

Digital Marketing Strategy: The Role of E-WOM in Mediating the Consumer Buying Decision Process Among Instagram Followers of Food Sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyse the influence of social media marketing and content marketing on the consumer buying decision process, with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as a mediating variable among followers of food sector MSMEs on Instagram in Muara Bungo. **Method:** This study employs a survey-based approach and is a quantitative associative study with an explanatory research approach. The population in this study consists of Instagram followers of SMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo who are interested in making online purchasing decisions for food snacks sold through Instagram accounts, with a sample size of 130 individuals. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). **Results:** Based on the research findings, it was concluded that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on the consumer buying decision process. Content marketing has a positive effect but is not significantly related to the consumer buying decision process. Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth. Content marketing has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth. Electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the consumer buying decision process. **Novelty:** Electronic word of mouth acts as a mediating variable between the effect of social media marketing on the consumer buying decision process, with the form of mediation being complementary mediation in the form of partial mediation. Electronic word of mouth also acts as a mediating variable between the influence of content marketing on the consumer buying decision process, with the form of mediation being indirect-only mediation, which is a form of full mediation.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, consumer behaviour has undergone significant changes. Online consumer behaviour encompasses various steps in the decision-making process, such as problem recognition (i.e., identifying consumer problems), information search (i.e., finding information to solve problems), evaluation (i.e., assessing possible outcomes or events), selection (i.e., determining which products to use), and outcome (i.e., whether consumers are satisfied or dissatisfied with the product) [1].

The development of digital technology has significantly altered societal consumption patterns, particularly in the purchasing decision-making process. Traditional patterns have been replaced by digital marketing [2]. In Indonesia, the use of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook is very high, making strategies like Social Media Marketing (SMM) crucial to marketing success. Many companies market their products online [3]. A study by [4] found that SMM on TikTok influences purchasing decisions.

Social media, especially Instagram, has changed the way MSMEs market their products. It is no longer just a platform for sharing photos, but has also developed into a

platform for promotion, branding, and direct interaction with customers. Optimising digital marketing is one of the measures that MSMEs can take, especially by improving their marketing strategies through social media, online advertising, video advertising, search engine advertising, and website management.

Given the increasing demand for daily consumption, food SMEs are among the most dynamic. However, in the era of digital disruption, competition among SMEs has become increasingly intense. Changes in consumer behaviour, which increasingly shift towards digital platforms for searching, selecting, and purchasing products, have prompted food SMEs to adopt digital-based marketing strategies. Currently, TikTok and Instagram (IG) are the most widely used digital marketing platforms. Due to their large user base and ease of use, these social media platforms provide business features. These features help users promote their products. Businesses of all sizes can use these features to showcase their profiles, gain followers, share insights, and promote posts to achieve their goals.

Social media began as the primary platform used in the business world because most people spend a lot of time using it, connecting with others, and purchasing their needs [5]. Currently, many companies across various industries actively use social media as an important tool to reach potential customers and existing customers [6]. Social media has become the primary channel for companies to build relationships with consumers through digital marketing strategies. Many experts refer to social media as a tool for two-way communication with consumers [7]. Social media marketing encompasses many things besides communication, such as entertainment, interaction, word- of-mouth promotion, and customisation [8].

Social media marketing is a form of advertising with a cultural context from the social community [9]. Instagram is a social media platform used to share information in the form of images, photos, videos, and captions (Atmoko, 2012), therefore, Instagram is categorised as social media. The number of posts and followers on an Instagram account can influence the audience to recognise and trust that account [10]. These MSMEs can improve their marketing systems with the help of digital marketing to support increased sales activities and expand their business objectives [11].

This systematic review shows that content marketing research continues to evolve due to new technologies and online platforms, which provide opportunities to improve content marketing strategies and practices. Another important relationship is between digital content marketing and electronic marketing, Internet marketing, web marketing, and related disciplines. Given that much digital content marketing is conducted through online channels, it makes sense that there is overlap between digital content marketing and electronic marketing [12]. Content marketing has emerged as an important strategy for digital brands, offering a multifaceted approach to engaging audiences and driving sales [13].

Food is a primary need and a product with great potential for differentiation through innovation in taste, packaging, and storytelling. MSMEs in the food sector have a huge market opportunity. However, due to fierce competition, digital marketing strategies are key to success. Marketing through social media encompasses five

dimensions [8] Interaction, entertainment, trends, customisation, and word- of-mouth promotion. Interaction refers to communication between users, entertainment refers to providing enjoyment through interesting content, and trends show that social media presents new and current information to consumers. Another aspect of social media marketing is customisation, which refers to the ability of social media platforms to provide information that customers need. Entrepreneurs must pay attention to and optimise the presentation of product information in the realm of digital content marketing (Liu Fan). Next (Pei Ling Tan) stating that they are improving their website content marketing strategy to make it more appealing to consumers, ultimately driving sales based on content characteristics such as educational, interactive, and entertaining content.

In addition, social media supports word- of-mouth promotion. According to research [14] In terms of potential consumer behaviour towards products, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is positively and significantly influenced by social media marketing. Social media users who see the product are more likely to indirectly discuss and promote it to other consumers. In addition [15] also found that social media marketing has a positive effect on e-word of mouth.

Food MSMEs in Muara Bungo are currently facing major challenges to remain competitive amid changing consumer behaviour that is increasingly shifting to digital platforms. Therefore, the implementation of digital marketing strategies has become an inevitable necessity, especially in utilising social media such as Instagram. Through this platform, MSMEs can build closer relationships with consumers by presenting informative, interesting, and relevant content. In this context, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) plays a crucial role as a communication bridge between brands and consumers, where consumers' experiences and opinions shared online can influence the purchasing decisions of other potential customers.

For MSMEs, e-WOM is not merely an indirect promotional tool, but also a reflection of the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategies they implement. The positive responses shown by Instagram followers to the content presented serve as an indicator of success in building consumer trust and loyalty. Therefore, SMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo need to continue developing content that can actively encourage consumer engagement to create e-WOM that positively impacts the purchasing decision-making process.

In this context, e-WOM plays a crucial role in influencing the purchasing decisions of account followers regarding the promoted food products. Food products are highly influenced by the opinions and experiences of other consumers, as food is a product that is highly sensitive to quality, taste, cleanliness, and visual appeal. Therefore, comments, reviews, and customer testimonials shared on Instagram – whether in the comment section, stories, or reels – serve as important sources of information for potential buyers.

However, in the context of products or services with high risks and costs, such as aesthetic services, potential consumers typically seek social validation. This is where the role of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) becomes highly significant. Online reviews, testimonials on Google Reviews, comments on social platforms, and videos from

influencers significantly contribute to strengthening potential consumers' trust in the products or services being offered.

Food-related SMEs are one of the trends in Muara Bungo. These SMEs are often managed by Gen Z individuals trying to start a culinary business. As Gen Z, they naturally consider social media as a promotional tool with various engaging content, whether it's their own creations or through influencers.

Considering the findings from various empirical studies, this research aims to examine the influence of Social Media Marketing and Content Marketing on the Consumer Buying Decision Process, with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as a mediating variable, specifically among Instagram followers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo. A quantitative approach through online surveys was chosen to obtain an accurate picture of the relationship between these variables. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide useful insights for SMEs in optimising their digital marketing strategies, thereby enhancing consumer engagement and strengthening their business position in the increasingly competitive digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

Consumer Buying Decision

Howard and Sheth developed the 'Buyer Behaviour Theory' to identify the elements of buyer decision-making and divided these elements into three groups: (1) a set of motives, (2) several alternative actions, and (3) decision-making intermediaries used to match motives with alternatives. Motives are specific to a product class and reflect the underlying needs of buyers, while alternatives are various brands that have the potential to satisfy buyer motives (Howard and Sheth). The Howard-Sheth theory made an important contribution to the purchasing decision process, also known as the 'stages model,' as shown in the figure below [16].

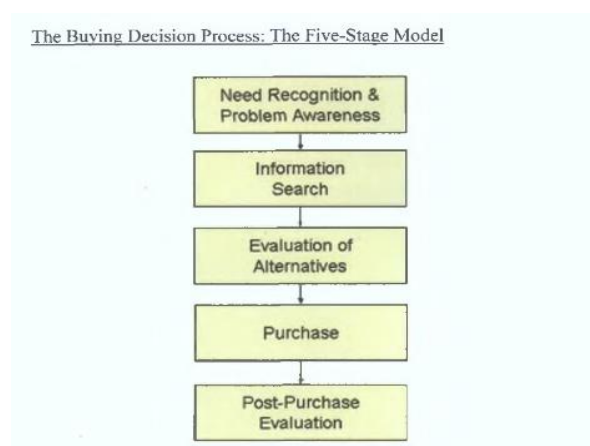


Figure 1. Stages model.

The five-stage model of the consumer purchasing decision process according to Kotler et al consists of: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. This process illustrates how consumers

systematically identify needs, seek solutions, compare options, and ultimately purchase and evaluate products. In the digital age, these stages are increasingly influenced by social media, digital content, and online reviews, which play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions [17]. Thus, understanding this process is key to designing relevant and effective marketing strategies.

Social Media Marketing dan Consumer Buying Decision Process

Social media marketing (SMM) plays an important role in influencing the consumer buying decision process, especially in today's digital age. SMM encompasses various product promotion activities and brand interactions through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and others. These activities are designed to build brand awareness, create consumer engagement, and encourage consumers in the purchasing decision-making process. One of the primary objectives of using social media for promotion and communication is to shape the consumer decision-making process. According to [18] One of the main purposes of using social media for promotion and communication is to shape the consumer decision-making process.

In the context of modern consumers, Wardah consumers in Indonesia found that informativeness and interactivity in SMM increase brand trust, which in turn strengthens consumers' purchase decisions directly and indirectly [19]. SMM on TikTok influences purchasing decisions for Jiniso products [4]. Study by [20] classifying social media marketing (SMM) activities into the dimensions of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, advertisement, and customisation. The results of the study indicate that customisation is the most influential dimension, followed by entertainment, advertisement, interaction, and trendiness, which underscores the importance of SMM strategies that target consumers' personal needs as the key to influencing consumer behaviour.

Hipotesis H1. Social Media Marketing has a positive impact on the Consumer Buying Decision Process.

Content Marketing dan Consumer Buying Decision Process

Content marketing is a relatively new field that is experiencing rapid growth, with various definitions and approaches among academics and practitioners regarding its implementation. This term is often referred to as labelled content marketing, online content marketing, or content marketing through social media [21], [22], [23].

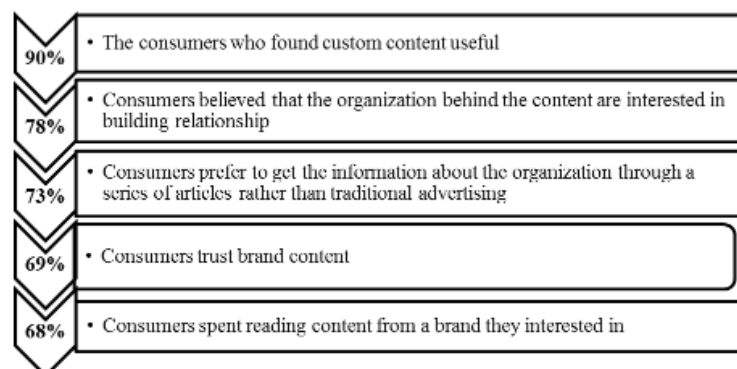


Figure 2. Consumer perceptions of brand content.
Source : Patel quoted in [21].

The image shows that content marketing has a strategic function in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviour towards brands. Around 90% of consumers say that tailored content is very useful, which shows the importance of relevance in meeting the information needs of the audience. 78% believe that organisations that create high-quality content aim to build long-term relationships with customers, reinforcing content marketing's role as a relationship-building tool rather than mere promotion. Additionally, 73% prefer articles or ongoing content over traditional ads, while 69% trust content created by brands, and 68% of consumers are willing to spend time exploring content from brands they like.

However [24] emphasises that the influence of digital brand content on online consumer behaviour is still not entirely clear. This is due to scattered and unintegrated literature, which hinders a comprehensive understanding of scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of content marketing in the context of online consumer behaviour.

Hipotesis H2. Content Marketing has a positive impact on the Consumer Buying Decision Process

Social Media Marketing dan Electronic Word of mouth (Ewom)

Social media marketing has become one of the main strategies used by companies to reach consumers more widely and effectively. By utilising social media platforms, companies can not only promote their products or services, but also build two-way interactions that strengthen their relationships with consumers. This has led to an increase in electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which is the spread of positive information about products through digital communication between consumers.

Social media has the characteristic that messages shared by a user are not only received by one user but by many users simultaneously, making the messages spread faster than through other media. Social media users who see a product are more likely to indirectly discuss the product and promote it to other consumers who do not use social media. Therefore, the higher the use of social media, the greater the opportunity for a product to be discussed by the public. Social media can also be used to encourage consumers to express their opinions about the products or services offered and publish their opinions within the social network on the internet. This can enhance the knowledge of consumers who read the comments or opinions of others regarding the market or the products and services being offered [15].

Winarno & Indrawati in terms of potential consumer behaviour towards products, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is positively and significantly influenced by social media marketing [14]. Social media users who see the product are more likely to indirectly discuss and promote it to other consumers. In addition [15] also found that social media marketing has a positive effect on e-word of mouth.

Hipotesis H3. Social Media Marketing has a positive impact on the Electronic Word of mouth

Content Marketing dan Electronic Word of mouth (Ewom)

In this rapidly evolving digital age, content marketing has become one of the main marketing strategies for various brands to build relationships with consumers. Content

marketing is a strategic marketing approach that focuses on creating and distributing relevant, valuable, and consistent content to attract and retain a clear audience – with the ultimate goal of driving profitable consumer action [12], [22]. Interesting, authentic, and informative content can trigger consumers' interest in voluntarily sharing their experiences or opinions through digital platforms. In this case, content marketing serves as the initial trigger for e-WOM. Research by Lou & Xie shows that social and entertaining digital content can enhance the consumer experience, which in turn strengthens brand loyalty and encourages online sharing behaviour [23].

Hipotesis H4. Content Marketing has a positive impact on the Electronic Word of mouth
Electronic Word of mouth (Ewom) dan Consumer Buying Decision Process

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is an activity that is generally carried out through social media by providing positive or negative comments or reviews to other consumers, or simply sharing experiences after purchasing and using a product (Sintiya et al). Electronic word of mouth communication arises when consumers are satisfied with a product or very disappointed with the product they have purchased. When consumers are satisfied, they will tell other consumers about the product, thereby attracting the interest of other consumers who have never purchased the product to try buying it and increasing the purchase decision for the product being offered [15].

Widyastuti et al says that if e-WOM can effectively disseminate product reviews, there will be an increase in purchasing decisions. e-WOM is disseminated using the internet as an intermediary medium, with the availability of online social communication, which automatically helps consumers to share their experiences regarding the products or services they obtain when making purchases [25].

Dewi et al found that electronic word of mouth had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions [15]. Similar findings were also reported by Sintiya et al which states that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a positive effect on product purchase decisions [26]. This shows that the better the e-WOM received, the greater its influence on product purchase decisions. This means that good reviews of a product can be one of the considerations for consumers in making purchase decisions. In addition, Widyastuti et al stated that e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions [25].

Hipotesis H5. Electronic Word of mouth has a positive impact on the Consumer Buying Decision Process.

Mediating Effect of Electronic Word of mouth (Ewom)

The conventional term word of mouth (WOM) can be defined as “the process of exchanging opinions and information about a particular product among consumers” [27]. In the context of the internet and online platforms, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) describes both positive and negative opinions expressed by current and potential customers about a company or its products via the internet [28].

A comprehensive explanation of consumer behaviour, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is often inadequate, as it does not contain the complexity needed to capture all influencing factor [29]. Therefore, it is crucial to expand and develop TPB to address this gap. One of the primary methods for refining this theory is by incorporating

additional elements such as price value and E-WOM. These factors play a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions and behaviour in today's market, particularly with the increasing prevalence of digital interactions and online shopping platforms. By integrating these elements, the TPB can provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding consumer behaviour in the ever-changing market of today.

To gather and obtain information about goods or services sold by businesses that will impact consumer purchasing decisions, consumers can use e-WOM as a personal communication tool [30], [6].

In the study Dewi et al E-word of mouth can mediate the relationship between social media marketing and purchasing decisions, which means that if e-word of mouth increases, the relationship between social media marketing and purchasing decisions will also increase. In addition, Siddiqui et al states that e-WOM acts as a mediator between social media marketing and the consumer purchasing decision process [31]. Then, interesting, authentic, and informative content can trigger consumers' interest in voluntarily sharing their experiences or opinions through digital platforms. In this case, content marketing serves as the initial trigger for e-WOM. Research by [23] shows that social and entertaining digital content can enhance the consumer experience, which in turn strengthens brand loyalty and encourages online sharing behaviour. Widyastuti et al says that if e-WOM can effectively disseminate product reviews, there will be an increase in purchasing decisions [25]. e-WOM is disseminated using the internet as an intermediary medium, with the availability of online social communication, which automatically helps consumers to share their experiences regarding the products or services they obtain when making purchases.

H6(a-b): Electronic word of mouth acts as a mediator factor between:

H6a: Electronic word of mouth has a mediating role between Social media marketing and Consumer Buying Decision Process.

H6b: Electronic word of mouth has a mediating role between Content marketing and Consumer Buying Decision Process.

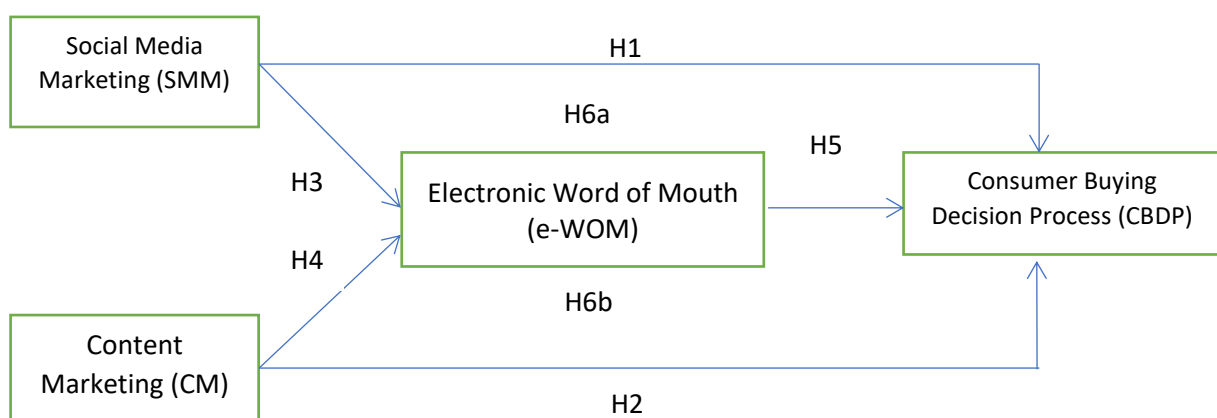


Figure 3. Proposed research model.

Research Model

This study uses a survey-based approach to test hypotheses and validate the proposed theoretical model. This study is an associative quantitative study with an explanatory research approach, which aims to explain the causal relationship between variables, particularly direct and indirect effects through mediation. The population in this study consists of Instagram followers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo who are interested in making online purchasing decisions for snacks sold through Instagram accounts. The sample size was determined by referring to the guidelines [32] which suggests that the representative sample size in a study should range from five to ten times the number of indicators used, or at least 100 respondents. This guideline is used because the research population is too large, so this approach is considered appropriate to ensure sufficient data for analysis. In this study, there are 13 indicators, so the sample size is calculated by multiplying $13 \times 10 = 130$. Thus, the sample size used is 130 Instagram followers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo who are interested in making online purchasing decisions for snacks sold through Instagram accounts. The questionnaire in this study consists of two segments: (1) collection of demographic data (gender, age, occupation), (2) assessing the impact of Social Media Marketing and content marketing on the Consumer Buying Decision Process with Electronic Word of Mouth as a mediating variable using a 5-point Likert scale. The indicators used are references from [2]. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), a method chosen for its suitability in explaining and predicting relationships in the proposed hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Profile

Table 1 shows the profile of respondents who follow the Instagram account of MSMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo who are interested in making online purchasing decisions for snacks sold on the Instagram account, as well as the influence of social media marketing and content marketing on the consumer buying decision process with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as a mediating variable. A total of 130 responses were collected in this study:

Table 1. Respondent Profile (n = 130).

Respondent Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	55	42.3%
Female	75	57.7%
Age		
< 20 years	12	9.2%
20–25 years	39	30.0%
25–30 years	34	26.2%
30–35 years	32	24.6%
> 35 years	13	10.0%

Occupation		
Government/Private Employee	54	41.5%
Student	27	20.8%
Entrepreneur	37	28.5%
Others	12	9.2%

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents in this study were women, numbering 75 (57.7%), with the largest age range being 20–25 years old, numbering 39 (30%), and the highest level of education being civil servant/private employee, numbering 54 (41.5%) of all respondents.

Outer Model

The measurement model shows how each indicator block relates to its latent variable [33].

Internal Consistency Reliability Dan Convergent Validity

The assessment of the reflective measurement model includes composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, with values that must be greater than 0.70 to evaluate internal consistency reliability. Then, the reliability of individual indicators is assessed with the condition that the outer loadings of each indicator are > 0.70 , and the average variance extracted (AVE) is > 0.50 to evaluate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). The results of the internal consistency reliability and convergent validity tests are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Test result internal consistency reliability and convergent validity.

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
<i>Consumer Buying Decision Process</i>	CBDP1	0.783	0.717	0.841	0.639
	CBDP2	0.841			
	CBDP3	0.772			
<i>Content Marketing</i>	CM1	0.890	0.764	0.859	0.671
	CM2	0.820			
	CM3	0.741			
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	SMM1	0.796	0.733	0.842	0.640
	SMM2	0.764			
	SMM3	0.837			
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i>	e-WOM1	0.817	0.777	0.854	0.595
	e-WOM2	0.834			
	e-WOM3	0.713			
	e-WOM4	0.715			

Source : PLS data processing, 2025

From Table 2, referring to the required outer loadings value of 0.70, all statement items used to measure the variables of social media marketing, content marketing, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and consumer buying decision process have met the requirements, where the value of each outer loading for each statement item is > 0.70 , thus all these statement items are deemed fully valid as stated by [34].

Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all variables, including social media marketing, content marketing, electronic word of mouth (e-

WOM), and consumer buying decision process, are above 0.70, indicating that all variables in the estimated model meet the reliability criteria as stated by [34], where reliability is indicated if the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values are > 0.70 . Similarly, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables are > 0.50 , indicating that each variable used meets the criteria for good measurement validity.

Discriminant Validity - Fornell-Larcker dan Rasio HTMT

The assessment of reflective measurement models also includes discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker criteria and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio can be used to test discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker criteria stipulate that the square root of the AVE of each construct (variable) must be greater than its highest correlation with other constructs. The HTMT ratio criterion states that an HTMT value < 0.90 indicates good discriminant validity [34]. The following are the results of the discriminant validity test using Fornell-Larcker and the heterotrait-monotrait correlation ratio (HTMT):

Table 3. Test results *discriminant validity* use fornell-larcker criterion.

	Consumer Buying Decision Process	Content Marketing	Electronic Word of Mouth	Social Media Marketing
Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.799			
Content Marketing	0.301	0.819		
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.466	0.440	0.772	
Social Media Marketing	0.366	0.531	0.417	0.800

Source: PLS data processing, 2025

The test results in Table 3 show the AVE square root values for each variable, consisting of the AVE square root values for social media marketing, content marketing, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and consumer buying decision process are greater than the correlations between variables and other variables in the model. If the square root AVE value of each variable is greater than the correlation value between variables and other variables in the model, then it is said to have good discriminant validity.

Table 4. Test result *Discriminant Validity* use HTMT.

	Consumer Buying Decision Process	Content Marketing	Electronic Word of Mouth	Social Media Marketing
Consumer Buying Decision Process				
Content Marketing	0.374			
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.609	0.519		
Social Media Marketing	0.456	0.622	0.475	

Source : PLS data processing, 2025

The test results in Table 4 show that all variables in the form of social media marketing, content marketing, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and consumer buying decision process have a Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) value < 0.90 , which indicates that all variables in this study have good discriminant validity.

Inner model

The structural model was evaluated using R-square for dependent constructs, the Stone-Geisser Q-Square test for predictive relevance, and t-tests and significance of structural path parameter coefficients for hypothesis testing [33].

R Square

Changes in R-squared values can be used to explain whether certain exogenous latent variables have a substantive effect on endogenous latent variables [33]. The interpretation values for R-squared are 0.75 (strong), 0.50 (moderate/moderate), and 0.25 (weak) [34]. Based on the data processing results, the estimated R-squared values are as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5. R-square result.

	R Square
Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.254
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.240

Source: PLS data processing, 2025

The R Square value in Table 5 shows that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) can be explained by social media marketing and content marketing by 0.240 (24%), while 76% is explained by other variables outside the scope of this study, indicating that the explanatory power of the model is weak because $0.240 < 0.25$. Furthermore, the consumer buying decision process can be explained by social media marketing, content marketing, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) by 0.254 (25.4%), while 74.6% is explained by other variables outside the scope of this study. The explanatory power of the model is also weak because $0.254 > 0.25$ but is lower than 0.50.

Q-square

Q-square measures how well the model generates observed values and estimates its parameters. A Q-square value > 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance, while a Q-square value < 0 indicates that the model lacks predictive relevance [33]. The interpretation values for Q-square are 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (strong) [34].

Table 6. Q-square predictive relevance.

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Consumer Buying Decision Process	390.000	339.197	0.130
Content Marketing	390.000	390.000	
Electronic Word of Mouth	520.000	461.121	0.113
Social Media Marketing	390.000	390.000	

Source: PLS data processing, 2025

Based on Table 6, it can be explained that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a Q Square value of 0.113, and the predictive relevance value of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is classified as weak ($0.113 < 0.15$). Furthermore, the consumer buying decision process has a Q-Square value of 0.130, and the predictive relevance of the consumer buying decision process is also classified as weak ($0.130 < 0.15$). From these results, it can be concluded that this model has weak predictive relevance for electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and the consumer buying decision process.

Hypothesis Testing

The stability of these estimates was evaluated using t-statistics obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. The hypothesis was accepted for one-tailed hypothesis results (one-way hypothesis) with the condition that the t-statistic value was greater than the t-table value (1.65) for a significance level of 0.05 [34]. The results of the bootstrapping test to obtain the significance value for the hypothesis test in this study can be described as follows:

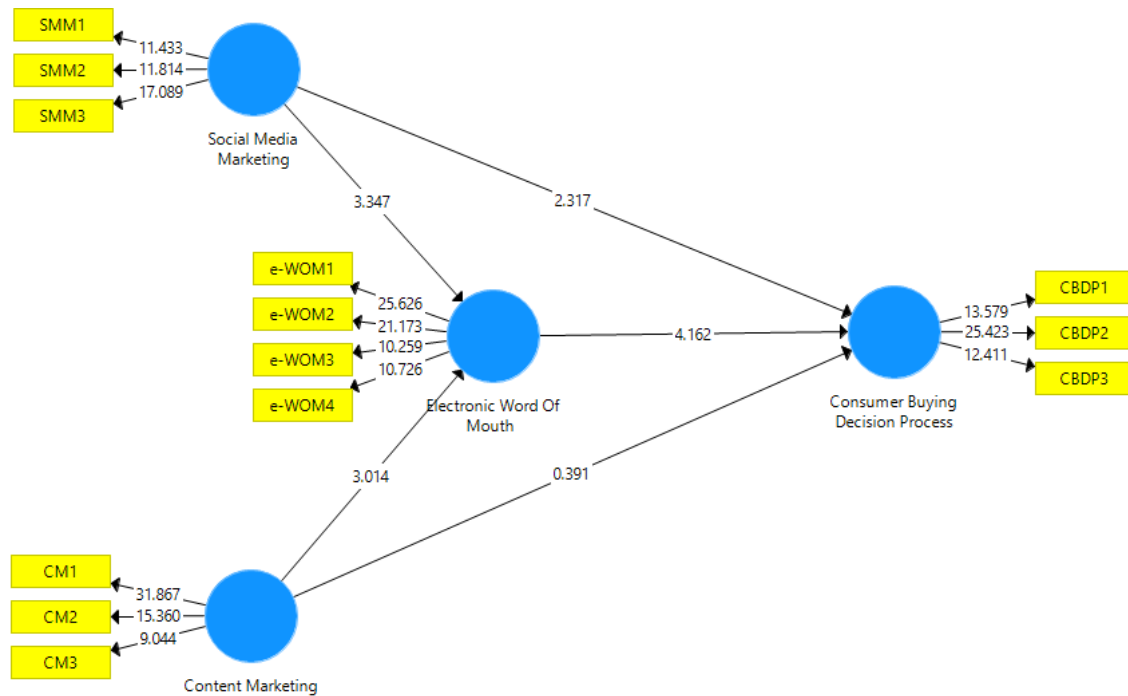


Figure 4. Bootstrapping test results.

Direct Effect

The results of testing for direct effects and indirect effects are as follows:

Table 7. Direct effect result.

		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Note
H1	Social Media Marketing -> Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.192	0.185	0.083	2.317	0.011	Accepted
H2	Content Marketing -> Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.036	0.043	0.092	0.391	0.348	Accepted
H3	Social Media Marketing -> Electronic Word of Mouth	0.255	0.264	0.076	3.347	0.001	Accepted
H4	Content Marketing -> Electronic Word of Mouth	0.304	0.300	0.101	3.014	0.002	Accepted
H5	Electronic Word of Mouth -> Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.370	0.389	0.089	4.162	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data processing with PLS, 2025

The results of the H1 test show that the original sample value is positive at 0.192 with a t-statistic value ($2.317 > 1.65$) and a p-value ($0.011 < 0.05$), meaning that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on the consumer buying decision process. Therefore, H1 is accepted. The results of the H2 test show that the original sample value is positive at 0.036 with a t-statistic value ($0.391 < 1.65$) and a p-value ($0.348 > 0.05$), meaning that content marketing has a positive but not significant effect on the consumer buying decision process. Therefore, H2 is rejected. The results of testing H3 show that the original sample value is positive at 0.255 with a t-statistic value ($3.347 > 1.65$) and a p-value ($0.001 < 0.05$), meaning that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth, thus H3 is accepted. The results of testing H4 show that the original sample value is positive at 0.304 with a t-statistic value ($3.014 > 1.65$) and a p-value ($0.002 < 0.05$), meaning that content marketing has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth, thus H4 is accepted. The results of testing H5 show that the original sample value is positive at 0.370 with a t-statistic value ($4.162 > 1.65$) and a p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$), meaning that electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the consumer buying decision process, thus H5 is accepted.

Indirect Effect

The results of testing for indirect effects are as follows:

Table 8. *Indirect effects* results.

		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Note
H6a	Social Media Marketing -> Electronic Word of Mouth -> Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.094	0.104	0.043	2.173	0.016	Accepted
H6b	Content Marketing -> Electronic Word of Mouth -> Consumer Buying Decision Process	0.113	0.115	0.044	2.573	0.006	Accepted

Source: Data processing with PLS, 2025

The results of the H6 test show that the original sample value is positive at 0.094 with a t-statistic value ($2.173 > 1.65$) and a p-value ($0.016 < 0.05$), meaning that electronic word of mouth acts as a mediating variable between the influence of social media marketing on the consumer buying decision process. Therefore, H6a is accepted. The results of testing H6b show that the original sample value is positive at 0.113, with a t-statistic value of $2.573 > 1.65$ and a p-value of $0.006 < 0.05$. This indicates that electronic word of mouth acts as a mediating variable between the influence of content marketing on the consumer buying decision process. Therefore, H6b is accepted.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on the Consumer Buying Decision Process

Based on the results, it can be concluded that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on the consumer buying decision process among Instagram followers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo, thus H1 is accepted. These findings indicate that the better the social media marketing, the more it increases the consumer buying decision process among Instagram followers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo. This shows that the personal experience of users is one of the clearest proofs of these findings. Instagram followers of SMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo feel that social media, particularly Instagram, has become a highly effective platform for introducing SME food products in Muara Bungo. Through visually appealing content, clear product information, and responsive interactions from sellers, consumers feel comfortable and confident in making purchasing decisions. In fact, consumers are proud to share their purchasing experiences through their personal social media because they are satisfied with the quality of the products and services received. This satisfaction also encourages consumers to recommend the products they have purchased to others through social media. This indicates that social media marketing influences the purchasing decision-making process. Therefore, the better the social media marketing strategy, the higher the likelihood of consumers making purchasing decisions.

Social Media Marketing (SMM) plays an important role in influencing the consumer buying decision process, especially in today's digital age. SMM encompasses various product promotion activities and brand interactions through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and others. These activities are designed to build brand awareness, create consumer engagement, and encourage consumers in the purchasing decision-making process. One of the main purposes of using social media for promotion and communication is to shape the consumer decision-making process. According to Alalwan, one of the main purposes of using social media for promotion and communication is to shape the consumer decision-making process [18]. A study by BILGIN categorises Social Media Marketing (SMM) activities into the dimensions of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, advertisement, and customisation [20]. The research findings indicate that customisation is the most impactful dimension, followed by entertainment, advertisement, interaction, and trendiness, underscoring the importance of SMM strategies that target consumers' personal needs as a key factor in influencing consumer behaviour.

The results of this study are consistent with those of other studies that found that, in the context of modern consumers, Wardah consumers in Indonesia believe that informativeness and interactivity in SMM increase brand trust, which in turn strengthens consumers' purchase decisions directly and indirectly [19]. SMM on TikTok influences purchasing decisions for Jiniso products [4].

Influence Content Marketing on the Consumer Buying Decision Process

Based on the results, it can be concluded that content marketing has a positive effect but does not significantly influence the consumer buying decision process among Instagram followers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo. Therefore, H2 is rejected. This finding indicates that content marketing has not yet had a significant impact on improving the consumer purchasing decision-making process in these MSMEs. The reason is that the majority of consumers in the food sector SMEs in Muara Bungo are more interested and focused on the direct product descriptions and pay attention to content related to the product itself, such as ingredients, taste, and product uniqueness,

rather than the content marketing strategies presented through social media. In other words, consumer purchasing decisions in the food sector SMEs in Muara Bungo are more influenced by the clarity and appeal of the product information they receive, rather than the general marketing content shared. Therefore, the content marketing efforts implemented have not yet been able to significantly impact the consumer purchasing decision-making process in this sector.

The results of this study are consistent with the results of the study Dwintri Nata & Sudarwanto who found that content marketing did not have a significant influence on the decision to purchase J GLOW skincare products in Surabaya [35]. Similarly, the results of the study Nasution et al who found that content marketing had no positive or significant influence on the decision to purchase electronic products [36].

Influence Social Media Marketing on the Electronic Word of Mouth

Based on the results, it can be concluded that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth among Instagram followers of MSMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo, thus accepting H3. These findings indicate that the better the social media marketing carried out by MSMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo, the higher the level of electronic word of mouth shown by their followers. This means that attractive promotions, informative content, and active interaction on social media can encourage consumers to voluntarily spread positive information about the products or services offered. This is reflected in the behaviour of the Instagram followers of these food sector SMEs, who recommend their favourite social media platforms to others, feel proud to share their purchases through the SMEs' social media accounts, and encourage others to buy products through these accounts. Thus, effective social media marketing strategies not only increase product exposure but also trigger digital word-of-mouth promotion.

Social media marketing has become one of the main strategies used by companies to reach consumers more broadly and effectively. By leveraging social media platforms, companies can not only promote products or services but also build two-way interactions that strengthen relationships with consumers. This leads to an increase in electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which is the spread of positive information about products through digital communication among consumers.

Social media has the characteristic where a message shared by a user is not only received by one user but by many users simultaneously, making the message spread faster than through other media. Social media users who see a product are more likely to indirectly discuss the product and promote it to other consumers who do not use social media. Therefore, the higher the use of social media, the greater the opportunity for a product to be discussed by the public. Social media can also be used to encourage consumers to express their opinions about the products or services offered and publish their opinions on social networks on the internet, which can ultimately increase the knowledge of consumers who read the comments or opinions of others about the market or the products and services offered [15]

The results of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies [14] In terms of potential consumer behaviour towards products, electronic word of mouth (E-

WOM) is positively and significantly influenced by social media marketing. Social media users who see the product are more likely to indirectly discuss and promote it to other consumers. In addition, [15] also found that social media marketing has a positive effect on e-word of mouth.

Influence of Content Marketing on Electronic Word of Mouth

Based on the results, it can be concluded that content marketing has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth among Instagram followers of MSMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo, thus accepting H4. This finding indicates that the better the content marketing conducted by SMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo, the higher the level of electronic word of mouth demonstrated by their followers, as reflected in various positive responses from consumers towards the content presented by SMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo. One indicator of this is seen in consumers' interest in product descriptions. Informative, clear, and attractively styled product descriptions can capture consumers' attention, encouraging them to learn more about the product and ultimately share this information digitally with others.

Additionally, consumers also show special attention to the product content presented. Content packaged in a visually appealing manner and accompanied by narratives that align with the needs and preferences of the audience makes consumers more emotionally and cognitively engaged. Not only are they interested and attentive, but consumers also express that they like the product descriptions. This liking reflects the positive relationship built through the right content marketing strategy, which in turn encourages consumers to actively share their experiences and views on the product through social media, online reviews, or other forms of e-WOM. Thus, it can be concluded that effective content marketing can increase consumer engagement and expand the reach of promotions through electronic word of mouth.

In the rapidly evolving digital age, content marketing has become one of the primary marketing strategies for various brands to build relationships with consumers. Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing relevant, valuable, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—with the ultimate goal of driving consumer actions that are beneficial [12], [22]. Interesting, authentic, and informative content can trigger consumers' interest in voluntarily sharing their experiences or opinions through digital platforms. In this case, content marketing serves as the initial trigger for e-WOM. Research by [23] shows that social and entertaining digital content can enhance the consumer experience, which in turn strengthens brand loyalty and encourages online sharing behaviour.

The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Purchasing Decision-Making Processes

Based on the results, it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the consumer buying decision process among followers of Instagram MSMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo, thus accepting H5. These findings indicate that the better the quality of e-WOM built by MSMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo, the higher the level of purchasing decisions made by their followers.

The reason behind the significant influence of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on the purchasing decision-making process can be explained through several consumer behaviours identified in the study. First, consumers tend to consider comments or updates about products or brands they encounter on e-WOM platforms, such as social media and review forums, as part of their evaluation process before purchasing. This

information shapes initial perceptions and serves as an important reference in assessing a product's credibility. Second, consumers show a tendency to change their opinions about a product or brand after seeing positive or negative comments on e-WOM platforms. This confirms that the opinions of other users have a strong influence on consumer perceptions and preferences.

Third, when faced with two product choices, consumers prefer products that are recommended on e-WOM forums over those that are not, indicating that recommendations based on other people's experiences provide greater confidence in making decisions. Finally, e-WOM is seen as an important source of information for consumers in the purchasing decision-making process. These four reasons collectively show that e-WOM is not just an additional communication channel but a determining factor in shaping consumers' final purchasing decisions, especially among social media users such as Instagram followers of SMEs in the food sector in Muara Bungo.

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is an activity that is generally carried out through social media by providing positive or negative comments or reviews to other consumers, or simply sharing experiences after purchasing and using a product [26]. Electronic word of mouth communication occurs when consumers are satisfied with a product or very disappointed with the product they have purchased. When consumers are satisfied, they will tell other consumers about the product, thereby attracting the interest of other consumers who have never purchased the product to try buying it and increasing the purchase decision for the product being offered [15].

e-WOM can spread product reviews well, so there will be an increase in purchasing decisions [25]. e-WOM is spread using the internet as an intermediary medium, with the availability of online social communication, this can automatically help consumers to share experiences regarding the products or services they obtain when making a purchase.

The results of this study are consistent with the results of the study [15] who found that electronic word of mouth had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Similar findings were also reported by [26] which states that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a positive effect on purchasing decisions products. This shows that the better the e-WOM received, the greater the influence on product purchasing decisions. This means that good reviews about the product can be one of the considerations for consumers in making purchasing decisions. Besides that [25] also states that e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions.

Electronic word of mouth (E-Wom) as a Mediating Variable for the Effect of Social Media Marketing and Content Marketing on the Consumer Buying Decision Process

Based on the results, it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth acts as a mediating variable between the influence of social media marketing on the consumer buying decision process on Instagram followers of Food Sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo, thus H6 is accepted. Based on testing the results of the mediation effect using the significance of the path coefficient [34], it can be seen that for H6, both direct and indirect relationships are all significant and have the same direction coefficient so that it can be concluded that the form of H6 mediation is Complementary mediation in the form of partial mediation.

Partial mediation occurs when exogenous variables are still able to directly influence endogenous variables without involving mediator (intervening) variables. This indicates that social media marketing can directly influence the consumer buying decision process without involving electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as mediation. However, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) also acts as a mediating variable that strengthens the influence between social media marketing on the consumer buying decision process, especially on Instagram followers of Food Sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo.

The role of e-WOM as a mediator is reinforced by consumers' consideration of information available on e-WOM forums or platforms. Consumers tend to consider comments or updates about products/brands on e-WOM platforms in their decision-making process. In fact, they are likely to change their opinion on a product or brand after seeing positive or negative comments shared by other users. When faced with a choice between two products, where one gets a recommendation from an e-WOM forum and the other does not, consumers are more likely to choose the recommended product. This shows that e-WOM is an important source of information that has a major influence in the consumer consideration process before making a purchase.

This condition is also very relevant in the context of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo, where consumers increasingly rely on reviews and recommendations from social media and online forums to evaluate the quality of local food products before deciding to buy. Food products from MSMEs usually do not yet have a big reputation like big brands, so information from e-WOM is a major determinant in shaping consumer perceptions. Thus, e-WOM is the main reason considered by consumers of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo in assessing and evaluating the effect of promotion through social media on their purchasing decisions, while strengthening the role of e-WOM as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and consumer buying decision process.

Then based on the results it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth also acts as a mediating variable between the influence of content marketing on the consumer buying decision process on Instagram followers of Food Sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo, thus H6B is accepted. Based on testing the results of the mediation effect using the significance of the path coefficient [34] it can be seen that for H6B the indirect relationship is significant, but the direct relationship is not significant, so it can be concluded that the form of mediation of H6B is Indirect-only mediation (indirect relationship mediation only) which is a form of perfect mediation (full mediation).

Full mediation occurs when exogenous variables are unable to significantly influence endogenous variables without going through mediator (intervening) variables. This indicates that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as an intervening variable (mediation) can perfectly mediate the effect of content marketing on the consumer buying decision process, especially on Instagram followers of Food Sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo.

The role of e-WOM as a mediator in the relationship between content marketing and the consumer buying decision process is strengthened by consumers' consideration of the information available on the e-WOM platform. Consumers tend to be influenced by comments or updates about products/brands they encounter on e-WOM forums in considering the products they will buy. They are also very likely to change their opinion of a product or brand after seeing positive or negative comments from other users. In fact, if faced with two product choices - one of which is recommended through an e-

WOM forum and the other is not - the majority of consumers will tend to choose the recommended product. This shows that e-WOM is one of the sources of information that is considered important in the purchasing decision-making process.

This condition is very relevant in the context of food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo. Food products from MSMEs that do not have high brand awareness tend to be assessed based on reviews and experiences of other users spread through digital content and e-WOM. Thus, e-WOM is the main consideration for consumers in assessing the effectiveness of content marketing, while strengthening the role of e-WOM as a full mediator in the influence of content marketing on the consumer buying decision process.

The conventional term word of mouth (WOM) can be defined as “the process of exchanging opinions and information about a particular product among consumers” [27]. In the context of the internet and online platforms, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) describes the good and bad opinions that current and potential customers express about a company or its products through cyberspace [28].

A comprehensive explanation of consumer behavior, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is often inadequate, as it does not contain the complexity needed to capture all influential factors [29]. Therefore, it is imperative to expand and develop the TPB to address this gap. One of the main methods to refine the theory is to add additional elements such as price value and E-WOM. These factors play a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions and behavior in today's market, especially with the rise of digital interactions and online shopping platforms. By incorporating these elements, the TPB can provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding consumer behavior in today's ever-changing market.

To collect and obtain information about goods or services sold by businesses that will have an impact on consumer purchasing decisions, consumers can use e-WOM as a personal communication tool [30], [6].

The results of this study are consistent with the results of the study Dewi et al which states that e-word of mouth is able to mediate the relationship between social media marketing on purchasing decisions, which means that if e-word of mouth increases, the relationship between social media marketing on purchasing decisions will also increase [15]. This finding is also in line with the research results [31] stated that e-WOM acts as a mediator between social media marketing and the consumer purchasing decision process. Then interesting, authentic, and informative content can trigger consumer interest in sharing their experiences or opinions voluntarily through digital platforms. In this case, content marketing serves as the initial trigger for e-WOM.

Then the results of this study are also consistent with research [23] which shows that social and entertaining digital content enhances the consumer experience, which in turn strengthens brand loyalty and encourages online sharing behavior. Next, if e-WOM can spread product reviews well, there will be an increase in purchasing decisions. e-WOM is spread using the internet as an intermediary medium, with the availability of social communication in online form, this can automatically help consumers to share experiences about the products or services they get when making purchases [25].

CONCLUSIONS

Fundamental Finding : The study found that social media marketing significantly affects the consumer buying decision process, while content marketing does not. Social media marketing positively impacts electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which in turn significantly influences consumer decisions. e-WOM acts as a mediator between both social media and content marketing, with different forms of mediation: partial for social media and full for content marketing. **Implication :** Food sector MSMEs in Muara Bungo can enhance consumer buying decisions by using social media to create engaging, pride-inducing content and by encouraging interactions through polls, reels, and incentives. For content marketing, clear and appealing product descriptions with high-quality visuals are essential, while actively responding to customer feedback and showcasing positive reviews will build credibility. **Limitation :** The study's scope was limited to Instagram followers of food MSMEs in Muara Bungo, which may not reflect the broader population. Other factors like offline word of mouth or influencer marketing were not considered, limiting the study's generalizability. **Future Research :** Future studies could include a broader range of sectors and regions and explore offline word of mouth and additional mediators like customer trust or brand loyalty to better understand consumer buying decisions.

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