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Word of Mouth, Social Media, and Service Quality on Consumer Purchase Decisions at Culinary Businesses in Surakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose— This study examines the associations of word of mouth, social-media engagement, and perceived service quality with reported culinary purchase decisions among consumers in Surakarta, Indonesia.

Research Methodology— A quantitative, cross-sectional questionnaire survey involved 150 purposively selected consumers who used social media and had recently visited local culinary establishments. Reported relationships were estimated using PLS-SEM.

Results— Social media had the largest reported positive standardized coefficient (β = 0.518), followed by service quality (β = 0.290) and word of mouth (β = 0.180). The model explained 78.2% of variation in the purchase-decision scores.

Research limitations/Implications— Purposive recruitment, reliance on self-reports, possible item overlap, and limited reporting of discriminant validity and bootstrapping constrain causal and population-level inference. The findings support context-specific attention to digital information, recommendations, and service encounters.

Originality— The study compares three commonly examined predictors within a single model of culinary-consumer evaluations in Surakarta, highlighting their different estimated magnitudes rather than asserting new causal mechanisms.

Keywords: Word of Mouth; Social Media; Service Quality; Purchase Decisions; Culinary Consumers; PLS-SEM.
Paper type: Research Paper

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1. Introduction

Surakarta offers a distinctive setting in which traditional foods, contemporary dining formats, and digitally circulated recommendations coexist. The city's culinary attractions have been discussed as a component of tourism development, including attention to the diversity of local dishes and experiences (Annisa et al., 2023). For consumers choosing where to eat, information is encountered before, during, and after a visit. Restaurant research has shown that food quality, the physical environment, and service encounters can shape satisfaction and behavioral intentions, although those outcomes are not identical to an initial purchase decision (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Ryu et al., 2012).

Information about culinary businesses travels through several channels. Recommendations from family and friends may be embedded in established relationships, whereas posts, reviews, and promotional material on digital platforms reach audiences beyond immediate social circles. Social media enables consumers to share brand-related

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content and communicate with businesses, but engagement and advertising differ by platform and message characteristics (Appel et al., 2020; Gensler et al., 2013; Voorveld et al., 2018). Understanding these channels separately is therefore useful even where the boundaries between interpersonal and electronic word of mouth are not sharp.

Electronic recommendations can influence what consumers notice and consider. Research on information adoption demonstrates the relevance of message quality and credibility, while synthesis studies show that associations between electronic word of mouth and market outcomes differ across platforms and product categories (Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Filieri, 2015; Ismagilova et al., 2020). The magnitude of a coefficient obtained from one consumer population should not be treated as a stable ranking of marketing channels in every market. It may also reflect how the constructs were operationalized and who entered the sample.

Service quality introduces a different dimension: the consumer's assessment of a business's responsiveness, reliability, interpersonal interaction, and physical setting. Conceptual work distinguishes the dimensions of quality and the role of expectations, while reviews of service-quality measurement caution against treating any single indicator set as universal (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Ladhari, 2009; Parasuraman et al., 1985). In culinary consumption, perceptions of service may be formed through prior visits, so a cross-sectional association with a reported purchase-decision score does not establish that service perceptions preceded the purchase.

Indonesian culinary studies provide useful comparisons without establishing a uniform pattern. Az Zahra and Paludi (2023) analyzed social media alongside price perceptions and product quality in a restaurant sample, whereas Aulia and Elpanso (2026) examined service quality with customer experience at a pempek business. Safitri et al. (2024) studied word of mouth, location, and service quality at a food stall and reported that not every predictor was individually significant. Differences in predictors, samples, estimators, and operational definitions complicate simple comparisons of coefficients across these settings.

A consumer-behavior interpretation may draw on the theory of planned behavior and social influence theory. Ajzen (1991) distinguishes attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions; Deutsch and Gerard (1955) distinguish normative from informational influence. These frameworks suggest questions about how consumers evaluate social information, but the present model does not directly measure the core components of planned behavior or specify the mechanisms of normative influence. They are used as interpretive foundations rather than theories claimed to have been fully tested.

Studies of influencer content and branded social-media messages likewise suggest several possible pathways involving credibility, trust, and engagement (Leung et al., 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021). However, the present survey groups social-media experience into a single explanatory construct and cannot isolate the effects of independent consumer reviews, paid endorsements, or individual platforms. The analytical contribution is consequently narrower: a simultaneous comparison of the estimated direct associations of three constructs with reported culinary purchase decisions within the observed Surakarta sample.

The research question is whether word of mouth, social media, and service quality each show a positive estimated association with the purchase-decision construct when included together in a three-predictor partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM). A second objective is to compare their standardized path estimates and conditional effect sizes within the sample. No mediation, moderation, experimental change, or population-representative ranking is claimed. These boundaries are essential when interpreting an observational survey in which prior purchases, recommendations, and service evaluations may influence one another.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Social Influence and Consumer Decisions

Behavioral decisions can involve both deliberate evaluation and information obtained from other people. The theory of planned behavior locates subjective norms alongside attitudes and perceived behavioral control in the explanation of intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Social influence research distinguishes behavior shaped by perceived expectations from judgments guided by information supplied by others (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In a culinary setting, a recommendation may operate as advice about likely quality or as a social cue about a popular venue. Neither mechanism can be identified from a coefficient alone without measures of the underlying beliefs.

Purchasing, satisfaction, and repeat intentions are related but conceptually different outcomes. Expectation-confirmation research relates evaluation of experience to satisfaction and subsequent intentions (Oliver, 1980). For consumers who have already visited a restaurant, reported willingness to purchase again may reflect remembered service and satisfaction. Accordingly, the interpretation of purchase-decision scores needs to distinguish decisions taken before a visit from judgments reported after previous experiences. This study retains its observed purchase-decision construct while avoiding assumptions about the chronological order of responses.

2.2 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) refers to communication about products or services among consumers, including advice from friends and relatives. Its interpersonal origin differentiates it conceptually from business-generated promotional content. Digital platforms extend the reach and persistence of consumer recommendations, creating electronic word of mouth (eWOM), whose motives and channels differ across users and settings (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; King et al., 2014). A review can communicate perceived product quality but may also reflect selective participation, incentives, and varying expertise. Trust is therefore an empirical attribute of a source rather than an assumption attached to every recommendation.

Evidence syntheses indicate that eWOM outcomes depend on the qualities of the message, source, platform, and product. Babić Rosario et al. (2016) found considerable heterogeneity in the association of electronic reviews with sales, while Ismagilova et al. (2020) highlighted expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity in evaluations of eWOM credibility. Filieri (2015) demonstrated that the perceived diagnostic value of online reviews can matter for information adoption. Rani and Shivaprasad (2021) further considered source and website credibility in a distinctive pandemic-period context. These findings justify attention to recommendations but do not establish a uniform direct effect across all culinary consumers.

The interpersonal WOM indicators in the Surakarta study concern the frequency of receiving recommendations, trust in recommendations, and willingness to try restaurants. The expected direction is positive because relevant recommendations may reduce information uncertainty when selecting an unfamiliar venue. However, willingness to recommend or reliance on reviews also appears in the conceptual description of purchase decisions. This overlap may inflate statistical associations and is considered when interpreting the estimated path. H1 states that WOM is positively associated with the reported purchase-decision construct.

2.3 Social Media

Social media provides channels for observing food presentations, viewing consumer reviews, following business accounts, and responding to posts. The content is not homogeneous: unpaid consumer opinions, firm advertising, and influencer endorsements carry different sources of credibility and commercial incentives. Research into social-media advertising identifies informativeness, interactivity, and relevance as potentially important to purchase intention (Alalwan, 2018), while platform comparisons show that engagement depends in part on how a medium is used (Voorveld et al., 2018). These

studies motivate separating frequency of exposure from more specific information-processing mechanisms in future work.

Influencer research identifies credibility, perceived similarity, and characteristics of sponsored content as possible elements in consumers' responses. De Veirman et al. (2017) examined follower counts and brand attitudes; Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) explored the perceived credibility of online celebrities among young female consumers. Lou and Yuan (2019) investigated the value and trustworthiness of branded influencer content, while Sokolova and Kefi (2020) considered credibility and parasocial interaction. Such findings illustrate potential mechanisms, not mechanisms directly measured by the present broad social-media construct. Sponsored content and independent eWOM should not be treated as interchangeable.

A synthesis of influencer studies identifies conditions that shape audience responses and the consequences of online influence (Vrontis et al., 2021). Leung et al. (2022) likewise show that influencer-marketing effectiveness depends on features of the influencer, followers, and message rather than on a single universal formula. In the Surakarta sample, social-media indicators broadly cover exposure to food content, influencer reviews, and engagement with business accounts. H2 therefore proposes a positive association between this reported social-media construct and purchase-decision scores, without asserting which form of content is causally responsible.

2.4 Service Quality

Service quality is generally understood as an evaluation of how well service performance meets customers' expectations and needs. Parasuraman et al. (1985) developed a gap-based conceptual model; Brady and Cronin (2001) emphasized interaction, physical-environment, and outcome dimensions. Ladhari (2009) reviewed the strengths and limitations of widely used service-quality measures. For culinary businesses, speed of response, staff attentiveness, consistency, and cleanliness are meaningful features, although their importance may differ between dining formats and occasions. A positive association with reported purchase decisions is plausible where consumers have sufficient experience of the service.

Restaurant research has linked physical setting, food and service quality to satisfaction, value judgments, and later behavioral intentions (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Ryu et al., 2012). Evidence from Pempek Cek Ana similarly considers perceived service quality together with customer experience in modeling purchase decisions (Aulia & Elpanso, 2026). These investigations differ in outcomes and measurement, so their numerical coefficients are not directly comparable with those of the Surakarta sample. H3 proposes that perceived service quality is positively associated with the reported purchase-decision score after accounting for the other two modeled predictors.

2.5 Reported Purchase Decisions

This section discusses the purpose of the literature review which represents the theoretical core of the article. Literature review not only presents a summary of previous relevant research, but also evaluates and synthesize the work of others reviewed by researchers.
It is important to consider the literature being reviewed and how to manage it. Some questions that researchers must take into account when first compiling a literature review are as follows: which aspects should be included in the literature review; how is the information in the literature review synthesized; how should the literature review be organized; what style should be used in compiling the literature review; and other significant questions to be answered.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Study Setting

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine associations between three predictor constructs and reported culinary purchase decisions. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to estimate the direct

relationships. The predictors were interpersonal WOM, social media, and perceived service quality; the endogenous construct was reported purchase decisions. The analysis was observational: none of the predictors was experimentally assigned or manipulated. Consequently, standardized path coefficients represent conditional relationships within the fitted model rather than independently identified causal effects.

The analysis focused on culinary consumers in Surakarta. The geographical setting provides a bounded context rather than a statistical basis for generalizing to the entire city. The observed data relate to respondents who had experienced local food businesses and were active users of social media. This eligibility criterion has direct relevance to interpretation: a coefficient involving social media among active users may differ from a coefficient estimated for people who rarely or never use digital platforms. It may also reduce variation in digital exposure relative to the general consumer population.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The study included 150 respondents recruited through purposive, nonprobability sampling. Eligibility required active social-media use and a visit to a culinary establishment in Surakarta within the preceding six months. Responses were obtained using a closed-ended questionnaire. These criteria define the analytic group and make the sample useful for examining digitally engaged culinary consumers; they do not produce known inclusion probabilities or a population-representative sample. Characteristics of participants are described in the results to contextualize the estimates.

The questionnaire used a five-point agreement response scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). All construct scores in the structural model were derived from responses rather than independent records of spending or transactions. Because the data were collected using a common self-report method, response style and shared measurement context may contribute to observed covariance. The potential for common-method bias in behavioral surveys has been documented in methodological research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This limitation is especially pertinent when both predictors and outcomes refer to recommendations.

3.3 Constructs and Measurement

The conceptual definitions and content domains of the four constructs are presented in Table 1. WOM concerns recommendations received and the respondent's trust in those recommendations. Social media concerns food-related content, influencer reviews, and interactions with business accounts. Service quality concerns timeliness, staff attentiveness, consistency, and physical appearance. The purchase-decision description encompasses visits, spending, recommendation behavior, and reliance on reviews. The latter two domains may share content with the predictor constructs, making construct discrimination an important requirement for interpreting the paths.

Table 1. Operational definitions and conceptual domains

Variables	Definition	Conceptual domains
Purchase decisions	Reported consumer evaluation and selection of culinary businesses in Surakarta.	Frequency of visits; amount spent; willingness to recommend; reliance on reviews or recommendations before purchasing.
Word of mouth	Informal interpersonal communication concerning culinary products or services.	Frequency of recommendations from friends or relatives; trust in those recommendations; influence on willingness to try restaurants.
Social media	Digital platforms facilitating exposure to, sharing of, and interaction around culinary content.	Viewing food-related content; influencer reviews or recommendations; engagement with culinary-business accounts through likes, shares, or comments.
Service quality	Perceived capacity of an establishment to provide responsive, reliable, and satisfactory service.	Speed of service; staff attentiveness; service consistency; physical appearance, including cleanliness and venue aesthetics.

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Each of the four latent constructs was represented by five coded indicators, yielding 20 indicators in total. Table 1 groups their conceptual content into three or four broader domains per construct. Because the individual questionnaire statements and their exact domain assignments are not presented, the correspondence between these domains and the observed indicators cannot be evaluated in detail. This distinction is important when assessing the possible overlap between WOM, social-media engagement, and the purchase-decision measure.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

The model was estimated using SmartPLS and specified three direct paths leading to purchase decisions. Measurement evaluation employed outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and indicator-level variance inflation factors (VIF). Structural results comprised R^2, adjusted R^2, conditional f^2, estimated standardized path coefficients, t statistics, and tabulated p values. Current guidance on PLS-SEM emphasizes the distinction between measurement quality, structural-path assessment, and predictive evaluation (Hair et al., 2019). The present results are interpreted within the limits of the statistics reported for this model.

AVE evaluates convergent validity rather than discriminant validity. Construct-level comparisons, including heterotrait–monotrait ratios, are especially relevant where constructs have related conceptual content (Henseler et al., 2015). The indicator-level VIF statistics do not replace structural predictor VIF estimates. Similarly, the fitted-sample R^2 does not establish predictive accuracy outside the estimation sample; approaches such as PLSpredict address that distinct question (Shmueli et al., 2019). The reported results therefore support interpretation of convergence, internal consistency, and in-sample associations without establishing discriminant validity or out-of-sample prediction.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Result

4.1.1 Respondent Characteristics

Table A1-APPENDIX summarizes respondent characteristics. Age was concentrated in the 21–30-year category (132 respondents, 88.00%), while 11 respondents (7.33%) were aged 31–40 and seven (4.67%) were older than 40. Women accounted for 82 respondents (54.67%) and men for 68 (45.33%). Each displayed percentage was calculated from the corresponding category frequency and the common denominator of 150. The concentration in early adulthood matters for interpreting engagement with visual and digital food content because the sample does not cover age groups evenly.

Educational attainment was concentrated at the high-school or equivalent level (83 respondents, 55.33%) and bachelor-level qualifications (65, 43.33%); two respondents (1.33%) reported a diploma. The largest occupational group consisted of students (57, 38.00%), followed by private-sector employees (39, 26.00%) and entrepreneurs (25, 16.67%). Other occupations accounted for 17 (11.33%), civil servants for six (4.00%), homemakers for five (3.33%), and military or police personnel for one (0.67%). The composition reinforces the importance of interpreting the model as a sample-specific description.

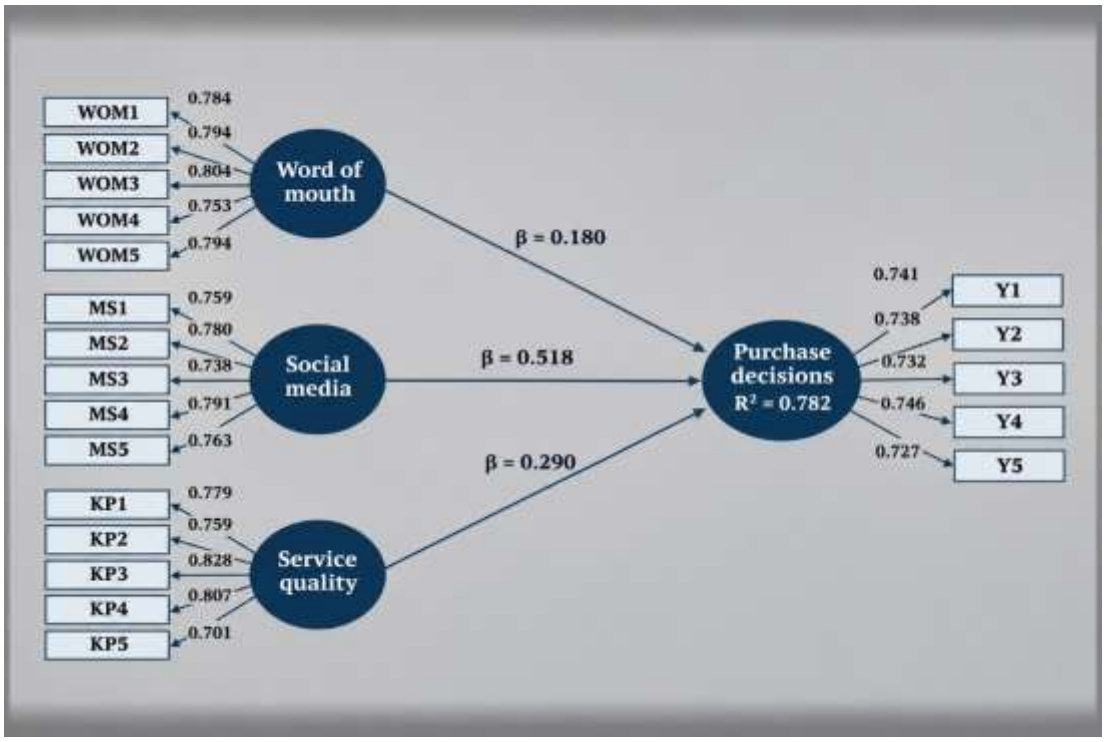
The most frequent monthly income category was IDR 1,000,000–2,500,000 (57 respondents; 38.00%), followed by IDR 2,500,000–4,000,000 (40; 26.67%). A further 25 respondents (16.67%) reported income below IDR 1,000,000, while 11 (7.33%), three (2.00%), and 14 (9.33%) fell into the successive higher categories shown in Table 2. These distributions describe economic heterogeneity among respondents but do not establish how income affects the three model paths because no income-specific interaction or subgroup analysis was estimated.

4.1.2 Measurement Model

The measurement model includes four constructs: WOM, social media, service quality, and purchase decisions. Figure 1 depicts five indicators per construct and three direct

paths toward the purchase-decision construct. The diagram includes the reported indicator loadings, standardized path estimates, and R^2. Tables 3–6 summarize measurement statistics; the structural estimates are presented separately in Tables 7–9.

Figure 1. PLS-SEM measurement and structural model



Source: Processed primary data, 2026

The five purchase-decision loadings range from 0.727 to 0.746, service-quality loadings from 0.701 to 0.828, social-media loadings from 0.738 to 0.791, and WOM loadings from 0.753 to 0.804 (Table A2). Every reported loading is above 0.70. The AVE values of 0.543, 0.602, 0.587, and 0.618 for purchase decisions, service quality, social media, and WOM, respectively, also exceed the commonly applied 0.50 threshold. Together, the loadings and AVE values are consistent with convergent validity under the specified measurement model.

Table 2. Average variance extracted (AVE)

Construct	AVE
Purchase Decisions	0.543
Service Quality	0.602
Social media	0.587
Word of Mouth	0.618

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Internal consistency estimates also exceed common descriptive benchmarks. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.790 to 0.845 across the constructs, and composite reliability from 0.856 to 0.890 (Table 3). These values support internal consistency but do not determine whether two constructs have meaningfully different item content. Because recommendation-related domains occur in both the predictors and the dependent construct, construct-level discriminant validity remains important for interpreting whether the paths represent distinct relationships rather than partly overlapping measurement.

The 20 indicator-level VIF values range from 1.373 to 2.367 (Table 4), below the commonly used threshold of five. This pattern does not indicate extreme collinearity

among the displayed indicator codes. It does not, however, establish low collinearity among the three exogenous latent constructs: that inference would require VIFs specifically for the structural predictors. Measurement discrimination and structural predictor collinearity answer different questions, and neither should be inferred from the reported outer-VIF range alone.

Table 3. Internal consistency statistics

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Purchase Decisions	0.790	0.856
Service Quality	0.834	0.883
Social Media	0.825	0.877
Word of Mouth	0.845	0.890

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Table 4. Indicator-level variance inflation factors

Indicator	VIF
KP1	1.962
KP2	1.746
KP3	2.367
KP4	2.175
KP5	1.373
MS1	1.688
MS2	1.821
MS3	1.640
MS4	1.873
MS5	1.680
WOM1	1.891
WOM2	1.899
WOM3	1.837
WOM4	1.692
WOM5	1.815
Y1	1.523
Y2	1.634
Y3	1.714
Y4	1.934
Y5	1.948

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

4.1.3 Structural Model and Hypotheses

The model reports $R^2 = 0.782$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.777$ for purchase decisions (Table 5). Thus, the three predictors jointly account for 78.2% of variation in the constructed purchase-decision scores within this sample. The unexplained 21.8% is the fitted model's residual variation, not an estimate of the individual contributions of unmeasured variables such as price, food quality, or location. A large fitted R^2 can coexist with omitted-variable bias, measurement overlap, or limited transferability to other samples. It should therefore be interpreted as in-sample explanatory fit rather than evidence of predictive accuracy for new consumers.

Table 5. Coefficients of determination

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Purchase Decisions	0.782	0.777

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

The reported conditional f^2 values are 0.497 for social media, 0.201 for service quality, and 0.053 for WOM (Table 6). Under commonly used descriptive benchmarks, their contributions to fitted R^2 are categorized as large, medium, and small, respectively. These statistics describe the extent to which the explained variance changes when a predictor is assessed conditionally in the specified model. Their numerical ranking should not be

equated with the impact of increasing advertising expenditure or changing service procedures, since the survey did not evaluate such interventions.

Table 6. Conditional f² estimates

Predictor	Purchase decisions (f²)
Service Quality	0.201
Social Media	0.497
Word of Mouth	0.053

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

All three estimated standardized paths were positive (Table 7). Social media had the largest estimated coefficient (β = 0.518; t = 8.763), followed by service quality (β = 0.290; t = 4.160) and WOM (β = 0.180; t = 2.468). These paths correspond to H2, H3, and H1, respectively, consistent with the stated hypotheses. The p values were below 0.001 for social media and service quality and 0.007 for WOM. The bootstrap settings and test-tail convention were not specified, which limits interpretation of the exact inferential probabilities.

Table 7. Reported direct-path estimates

Path	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	t	Reported p
Service Quality Purchase Decisions	0.290	0.291	0.070	4.160	p < 0.001
Social Media Purchase Decisions	0.518	0.517	0.059	8.763	p < 0.001
Word of Mouth Purchase Decisions	0.180	0.184	0.073	2.468	0.007*

Note. *For WOM, the reported p = 0.007; t = 2.468 corresponds to approximate one-sided and two-sided normal-tail p values of 0.007 and 0.014, respectively.
Source: Processed primary data, 2026

For the WOM path, t = 2.468 corresponds to an approximate normal-tail probability of 0.007 for a one-sided test and 0.014 for a two-sided test. Both approximations fall below 0.05, but neither replaces the actual bootstrap probability or its confidence interval. The tabulated p = 0.007 is retained as reported, while the lack of detail about the test-tail convention limits more precise inference. The positive association and its relatively small standardized magnitude are interpreted within the three-predictor model. No indirect effects were estimated.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Word of Mouth

WOM showed the smallest standardized path (β = 0.180) and conditional f² (0.053) among the three predictors. A plausible interpretation is that interpersonal recommendations still contribute information when consumers consider culinary options, but their distinct association is weaker once perceived service quality and digital exposure are represented in the model. Such a pattern can arise when information from acquaintances overlaps with reviews encountered online. Evidence syntheses have documented variation in eWOM relationships across settings and message characteristics (Babić Rosario et al., 2016; King et al., 2014), making a context-bound interpretation more defensible than a universal statement that WOM is unimportant.

Informational social influence offers one explanation for why advice from acquaintances is used when the quality of an unfamiliar restaurant is uncertain (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Yet the model does not separate informative messages from normative pressure, nor does it measure trust in a way that establishes a mechanism linking source credibility to an observed purchase. The overlap between recommendation-related content in the WOM and purchase-decision descriptions is an additional qualification. In the Banyuwangi food-stall context, Safitri et al. (2024) analyzed WOM along with

location and service quality, illustrating that the explanatory pattern changes when different predictors are combined.

The practical interpretation is therefore measured. Culinary firms may regard interpersonal recommendations as one source of consumer information, particularly for newcomers to the market, but the present coefficient does not quantify additional customers generated by referral programs. Advice concerning customer advocacy would require direct measurements of referral exposure, purchase timing, and actual transactions. More clearly distinguishing interpersonal recommendations from online reviews would also improve comparison with research on information diagnosticity and credibility (Filieri, 2015; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021).

4.2.2 Social Media

The social-media construct produced the largest path estimate (β = 0.518) and conditional f^2 (0.497). For the digitally active consumers recruited in this study, online food content, recommendations, and business-account engagement were more strongly associated with the reported purchase-decision score than either other modeled predictor. Exposure to restaurant imagery and peer opinions can increase familiarity with alternatives, and digital platforms can connect consumer-generated experiences with business communication (Appel et al., 2020; Gensler et al., 2013). However, the analysis cannot distinguish exposure frequency from content quality, perceived authenticity, or prior preferences that might attract users to particular accounts.

Studies of online recommendations and influencer communication help explain why content characteristics matter. Erkan and Evans (2016) examined eWOM information adoption, Lou and Yuan (2019) addressed credibility and trust in branded influencer posts, and Sokolova and Kefi (2020) analyzed credibility and parasocial interaction. Vrontis et al. (2021) synthesize a broader range of antecedents and boundary conditions, while Leung et al. (2022) report that influencer-marketing performance depends on strategic and message-specific features. These findings should not be condensed into a claim that every form of social-media marketing causes greater purchases in Surakarta.

The observed ranking is also sensitive to sample selection. All respondents met a social-media-use criterion, and 88.00% were aged 21–30; therefore, the analysis offers little insight into consumers who do not use social media or rely primarily on offline information. Further, studies of influencer credibility and follower characteristics have used different designs and populations (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). A comparison of standardized coefficients among constructs in one fitted model is not an experimental test of which campaign would yield the largest return on marketing expenditure.

In a restaurant setting, digital communication may be most useful when it conveys accessible information about menus, location, prices, and customer experience. Az Zahra and Paludi (2023) studied social media together with price perceptions and product quality in an Indonesian restaurant sample, emphasizing that digital communication sits alongside other purchase considerations. The present model does not estimate those additional variables. Recommendations to improve content quality and clarity are reasonable hypotheses for business practice, but their effectiveness must be evaluated through actual engagement and purchase outcomes rather than inferred from the path coefficient alone.

4.2.3 Discussion: Service Quality

Perceived service quality had a positive standardized estimate (β = 0.290) and a medium conditional f^2 (0.201), between the magnitudes of the social-media and WOM paths. This association suggests that consumers who report better service experiences also tend to report higher purchase-decision scores within the fitted sample. The descriptive dimensions—speed, attentiveness, consistency, and physical appearance—are consistent with broader frameworks for evaluating interaction and service environments (Brady &

Cronin, 2001; Parasuraman et al., 1985). The model does not determine which dimension contributes most, since its reported path treats service quality as one aggregate construct.

Service may influence later purchasing through satisfaction, evaluations of value, or memories of previous visits. Oliver (1980) described the relation between expectations and satisfaction; restaurant studies connect service and physical quality to perceptions and behavioral intentions (Ryu et al., 2012). Nevertheless, a single-wave survey of consumers who have already visited culinary establishments cannot identify whether service quality preceded the reported decision or was shaped by it. The association is therefore more accurately interpreted as a relationship between perceptions and decisions than as proof that changing service speed will increase purchases by a specified amount.

The sectoral comparisons are mixed rather than uniform. Aulia and Elpanso (2026) modeled service quality and customer experience in a pempek business, whereas Safitri et al. (2024) reported an individually nonsignificant service-quality estimate in their Banyuwangi food-stall model. Such contrasts are valuable because service expectations and alternative predictors differ between establishments. The Surakarta result supports the relevance of perceived service quality within the selected sample, while further research is needed to separate first-time purchase decisions, repeat behavior, and satisfaction-mediated pathways.

5. Conclusion

Among 150 purposively selected culinary consumers in Surakarta, WOM, social media, and perceived service quality all had positive estimated direct paths to reported purchase-decision scores. Social media had the largest standardized coefficient (β = 0.518; f^2 = 0.497), followed by service quality (β = 0.290; f^2 = 0.201) and WOM (β = 0.180; f^2 = 0.053). The three-predictor model accounted for 78.2% of the observed variation in the dependent construct (R^2 = 0.782), with adjusted R^2 = 0.777. These findings answer the study's comparative question within the specified sample and measurement model.

The estimated ranking describes associations, not proven causal effectiveness of specific marketing or service interventions. Its interpretation is limited by nonprobability sampling, the high proportion of young respondents, social-media-based eligibility, self-reported measurement, and the possibility of overlapping recommendation-related indicators. The measurement statistics support convergent validity and internal consistency but do not by themselves establish discriminant validity. Broader recruitment, clearer item-level separation, documented bootstrap procedures, and out-of-sample prediction would provide a stronger basis for future comparisons and practical decisions.

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The authors have nothing to report.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

✉ **ALP:** Corresponding; Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Formal analysis; Project administration; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing. **LH:** Methodology; Investigation; Data curation; Formal analysis; Validation; Writing – review & editing; Supervision

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USE

During the preparation of this work, the author used generative artificial intelligence tools to support the scientific writing process. Grammarly was used to check grammar, refine writing style, and improve clarity in scientific writing. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Respondent characteristics (n = 150)

Group	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 – 30 years	132	88.00%
	31 – 40 years	11	7.33%
	> 40 years	7	4.67%
Gender	Women	82	54.67%
	Men	68	45.33%
Education	SMA/SMK/Equal	83	55.33%
	Diploma (D1/D2/D3)	2	1.33%
	Bachelor's Degree (S1/D4)	65	43.33%
Occupation	Students	57	38.00%
	PNS/ASN	6	4.00%
	TNI/POLRI	1	0.67%
	Private-sector employees	39	26.00%
	Entrepreneurs	25	16.67%
	Homemakers	5	3.33%
	Other	17	11.33%
Income	< 1.000.000	25	16.67%
	1.000.000 – 2.500.000	57	38.00%
	2.500.000 – 4.000.000	40	26.67%
	4.000.000 – 5.500.000	11	7.33%
	5.500.000 – 7.000.000	3	2.00%
	> 7.000.000	14	9.33%

Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Table A2. Outer loading estimates

Indicator	Purchase decisions	Service quality	Social media	Word of mouth
KP1		0.779		
KP2		0.759		
KP3		0.828		
KP4		0.807		
KP5		0.701		
MS1			0.759	
MS2			0.780	
MS3			0.738	
MS4			0.791	
MS5			0.763	
WOM1				0.784
WOM2				0.794
WOM3				0.804
WOM4				0.753
WOM5				0.794
Y1	0.741			
Y2	0.738			
Y3	0.732			
Y4	0.746			
Y5	0.727			

Source: Processed primary data, 2026