

E-WOM In Urban Community Support Ariculture: Impact Of Customer Experience, Knowledge, And Involvement

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ABSTRACT

The demand for organic vegetables is continuously increasing to support healthy lifestyles that more people follow. Digital technology has facilitated this product marketing to serve a larger market, including agri-food marketing using social media that explicitly targets online communities. The growing participation in Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) as an agricultural product direct selling initiative in Indonesia highlights the necessity to examine how customer experience, knowledge, and involvement stimulate electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) as a powerful promotion tool that consists of peer opinions and experiences aiming to foster sustainable consumer engagement and market expansion. This study aims to determine the effect of customer experience, product knowledge, and customer involvement on E-WoM on organic vegetable customers at an urban CSA in Bandung City that sells organic vegetables. The research employed a quantitative method with the Structural Equation Model – Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). We sampled 60 respondents of the urban CSA customers. The results show that customer experience, product knowledge, and customer involvement significantly influence E-WoM. The research provides theoretical implications for consumer perceptions, engagement, and decision-making in shaping E-WoM impact, including practical implications on marketing organic products in online communities that support urban agricultural practices related to enhancing consumer trust, attracting new members, and promoting the sustainability of urban community-supported agriculture initiatives.

Keywords: *E-WoM, CSA, social commerce, organic food marketing*

BACKGROUND

There have been many changes to people's lifestyles after the COVID-19 pandemic. This change is reflected in people's increasing concern for the surrounding environment and impacts the emergence of interest in organic products (Utami & Chaeriyah, 2018). Based on the Ubersuggest site, in a survey of *Aliansi Organik Indonesia* (AOI), there were 1,600 searches for organic vegetables on Google from March 2019 to May 2020. In a 2023 study by Rakuten Insight of 10,983 Indonesian organic food consumers, 34% reported purchasing organic items for perceived health benefits (Statista, 2025a). Another survey data conducted by Rakuten Insight in 2023 also stated that approximately 91% of respondents in Indonesia emphasized the significance of purchasing organic vegetables and fruits in their consumption choices (Statista, 2025b). This shows that many people

need or are interested in organic vegetable products. Organic vegetables are also the organic products most consumed by the public (David, 2017), and the trend remained the same until 2023 (see Fig.1). Changes in people's healthier lifestyles can begin with managing the surrounding environment. and daily activities that can reflect a healthy lifestyle. One way to create a healthy environment is by forming a community that can influence someone's new lifestyle (Susanti & Kholisoh, 2018). This kind of community, such as the organic food enthusiast community, can be formed through social media.

The advance of Web 2.0 as the concept and platform for leveraging collective intelligence and the rapid development of social media has created significant opportunities to shift from e-commerce as a product-oriented platform to s-commerce as a social and customer-centred environment. Social media, which refers to Internet-based applications, has hugely influenced people's lifestyles (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and s-commerce refers to utilizing Web 2.0 in e-commerce with more user-generated and shared content (Singh & Srivastava, 2017) offers more social interaction with and among consumers (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013).

Many social commerce (S-commerce) communities also commercialise their products on social media because it facilitates interaction between community members, including customers and producers. S-commerce also makes shopping convenient by providing easy transactions. Customers will feel like they are in the proper environment because they are part of a community. According to survey results from Hootsuite in 2022, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook were the three most-used platforms (We Are Social, 2022). Many entrepreneurs have used this platform to display or market their businesses (Y. Chen *et al.*, 2022). These social networking services allow people to interact with each other and build various types of online communities (Xiao *et al.*, 2015).

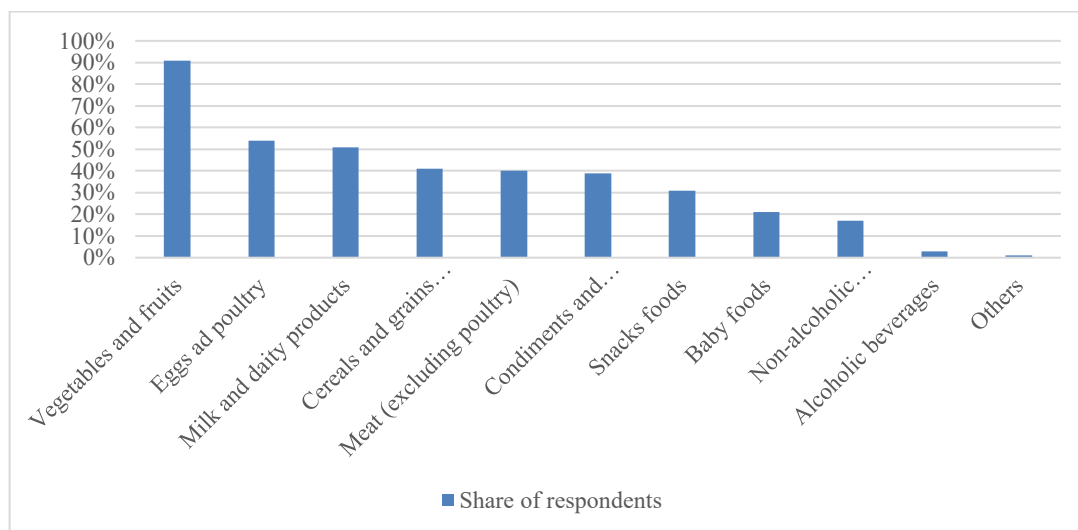


Figure 1. Preferred Organic Food Categories Among Indonesian Consumers in 2023

Source: Statista (Statista, 2025b)

S-commerce allows social interactions among individuals, which could transform customer into brand advocates. This new growing market of S-commerce represents a convergence of transactional and social interactions, enables users to share information through word-of-mouth (WoM) in social media, meaning electronic word-of-mouth (E-WoM) (Ali *et al.*, 2018). E-WoM is defined as positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers regarding a product or company that can be accessed by many people via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). According to Chu & Kim (2011), E-WoM can be seen through three dimensions, namely (1) Searching for opinions, (2) Giving opinions, and (3) Conveying opinions. Online interactions among

customer have enabled them to exchange knowledge, share their shopping experiences, and disseminate information about products and services through their social networks. E-WOM is considered one of the most trusted communication media by customers compared to advertising or promotions made by a company (Kuo *et al.*, 2013).

According to research results of Zhang *et al.* (2017), Customer experience encourages community involvement, increasing the intention to carry out E-WoM. Another research conducted by Chang & Huang, (2019) stated that product knowledge affects word of mouth on the customer online. E-WOM enables product users to exchange information in the community more quickly because they are satisfied with the products, which provides referrals to other users or community members (Prayustika, 2016).

There were limited studies about the role of E-WoM in urban CSA that utilised customer experience, knowledge, and engagement. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is one form of direct marketing that involves a group of people who agree to support a farm operation, making the land legally or figuratively the community's farm. Growers and consumers support one another and share the risks and rewards of food production (Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC), n.d.). Urban CSA are Community Supported Agriculture initiatives that operate in urban settings are known. The urban CSA that is observed in this study is the one that utilises social commerce to inform its activities, including selling its products via digital applications. Previous research focuses on consumer environment situation and relationship quality as the drivers of E-WoM (Ali *et al.*, 2018; Jalilvand *et al.*, 2017) and how E-WoM affect consumer purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016, 2018; Roy *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2018).

The urgency of observing customer experience, customer knowledge, and engagement and its effect on E-WoM because these three factors shape customer online purchase behaviour influenced by the improvement of web technologies that allow online users to share reviews as online content and opinions based on their experience, knowledge, including involvement to which customers actively engage in the urban CSA initiatives through digital platforms. Research on customer experience becomes essential in E-WoM because social networking sites enable people to share their opinions (Chun & Lee, 2016), the most valuable information source when E-WoM is shared (Erkan & Evans, 2018). Customer knowledge is critical in the information-processing approach for individuals to learn and develop certain perceptions to help them decide on problem-solving plans (Gottschalk & Mafael, 2017). Customer engagement in online brand communities has been conceptualised as a mental state that reflects a customer's positive attitude that could influence their willingness to advocate the brand and community promotion (Bento *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2017) in the digital world.

The involvement theory proposed by Zaichkowsky (1985) states that engagement can be applied to several objects, such as products and customers. When customers are involved with a product, this can lead them to find more information about it and spend more time looking for the right product choice. Such involvement can also provide more significant customer commitment to the brand, allowing customers to tell others about their purchased products. Hereafter, the cognitive learning theory presented by Batkoska & Koseska (2012), customer reactions to a product are influenced by critical factors, namely cognitive learning, which involves learning concepts, attitudes, and reasoning abilities. This allows customers to utilise information stored in their memory as additional information for future use. These two theories are the theoretical basis for this research to explain how customer knowledge and experience influence every customer's product evaluation.

Customer experience is a form of experience buying a product at a retail or retailer, which is then used as evaluation material to determine whether or not to continue purchasing the product (Barari *et al.*, 2020). According to Singh & Söderlund (2020), customer experience can be measured by considering several dimensions, such as (1) Customer service, (2) Product experience, (3) Delivery experience, and (4) Brand experience. Previous research conducted by Serra-Cantallops *et al.* (2018)

revealed that customers with positive emotional experiences positively affect E-WOM. Other research conducted by Sulistyo (2020) shows that customer experience influences word of mouth on social media. Thus, the first hypothesis can be determined as there was a difference between an E-WOM driver related to customer experience and a significant effect on E-WoM.

Product knowledge is defined as the amount of specific knowledge about the quality of a product in consumer memory (Brucks, 1985; Wood & Lynch, 2002). According to Adekayanti et al. (2022) and Brucks (1985), there are three categories to measure product knowledge, namely (1) subjective knowledge, (2) objective knowledge, and (3) experience-based knowledge. Previous research conducted by Khoirunnisa & Albari (2023) stated that product knowledge positively and significantly affects E-WoM because product knowledge can encourage someone to do E-WoM. Therefore, the second hypothesis can be determined as there was a difference between an E-WOM driver related to product knowledge and a significant effect on E-WoM.

Customer involvement is a marketing strategy involving customers, not just selling a brand to consumers, but making a brand as a means of interaction with preexisting content, thereby creating two-way communication between brand and customer (Anggita & Trenggana, 2020). According to Chen et al. (2020), consumer involvement can be measured by looking at two orientations of involvement, namely (1) emotional and (2) rational. Previous research conducted by Christofi et al. (2020) stated that customer involvement with a company can encourage positive word of mouth. Another study by Thanh and Binh (2020) revealed that customer involvement specifically impacts E-WOM. From this explanation, the third hypothesis can be determined as there was a difference between an E-WOM driver related to customer involvement and a significant effect on E-WoM.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applied a quantitative research design using a survey technique approach to organic vegetable customer of one urban CSA in Bandung City that sells organic products using social media and e-commerce. There is no official data on the number of urban CSAs in Bandung City. The following are examples of urban CSA in Bandung City, namely Kelompok Seni Tani (@kamisenitani) and Warung Seribu Kebun (warung1000kebun). The urban CSA in this research is Warung Seribu Kebun. This community is one of the pioneers in urban CSA in Bandung City that actively promotes organic farming in urban residential areas. Social media is one of the promotional tools that they expect to increase their branding and agriculture activities and meet target sales. Data was collected using a questionnaire using a 1-7 Likert scale. A 7-point Likert scale is used because it produces more precise data compared to a 5-point Likert scale (Munshi, 2014). An online questionnaire was used to collect primary data to complete the survey using Google Forms according to the criteria: urban CSA customers who had purchased CSA organic vegetables in the last three months in Warung Seribu Kebun and were actively using social media. The questionnaire comprised three parts. The first part provided the screening questions to filter the non-eligible respondents who were not customer who had ever bought organic vegetables from the CSA. The second part of the questionnaire focused on capturing the respondents' demographic characteristics, while the final section was structured to assess the constructs outlined in the research model.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The final sample comprises 60 valid responses. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents' profiles and was designed to preserve respondent's anonymity, demonstrating the socio-

demographic attributes of the samples, patterns of social media usage, and purchasing behaviours associated with organic vegetables.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic characteristic	Type	Frequency (n=60)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	4	6.7
	Female	56	93.3
Age	17 – 35	31	51.7
	36 – 55	25	41.7
	Over 56	4	6.6
Education	High school graduate or equivalent	10	16.7
	Diploma	10	16.7
	College graduate (four-year program)	35	58.3
	Graduate degree (MSc, MSi, MBA, etc)	5	8.3
Organic Vegetable Shopping Frequency	Less than 5 times/month	38	15
	5 – 8 times/month	21	46.7
	More than 8 times/month	1	38.3
Social Media Usage	Less than 5 hours/day	9	63.3
	5 – 8 hours/day	28	35
	More than 8 hours/day	23	1.7

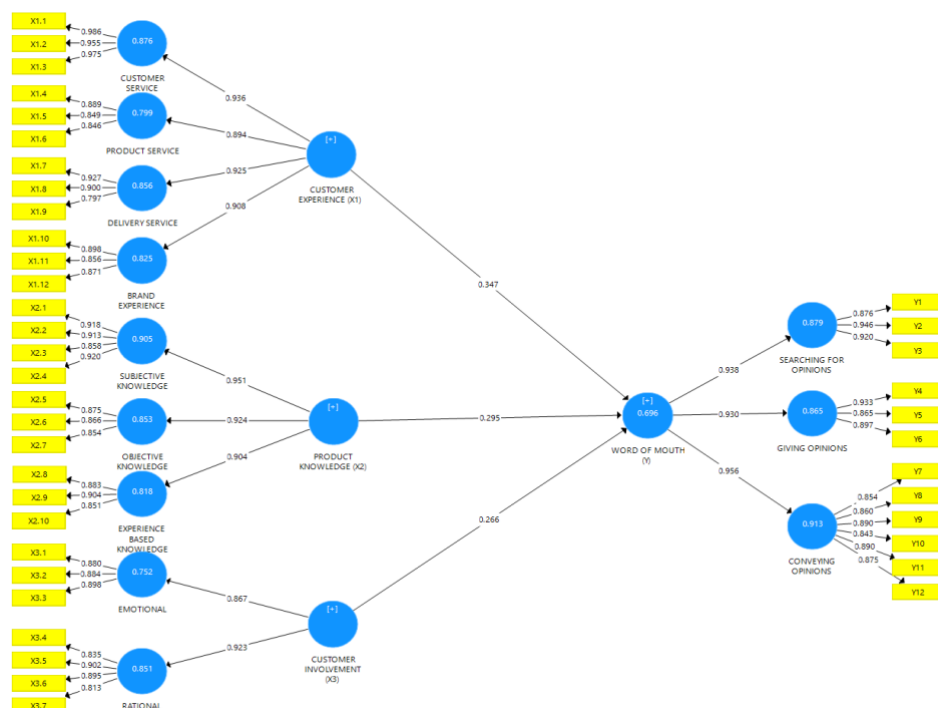


Figure 2. The Test Result

The results of the questionnaire distribution were then processed using the PLS-SEM method and the SmartPLS 3.0 program. PLS-SEM has experienced a lot of scientific development, so researchers have moved from relatively small models to more advanced ones (Sharma *et al.*, 2019), such as higher-order constructs (Ringle *et al.*, 2019). This higher-order construct (second-order) can

also be called hierarchical component models in the PLS-SEM method. This higher-order construct has advantages such as reducing the complexity of the Parsimony Model, overcoming the Bandwidth-Fidelity Dilemma, and reducing collinearity between formative indicators (Polites *et al.*, 2012; Hair *et al.*, 2019; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, this research uses a higher-order construct (second-order) in the PLS-SEM method.

Measurement Model Analysis

The first stage in carrying out PLS-SEM testing is the Measurement Model Evaluation or the outer model, which is used to evaluate the validity and reliability values of variables and indicators in a measurement model (Hair *et al.*, 2022). A research indicator is reliable if it has a value *outer loading* above 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Apart from looking at values, outer loading can also be done by looking at the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. An indicator is deemed reliable if it has an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Table 3 demonstrates that all first-order and second-order constructs met the reliability requirements by meeting the minimum loading factor and average variance extracted (AVE) values, and the result of the AVE values exceeded the cut-off value of 0.5.

Table 2. Loading Factor & AVE Output

Dimension	Loading Factor	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Result
Customer Service	0.936	0.677	Valid
Product Service	0.894		Valid
Delivery Service	0.925		Valid
Brand Experience	0.908		Valid
Subjective Knowledge	0.951	0.614	Valid
Objective Knowledge	0.924		Valid
Experience-Based Knowledge	0.904		Valid
Emotional	0.867	0.676	Valid
Rational	0.923		Valid
Searching For Opinions	0.938	0.703	Valid
Giving Opinions	0.930		Valid
Conveying Opinions	0.956		Valid

The next stage is to test Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values, which require values above 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Table 2 shows that first- and second-order met Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability value requirements. Based on the analysis, the constructs in this research have met the reliability requirements (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability Output

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Result
Customer Experience	0.956	0.962	Reliable
Product Knowledge	0.895	0.917	Reliable
Customer Involvement	0.946	0.954	Reliable
Word of Mouth	0.961	0.966	Reliable

The final stage to test the outer model is to look at the Fornell Larcker Criterion value; this value is a means by which the square root value of the AVE for each construct must be greater than

the correlation value between the construct and other constructs in the model, then the model is said to have good discriminant validity values (Fornell dan Larker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2019). In this research model, each construct's AVE square root value is greater than the correlation value between the construct and other constructs, so the model has a good discriminant validity value. Therefore, all outer model tests have met the validity and reliability requirements (see Table 5).

Table 4. Fornell Larcker Criterion

	Customer Experience (X1)	Customer Involvement (X3)	Product Knowledge (X2)	Word Of Mouth (Y)
Customer Experience (X1)	0.823			
Customer Involvement (X3)	0.721	0.783		
Product Knowledge (X2)	0.793	0.782	0.822	
Word of Mouth (Y)	0.773	0.747	0.778	0.838

Structural Model Analysis

The structural model and substantive theory comprehensively explain how effectively the theoretical framework predicts the anticipated relationships by testing the inner model (Hair *et al.*, 2019). For the analysis, this study follows the principles suggested by Hair *et al.* (2019) by assessing the coefficient of determinants (R^2), the predictive relevance (Q^2), and the path coefficient and then testing the hypothesis. According to Hair *et al.* (2019), an R^2 value of 0.19 is weak, a value of 0.33 is moderate, and a value of 0.67 is strong. Word-of-mouth can be explained strongly, namely 69.6%, by the customer experience, the product knowledge, and the customer involvement (see Table 6). The remaining 30.4% is explained by variables not involved in this study.

Table 5. R^2 Value

	R^2	R^2 adjusted
Word of Mouth	0.696	0.680

The Q^2 value assesses the predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2019). According to Hair *et al.* (2019), the Q^2 value below 0.02 is small, a value of 0.35 is moderate, and a value above 0.35 is high (see Table 6). The Q square value is only for endogenous constructs with reflective indicators (Alamanda *et al.*, 2024). Variable Y has a Q square value of 0.464, so this research has high predictive relevance (see Table 6). Another fit index analysed is the standardised root mean squared residual (SRMR). According to Schermelleh *et al.* (2003), when the value of SRMR < 0.10 , then the model is fit. The analysis shows that the SRMR value of $0.089 < 0.10$ is included as acceptable, which means the model in this research is fit.

Table 6. Q^2 Value

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
Customer Experience (X1)	720.000	720.000	
Product Knowledge (X2)	600.000	600.000	
Customer Involvement (X3)	420.000	420.000	
Word of Mouth	720.000	385.957	0.464

Table 7 provides an informative summary of the path analysis results in this study. If the Path Coefficient value is in the range of 0 to +1, then the cause-and-effect relationship is stronger;

conversely, if the Path Coefficient value is in the range of -1 to 0, then the cause-and-effect relationship tends to be negative (Hair *et al.* 2019). Based on the analysis, the customer experience variable (X1) has a positive effect of 0.347 on word of mouth (Y). The product knowledge variable (X2) has a positive effect of 0.295 on word of mouth (Y). The customer involvement variable (X3) has a positive effect of 0.266 on word of mouth (Y).

Table 7. Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)
Customer Experience (X1) -> Word of Mouth (Y)	0.347	2.790
Product Knowledge (X2) -> Word of Mouth (Y)	0.295	2.150
Customer Involvement (X3) -> Word of Mouth (Y)	0.266	2.286

The hypotheses testing shows that the three hypotheses are accepted based on the analysis and following of Hair *et al.* (2019) (see Table 8). Based on the study, all the hypotheses were accepted.

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing

	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	T Tabel	P-Values	Result
H ₁ Customer Experience (X1) → Word of Mouth (Y)	2.790	2.00172	0.005	Accepted
H ₂ Product Knowledge (X2) → Word of Mouth (Y)	2.150	2.00172	0.032	Accepted
H ₃ Customer Involvement (X3) → Word of Mouth (Y)	2.286	2.00172	0.022	Accepted

The result confirmed the first hypothesis that customer experience has a significant positive effect on WoM. The result supports the previous study about how customer experience positively affects community involvement, which can increase the intention to do something WoM from community members (Zhang *et al.*, 2017), and how customer involvement can help promote the company and its products on the networking sites (Chun & Lee, 2016). The result also confirmed the second hypothesis that product knowledge has a significant positive effect on WoM. The result aligns with the argument expressed by Khoirunnisa and Albari (2023), who stated that someone with knowledge about a product and purchasing experience would be more involved in communicating and sharing product information with others, as about customer knowledge as one of the factors for an individual to spread WoM about online shopping (Ali *et al.*, 2018). The analysis also confirmed the last hypothesis: customer involvement has a significant positive effect on WoM. The previous study also shows that WoM intentions can endure customer involvement in social media (Chun & Lee, 2016), which reflects the level of customer involvement that can influence customer intentions to spread information about the company on social networking sites. The study demonstrates that when customers have good experience and knowledge in their memory and are involved (actively use social media) with the urban CSA, they will recommend the urban CSA products to others.

This study provides valuable findings related to the internal factors from customers that influence WoM in the context of social commerce with a community-based focus. The study highlights the role of customer online shopping experience, product knowledge, and customer involvement in spreading WoM when purchasing fresh products produced by the local urban CSA. The engagement built by social commerce to the community members by facilitating a memorable experience, increasing product knowledge, and giving opportunities for customers to be involved in the business process can increase WoM. It has been found that in the digital commerce market, such as social commerce, digital marketing strategy could benefit the positive customer experience,

knowledgeable customers, and customer involvement in various activities held by the community to write and share positive reviews and information in their online communities.

Therefore, this study proposes a theoretical contribution by extending the cognitive learning theory and involvement theory related to customer experience, customer product knowledge, and customer involvement in influencing online marketing communications carried out through E-WoM in the context of the online food business. Customer knowledge about the product and experience related to the product can encourage customer involvement in the online food business. Customers utilise their shopping experiences and knowledge while interacting with online communities regarding organic food business, and customer involvement in online communities could enhance customer propensity to recommend and promote social commerce to others. The findings support the cognitive learning and involvement theories that Zaichkowsky (1985) presented, which states that cognitive learning involves all customer activities in solving problems when purchasing a product. That way, customers will use the information they have to use when choosing or recommending a product. Additionally, involvement can encourage customers to recommend products to others because they feel they have been appreciated or recognised by a brand. Thus, this research proves that doing E-WoM requires a memorable shopping experience, sufficient knowledge about the product, and being directly involved with the product or brand.

This research also tries to make a practical contribution regarding organic food marketing communication strategies with a community-based approach that online communities can carry out by utilising digital applications in social media and influencing existing customers to disseminate positive information online to a broader target market. This research can also be used as a reference for social commerce with community-based to determine what factors play a significant role in a community member carrying out E-WOM. Online communities that support urban agricultural activities by creating a memorable shopping experience for customers and providing various support to enhance customer knowledge about organic products more interactively and regularly, such as using interactive features available on social media (e.g., live streaming, story sharing, video content sharing).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the previous results and discussion, it can be concluded that customer experience, product knowledge, and customer involvement positively and significantly affect E-WOM purchasing organic vegetables. Customer experience influences E-WOM because they pay attention to service, product quality, delivery speed, and experience with the brand. When customers have a good shopping experience, they will carry out E-WOM. Customer knowledge can influence E-WOM because customers may spread information through E-WOM based on the sufficient knowledge they obtain. Customer involvement can also influence E-WOM because the business started from a community. There is solid engagement between the company and the community members who also become customers; customers do not just try to fulfil their food needs. The customers may feel involved in various activities held by the company. Therefore, there is an indication that customers can voluntarily spread positive E-WoM about their experience and satisfaction involved in such activities, both buying activities and community activities.

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