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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Brand Trust on Purchase Intention for Aqua products following the emergence of a boycott issue. A boycott brand can influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions; Therefore, it is important to examine the role of electronic communication and brand trust in shaping consumer purchasing intentions. This research adopts a quantitative approach, with data collected through questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression tests. The results show that, partially, eWOM has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention of Aqua products. Similarly, Brand Trust is also proven to have a positive and significant partial effect. Simultaneously, both independent variables significantly and positively affect purchase intention after the boycott issue. These findings indicate that effective digital communication strategies and efforts to build and maintain brand trust are key to sustaining consumer loyalty, especially in the face of reputation crises.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention, Aqua

INTRODUCTION

Drinking water is a basic human need that is inseparable from daily life. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, the daily water requirement for adults is approximately 2 liters, equivalent to 8 glasses. To meet this need, many Indonesians use bottled drinking water (AMDK), which has become the primary source of water consumption, with the percentage of users reaching 31.3% in Indonesia and 32.26% in North Sumatra (BPS, 2016). One of the most popular bottled water brands is Aqua, which has been a pioneer of bottled water in Indonesia since 1973 and is now under the auspices of Danone. Despite Aqua's market leadership, Top Brand Index (TBI) data shows a significant decline from 2020 to 2024. This decline coincided with the emergence of a boycott movement against Aqua in 2023, following allegations that its parent company, Danone, supported Israel in the Palestine-Israel conflict. This movement spread widely on social media through various hashtags such as #BoycottDanoneAqua and #RejectDanoneAqua, and caused a decline in public purchasing interest in Aqua products.

This boycott phenomenon demonstrates the significant influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in shaping consumer opinions and behavior. Based on a pre-survey, many respondents agreed to spread the boycott issue despite realizing it could decrease purchasing interest in Aqua products. Furthermore, the majority of respondents stated that they began looking for alternative products due to their declining trust in the Aqua brand. Another factor influencing purchasing interest is brand trust. A pre-survey showed that since the boycott issue emerged, consumer trust in Aqua has declined, which directly impacted purchasing interest. Twenty-four out of 30 respondents believed that Aqua's reputation had suffered as a result of the issue, and they became less interested in the product's innovations.

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Previous studies have shown mixed results regarding the influence of eWOM and brand trust on purchase intention. Some have found a significant effect, while others have found the opposite. Therefore, researchers are interested in further examining the influence of eWOM and brand trust on purchase intention after the Aqua boycott. This research focused on students in the Management Study Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of North Sumatra, specifically Generation Z, known as the digital generation and highly active on social media. These students were selected because they possess characteristics relevant to the research variables and are familiar with marketing issues such as eWOM and brand trust. Based on the background and phenomena, the researcher took the title: "The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Brand Trust on Purchase Interest of Aqua Products among Generation Z Post Boycott (Case Study of Management Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of North Sumatra)."

The objectives to be achieved in this research are as follows:

- 1. To determine and analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Brand Trust on the Interest in Purchasing Aqua Products among Generation Z Post-Boycott Case Study of Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of North Sumatra.
- 2. To determine and analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on the Purchase Interest of Aqua Products among Generation Z Post-Boycott Case Study of Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of North Sumatra.
- 3. To determine and analyze the influence of Brand Trust on Purchase Interest of Aqua Products in Generation Z Post Boycott Case Study of Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of North Sumatra.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach that aims to determine the effect of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and brand trust variables on purchase intention. The research location is at the Faculty of Economics and Business. University of North Sumatra, with implementation from October 2024 to July 2025. The population in this study were 1,047 active students of the Management Study Program, intake 2018–2024. The sample was determined using a nonprobability sampling method with a purposive sampling technique, and the number of respondents was obtained as many as 91 people based on the Slovin formula with a 10% error rate. Respondent criteria include belonging to Generation Z, knowing Aqua products, and knowing the issue of boycotting Aqua products. Data collection was carried out through interviews and questionnaires in the form of Google Forms. The types of data used are primary and secondary data. The measurement scale uses a Likert scale with a score range of 1 to 5. Instrument testing was carried out through validity and reliability tests using the SPSS program. Validity is determined by comparing the calculated r value and the table r value, while reliability is determined based on the Cronbach Alpha value (≥ 0.60). Data analysis was conducted through quantitative statistical analysis using multiple linear regression to test the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. The regression model used is: $Y = \alpha + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + e$, where Y is purchase intention, X1 is eWOM, and X2 is brand trust. Hypothesis testing was conducted through t-test (partial), F-test (simultaneous), and coefficient of determination (R²) test to determine how much contribution the independent variables make in explaining the dependent variable. Classical assumption tests such as normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity were also conducted to ensure the validity of the regression model.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION CLASSICAL ASSUMPTION TEST RESULTS NORMALITY TEST

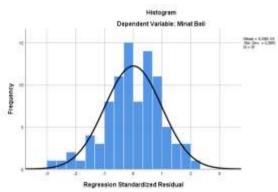


Figure 1. Histogram Normality Test

Based on Figure 1, it can be seen that the variables are normally distributed, this is indicated by the data distribution which is bell-shaped and does not deviate to the left or right.

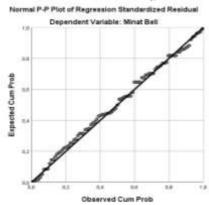


Figure 2. P-Plot Normality Test

Figure 2 shows that the data points follow the diagonal line. This indicates that the researcher's residuals are normally distributed. However, to further confirm that the diagonal line is normally distributed, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed.

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		91
Normal Parametersa,b	Mean	,0000000
	Standard Deviation	3.46365812
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,054
	Positive	,038
	Negative	-,054
Test Statistics	-	,054
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200c,d

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Calculated from data.
- c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
- d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

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Table 1 shows that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.200 and above the significant value (0.05) or 5%, so it can be concluded that the residual variable is normally distributed.

MULTICOLLINEARITY TEST

Table 2. Multicollinearity Test Coefficientsa

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Toleranc e	VIF
1	(Constant)	6.145	1,581		3,88	.000		
	Electronic Word of	.273	.086	.273	3,17 4	.002	.428	2,339
	Mouth Brand Trust	.494	.068	.624	7,25 7	.000	.428	2,339

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Interest

In Table 2, it is known that the tolerance value of all independent variables is greater than the fixed value of 0.1 and the VIF value of all independent variables is smaller than the fixed value of 10. Therefore, the data in this study is said to not experience multicollinearity problems.

HETEROSCEDASTICITY TEST

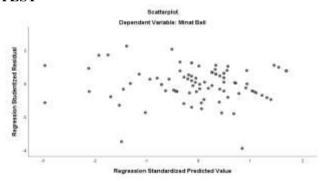


Figure 3 Heteroscedasticity Test

In Figure 3, it is known that there is no clear pattern and the points are spread above and below the number 0 on the Y axis, so based on the graphical method, there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model which is suitable for use in predicting purchasing interest based on the input variables Electronic Word Of Mouth (e-wom) and Brand Trust.

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Table 3. Glejser Test Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.
	В	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4,330	.955		4,532	.000
1 Electronic Word of Mouth	053	.052	164	-1.021	.310
Brand Trust	006	.041	023	145	.885

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Interest

Table 3 shows that none of the independent variables statistically significantly influence the dependent variable. This is indicated by the Sig. values of the independent variables, which are greater than the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, it can be concluded that this regression model does not experience heteroscedasticity.

MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION

Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Test

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	6.145	1,581		3,887	.000
	Electronic Word of Mouth	.273	.086	.273	3,174	.002
	Brand Trust	.494	.068	.624	7,257	.000

Based on Table 4, it is known that in the second column (unstandardized Coefficients) in section B, the β 1 value for the perceived usefulness variable is 0.273, the β 2 value for the perceived ease variable is 0.494 and the constant value (β 0) is 6.145, so the multiple linear regression equation is obtained as follows:

$$Y = 6.145 + (0.273)$$

From this equation it can be described as follows:

- 1. The constant $(\beta 0) = 6.145$ shows that if electronic word of mouth and brand trust are considered constant, the purchase interest variable has a value of 6.145.
- 2. The coefficient $(\beta 1) = 0.273$ shows a positive influence, which means that if the electronic word of mouth variable increases by one unit, the purchase interest value also increases by 0.273 units and vice versa.
- 3. The coefficient $(\beta 2) = 0.494$ shows a positive influence, which means that if the brand trust variable increases by one unit, the purchase interest value will also increase by 0.494 units and vice versa.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is a statistical method used to test the truth of a statement or hypothesis about a population based on sample data. This process helps in making a decision to accept or reject the statement.

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Partial Test (t)

Table 6. Partial Test (t)

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	6.145	1,581		3,887	.000
	Electronic Word of Mouth	.273	.086	.273	3,174	.002
	Brand Trust	.494	.068	.624	7,257	.000

Table 6 shows that:

- 1. The electronic word of mouth variable significantly influences purchase intention. This is evident from the significance value (0.002) <0.05 and the calculated t-value (3.174) > compared to the t-table (1.662). Therefore, in this study, H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected.
- 2. The brand trust variable significantly influences purchase intention. This is evident from the significance value (0.000) < 0.05 and the calculated t-value (7.257) > compared to the t-table (1.662). Therefore, in this study, H2 is accepted and H0 is rejected.

Simultaneous Test (F)

The F test is a statistical method used to determine how much influence one or more independent variables have on the variation of the dependent variable in a regression model.

Table 5. Simultaneous Test Results (F)

ANOVA

		Sum of				
	Model	Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2801.024	2	1400.512	114,145	.000b
	Residual	1079,723	88	12,270		
	Total	3880.747	90			

- a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Interest
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Trust, Electronic Word Of Mouth

Table 5 reveals that the F-count value is 114.145 with a significance level of 0.000. While the F-table at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha=0.05$) is 3.100. Therefore, in both calculations, namely F-count > F-table and the significance level (0.000) < 0.05, it shows that the influence of the independent variables (electronic word of mouth and brand trust) is simultaneously positive and significant on purchasing interest, so that H3 is accepted and H0 is rejected.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 7. Results of the Determination Coefficient Test Model Summary

				Standard Error
			Adjusted R	of the
Model	R	R Square	Square	Estimate
1	,850a	,722	,715	3,503

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Trust, Electronic Word Of
Mouth

b. Dependent Variable: Purchase Interest

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Based on Table 7, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.715 indicates that 71.5% of purchase intention can be explained by electronic word of mouth and brand trust. The remaining 28.5% can be explained by other factors not examined in this study.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on Purchase Interest

Based on the t-test results, the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) variable was proven to have a positive and significant effect on the purchase interest of Aqua products after the boycott issue among Generation Z, with a significance value of 0.002 < 0.05 and a calculated t-value of 3.174 > t-table 1.662. This result is supported by a descriptive analysis which shows that the average respondent response to the eWOM variable was at a score of 3.39, which means that most respondents disagreed that sharing boycott information made them feel more knowledgeable about Aqua products. This indicates that there is still an information gap in society, even though eWOM plays an important role in influencing consumer behavior. Interestingly, several statements actually received positive responses, one of which was the respondent's belief that sharing information related to Aqua can provide social awareness, with an average score of 3.59. This shows that consumers are aware of the importance of sharing correct information, especially after clarification from Aqua that its parent company does not have any particular political affiliation. Therefore, eWOM plays a major role in shaping perceptions and increasing public purchase interest in Aqua products after the boycott issue. This finding aligns with research by Rizky et al. (2024) and Khairun (2022), which also stated that eWOM has a significant influence on purchase intention.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Purchase Intention

The t-test results show that the brand trust variable has a positive and significant effect on the purchase intention of Aqua products after the boycott, with a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05 and a t-count of 7.257 > t-table of 1.662. Descriptive analysis supports these results with an average respondent response score of 3.56, which means that most respondents agree that they still trust Aqua products despite the boycott issue. The statement with the highest score, namely 3.68, indicates that Aqua is still considered reliable, while the second highest score of 3.63 indicates that Aqua's reputation remains high in the eyes of consumers. This shows that trust in the Aqua brand remains strong among Generation Z, especially after the company's clarification regarding political impartiality and the use of the tagline "100% Asli Indonesia" which strengthens the brand image. Thus, brand trust is proven to be an important factor that influences consumer purchasing interest, in accordance with the research results of Kamilla (2023) and Mawaddah (2024) which state that brand trust has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. Top of Form Bottom of Form

The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Brand Trust on Purchase Intention

The F-test results show that electronic word of mouth and brand trust variables simultaneously have a significant effect on purchase intention, with an F-count of 114.145 > F-table 3.100 and a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. The average respondent response to both independent variables shows a value of 3.47 which means it is in the "agree" category, indicating a positive influence on purchase intention. eWOM carried out appropriately can accelerate the dissemination of information and increase consumer trust because it involves direct experiences from fellow consumers, as stated by Chu et al. (2019). Meanwhile, high brand trust encourages consumers to prefer Aqua over other brands because they feel confident in the quality, reputation, and innovation offered by the product, in accordance with the statement of Hung et al. (2023). In other words, the synergy between brand trust and effective information dissemination through eWOM can increase consumer purchase intention after the boycott issue.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion carried out in this research, the researcher draws the following conclusions:

- 1. Electronic Word Of Mouth (eWOM) partially has a positive and significant effect on the variable of Purchase Interest of Aqua Products After the Boycott Issue.
- 2. Brand Trust partially has a positive and significant effect on the variable of Purchase Interest of Aqua Products After the Boycott Issue.

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3. Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Brand Trust simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on the Variable of Purchase Interest of Aqua Products Post Boycott Issue.

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