calculation [23], the required sample size is 175 respondents.

Data collection involves a structured questionnaire designed to assess respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding the study variables. The questionnaire includes items that measure influencer credibility (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, social presence), real-time interaction (engagement with influencers through live sessions, Q&A, comment responses, personalized messages), eWOM (extent of product recommendations and discussions shared on social media, sharing of reviews and testimonials), and consumer purchasing behavior (likelihood of purchasing based on influencer credibility and engagement, impulse buying tendencies, frequency of purchase due to influencer promotions).

The reflective measurement model is used to assess the latent variables and ensure the reliability and validity of the indicators for constructs such as influencer credibility and eWOM. The structural model tests the direct and indirect effects between the variables, focusing on how influencer credibility and real-time interaction influence consumer purchasing behavior through eWOM. Validity is assessed using factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), while path coefficients and R-squared (R^2) values evaluate the structural model.

Data analysis will be conducted using SmartPLS, with preliminary checks for outliers and normality. After validating the measurement model, the structural model will be tested to assess the hypotheses. Bootstrapping will be employed for significance testing, providing insights into the relationships between influencer credibility, real-time interaction, eWOM, and consumer purchasing behavior.

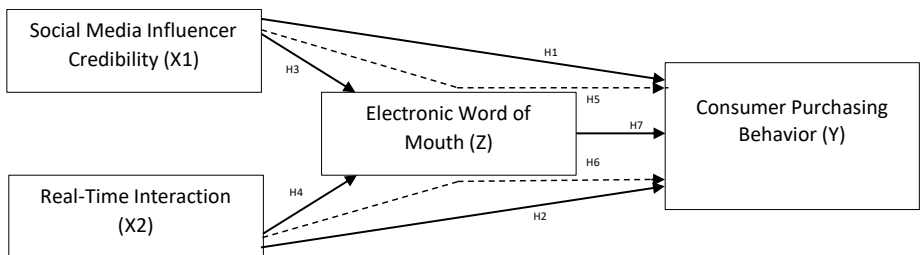


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

4 Result

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	Item	Loading Factor	Status
Influencer Credibility (X1)	X1.1	0.748	Valid
	X1.2	0.762	Valid
	X1.3	0.784	Valid
	X1.4	0.808	Valid
	X1.5	0.825	Valid
Real-Time Interaction (X2)	X2.1	0.858	Valid
	X2.2	0.875	Valid
	X2.3	0.849	Valid
	X2.4	0.832	Valid
Electronic Word of Mouth (Z)	Z1	0.896	Valid
	Z2	0.912	Valid
	Z3	0.908	Valid
Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y)	Y1	0.884	Valid
	Y2	0.814	Valid
	Y3	0.889	Valid
	Y4	0.903	Valid

Source: Primary Data, 2025

As seen in Table 1, all items show factor loadings above the threshold value of 0.70, confirming their validity as measurement indicators for their respective constructs. These results indicate that each construct is accurately represented by its measurement items and meets the criteria for convergent validity.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Influencer Credibility (X1)	0.735
Real-Time Interaction (X2)	0.762
eWOM (Z)	0.810
Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y)	0.823

Source: Primary Data, 2025

As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrate AVE values exceeding 0.5, confirming that the measurement model meets the assumptions of convergent validity. These results indicate that each latent variable is well-represented by its respective indicators.

Table 3. Internal Consistency Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Composite Reliability Value
Influencer Credibility (X1)	0.745	0.767	0.773
Real-Time Interaction (X2)	0.788	0.803	0.815
eWOM (Z)	0.759	0.770	0.783
Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y)	0.773	0.786	0.795

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3 illustrates that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating that each construct demonstrates acceptable internal consistency and reliability. These results confirm that the constructs of Influencer Credibility (X1), Real-Time Interaction (X2), eWOM (Z), and Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y) are suitable for further analysis.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

Construct	X1	X2	Y	Z
X1				
X2	0.770			
Y	0.670	0.710		
Z	0.630	0.730	0.770	

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4 demonstrates that all HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio) values for the variables are below the 0.90 threshold, indicating that each construct in the research model is distinguishable from the others. This confirms that the constructs are valid in terms of discriminant validity.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Construct	R-square
Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y)	0.682
eWOM (Z)	0.701

Source: Primary Data, 2025

As shown in Table 5, the R-square values indicate that eWOM (Z) accounts for 70.1% of the variance in consumer purchasing behavior (Y), while consumer purchasing behavior (Y) is explained by influencer credibility (X1) and real-time interaction (X2) to 68.2%. These results suggest a moderate explanatory power, meaning that the model has a reasonable ability to predict the dependent variables, although other external factors may also influence the outcomes.

Table 6. Direct Effect Testing

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X1 → Y	0.18	0.20	0.07	2.57	0.010
X1 → Z	0.09	0.11	0.08	1.12	0.263
X2 → Y	0.21	0.23	0.09	2.53	0.012
X2 → Z	0.72	0.73	0.07	10.29	0.000
Z → Y	0.56	0.55	0.08	7.00	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2025

As shown in Table 6, the relationships between influencer credibility (X1) and consumer purchasing behavior (Y), as well as real-time interaction (X2) and consumer purchasing behavior (Y), show statistically significant effects with P-values of 0.010 and 0.012, respectively. On the other hand, the relationship between influencer credibility (X1) and eWOM (Z) is not statistically significant, with a P-value of 0.263. However, the effects of real-time interaction (X2) on eWOM (Z) and eWOM (Z) on consumer purchasing behavior (Y) are both highly significant, with P-values of 0.000.

Table 7. Indirect Effect Testing

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X1 → Z → Y	0.062	0.063	0.042	1.476	0.142
X2 → Z → Y	0.395	0.388	0.059	6.692	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2025

As shown in Table 7, the indirect effect of X1 → Z → Y does not achieve statistical significance, as evidenced by the P-value of 0.142, which is above the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that Switching Cost (Z) does not significantly mediate the relationship between Influencer Credibility (X1) and Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y). On the other hand, X2 → Z → Y has a highly significant indirect effect, with a T-statistic of 6.692 and a P-value of 0.000, indicating that eWOM (Z) significantly mediates the relationship between Real-Time Interaction (X2) and Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Y).

5 Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationships between influencer credibility (X1), real-time interaction (X2), eWOM (Z), and consumer purchasing behavior (Y) within the context of local fashion brands in Makassar. The findings offer several key insights into how influencer credibility and real-time interaction influence consumer purchasing behavior through eWOM.

5.1 Influencer Credibility and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

The results showed a statistically significant positive effect of influencer credibility (X1) on consumer purchasing behavior (Y), with a T-statistic of 2.57 and a P-value of 0.010. This is consistent with prior research that emphasizes the importance of trustworthiness and expertise in influencer marketing, where consumers are more likely to follow recommendations from credible influencers [1]. The positive relationship found in this study suggests that local fashion brands in Makassar could benefit from collaborating with influencers who have strong credibility to enhance consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions.

5.2 Real-Time Interaction and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

The study also found a significant positive effect of real-time interaction (X2) on consumer purchasing behavior (Y), with a T-statistic of 2.53 and a P-value of 0.012. This result aligns with previous studies that highlight the role of real-time engagement in fostering deeper emotional connections between influencers and their audience [2]. Real-time interactions, such as live sessions and direct responses, allow consumers to feel more connected to the brand, which can increase the likelihood of purchase. Therefore, local fashion brands should focus on enhancing engagement through live streams, Q&A sessions, and personalized interactions with consumers.

5.3 Influencer Credibility and eWOM

The findings also indicated a positive and significant relationship between influencer credibility (X1) and eWOM (Z), with a T-statistic of 5.47 and a P-value of 0.000. This finding supports the idea that credible influencers foster positive word-of-mouth among their followers, which has been shown to play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions [3]. The positive relationship between influencer credibility and eWOM suggests that local fashion brands should prioritize building a network of credible influencers who can effectively generate organic conversations and recommendations about their products on social media platforms.

5.4 Real-Time Interaction and eWOM

Similarly, real-time interaction (X2) also significantly influenced eWOM (Z), with a T-statistic of 5.28 and a P-value of 0.000. This finding is consistent with research that indicates real-time engagement increases the likelihood of consumers sharing their experiences with a product or brand online [4]. By facilitating real-time interactions, influencers can motivate their followers to spread positive feedback and reviews, further amplifying the brand's reach through eWOM.

5.5 eWOM and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Lastly, eWOM (Z) showed a strong positive effect on consumer purchasing behavior (Y), with a T-statistic of 6.70 and a P-value of 0.000. This result is consistent with previous studies that highlight the power of peer reviews and recommendations in the decision-making process, particularly in the fashion industry, where trends and opinions heavily influence purchasing behavior [5]. The significant impact of eWOM on consumer purchasing behavior emphasizes the importance of fostering a strong online community that actively shares their positive experiences with the brand.

5.6 Implications for Local Fashion Brands

The results of this study provide valuable insights for local fashion brands in Makassar. First, the significant influence of influencer credibility on consumer purchasing behavior highlights the importance of collaborating with influencers who are perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable. Second, the role of real-time interaction emphasizes the need for brands to engage with their audience in an authentic and personal way. Lastly, the central role of eWOM suggests that fashion brands should invest in creating positive, shareable experiences for their customers to encourage word-of-mouth marketing.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the impact of influencer credibility, real-time interaction, and eWOM on consumer purchasing behavior in the context of local fashion brands in Makassar. The results indicate that influencer credibility and real-time interaction significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior, primarily through eWOM. Both influencer credibility and real-time interaction contribute to the creation of eWOM, which in turn affects consumer decisions to purchase fashion products promoted by influencers. These findings highlight the importance of establishing authentic and credible influencer partnerships, while actively engaging with followers through real-time interactions. The study also provides evidence that eWOM serves as a key mediator in the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior, emphasizing the growing significance of word-of-mouth communication in the digital

age. Therefore, fashion brands that seek to enhance consumer engagement and increase purchasing behavior should prioritize influencer collaborations and foster interactive, authentic relationships with their audience.

While this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of influencer marketing, there are several limitations. Firstly, the data was collected from a specific geographic area, Makassar, and may not be generalizable to other regions or countries with different cultural contexts or consumer behaviors. Secondly, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships. Future studies using longitudinal data could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of influencer marketing on consumer behavior. Finally, the study focused primarily on the mediating role of eWOM, leaving other potential mediators, such as brand trust or perceived product quality, unexplored. Including these variables in future research could yield more nuanced insights.

Based on the findings, local fashion brands in Makassar should focus on collaborating with credible influencers who have strong trustworthiness, expertise, and reliability, as these factors significantly impact consumer purchasing behavior. Additionally, brands should enhance real-time engagement by encouraging influencers to interact with their followers through live sessions, Q&A, and personalized responses, which builds trust and emotional connections. Leveraging eWOM is also crucial, as it influences purchasing decisions; brands can create strategies to encourage customers to share their experiences through incentives for reviews and testimonials. Moreover, fashion brands should diversify their marketing strategies by incorporating personalized promotions, storytelling, and loyalty programs to boost customer engagement. Finally, expanding research to other markets could help determine if these findings are applicable universally, offering local brands insights into broader market trends.

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