



Understanding Consumer Purchasing Decisions Through Word of Mouth: Evidence from Somethinc Users in Malang

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of the skincare industry in Indonesia has encouraged local brands to utilize Word of Mouth (WOM) and electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) as marketing communication strategies. This study aims to understand the role of WOM in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc consumers in Malang. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving 12 informants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using interactive analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that WOM and e-WOM significantly influence consumer perceptions, trust, purchase intentions, and purchasing decisions toward Somethinc products. Recommendations from friends, family, beauty influencers, and digital reviews on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram were found to strengthen consumer confidence regarding product quality and suitability. Positive consumer experiences also encouraged repeat purchases and sustainable WOM communication among consumers. This study contributes to consumer behavior and digital marketing literature by providing a deeper qualitative understanding of the role of WOM and e-WOM in skincare purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Word of Mouth, e-WOM, Purchasing Decision, Local Skincare, Consumers

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1. INTRODUCTION

The skincare industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by increasing public awareness of skin health, lifestyle changes, and the growing beauty trends among young consumers (Riyadi & Adiwijaya, 2023). The rapid development of digital technology and social media has also transformed consumer purchasing behavior, particularly in the beauty and skincare sector. Data from Statista (2026) shows that Indonesia's skincare market continues to grow steadily and is projected to generate billions of dollars in revenue in the coming years, supported by increasing consumer demand and digital purchasing activities. In addition, the high use of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram has accelerated the growth of local skincare brands through digital marketing and online consumer engagement. One of the local skincare brands experiencing rapid growth is Somethinc, which has successfully utilized social media, beauty influencers, and digital consumer reviews to strengthen its market position among young consumers in Indonesia.

The growth of the skincare industry has encouraged the emergence of many local beauty brands competing to attract consumers through digital marketing strategies and social media engagement. One of the most popular local skincare brands in Indonesia is Somethinc, which has become one of the fastest-growing skincare brands in the local beauty industry (Riyadi & Adiwijaya, 2023). The brand's rapid growth is strongly supported

by intensive social media marketing, influencer collaborations, and active consumer interactions on digital platforms. Studies have shown that Somethinc successfully utilizes social media activities to increase consumer purchase intention and brand awareness.

The increasing use of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram has significantly influenced consumer purchasing behavior in Indonesia. Consumers no longer rely solely on traditional advertising, but actively seek product information through reviews, testimonials, and recommendations shared on digital platforms (Ariani et al., 2025). TikTok and Instagram have become important sources of product information because visual and interactive content can influence consumer perceptions and purchasing intentions more effectively. Research indicates that online reviews and digital content on TikTok significantly affect consumer purchasing decisions, especially among young consumers.

In the context of skincare products, *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) play crucial roles in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. Skincare products are closely related to skin compatibility and product safety, causing consumers to be more careful before purchasing products. Recommendations from friends, family, beauty influencers, and online reviews are often considered more trustworthy than formal company advertisements because they are based on real user experiences. Previous studies have shown that WOM and e-WOM significantly influence consumer trust, purchase intention, and purchasing decisions toward skincare products (Nathania & Foek, 2023).

The role of e-WOM has become increasingly important with the rapid growth of beauty-related content on TikTok and Instagram. Consumers frequently access skincare tutorials, before-after reviews, product testimonials, and influencer recommendations before deciding to purchase products. Interactive digital communication allows information to spread quickly among consumers and creates stronger social influence on purchasing behavior (Fhaizyah & Hakim, 2025). Local skincare brands, including Somethinc, have actively utilized these platforms to build consumer engagement and strengthen brand image in the digital market.

Malang was selected as the research location because the city is dominated by young consumers and university students who actively use social media in their daily lives. The high intensity of social media usage among young consumers makes them highly exposed to WOM and e-WOM communication related to beauty and skincare products. This condition makes Malang a relevant context for examining how WOM influences purchasing decisions of local skincare consumers, particularly users of Somethinc products.

Although numerous studies have examined the influence of *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) on consumer purchasing decisions in the skincare industry, most previous studies have predominantly employed quantitative approaches focusing on measuring statistical relationships among variables such as purchase intention, brand trust, and consumer loyalty. Studies conducted by Oktaviani & Estaswara (2022), Gunawan (2022) and H & Aditama (2026) primarily analyzed the direct influence of e-WOM on purchasing decisions using survey-based quantitative methods. Only a limited number of studies have explored WOM in the skincare industry through qualitative

approaches that deeply investigate consumers' personal experiences, perceptions, and social interactions during the purchasing decision-making process.

Furthermore, previous studies have not sufficiently explained how consumers interpret, evaluate, and internalize WOM information before deciding to purchase skincare products, particularly products involving skin compatibility, safety, and personal trust. Existing quantitative studies generally focus on the strength of variable relationships but are unable to comprehensively capture the emotional considerations, social influences, and credibility evaluations experienced by consumers when interacting with WOM and e-WOM content on digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. In addition, studies specifically examining Something consumers in Malang remain relatively limited, despite the city's large population of young consumers and active social media users.

Therefore, this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to provide deeper insights into how WOM and e-WOM shape purchasing decisions through consumers' real experiences and perceptions. Unlike quantitative approaches that primarily produce statistical generalizations, this study aims to explore how consumers build trust, interpret digital reviews, evaluate product suitability, and respond to social influences before making skincare purchasing decisions. Through in-depth interviews and qualitative exploration, this study is expected to generate richer contextual understanding regarding consumer behavior and digital marketing communication in the local skincare industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word of Mouth (WOM) refers to interpersonal communication among consumers regarding experiences, opinions, and recommendations related to products or services. WOM usually occurs informally through conversations between friends, family members, colleagues, or social communities. In marketing studies, WOM is considered one of the most influential communication strategies because the information conveyed originates from real consumer experiences and is perceived as more trustworthy than company-generated advertisements. Consumer Behavior Theory by Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L., (2020), consumer purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by social and personal factors, including recommendations and experiences shared by others. This perspective is closely related to Consumer Behavior Theory, which explains that consumers tend to rely on social references before making purchasing decisions, especially for products involving personal risk and product suitability such as skincare products.

The role of WOM can also be understood through Social Influence Theory, which explains that individuals' attitudes and behaviors are significantly influenced by interactions with surrounding social groups. Consumers often adjust their perceptions and purchasing decisions based on opinions and experiences shared by people they trust. In the skincare industry, recommendations from friends, family, and beauty communities become highly influential because skincare products involve concerns regarding skin compatibility, safety, and effectiveness. Consumers tend to seek reassurance from other users before purchasing products in order to reduce uncertainty

and perceived risk. Therefore, WOM functions not only as a communication channel but also as a form of social influence capable of shaping consumer perceptions and behavior toward skincare products. Research by (Susanti et al., 2023) found that Word of Mouth positively influences purchasing decisions because consumers perceive recommendations from other users as more reliable than traditional promotional messages.

In the digital era, the concept of WOM has evolved into electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), where communication among consumers occurs through digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Shopee, and online communities. The development of e-WOM can be explained through Information Adoption Theory, which states that consumers adopt information based on its credibility, usefulness, and relevance. Consumers are more likely to trust online reviews, testimonials, and beauty influencer content when the information is considered authentic and relevant to their personal needs. Previous studies have shown that consumers actively evaluate the quality of digital information before making purchasing decisions, especially in the beauty and skincare industry where product suitability becomes an important consideration. Research by Oktaviani & Estaswara (2022) explained that e-WOM through social media significantly influences skincare purchasing decisions because consumers use online reviews as a primary source of product evaluation.

Furthermore, the influence of WOM and e-WOM on purchasing decisions can also be linked to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This theory explains that purchasing decisions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Positive recommendations and reviews from other consumers contribute to the formation of favorable attitudes toward products and create social pressure that encourages purchasing intentions. In addition, Consumer Trust Theory emphasizes that trust plays a central role in consumer decision-making processes. Consumers who perceive WOM information as credible and honest are more likely to develop trust toward products and brands. In the context of skincare products such as Somethinc, trust becomes a critical factor because consumers seek assurance regarding product quality, safety, and compatibility with their skin conditions. Research by Gunawan (2022) found that electronic Word of Mouth significantly increases brand trust and brand image in skincare purchasing behavior.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that WOM and e-WOM significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior in the skincare industry. Research conducted by H & Aditama (2026) showed that electronic Word of Mouth and beauty influencers strongly influence purchasing decisions because interactive digital content can shape positive consumer perceptions toward skincare products. These findings indicate that WOM and e-WOM have become essential elements in modern digital marketing communication strategies, particularly in shaping consumer trust, purchase intentions, and purchasing decisions toward local skincare products.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

The development of digital technology and social media has given rise to a new form of communication known as *electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)*. e-WOM refers to

communication among consumers conducted through digital media such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, marketplaces, and various other online platforms. Unlike traditional WOM, which has a limited reach, e-WOM enables information to spread rapidly to a large number of people in a short period of time. This makes e-WOM one of the important factors in modern digital marketing strategies.

Usually, e-WOM appears in the form of product reviews, comments, ratings, testimonials, and product experience content shared by consumers through social media. This information often becomes the main reference for prospective buyers before making transactions. Consumers tend to rely on online reviews and digital recommendations because e-WOM significantly influences purchase intention by increasing trust and reducing uncertainty toward products in social commerce environments (Zhao et al., 2020). Research by Sepfiani et al., (2023) showed that e-WOM has a significant influence on purchasing decisions because it can enhance perceptions of product quality and consumer trust toward a brand. The more positive the information received by consumers, the greater the likelihood that consumers will make a purchase.

In the skincare industry, e-WOM has a very strong influence because consumers tend to seek product usage reviews before deciding to make a purchase. Video content such as skincare tutorials, before-and-after product results, and influencer reviews become sources of information considered relevant by consumers. Research by Dwiputri & Syahputra (2023) showed that e-WOM through the TikTok platform is able to increase consumers' purchase intention toward local skincare products because the visual and interactive delivery of information is considered more convincing.

Purchasing Decision

A purchasing decision is a process undertaken by consumers in determining their choice of a product or service. This process involves several stages, starting from problem recognition, information searching, evaluation of alternatives, and finally the decision to purchase a particular product. In consumer behavior theory, purchasing decisions are influenced by various factors such as personal needs, price, product quality, social environment and the information received by consumers before making a purchase.

In today's digital era, purchasing decisions are influenced not only by company promotions but also by the experiences and recommendations of other consumers. Information obtained through Word of Mouth and e-WOM becomes an important consideration because it is perceived as more authentic and based on real user experiences. Research by Rahayu & Sukaris (2024) showed that e-WOM has a significant influence on purchasing decisions because it helps consumers evaluate the quality and benefits of products before making a purchase.

In the context of skincare products, consumers' purchasing decisions tend to be influenced by their level of trust in the safety and effectiveness of the products. Consumers usually compare various reviews and recommendations before determining

which product best suits their skin needs. Therefore, *Word of Mouth* communication plays a major role in shaping consumers' confidence toward a skincare product. Research by Harsoyo & Utami (2024) showed that *electronic Word of Mouth* has a positive influence on purchasing decisions of Somethinc skincare products because it is able to enhance consumers' perceptions and trust toward the product.

Previous Studies

Various previous studies have shown that *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) play important roles in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions, particularly in beauty and skincare products. Research by Moenardy & Winarni (2022) found that *Word of Mouth* significantly influences purchasing decisions among skincare consumers because recommendations from other users are considered more trustworthy than company promotions. Consumers tend to use the experiences of other users as their primary source of reference before purchasing a product. In addition to direct WOM, the development of social media has also strengthened the influence of *electronic Word of Mouth* in consumer decision-making processes. Research by Oktaviani & Estaswara (2022) showed that e-WOM through social media influences skincare purchasing decisions because user reviews and comments help consumers evaluate product quality before making a purchase.

Research by Gunawan (2022) also explained that *electronic Word of Mouth* is able to improve *brand image* and *brand trust*, thereby influencing skincare consumers' purchasing decisions. Furthermore, Tehuayo & Darso (2022) found that *electronic Word of Mouth* has a significant influence on purchasing decisions because digital information disseminated through social media is considered more accessible and relevant to the needs of modern consumers.

Recent research by H & Aditama (2026) also showed that *electronic Word of Mouth* and beauty influencers have a strong influence on skincare product purchasing decisions because they are able to shape positive consumer perceptions through interactive and informative digital content. Based on these various studies, it can be understood that WOM and e-WOM are important factors in shaping skincare consumers' purchasing decisions. However, most previous studies still employed quantitative approaches focusing on the relationships between variables. Research that deeply explores consumers' experiences and perceptions regarding how *Word of Mouth* shapes purchasing decisions through a qualitative approach remains relatively limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore more deeply the role of *Word of Mouth* in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc products among consumers in Malang.

Research Gap

Based on various previous studies, it is known that *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) have a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions, particularly in skincare products. Most previous studies focused on measuring the relationships between variables using quantitative approaches, such as the influence of e-WOM on purchase intention, purchasing decisions, *brand image*, and *brand trust*. These studies mainly emphasized the magnitude of variable influence through statistical analysis, and therefore were not able to describe in depth how the process of *Word of*

Mouth is formed and received by consumers in real-life situations.

In addition, previous studies generally positioned consumers as objects of measurement rather than as subjects whose experiences and perceptions were explored in depth. In fact, in the context of skincare products, purchasing decisions are influenced not only by product information but also by personal experiences, trust levels, skin compatibility, and social influences from surrounding environments and digital media. Therefore, a more exploratory approach is needed to understand how *Word of Mouth* shapes consumers' beliefs and purchasing decisions before buying skincare products.

On the other hand, studies specifically examining Somethinc products using a qualitative approach are still relatively limited, especially in the context of consumers in Malang. In fact, Malang has consumer characteristics dominated by young people and university students who actively use social media as a source of beauty product information. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap by exploring more deeply how *Word of Mouth*, both direct and digital, shapes purchasing decisions of Somethinc products among consumers in Malang through a qualitative exploratory approach.

The Role of Word of Mouth in Shaping Purchasing Decisions of Somethinc Products

Word of Mouth (WOM) plays an important role in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc products in Malang. In the context of this study, WOM is understood as the process of delivering information, experiences, and recommendations among consumers regarding Somethinc products, both directly and through digital media. Information obtained from friends, family, colleagues, and social media becomes one of the main considerations for consumers before deciding to purchase skincare products. In Malang City, the role of WOM becomes even stronger because the consumer characteristics are dominated by young people and university students who actively interact within social environments and digital media. Consumers tend to share experiences regarding skincare product usage, especially related to product quality, skin compatibility, product benefits, and results after usage. Recommendations from familiar people are considered more trustworthy because they come from real experiences and are not formal in nature like company advertisements.

In addition to direct communication, electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) also plays a major role in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc products in Malang City. Consumers obtain a great deal of information through TikTok, Instagram, Shopee, and various other digital platforms in the form of product reviews, comments, ratings, and beauty influencer content. Such information helps consumers recognize products, understand product benefits, and evaluate product quality and safety before making a purchase.

The role of WOM in this study is also reflected in the process of building consumer trust. Skincare products carry the risk of skin incompatibility, causing consumers to seek

references from other users before trying new products. When consumers receive many positive recommendations about Somethinc, a perception emerges that the product is

safe, high-quality, and worth using. These positive perceptions then influence purchase intention and ultimately consumers' purchasing decisions.

Besides shaping initial purchasing decisions, WOM also plays a role in creating customer loyalty and the further dissemination of information. Consumers who are satisfied after using Somethinc products tend to share their experiences with others, both through direct conversations and social media. This causes WOM to continue developing and become an indirect promotional medium capable of expanding the market reach of Somethinc products in Malang City.

Thus, the role of Word of Mouth in this study is viewed not only as a medium for delivering information, but also as a factor that shapes consumers' perceptions, trust, purchase intentions, and purchasing decisions toward Somethinc products. WOM becomes one of the most effective marketing communication strategies because it is able to influence consumer behavior through real experiences and social interactions among skincare product users.

Conceptual Framework

Based on theories and previous studies, the conceptual framework of this research can be described as follows:

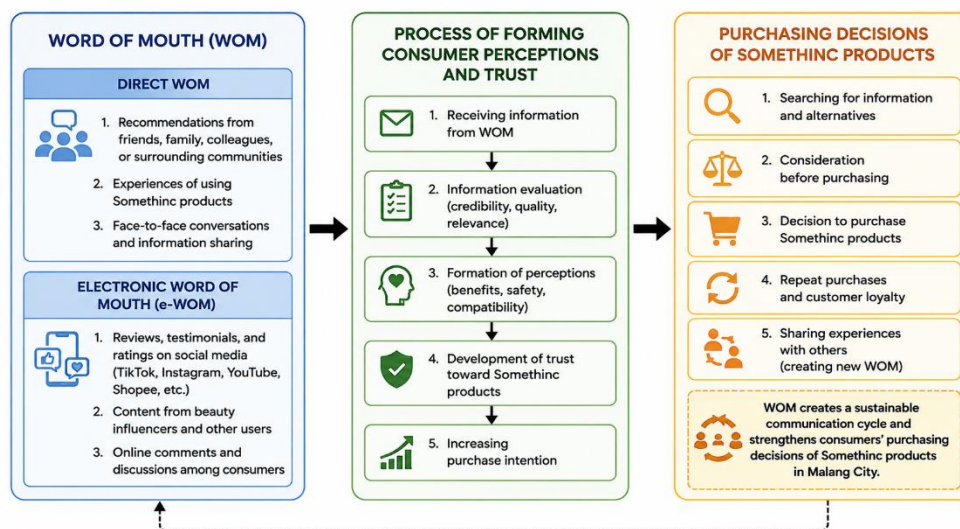


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework illustrates that *Word of Mouth* (WOM) acts as the primary source of information obtained by Somethinc consumers in Malang, both through direct communication and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) on digital media. The information received by consumers is then evaluated based on its credibility, quality, and relevance, thereby shaping perceptions regarding the product's benefits, safety, and suitability. These positive perceptions will build consumer trust toward Somethinc products and encourage an increased intention to purchase.

When purchase intention becomes stronger, consumers will go through the purchasing decision process starting from information searching, consideration, and finally the act of purchasing. Positive experiences after the purchase not only create repeat purchases and customer loyalty, but also encourage consumers to share their experiences with others, allowing WOM to be formed again and creating a continuous communication cycle. This cycle strengthens the influence of WOM in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc products in Malang.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory research design. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) shape purchasing decisions of Somethinc consumers in Malang. Through this approach, the researcher was able to explore consumers' experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints regarding the information they received before purchasing skincare products. The descriptive-exploratory design was used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social phenomena related to consumer purchasing behavior in the digital era.

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory research design. A qualitative approach was selected because this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) shape purchasing decisions of Somethinc consumers in Malang. Qualitative research is considered appropriate for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social phenomena and human problems (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N., 2018). Through this approach, the researcher was able to explore consumers' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding the information they received before purchasing skincare products. The descriptive-exploratory design was considered appropriate because it allows a deeper exploration of social interactions and consumer behavior related to digital marketing communication in the skincare industry.

The research was conducted in Malang City because the city is dominated by young consumers and university students who actively use social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram as sources of beauty product information. The informants in this study consisted of 12 consumers of Somethinc products selected through purposive sampling techniques. The participants consisted of 9 female consumers and 3 male consumers aged between 19–27 years old. The inclusion criteria required informants to have used Somethinc skincare products for at least three months, purchased the products more than twice, actively accessed skincare-related information through social media, and obtained information regarding Somethinc products through direct WOM communication or e-WOM on digital platforms. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to select participants who possessed relevant experiences and information related to the research objectives.

The recruitment process was conducted gradually until the data reached saturation. Data saturation was identified when additional interviews no longer produced new information, themes, or perspectives related to the role of WOM and e-WOM in purchasing decisions. The variation in gender, age, and frequency of product usage was intended to obtain diverse perspectives regarding consumer experiences and social influences in skincare purchasing behavior.

The profile of informants involved in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Informants

Informant	Gender	Age	Duration of Use	Purchase Frequency	Main Source Information
I1	Female	21	8 months	4 times	TikTok
I2	Female	22	1 year	5 times	FriendRecommendation
I3	Male	24	6 months	3 times	Instagram
I4	Female	20	5 months	3 times	TikTok
I5	Female	23	1 year	6 times	Shopee Reviews
I6	Female	21	7 months	4 times	Beauty Influencer
I7	Male	24	9 months	4 times	TikTok
I8	Female	24	4 months	2 times	Instagram
I9	Female	24	1 year	5 times	TikTok
I10	Female	24	2 years	8 times	Friend Recommendation
I11	Male	24	10 months	4 times	Instagram
I12	Female	24	6 months	3 times	TikTok

Source: Processed by The Researcher, 2026

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were used to explore consumers' experiences and perceptions regarding the influence of WOM and e-WOM on purchasing decisions of Somethinc products. Observation was conducted to examine consumer behavior and communication activities related to skincare products both directly and through social media platforms. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of screenshots of product reviews, social media comments, and digital content related to Somethinc products.

Data analysis employed an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J., 2014). Data reduction was conducted by selecting and simplifying interview data according to the focus of the study. The data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships among the information obtained. The final stage involved drawing conclusions to identify meanings and findings regarding the role of WOM and e-WOM in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc consumers in Malang City.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from several informants with different backgrounds and experiences in using Somethinc products. Meanwhile, technique triangulation was carried out by comparing

data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure consistency and accuracy. Through these validation techniques, the study was expected to produce credible and in-depth findings regarding consumer purchasing behavior toward local skincare products

4. RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) play important roles in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc consumers in Malang. Most informants stated that they first became familiar with Somethinc products through recommendations from friends, family members, classmates, and social communities. Informants explained that interpersonal recommendations were considered more trustworthy because they originated from direct user experiences. One informant stated: "I first knew about Somethinc from my friends because many of them recommended the product and shared their positive experiences after using it." (Informant 3). This finding indicates that WOM functions as an initial communication channel that introduces consumers to skincare products and creates early interest in purchasing decisions.

In addition to direct communication, the study found that *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) through social media platforms had a significant influence on consumer perceptions toward Somethinc products. Most informants admitted that they actively searched for product reviews through TikTok, Instagram, Shopee, and YouTube before purchasing skincare products. Review videos, product ratings, skincare tutorials, and beauty influencer content became important references for consumers in evaluating product quality and suitability. One informant explained: "I trusted Somethinc because many TikTok users shared positive reviews about its suitability for sensitive skin." (Informant 7)

Another informant also stated:

"Before buying the product, I usually watched several skincare reviews on TikTok and Instagram to compare the results from different users." (Informant 5). These findings demonstrate that e-WOM plays a major role in shaping consumer trust and perceptions through visual and interactive digital communication.

The results also reveal that consumers tend to evaluate the credibility and relevance of information before making purchasing decisions. Informants explained that they did not immediately trust a single source of information but instead compared various reviews from different social media platforms and users. Consumers were more likely to trust reviews that were detailed, honest, and relevant to their skin conditions. One participant mentioned: "I prefer reviews from users who have the same skin type as me because their experiences feel more convincing and realistic." (Informant 8). This finding suggests that the credibility and relevance of information are important factors influencing consumer confidence in skincare products.

Furthermore, the study found that WOM and e-WOM significantly contribute to the formation of consumer trust toward Somethinc products. Recommendations and positive experiences shared by other users reduced consumers' uncertainty regarding product

safety and effectiveness. Since skincare products involve compatibility with personal skin conditions, consumers tend to seek reassurance before purchasing products. One informant explained: “I was initially afraid of trying new skincare products, but after reading many positive reviews and recommendations, I became more confident to use Somethinc.” (Informant 2). This finding indicates that WOM not only functions as a source of information but also as a mechanism for reducing perceived risk in consumer decision-making.

The findings further show that visual digital content strongly influences consumers’ purchase intentions. Informants stated that skincare tutorials, before-after content, and product demonstrations on social media platforms increased their interest in purchasing Somethinc products. Interactive content enabled consumers to better understand product usage and expected results. One participant stated: “Tutorial videos and before-after skincare content on TikTok made me more confident to try Somethinc products.” (Informant 9). These findings highlight the important role of digital communication in influencing modern consumer behavior, particularly among young consumers who actively use social media platforms.

In addition to influencing initial purchasing decisions, WOM and e-WOM were also found to contribute to repeat purchases and consumer loyalty. Informants who experienced positive results after using Somethinc products tended to repurchase the products and share their experiences with others. Several participants actively uploaded product reviews and recommendations through social media platforms. One informant explained: “After using Somethinc and getting good results, I recommended it to my friends and uploaded my review on Instagram.” (Informant 11). This finding suggests that satisfied consumers not only become repeat buyers but also become promoters who continuously create new WOM communication.

Overall, the results demonstrate that WOM and e-WOM are important factors influencing consumer perceptions, trust, purchase intentions, and purchasing decisions toward Somethinc products. In the context of Malang City, where young consumers actively engage with social media, interpersonal communication and digital reviews strongly shape consumer behavior toward local skincare products. These findings indicate that WOM has evolved beyond traditional communication and has become an essential component of digital marketing strategies in the skincare industry.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that *Word of Mouth* (WOM) plays an important role in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc products among consumers in Malang. Consumers tend to obtain initial information about the products through recommendations from friends, family, and their closest social environment before making a purchase. These recommendations are considered more trustworthy because they come from real user experiences rather than company promotions. The findings of this study are consistent with the research conducted by Moenardy & Winarni (2022), which stated that *Word of Mouth* has a significant influence on purchasing decisions because interpersonal communication is able to increase consumers’ trust in the recommended products.

In addition to direct WOM, this study also found that electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) through social media had a very large influence on shaping consumer perceptions. Consumers tended to trust skincare information shared through TikTok, Instagram, and online reviews when the information was considered credible and relevant to their personal skin conditions. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that social media information credibility significantly influences consumers' purchase intentions toward skincare products (Ranjith et al., 2025). Most informants admitted that they obtained information about Somethinc products through TikTok, Instagram, Shopee, and other digital platforms. Content such as product reviews, skincare tutorials, and user testimonials was considered helpful for consumers in understanding the quality and benefits of the products before making a purchase. These findings support the study conducted by Oktaviani & Estaswara (2022), which explained that *electronic Word of Mouth* influences purchasing decisions because consumers use digital reviews as the main reference source in evaluating skincare products.

This study also shows that consumers do not immediately trust a single source of information, but instead evaluate the credibility and quality of the information they receive. Consumers tend to compare various reviews before making purchasing decisions. Information considered honest, detailed, and relevant to their skin conditions becomes the most trusted source of information. This indicates that information credibility is an important factor in shaping consumers' confidence toward skincare products. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Gunawan (2022), which stated that *electronic Word of Mouth* is able to enhance *brand trust* and *brand image* because consumers place greater trust in real user experiences than in formal company promotions.

Besides influencing initial purchasing decisions, this study found that WOM also plays a role in creating consumer loyalty toward Somethinc products. Consumers who are satisfied with product quality tend to make repeat purchases and share their positive experiences with others through direct conversations and social media. Thus, WOM creates a continuously developing communication cycle among consumers. These findings support the study conducted by Tehuayo & Darso (2022), which explained that *electronic Word of Mouth* has a significant influence on repurchase behavior because positive consumer experiences encourage the formation of new recommendations to other potential consumers.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that WOM and e-WOM are important factors in shaping consumers' perceptions, trust, purchase intentions, and purchasing decisions toward local skincare products. In the context of Malang, which is dominated by young people and active social media users, communication among consumers has been proven to have a strong influence on consumer behavior. These findings are also consistent with the study conducted by H & Aditama (2026), which showed that *electronic Word of Mouth* and beauty influencers are able to shape positive consumer perceptions toward skincare products through interactive and informative digital content. Therefore, skincare companies should not only focus on product quality, but also pay attention to consumer experiences and digital communication strategies that are capable of creating positive WOM within society.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Word of Mouth* (WOM) and *electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) play important roles in shaping purchasing decisions of Somethinc consumers in Malang. Recommendations from friends, family, beauty influencers, and online reviews significantly influence consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions toward skincare products.

The findings also show that social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become important channels for digital skincare marketing. Review content, skincare tutorials, and user testimonials help consumers evaluate product quality, safety, and suitability before making purchasing decisions. Positive consumer experiences further encourage repeat purchases and continuous WOM communication among consumers.

Theoretically, this study contributes to consumer behavior and digital marketing literature by providing a qualitative understanding of how WOM and e-WOM influence skincare purchasing decisions. Practically, the findings imply that skincare companies should strengthen authentic digital communication, encourage positive consumer reviews, and optimize social media engagement to build consumer trust and loyalty.

Future research is recommended to examine WOM and e-WOM in different cities, demographic groups, or other local skincare brands using broader qualitative or mixed-method approaches. Further studies may also explore the influence of influencer credibility and consumer trust on digital purchasing behavior in the beauty industry

7. REFERENCES

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