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The Role of Electronic Word of Mouth and Brand Image in Driving Impulse Buying of Feel Matcha among Generation Z Consumers In Surabaya

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and Brand Image on Impulse Buying of Feel Matcha products among Generation Z consumers in Surabaya. This research employs a quantitative approach using the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method through SmartPLS software. The research sample consisted of 100 respondents, who are Generation Z consumers residing in Surabaya and have purchased Feel Matcha products within the past year, selected using purposive sampling technique. The results indicate that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying, and Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying. Variable Brand Image has a more dominant influence than E-WOM in driving Impulse Buying behavior, among Feel Matcha consumers

Keywords: Electronic Word Of Mouth, Brand Image, Impulse Buying, Generation Z, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The franchise industry in Indonesia has shown remarkable growth over the past decade, particularly in the food and beverage sector. According to data from the Ministry of Trade (2025), as of February 2025 there were 311 active franchises in Indonesia, with the food and beverage sector dominating at 47%. The transformation of the franchise

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industry is now shifting from massive physical expansion toward the strengthening of digital ecosystems. In line with the findings of Poluan et al. (2024), digital marketing integration has become a crucial pillar because it is able to provide a significant influence, reaching above 60%, on purchasing decisions among Generation Z, who are highly active social media users.

The consumption trend of matcha in Indonesia has experienced a significant increase. A survey by YouGov (2025) shows that public preference for matcha reaches 43%, placing it as the most favored tea variant after black tea. Google Trends data also reflects a significant rise in search interest for the keyword “matcha,” particularly during 2024 and 2025. One brand that has successfully capitalized on this momentum is Feel Matcha, a local matcha specialty café established in 2021 that claims to use First Grade Japan Ceremonial Matcha. Feel Matcha has expanded its outlets across major Indonesian cities, including Surabaya, with a presence in premium shopping centers such as Tunjungan Plaza.

Internal sales data from Feel Matcha (2025) recorded an increase from approximately 150,000 cups in its first year to more than 410,000 cups by early 2025, a growth of over 170% within a few years. This success is closely tied to the role of social media, evidenced by the brand's Instagram account reaching 152,000 followers as of November 2025. Preliminary research conducted on 50 Feel Matcha consumers found that 53.8% made purchases impulsively, indicating a strong tendency toward unplanned buying driven by E-WOM and Brand Image circulating on social media.

The Feel Matcha phenomenon presents an interesting paradox. On one hand, Feel Matcha has experienced significant sales growth and high virality on social media. On the other hand, negative E-WOM has emerged regarding service inconsistency, unavailable menu items, and packaging changes that could potentially hinder Impulse Buying. However, the fact that impulsive purchase rates remain high amid negative sentiment constitutes an intriguing anomaly. Previous studies such as Pambagyo & Karnawati (2020) and Irman & Ambardi (2022) have established the influence of E-WOM and Brand Image on purchasing decisions, yet limited research has examined the contradictory condition in which visual virality coexists with operational complaints on a specific product such as Feel Matcha. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of E-WOM and Brand Image on Impulse Buying of Feel Matcha products among Generation Z consumers in Surabaya.

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Objectives

This article intends :

1. To examine the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Impulse Buying among Generation Z consumers of Feel Matcha in Surabaya.
2. To examine the influence of Brand Image on Impulse Buying among Generation Z consumers of Feel Matcha in Surabaya.

Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory

The S-O-R theory, developed by Mehrabian and Russell, explains how environmental stimuli can affect a person's internal state, which subsequently drives certain behaviors (Hongsuchon et al., 2025). In the context of this study, E-WOM and Brand Image act as external stimuli that trigger an internal process (organism) in the form of perception, opinion, or emotional drive among Generation Z consumers, which ultimately produces a response in the form of spontaneous purchase, or Impulse Buying.

Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM)

E-WOM refers to positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company through social networks or the internet (Boldureanu et al., 2025). E-WOM is the digital evolution of traditional Word of Mouth. According to Lestari et al. (2024), E-WOM plays a crucial role in shaping consumer brand perception, particularly within the context of social media, which can disseminate information quickly and widely. Within the S-O-R framework, E-WOM is categorized as a stimulus, where viral reviews and information act as an external trigger that provokes consumers' cognitive and affective responses.

Brand Image

Brand Image is a set of beliefs held by consumers regarding a particular brand (Made & Purnama, 2022). Brand Image encompasses associations, perceptions, emotions, and beliefs that consumers link to a brand (Chandra, 2023). The formation of a positive Brand Image makes consumers increasingly attracted because they perceive the product as having a trustworthy image, which provides a sense of security when consuming it (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Within S-O-R theory, Brand Image functions as a visual stimulus that triggers an emotional drive to make a purchase.

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Impulse Buying

Impulse Buying is a strong and compelling experience that drives consumers to make an immediate purchase, often accompanied by emotional conflict and disregard for negative consequences (Rook, 1987). Impulse Buying occurs when a consumer purchases a product without any prior need or desire (Ika et al., 2020). The indicators of Impulse Buying used in this study refer to Rook as cited in Salwanisa & Fitriyah (2024), namely spontaneity, disregard for consequences, hedonic and emotional activation, and compulsion and urge to buy.

The Effect Of Electronic Word Of Mouth on Impulse Buying

E-WOM has a strong relationship with Impulse Buying behavior. When consumers are exposed to reviews shared online about a brand, this can create a strong urge that triggers Impulse Buying. E-WOM is persuasive in nature, which can bypass lengthy rational consideration and increase the likelihood of impulsive purchases. Research conducted by Rahayu et al. (2025) and Kurniawan & Setiawan (2023) shows that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying.

H^1: Electronic Word Of Mouth is presumed to have a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying

The Effect Of Brand Image on Impulse Buying

A positive Brand Image creates a sense of familiarity and credibility that makes consumers feel more comfortable making spontaneous purchasing decisions. The higher the level of trust and emotional connection consumers have with a brand, the greater the likelihood they will engage in Impulse Buying when encountering the product. Research conducted by Khairinnisah (2024) and Permata et al. (2025) found that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying.

H^2: Brand Image is presumed to have a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying.

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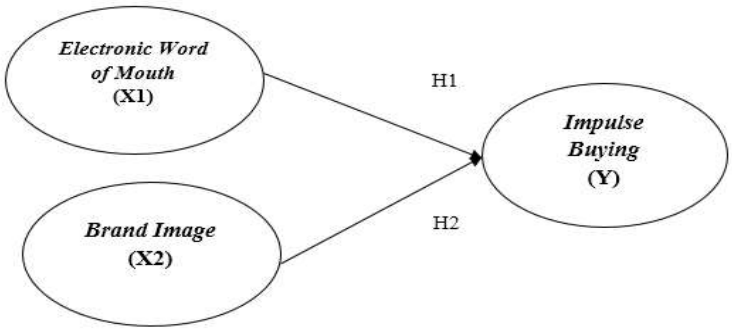


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal associative research design aimed at identifying the cause-and-effect relationship between variables. The population of this study consists of consumers who have purchased Feel Matcha in Surabaya. The sample comprised 100 respondents who are Generation Z, residing in Surabaya, and have purchased Feel Matcha products within the past year, selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the rule of thumb proposed by Hair et al. (2022), with 10 indicators multiplied by 10 parameters. Data were collected through a questionnaire using a 1-5 Likert scale distributed digitally via Google Form. The data analysis technique employed Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Square (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software.

Respondent Characteristics

Of the 100 respondents, the majority were female. This is relevant to the characteristics of contemporary matcha product consumers, who are predominantly female, as women tend to be more active in following social media trends, making them more susceptible to the influence of E-WOM and Brand Image in driving Impulse Buying. Based on age, the majority of respondents fell within the 22-25 age range, followed by the 18-21 range. This age group consists largely of final-year students or fresh graduates who are highly active in using social media as a source of information, including references for contemporary products such as Feel Matcha. In terms of purchase

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frequency, the majority of respondents made purchases 2-3 times, reflecting the situational and non-routine nature of impulsive purchasing behavior.

DISCUSSION

Table 1. Outer Loading

	E-WOM	*Brand Image*	*Impulse Buying*	Keterangan
X1.1	0.796	0.419	0.398	valid
X1.2	0.780	0.242	0.342	valid
X1.3	0.600	0.316	0.200	valid
X2.1	0.305	0.790	0.373	valid
X2.2	0.390	0.577	0.257	valid
X2.3	0.286	0.742	0.394	valid
Y1.1	0.247	0.280	0.724	valid
Y1.2	0.335	0.371	0.792	valid
Y1.3	0.330	0.458	0.748	valid
Y1.4	0.454	0.393	0.854	valid

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the researcher (2026)

The validity test using the outer loading method applies a minimum threshold of 0.50. All indicators across the three variables show loading factor values above 0.50. For the E-WOM variable (X1), indicator X1.1 obtained a value of 0.796, X1.2 obtained 0.780, and X1.3 obtained 0.600. For the Brand Image variable (X2), indicator X2.1 obtained 0.790, X2.2 obtained 0.597, and X2.3 obtained 0.742. For the Impulse Buying variable (Y), indicator Y1.1 obtained 0.724, Y1.2 obtained 0.792, Y1.3 obtained 0.748, and Y1.4 obtained 0.854, the highest value among all indicators. Thus, all research instruments are declared valid and suitable for further testing

Table 2. Composite Reliability and AVE

	Composite Reliability	*AVE*
E-WOM	0,749	0,502
Brand Image	0,772	0,534
Impulse Buying	0,862	0,610

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the researcher (2026)

Reliability and convergent validity testing was conducted using the values of composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). A construct is considered

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reliable if its composite reliability value exceeds 0.70, while convergent validity is met if the AVE value exceeds 0.50. Based on the test results, all research variables meet these criteria. The E-WOM variable obtained a composite reliability value of 0.749 and an AVE of 0.502, the Brand Image variable obtained a composite reliability value of 0.772 and an AVE of 0.534, and the Impulse Buying variable obtained a composite reliability value of 0.862 and an AVE of 0.610. Thus, all variables can be declared reliable with good convergent validity.

Table 3. Latent Variable Correlations

	Brand Image	E-WOM	*Impulse Buying*
Brand Image	1.000	0.444	0.490
E-WOM	0.444	1.000	0.448
Impulse Buying	0.490	0.448	1.000

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the researcher (2026)

The latent variable correlations table shows that the correlation values among all latent variables are below 1.000, and none approach 0.900, indicating no multicollinearity among the variables. The highest correlation occurs between Brand Image and Impulse Buying at 0.490, followed by E-WOM and Impulse Buying at 0.448, and Brand Image and E-WOM at 0.444. This is consistent with the hypothesis testing results, which show that Brand Image has a greater influence on Impulse Buying than E-WOM, and all values satisfy the discriminant validity requirement.

Table 4. R-Square Test Result

	R Square	*R Square Adjusted*
Impulse Buying (Y)	0.336	0.306

Source: SmartPls Output, processed by the researcher (2026)

The R Square value for the Impulse Buying variable of 0.336 indicates that E-WOM and Brand Image jointly explain 33.6% of the variance in Impulse Buying, while the remaining 66.4% is explained by other variables outside this study. The R-Square Adjusted value of 0.306, adjusted for the number of variables and sample size, is more

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representative. Referring to the criteria of Hair et al. (2022), this value falls into the moderate category and remains meaningful in the context of consumer behavior. This finding suggests that although E-WOM and Brand Image are proven to have an effect, the Impulse Buying behavior of Feel Matcha consumers is also influenced by other factors such as community influence, fund availability, mood, and other situational factors not covered in this study.

Table 4. Hypothesis Result (Path Coefficient)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Brand Image* (X2) -> *Impulse Buying	0.362	0.372	0.100	3.622	0.000
E-WOM (X1) -> *Impulse Buying*	0.287	0.301	0.079	3.649	0.000

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by the researcher (2026)

The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Impulse Buying

The results of the first hypothesis test indicate that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying among Generation Z Feel Matcha consumers in Surabaya, thus H1 is accepted. This result can be explained through the S-O-R theoretical framework, in which E-WOM acts as an external stimulus that triggers an internal process of trust and emotional drive in consumers, which in turn produces an Impulse Buying response. Among the E-WOM indicators, recommendations from fellow users (valence of opinion) emerged as the most dominant indicator, demonstrating that Generation Z consumers' trust in the testimonials and experiences of others on social media is the most effective stimulus in triggering impulsive purchases. Nevertheless, the influence of E-WOM is slightly lower than that of Brand Image, which can be understood due to the presence of negative E-WOM regarding inconsistent service quality and product issues that have also circulated on social media. This finding is consistent with the studies of Rahayu et al. (2025), Kurniawan & Setiawan (2023), Lestari & Hayadi

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(2024), and Boldureanu et al. (2025), which proved that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying.

The Influence of Brand Image on Impulse Buying

The results of the second hypothesis test indicate that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying among Generation Z Feel Matcha consumers in Surabaya, thus H2 is accepted. Within the S-O-R framework, Feel Matcha's Brand Image acts as an external stimulus that triggers an internal process of perception and emotional drive, which produces a response in the form of Impulse Buying. Among the Brand Image indicators, visual appeal and packaging emerged as the most dominant factor, indicating that product aesthetics is the primary element most effective in triggering Impulse Buying among Generation Z, who are highly responsive to visual stimuli on social media. Brand Image has a greater influence than E-WOM, demonstrating that Feel Matcha's success in building a brand image through a premium specialty café concept, the claim of using first grade Japan Ceremonial Matcha as a raw material, and aesthetically appealing visual branding is the most dominant factor in driving Impulse Buying. This finding is consistent with the studies of Khairinnisah (2024) and Permata et al. (2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that E-WOM has a proven positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying among Generation Z Feel Matcha consumers in Surabaya, where consumers' high trust in fellow users' recommendations on social media, supported by the intensity of Feel Matcha content exposure, drives impulsive purchases as a response to continuously received digital stimuli. Brand Image is also proven to have a positive and significant effect on Impulse Buying, where consumers' positive perceptions of the uniqueness of visual appearance and packaging, confidence in raw material quality, and ease of recalling the Feel Matcha brand are responded to as an emotional drive to make an immediate, unplanned purchase. Between the two variables, Brand Image has a more dominant influence in driving Impulse Buying among Feel Matcha consumers.

The practical implication of this research is that Feel Matcha needs to prioritize consistency in visual aesthetics of products and packaging across all consumer touchpoints, while also actively managing E-WOM through user-generated content strategies and transparent, responsive handling of negative reviews. For future researchers, it is recommended to incorporate additional variables beyond E-WOM and

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Brand Image, given that the R-Square value in this study indicates the presence of other factors that also influence consumers' Impulse Buying behavior.

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