

The Influence of Product Quality and e-WOM on iPhone Smartphone Purchasing Decisions Generation Z in Surabaya

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ABSTRAK

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The iPhone has emerged as a symbol of modern identity and social prestige among Generation Z consumers in Surabaya. This study aims to examine the extent to which product quality and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) influence the purchasing decisions of this consumer group. Employing a quantitative research design, the study utilized purposive sampling to select respondents aged between 18 and 26 who are current iPhone users. Data were gathered through structured online questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression through SPSS software. The results indicate that both product quality and e-WOM exert a significant and positive influence on purchasing decisions, both individually and jointly. Product quality reflected in features such as design aesthetics, performance, durability, and overall reliability was identified as a key determinant in consumer decision-making processes. Concurrently, e-WOM, particularly through social media platforms, online reviews, and influencer recommendations, was found to play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions, building trust, and enhancing the likelihood of purchase. These results highlight the dual importance of maintaining superior product standards and strategically engaging with digital communication channels. For practitioners, the study suggests prioritizing quality enhancement while simultaneously investing in digital marketing strategies that resonate with the online habits and preferences of Generation Z. Encouraging positive consumer feedback and optimizing brand visibility across digital platforms may further strengthen purchasing motivation. Future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables such as brand image, lifestyle orientation, or perceived value to develop a more comprehensive model of consumer behavior in the premium smartphone segment.

INTRODUCTION

A majority of iPhone users are aged between 18 and 34 years, which falls within the Generation Z category. This group represents Apple's primary market segment, given their significant influence on technological consumption trends. However, the high price of iPhones ranging from IDR 4 million to IDR

14 million presents a dilemma, as income data for Gen Z in Indonesia indicates that most of them earn relatively low wages. The Indonesia Millennial and Gen Z Report (IMGR, 2024) found that 56% of Gen Z individuals earn less than IDR 2.5 million per month.

Two primary factors are presumed to influence Gen Z's decision to purchase iPhones: product quality

and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Product quality includes aspects such as performance, durability, reliability, and design (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012), which offer added value for consumers. Meanwhile, e-WOM serves as a key source of information in the purchasing decision-making process, as Gen Z is highly influenced by digital reviews, recommendations from friends, family, and influencers (The development of information and communication technology has significantly influenced consumer behavior, particularly in the use of smartphones, which have now become a primary necessity. One of the most prominent smartphone products in the global market is the iPhone, known for its premium quality, elegant design, and technological innovation. Its appeal is especially strong among Generation Z, individuals born between 1995 and 2012, who are also known as digital natives due to their early exposure to technology and social media (Prensky, 2014; Stillman, 2019).

A report by *Financial Times* revealed that 90% of Generation Z in the United States consider the iPhone a symbol of social status. This phenomenon is also evident in Indonesia, where owning an iPhone is often associated with social prestige. The emergence of iPhone rental services in various regions further illustrates the strong social drive behind smartphone purchase decisions, even though such ownership may not align with the financial capabilities of most Gen Z individuals. In Indonesia, the trend of smartphone ownership has shown significant growth. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2021), 65.87% of the Indonesian population owned a smartphone in 2021, a sharp increase from 39.19% in 2011. Within this context, the iPhone has become one of the brands experiencing rapid growth in demand. IDC (2023) reported that in the fourth quarter of 2023, Apple shipped 80.5 million iPhones globally, securing a 24% market share.

Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Although previous studies have examined these two variables, few have focused specifically on the behavior of Gen Z in Indonesia in the context of purchasing premium products such as the iPhone. Therefore, this study aims to empirically examine the influence of product quality and e-WOM on the purchasing decisions of iPhones among Generation Z in Surabaya, taking into account the unique characteristics of this generation and the socio-economic dynamics that shape their consumption behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Product Quality

Product quality is one of the most critical factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions. According to Kotler (2015), product quality refers to a product's ability to satisfy consumer needs and desires. This includes aspects such as durability, reliability, performance, design, and ease of use. A high-quality product tends to foster consumer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. In the context of smartphones, product quality covers technical specifications such as processor speed, camera resolution, stable operating systems, and appealing aesthetics.

Several previous studies support the important role of product quality in purchasing decisions. Oktavenia and Ardani (2018) found that product quality significantly influences consumers' purchasing decisions of Nokia phones. Likewise, a study by Mona Karina and Nunung Eka Sari (2023) in the TikTok Shop online platform confirmed that product quality plays a major role in consumers' decisions to purchase goods online. In addition, research by Nilowardono et al. (2024) revealed that product quality strongly affects consumers' purchasing decisions toward local brand 3Second. These findings emphasize that product quality remains a dominant variable in consumer decision-making processes, including when purchasing premium smartphones like the iPhone.

Although numerous studies have examined the influence of product quality and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on purchasing decisions, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these factors operate within the context of Generation Z in Indonesia, particularly in relation to premium smartphone brands such as the iPhone. Previous research has often focused on general consumer behavior in online shopping platforms (Mona Karina & Nunung Eka Sari, 2023), local brand purchases (Nilowardono et al., 2024), or broader product categories such as electronic goods (Oktavenia & Ardani, 2018). However, limited attention has been paid to luxury or prestige-oriented products, where both functional quality and symbolic value intersect in shaping consumer choices.

This research is particularly important given the unique socio-economic dynamics of Generation Z in Indonesia. On one hand, Gen Z constitutes the most technologically engaged consumer group, highly responsive to digital platforms and peer influence, making them heavily exposed to e-WOM. On the other hand, their relatively limited income, as reported by the Indonesia Millennial and Gen Z Report (IMGR,

2024), creates a tension between aspiration and affordability when purchasing high-priced products like the iPhone. This duality highlights a distinct consumer behavior pattern that has not been thoroughly explored in existing literature.

Studying iPhone purchase decisions among Generation Z in Surabaya is therefore crucial to fill this research gap. It provides empirical evidence on how product quality—encompassing durability, performance, and design—and e-WOM—shaped by reviews, social media, and influencer endorsements—jointly affect consumer decision-making in the premium smartphone segment. The findings are expected not only to advance academic understanding of consumer behavior among digital natives but also to offer practical insights for marketers on how to effectively target and engage this influential demographic.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) refers to the dissemination of consumer opinions or reviews via digital platforms regarding a product or service. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) define e-WOM as any positive or negative statement made by actual, potential, or former customers about a product or company, shared widely through the internet. In today's digital era, e-WOM is a powerful force as it enables information to be distributed quickly and broadly, especially through social media, discussion forums, and review platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Generation Z, being highly active online, is particularly influenced by e-WOM in their purchasing decisions, including when choosing smartphones.

Previous studies have shown a positive relationship between e-WOM and purchasing decisions. Iqbal et al. (2022), in their study of smartphone consumers in India, found that e-WOM significantly influences purchase decisions because consumers tend to trust user-generated reviews more than commercial advertisements. Conversely, a study by Lannita Febiyati and Diana Aqmala (2022) found that e-WOM did not have a direct significant effect on consumers' decisions to use the Grab service, although it had an indirect effect through purchase intention. These findings suggest that the impact of e-WOM is contextual and depends on the product type and consumer characteristics. Therefore, it is important to investigate how e-WOM affects Generation Z's decisions to purchase iPhones,

given their heavy reliance on digital media in everyday life.

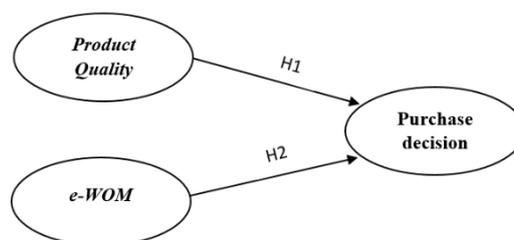
Purchase Decision

Purchase decision refers to the mental process a consumer undergoes when determining whether or not to buy a product. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), a purchase decision is the stage in the consumer decision-making process where the individual selects one option among several alternatives. This process does not merely involve the act of buying but also includes recognizing a need, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making the purchase decision, and engaging in post-purchase behavior. Various factors can influence a consumer's purchase decision, such as product quality, price, lifestyle, and social influences, including recommendations from friends or electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

This process involves both cognitive and emotional considerations and is influenced by factors such as product quality, price, social influence, and digital exposure (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). Previous studies have highlighted the importance of these factors. Karina and Sari (2023) found that product quality significantly affects purchase decisions on TikTok Shop. Iqbal et al. (2022) confirmed the positive effect of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on smartphone purchasing behavior in India, while Nilwardono et al. (2024) emphasized the role of product perception in influencing consumer choices for local brands. These findings underscore the relevance of product quality and e-WOM in shaping purchase decisions, especially among Generation Z, who are highly responsive to digital and social media content.

Framework

Figure 1. Research Framework



Keterangan:

X = Independent Variables, namely Product quality, and e-WOM

Y = Dependent Variable, namely Purchase Decision

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a conclusive research type that is both descriptive and causal. The objective of this approach is to identify and examine the influence of two independent variables product quality and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on the dependent variable, namely the purchase decision of iPhones among Generation Z. This design aligns with Malhotra's (2009) view that a conclusive quantitative approach is used to test cause-and-effect relationships systematically and measurably.

Population and Sample

The population in this research consists of iPhone users from Generation Z residing in Surabaya, aged 18 to 26 years old. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling, in which respondents are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. A total of 200 respondents were selected and considered representative of the target population.

Data Collection Method

The types of data used in this study include primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to respondents who met the defined criteria. Secondary data were obtained from various literature sources such as academic journals, textbooks, statistical reports, and other relevant documents that support the theoretical framework and background of the research.

Data Analyzed Method

The collected data were analyzed using the multiple linear regression analysis method, with the assistance of SPSS version 23 software. This technique is applied to determine the extent of both simultaneous and partial effects of product quality and e-WOM on purchase decisions. It allows the researcher to test the significance and strength of the relationship between variables.

RESULT

Respondent Characteristic

In survey-based research, the characteristics of respondents play an important role in providing a clear picture of the study population. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016), demographic information such as age, gender, education, and occupation is essential to understand the distribution and representativeness of research data. Similarly, Malhotra (2010) emphasized that analyzing respondent profiles not only helps in describing the sample but also serves as a foundation for interpreting consumer behavior more accurately. In the context of studies on product quality, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and purchase decisions, demographic characteristics can provide deeper insights into how different groups of consumers perceive and respond to online purchasing experiences.

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	45	45%
	Female	55	55%
Age	18–25 years	70	70%
	26–35 years	20	20%
	>35 years	10	10%
Education	High School	25	25%
	Diploma/Bachelor	65	65%
	Postgraduate	10	10%
Online Shopping Frequency	Rarely	15	15%
	Occasionally	35	35%
	Frequently	50	50%

Validity Test

Validity testing is a technique used to assess the extent to which a research instrument (such as a questionnaire) accurately measures what it is intended to measure. An instrument is considered valid if each question item shows a significant correlation with the total score. In a quantitative context, validity is tested using Pearson correlation between each item score and the total score, and the result is compared to the critical value of the r-table. If the correlation value exceeds the r-table value, the item is deemed valid (Sugiyono, 2017).

Table 1. Validity Test result

Variabel	Item	R. Calculate	R. Table	Description
Product Quality	X1.1	0,922	0,138	Valid
	X1.2	0,937	0,138	Valid
	X1.3	0,927	0,138	Valid
	X1.4	0,926	0,138	Valid
	X1.5	0,931	0,138	Valid
	X1.6	0,921	0,138	Valid
	X1.7	0,929	0,138	Valid
	X1.8	0,934	0,138	Valid
	X1.9	0,924	0,138	Valid
	X1.10	0,930	0,138	Valid
	X1.11	0,918	0,138	Valid
	X1.12	0,934	0,138	Valid
e-WOM	X2.1	0,932	0,138	Valid
	X2.2	0,944	0,138	Valid
	X2.3	0,936	0,138	Valid
	X2.4	0,933	0,138	Valid
	X2.5	0,938	0,138	Valid
	X2.6	0,925	0,138	Valid
	X2.7	0,923	0,138	Valid
	X2.8	0,923	0,138	Valid
	X2.9	0,925	0,138	Valid
	X2.10	0,933	0,138	Valid
Purchase Decision	Y.1	0,924	0,138	Valid
	Y.2	0,914	0,138	Valid
	Y.3	0,933	0,138	Valid
	Y.4	0,936	0,138	Valid
	Y.5	0,939	0,138	Valid
	Y.6	0,950	0,138	Valid
	Y.7	0,934	0,138	Valid
	Y.8	0,936	0,138	Valid

The results of this study indicate that all questionnaire items have correlation values above the r-table, thus they are declared valid.

The results of the analysis using the Three-box Method show that all three variables in this study are predominantly rated in the high category. Product Quality (X1) received an average score of approximately 73%, with the strongest indicator being product-description conformity, indicating that respondents perceive the products as reliable and consistent with expectations. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM/X2) also showed a high average score of around 72%, with review accessibility emerging as the most influential indicator, suggesting that respondents find online reviews easy to access and valuable in shaping their perceptions. Similarly, Purchase Decision (Y) was rated highly with an average of 75%, where purchasing based on needs was identified as the strongest factor, reflecting that consumer decisions are primarily driven by personal relevance and satisfaction. Overall, these findings demonstrate that respondents have a positive perception of product quality and e-WOM, both of which significantly support and influence their purchasing decisions.

Reliability Test Results

Reliability testing is used to measure the extent to which a research instrument can produce consistent

results when applied repeatedly under the same conditions. An instrument is considered reliable if it demonstrates a high level of consistency in measurement. In quantitative research, reliability testing is commonly conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha method. A variable is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.6.

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Alpha Value (r calculated)	Cronach's Alpha min	Description
Product Quality (X1)	0,6	0,985	Reliabel
e-WOM (X2)	0,6	0,983	Reliabel
Purchase decision (Y)	0,6	0,979	Reliabel

All Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.6, indicating that the research instruments for each variable have a good level of internal consistency and can be categorized as reliable.

Normality Test Result

Normality testing is used to determine whether the data in the study are normally distributed, which is one of the essential assumptions in multiple linear regression analysis. A normal distribution is necessary to ensure that the results of statistical tests can be interpreted accurately. One commonly used method to test normality is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, in which the data are considered normally distributed if the significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) is greater than 0.05.

Table 3. Nomality Test Result

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		200
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	,0000000
	Std. Deviation	4,09328014
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,035
	Positive	,035
	Negative	-,026
Test Statistic		,035
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c		,200 ^d

Based on the results of the analysis in this study, the significance value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data in this study are normally distributed and meet the classical assumption

of normality required for the multiple linear regression model.

Multicollinearity Test Result

Multicollinearity testing is used to determine whether there is a correlation among the independent variables in a regression analysis. To identify the presence of multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) results are examined. The VIF value should not exceed 10; if it does, multicollinearity is considered to be present. The test results are as follows:

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Result

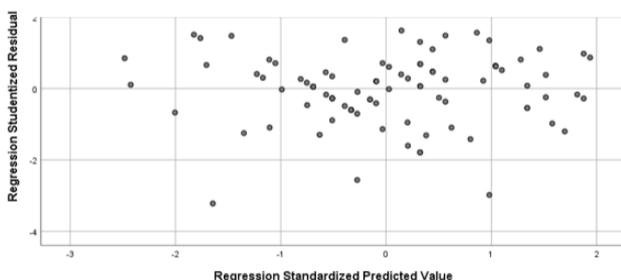
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std Error			
(Constant)	3,232	1,295		2,497	0,013
Kualitas Produk	0,300	0,025	0,455	11,825	0,000
e-WOM	0,538	0,030	0,688	17,855	0,000

Based on the data analysis results in this study, the Tolerance values for each independent variable (product quality and e-WOM) are above 0.10, and the VIF values are below 10. This indicates that there is no indication of multicollinearity among the independent variables in this regression model.

Heteroscedasticity Test

In quantitative research, one of the common methods used to detect the presence of heteroscedasticity is the Glejser test. This test is conducted by regressing the absolute value of the residuals against the independent variables and evaluating the significance of the regression coefficients. The results of this test will indicate whether heteroscedasticity can be identified through a specific pattern in the distribution of the residuals.

Figure 2. Heteroscedasticity Result



In the scatter plot diagram, the data points are randomly and evenly distributed above and below the value of 0 on the Y-axis. This distribution indicates the absence of heteroscedasticity in the regression model used for hypothesis testing.

Analysis of Multiple Linier Regression

Multiple linear regression analysis is used in research involving two or more independent variables. This analysis aims to determine the extent to which changes in the values of independent variables influence the dependent variable. In this study, SPSS version 23 was used to analyze the effect of product quality (X1) and electronic word of mouth or e-WOM.

Table 5. Multiple linear regression Result

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Description
Product Quality (X1)	0,998	1,002	Multicollinearity does not occur
Purchase decision (Y)	0,998	1,002	Multicollinearity does not occurs

(The analysis results show that when the value of e-WOM (X2) is held constant, the predicted value of purchase decision (Y) is 2.991. The regression coefficient for the product quality variable (X1) is 0.426, indicating that a one-unit increase in product quality will increase the purchase decision by 0.426. Meanwhile, the e-WOM variable (X2) has a coefficient of 0.362, meaning that a one-unit increase in e-WOM will increase the purchase decision by 0.362. Therefore, both independent variables have a positive influence on the purchase decision, which is also statistically significant as the significance values are less than 0.05.

Coefficient of Determination (R2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to measure how well the regression model explains the variation in the dependent variable as influenced by the independent variables. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model explains the relationship between the analyzed variables. In the context of multiple linear regression, the Adjusted R^2 value is more commonly used because it takes into account the number of independent variables in the model, resulting in a more accurate measurement.

Table 6. coefficient of determination Result

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,842 ^a	,708	,705	4,11401
a. Predictors: (Constant), X2, X1				
b. Dependent Variable: Y				

Based on the data analysis results in this study, the Adjusted R² value is 0.708. This indicates that 70.8% of the variation in iPhone purchase decisions among Generation Z in Surabaya can be explained by the two independent variables, namely product quality and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). The remaining 29.2% is influenced by other variables outside the model.

T-test

The t-test determines each independent variable's individual effect on the dependent variable by comparing significance values to a set threshold. The t-test results are as follows:

Table 7. T Test Result

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients ^a		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,232	1,295		2,497	0,013
	Kualitas Produk e-WOM	0,300	0,025	0,455	11,825	0,000
		0,538	0,030	0,688	17,855	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: LAG_Y

The t-test results in this study indicate that both independent variables, namely product quality (X1) and electronic word of mouth or e-WOM (X2), have significance values of 0.000. This value is less than 0.05, which means that product quality and e-WOM have a significant partial effect on iPhone purchase decisions (Y) among Generation Z in Surabaya. Therefore, it can be concluded that improvements in product quality and positive e-WOM influence will individually encourage an increase in purchase decisions.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Product Quality on Purchase Decisions

The results of this study indicate that product quality has a positive and significant influence on the purchase decisions of iPhones among Generation Z in Surabaya. This finding suggests that the higher the consumer's perception of iPhone quality—in terms of design, durability, performance, and technological innovation—the greater their tendency to make a purchase. This aligns with the opinion of Kotler and Armstrong (2012), who state that product quality is a key element influencing consumer preferences and decisions. High-quality products provide added value that encourages customer loyalty and increases purchase intention. In the context of Generation Z, who are highly selective in choosing technology, the perception of product quality becomes a primary

consideration when selecting premium smartphones such as the iPhone.

The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on Purchase Decisions

The results of This study also confirms that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) significantly affects purchase decisions. Generation Z, as active users of social media, is highly influenced by online reviews and testimonials they encounter from peers, influencers, or online communities. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) explain that e-WOM has the power to shape consumer perceptions through information that is personal, rapidly disseminated, and often considered more trustworthy than conventional advertising. In this case, e-WOM plays a crucial role as a social reference that encourages Generation Z consumers to make purchase decisions, especially for premium products like the iPhone.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that both product quality and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) have a significant influence both simultaneously and partially on the purchase decisions of iPhones among Generation Z in Surabaya. This indicates that Generation Z places great importance on product quality, such as design, durability, and performance, when making purchasing decisions. Additionally, the influence of e-WOM through reviews, comments, and recommendations on social media is also a critical factor in shaping their perception and trust toward the product. Therefore, companies must ensure that the products they offer maintain high quality while also building strong and positive digital communication through various social platforms.

The implication of this study is to provide insights for business practitioners, particularly in the technology and smartphone industries, to better understand the purchasing behavior of young consumers. Digital-based marketing strategies and brand image enhancement through e-WOM can serve as effective approaches to increasing product competitiveness.

Based on the research conducted, the following suggestions can be made:

1. Companies should maintain and enhance product quality. Elements such as design, durability, features, and the exclusive operating system should be continuously improved to remain aligned with the needs and expectations of Generation Z, who are highly selective when it comes to technology products.
2. Optimization of digital marketing strategies is essential. Given the significant influence of e-

WOM on purchase decisions, companies are encouraged to actively utilize social media, collaborate with influencers, and motivate customers to leave positive reviews in order to build a strong brand reputation.

3. It is important for producers to understand the purchasing power of Generation Z. Although interested in iPhones, most of them do not yet have a stable income. Therefore, companies could offer installment plans, student discounts, or bundled packages to make the products more affordable.
4. Future research should consider additional variables. Since the coefficient of determination indicates that 29.2% of purchase decisions are influenced by factors outside the current model, further studies may include variables such as brand image, lifestyle, and promotional strategies to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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