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The Impact of E-WOM and Flash Sales on Impulse Buying Among Gen Z E-Commerce Users: The Mediating Role of Positive Emotions

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and Flash Sales on increasing impulse buying among Gen Z e-commerce users, emphasizing the mediating role of Positive Emotion. This research uses a quantitative approach with a total of 60 respondents in Semarang Regency, selected through non-probability purposive sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire with a 1–5 Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using SEM-PLS through SmartPLS version 4.1.1.8. The research results show that E-WOM does not have a positive and significant effect on impulse buying, while Flash Sales have a positive and significant effect on impulse buying. Furthermore, Positive Emotion has been proven to mediate the relationship between E-WOM and Flash Sales on impulse buying behavior. These findings indicate that digital communication and limited-time promotional strategies can influence impulse buying behavior through positive emotional responses among Gen Z e-commerce users. This research provides practical contributions to e-commerce managers in designing more effective marketing strategies by leveraging the power of digital communication and limited-time promotions to encourage consumer purchasing behavior.

Keywords: E-commerce; E-WOM; Flash Sale; Impulse Buying; Positive Emotion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The continuous development of digital technology, accompained by the expanding accessibility of the internet has substantially transformed consumer purchasing behavior. These innovations have taken convenience to the consumers in terms of availability of wide variety of products and services, but these have also introduced new psychological affects on the decision making process of the consumers. With the rising use of tactics that promote fast responses by e-commerce platforms and social media, it is becoming more necessary to understand the elements that lead to impulsive buying behavior.

In the digital age, there are two main elements that influence online consumer behavior, namely electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) and Flash Sale. Both variables have been highlighted as key drivers of Impulse Buying, especially when online suggestions and limited-time specials trigger a strong impulse to buy without much thought (Hikam & Supriyono, 2024; Peña-García et al., 2022; Salim et al., 2021). This phenomena is particularly important for Gen Z, who grew up in digital environments saturated with social media and e-commerce platforms. Therefore, the dangers and opportunities of impulsive conduct must be investigated in a systematic manner (Cahyani & Marcelino, 2023; Fahriansah et al., 2023; Mariyana et al., 2023).

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E-commerce in Indonesia is increasing rapidly and Gen Z is the main target group that is most responsive to digital signals such as E-WOM and Flash Sales. The data acquired from Shopee reveals that the quality of the website, sales promotions, and online reviews directly affect the impulsive behavior of young consumers (Baqai et al., 2021; Kurniawan & Indriani, 2023; Salim et al., 2021). Specifically, the influence of external stimulation and consumer response is moderated by local environment, culture, and platform promotion dynamics, making research in Indonesia extremely relevant (Azizah & Indrawati, 2022; García et al., 2022).

A survey conducted by Jakpat in February 2026 involving 1,387 respondents reveals that marketplaces form the backbone of the digital business sector in Indonesia. Shopee remains the most prominent platform, used by nearly every business owner (100% of Gen Z, Millennials, 36% of Gen X). TikTok Shop is very substantial, especially with younger demographics (65% of Gen Z, 57% of Millennials, and 36% of Gen X) thanks to its interactive short-form video content. Tokopedia is still strong, used by 54% of Gen Z, 62% of Millennials, and 36% of Gen X. Lazada (26% Gen Z, 40% Millennials) and Blibli (6% Gen Z, 24% Millennials) have smaller market shares but are not used by Gen X.

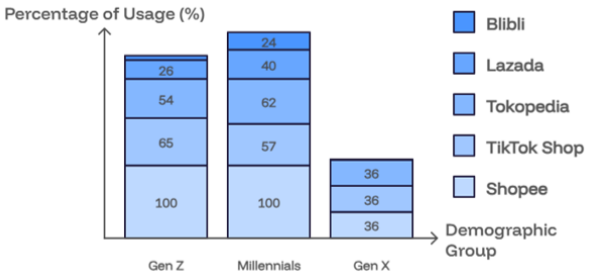


Figure 1. E-Commerce Platform Usage by Generation in Indonesia (2026).

Source: (2026).

Impulse buying is an unplanned purchase caused by a brief emotional reaction to stimuli such as discounts, countdowns or positive reviews (Herzallah et al., 2022; Hikam & Supriyono, 2024). Price promotions, website quality, and E-WOM are the main factors that influence consumer behavior, and good emotions operate as a mediator in this relationship (Azid & Ekowati, 2023; Cahyani & Marcelino, 2023; Mariyana et al., 2023). However, the research findings still show differences among situations, therefore the mediation effect of pleasant emotions needs to be further investigated among Indonesian Gen Z e-commerce users (García et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024).

E-WOM is different from regular WOM because the information is widely accessible and persists for a long time. Especially important are the effects on impulse purchases on platforms that depend on reviews from users, evaluations of products, and suggestions from influencers (Baqai et al., 2021; Hikam & Supriyono, 2024; Salim et al., 2021). Cross-national studies reveal that E-WOM has a significant contribution via the paths of perceived value, trust, and shopping satisfaction. However, the magnitude of these relationships varies by brand, product category, source credibility, and consumer exposure level (García et al., 2022; Tjahjaningsih et al., 2024).

Since flash sales are time-limited, they have high potential to increase impulse buying since they create a sense of urgency and a perception of high value among young shoppers who are responsive to discounts and bundled offers (Azizah & Indrawati, 2022; Madhura & Panakaje, 2022; Mariyana et al., 2023). Product engagement and perceived value are among the factors that mediate the association between flash sales and shopping experience and impulse buying, according to Shopee research (Madhura & Panakaje, 2022). However, this effect may be weakened if trust in the platform is poor or if the shopping experience has previously been favorable, therefore a full mediation analysis is needed (Baqai et al., 2021; Safeer, 2024).

This study follows the Stimulus-Organism-reaction (S-O-R) framework where E-WOM and flash sales act as stimuli affecting happy emotions (the organism), which in turn leads to impulse purchase (the reaction). This model has been widely used, it shows that happy emotions act as a mediator between E-WOM and flash sales and impulsive purchasing (Cahyani & Marcelino, 2023; García et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024). Given the previous explanation, this study is vital to validate the mediating effect of the Positive Emotions to induce constructive impulse buying through E-WOM and Flash Sale techniques.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

E-WOM (Word of Mouth)

According to Goyette I. et al. in Anastassya et al. (2024), electronic word of mouth is defined as informal, noncommercial online communication containing opinions about a service or product and can occur in person, by phone, email, or other means of communication. E-WOM is defined as the exchange of information about products or services using the internet (Puspita et al., 2023). E-WOM as stated by Rumondang et al. as mentioned in Hasim & ari, (2022), is the statements made by prospective, existing, or past customers regarding a product or company. E-WOM can be accessed by wide variety of persons and organizations over the internet.

Flash Sale

According to Gu et al. in Septiyani & Hadi, (2024), A flash sale is a sale of goods at a price lower than the pricing, in limited numbers and in a limited time. A flash sale is a promotional program where clients are offered limited time and limited quantities of specific products according to the research of Agrawal and Sareen in Febrianty (2026). Meanwhile, flash sales as stated by Rachmadi et al. (2024) are events held by the company to provide prices below the normal retail price, in order to encourage people to join in the event and then buy or purchasing.

Positive Emotion

According to Setiadi in Maulana et al. (2025), positive mood as a state of mind influences and dictates the intensity of consumer decision-making. Based on the findings of Hendriks et al. in Febrianty (2026), positive emotions, like joy, appreciation, and hope, may improve mentality and increase cognitive and psychological flexibility. Meanwhile, after by Scherer in Moudyla et al. (2025), positive emotions are characterized as good sentiments that prompted persons to seek out a stimulus, e.g., enjoyment, satisfaction, and achievement.

Impulse Buying

Rook and Fisher in Febrianty (2026), describes impulse buying as a spontaneous purchase that is influenced by emotional inputs, rather than conscious preparation. In the context of live commerce, impulsive buying is affected by affective reactions formed during the pre-decision phase of the purchase choice, such as the delight of receiving a limited-edition goods or the fear of losing out if one does not buy it. Verplanken et al. (2026), explains that impulsive buying is a purchase that is not intentionally decided by the customer about the brand or product category before buying. This behavior is influenced by powerful emotions and impulses without much consideration. Apriliya in Fadhillah et al. (2025) said that impulse buying is a sudden purchase without prior forethought and often affected by instant emotions.

Conceptual Framework

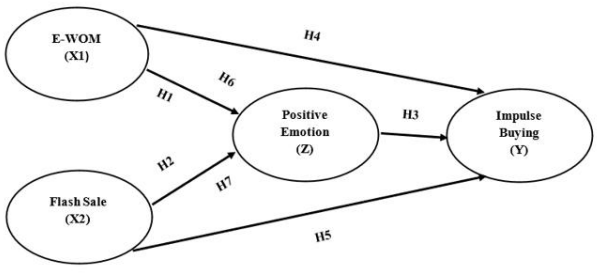


Figure 2. Conseptual Framework.

Hypothesis

In accordance with the structure set out above, the research hypothesis is defined as follows:

H1: E-WOM positively and significantly affects positive emotion.

H2: Flash Sale has a considerable beneficial effect on beneficial Emotions.

H3: Positive Emotion has positively and significantly influenced Impulse Buying.

H4: Impulse Buying is positively and significantly affected by E-WOM.

H5: Flash Sale has favorable and significant effect on Impulse Buying.

H6: E-WOM positively and significantly influences Impulse Buying through Positive Affect.

H7: Flash Sale has a positive and significant influence on Impulse Buying mediated by Positive Emotion.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a quantitative study. This study was conducted in Semarang Regency. This study includes respondents who are Generation Z consumers of e-commerce platforms, aged 18-25 years, inhabitants of Semarang Regency. The present study employed non-random sampling by using purposive sample approach involving 60 respondents in total. The research variables are E-WOM, Flash Sales, Positive Emotions, and Impulse Buying. Data were collected by questionnaire with a research assessment tool using a Likert scale of 1–5. The research hypotheses were tested by the SEM-PLS analysis. The software used to process the data was SmartPLS 4.1.1.8.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Variables.

Variable	Variable Definition	Indicator
E-WOM (X1)	Noncommercial online communication containing opinions about a service or product, which can take place in person, by phone, via email, or through other communication methods (Anastassya et al., 2024).	1. Intensity Intensity 2. Opinion Valence 3. Message Characterictics (Purbasari & Respati, 2024)
Flash Sale (X2)	Promotional program that offers customers a limited time and limited quantities for specific products (Febrianty et al., 2026).	1. Promotion Frequency 2. Quality of Promotion 3. Promotional period 4. Accuracy or Relevance of the Promotional Target (Aisyah & Rosyidi, 2023)
Positive Emotion (M)	State of mind, influences and determines the intensity of consumer decision-making (Maulana et al., 2025).	1. Exited 2. Enthusiastic 3. Happy (Febrianty et al., 2026)

Impulse Buying (Y)	Type of purchase in which the buyer does not consciously decide on a brand or product category before buying without much deliberation, strong emotions and impulses influence this behavior (Febrianty et al., 2026).	1. Spontanity 2. Power Compulsion and Intensity 3. Excitement and Simulation 4. Disregard for Consequences (Purbasari & Respati, 2024)

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The statistics showed that, based on gender, there were 42 female respondents (70.0%) and 18 male respondents (30.0%) of the overall study population. Based on the questionnaire results, the respondents were divided into two age groups. 38 respondents (63.3%) were aged 18–21 years and 22 respondents (36.7%) were aged 22–25 years. There were three alternatives for e-commerce platforms that were most frequently used by respondents: 47 respondents (78.3%) used the Shopee platform; 8 respondents (13.3%) used the Tokopedia platform; and 5 respondents (8.3%) utilized other e-commerce platforms.

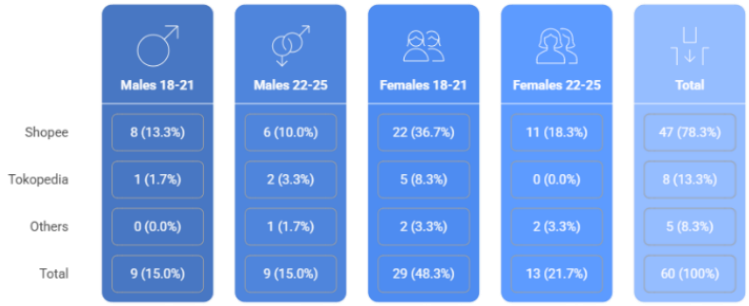


Figure 3. E-commerce Preferences by Gender, Age, and Apps Used.

Outer Model

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity can be established by studying the correlation beetwen the indicators and the respective construct. The outer loading value of 0.5-0.6 is still acceptable. If the correlation value is >0.7, then the construct can be deemed to have a strong influence (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Figure 4 shows that the outer loadings of all indicators are over 0.7, indicating that these indicators have good results.

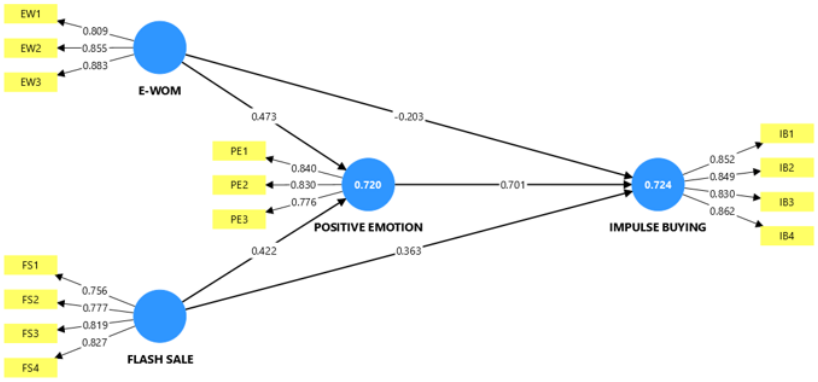


Figure 4. Convergent Validity Test.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity tests were conducted to examine the extent to which one construct is experimentally different from another construct and to examine the discriminant validity (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The results in Table 1 show that the AVE values for each variable are above 0.5 and are valid. The AVE values calculated are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 2. Discriminant Validity.

Construct reliability and validity - Overview	
	Average variance extracted (AVE)
E-WOM	0.722
Flash Sale	0.633
Positive Emotion	0.720
Impulse Buying	0.665

Composite Reliability

Construct validity meets the criteria for reliability if the Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.7, indicating that the indicators used to measure the variation in the latent variable are stable and consistent. Based on the data in Table 2, the research findings indicate that the Composite Reliability value is greater than 0.70, suggesting that all variables meet the criteria for reliability and validity for further analysis in the structural model.

Table 3. Composite Reliability Test.

Construct reliability and validity - Overview			
	Cronbach Alpha	**Composite reliability (rho_a)**	**Composite reliability (rho_a)**
E-WOM	0.806	0.809	0.886
Flash Sale	0.808	0.819	0.873
Positive Emotion	0.870	0.872	0.911
Impulse Buying	0.749	0.757	0.856

Inner Model

Coefficient of Determination Test

R-square is a measure of the extent of determination between the endogenous and exogenous variables. If the R-square value is 0.75 (strong) or 0.50 (moderate) or less than 0.25 (weak), it is said that the model is good (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The value of the R-square variable of Impulse Buying is 0.724 (moderate category), as presented in Table 3. The value of the R-square variable of Positive Emotion is 0.720, which is also in the moderate group.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination.

R-square - Overview		
	R-square	R-square adjusted
Impulse Buying	0.724	0.709
Positive Emotion	0.720	0.710

Hypothesis Testing

The SEM-PLS analysis shows that the T-value is also an indicator of the significance of a coefficient at a low significance level. The significance of a coefficient correlates with a P-value below the widely accepted threshold or less than 0.005. Table 4 below shows the results of bootstrapping analysis for hypothesis testing.

Table 5. Testing of Research Hypotesis.

Construct	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standart Deviation	T-statistics	P- values	Result
EW → PE	0.473	0.462	0.123	3.849	0.000	accepted
FS → PE	0.422	0.433	0.110	3.836	0.000	accepted
PE → IB	0.701	0.686	0.130	5.413	0.000	accepted
EW → IB	0.203	0.212	0.192	1.058	0.290	rejected
FS → IB	0.701	0.686	0.130	5.413	0.000	accepted
EW → PE → IB	0.332	0.318	0.106	3.132	0.002	accepted
FS → PE → IB	0.296	0.296	0.088	3.367	0.001	accepted

The first hypothesis test between E-WOM and Positive Emotion indicated that the P-value was 0.000, which implies that the T-statistic satisfied the criteria of $P < 0.05$, and the coefficient value was 0.473. The second hypothesis of the effect of Flash Sales and Positive Emotion is accepted with P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and positive coefficient of 0.422. The third hypothesis test between Positive Emotion and Impulse Buying indicates the P-value of $.000 < 0.05$ accepted. Coefficient value is 0.701. The fourth hypothesis is rejected since the P-value for the link between E-WOM variable and Impulse Buying is $0.290 > 0.05$, with the coefficient value of 0.203. Further investigation indicated that the proposal was approved between Flash

Sale and Impulse Buying. The P-value is 0.000 which meets the P-value < 0.05 criteria and the coefficient value is 0.701. However, the hypothesis test of E-WOM and Impulse Buying mediated by Positive Emotion, exhibited P-value 0.002 < 0.05. The coefficient's value was 0.332 which may be considered as approved. Moreover, the hypothesis test between Flash Sale and Impulse Buying mediated by Positive Emotion indicated the P-value of 0.001 < 0.05 with the coefficient value of 0.296. Thus, this idea can be determined that acceptable.

Goodness of Fit (GoF)

Goodness of Fit (GoF) is a hypothesis testing to check the adequacy and accuracy of the model used for validation in SEM-PLS. A structural equation model is said to fit well if the SRMR value is less than 0.10, and it is said to fit badly if the SRMR value is more than 0.15 (Ghozali, 2021). The appropriate chi-square is when it is above 0.05 and NFI value below 0.90 suggests a decent model. The results of Table 5 indicate that the SRMR value is 0.089, the Chi-square value is 290.904 and the NFI value is 0.673. Therefore, the model is considered a good fit for the data in this investigation.

Table 6. Goodness of Fit (GoF).

Model fit		
	Saturated model	**Estimated model**
SRMR	0.089	0.089
Chi-square	290.904	290.904
NFI	0.673	0.673

Effect Size

Effect size indicates the practical significance of a finding by measuring the amount of the difference found between the experimental and control group. An F-square value of 0.02 is tiny, 0.15 is moderate and 0.35 is substantial (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Based on the facts in Table 6, the effect of E-WOM on Impulse Buying (0.042) was minimal and on Positive Emotion (0.289) was substantial. Flash Sale has a modest influence on Impulse Buying (.140) and a moderate effect on Positive Emotion (.230). The large influence (0.498) of the Positive Emotion variable on Impulse Buying.

Table 7. Effect Size.

f-square - Matrix				
	E-WOM	**Flash Sale**	**Impulse Buying**	**Positive Emotion**
E-WOM			0.042	0.289
Flash sale			0.140	0.230
Positive Emotion			0.498	

Discussion

The effect of E-WOM on Positive Emotion

The study indicated that E-WOM had a positive and significant effect on Positive Emotions. Test results show a p-value of 0.000 at a significance level of 0.05. The results of this study are similar with previous research conducted by Putri et al. (2025), which states that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Positive Emotion to improve the sales performance of Baso Aci MSMEs on TikTok Shop. Welhenly & Sugiyanto, (2026), juga menemukan bahwa variabel E-WOM berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap variabel Positive Emotion pada konsumen Sociolla di wilayah Jabodetabek.

The effect of Flash Sale on Positive Emotion

The findings indicated a positive, substantial influence of Flash Sales on Positive Emotion. It shows that the test result has a P-value of 0.000 which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. These results confirm the research undertaken by Ramadhan & Wardi, (2025), which proves that Flash Sales have a favorable influence on users favorable Emotion on the Shopee app. This is highly corroborated by the findings of the study of Hamzah & Rachman, (2025), that Flash Sale had a substantial effect on Positive Emotion in the AEON Store BSD CITY.

The effect of Positive Emotion on Impulse Buying

favorable Emotion was found to have a favorable and significant effect on Impulse Buying. According to the test results, the P-value was 0.000 which is less than the significance level of 0.05. These results are similar with the research of Cahyani & Marcelino, (2023), revealed that beneficial Emotions have a beneficial effect on Impulse Buying on e-commerce customers in Indonesia. This is also consistent with the findings of Aulia (2025), that beneficial Emotion has a beneficial affect on Impulse Buying on Shopee e-commerce service customers in Padang City.

The effect of E-WOM on Impulse Buying

The results of this study show that E-WOM has no positive and substantial influence on Impulse Buying. The test findings gave a P-value of 0.290 which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. These findings are in line with the findings of Hasim & Lestari, (2022), which says that E-WOM has no positive and substantial effect on Impulse Buying among Tokopedia customers. This is in line with the findings by Salwanisa & Fitriyah, (2024), who also revealed the similar results. This means that the E-WOM variable does not have a positive and substantial effect on Impulse Buying on Gen Z Shopee consumers in Surabaya.

The effect of Flash Sale on Impulse Buying

The study indicated that Flash Sale has a favorable and significant effect influence on Impulse Buying. The test findings gave a P-value of 0.000, which is less than the significant level of 0.05. It is consistent with the findings of Rahmadanti et al. (2025), which says that Flash Sale has a good and significant effect on Impulse Buying of Camille Beauty skincare products on TikTok Shop. Ramadhan & Wardi, (2025) also demonstrate that the effect of Flash Sale has a good and significant effect on Impulse Buying in Shopee app users.

The Effect of E-WOM on Impulse Buying Mediated by Positive Emotion

The results of this study indicate that Positive Emotion mediates the effect of E-WOM on Impulse Buying. The test result shows p-value of 0.002 which is below than the significance level of 0.05. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Welhenly & yanto, (2026), which states that the Positive Emotion variable has a positive and substantial effect on mediating the relationship between E-WOM and Impulse Buying on Sociolla customers in the Jabodetabek area. The results are further corroborated by the research of Bidari (2026), which demonstrates the variable Positive Emotion can influence the association between E-WOM and Impulse Buying.

The Effect of Flash Sale on Impulse Buying Mediated by Positive Emotion

Furthermore, this study also revealed that Positive Emotion mediates the effect of Flash Sale on Impulse Buying. The test yielded a P-value of 0.001 at the significance level of 0.05. These results are in line with the research of Ramadhan & Wardi, (2025), whether the Positive Emotion variable mediates the association between Flash Sale and Impulse Buying among Shopee app users. In the meantime, research by Hamzah & Rachman, (2025), suggests that Positive Emotion can also mediate the influence of Flash Sale on Impulse Buying in the AEON Store BSD CITY study.

5. CONCLUSION

The results indicated that Flash Sales had a positive and significant effect on Gen Z's Impulse Buying, while the direct effect of E-WOM was not statistically significant. Positive Emotion totally mediates the association between these two variables, implying that both Flash Sales and E-WOM only induce Impulse Buying if they are able to induce Positive Emotions beforehand. We suggest e-commerce managers to improve the quality of e-WOM material that stimulates enthusiasm, to improve Flash sales by providing engaging images, and to personalize promotions based on Gen Z's emotional data. This study has limitations, for instance, the small sample size (60 respondents) and the scope limited to Semarang Regency. The purposive

samplingmethod is prone to bias and does not address other situational elements such as price discounts, ease of access or peer influence, which could influence Impulse Buying.

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