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THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL PRESENCE AND QUALITY OF USER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC) ON CONSUMER TRUST THROUGH ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (EWOM) IN FEB UNJ STUDENTS ON THE TIKTOK PLATFORM

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of Social Presence and User-Generated Content (UGC) Quality on Consumer Trust through Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) among TikTok users in the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Jakarta. This phenomenon is important because social interaction and content quality on video-based platforms are believed to shape digital trust through the process of communication between users. The study uses a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method on 185 respondents. The results show that Social Presence and UGC Quality have a significant positive effect on eWOM and Trust, and eWOM mediates this relationship. These findings confirm that digital trust is not only built from the quality of information, but also from social closeness and user participation in eWOM. This study reinforces Social Presence Theory and Information Quality Theory, and provides practical contributions for marketers and content creators in building trust through authentic interactions and credible content on TikTok.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid emergence of social media has altered the way customers connect and share information in the digital world. TikTok, with its short video content, fast interaction, and powerful personalization algorithm, is one of the platforms that now dominates digital communication patterns. This phenomenon shows a major shift from text-based communication to more engaging visual and audiovisual-based communication.

User-generated content (UGC) is the primary source of consumer information in this case. User-generated content not only provides a more accurate perspective, but also fosters social closeness and trust through the real experiences of fellow users (Zahrah et al., 2024)Additionally, social presence, or social presence, is an important component in building customer trust and engagement, especially on digital platforms that emphasize human interaction such as TikTok (Lee, 2025)

However, although research on Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has been extensively conducted, most previous studies have concentrated on text-based platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, which focus more on written communication and product reviews (Bui et al., 2025). There has been little research examining the function of video-based platforms such as TikTok, even though their communication features are more dynamic due to their use of visuals, emotional expressions, and real-time social interaction.

In addition, most previous studies have placed eWOM as an independent variable that influences consumer trust or purchase intent. However, few studies have examined the mediating role of eWOM between social presence

and user-generated content (UGC) quality on consumer trust, particularly in the context of video-based platforms. This has led to a research gap that needs to be addressed by this study.

Based on this background, the goal of this study is to look at the impact of social presence and UGC quality on consumer trust via eWOM among TikTok users, namely students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Jakarta State University (FEB UNJ). Students were chosen because they are an active section of digital users who engage heavily with video-based material, representing young consumer behaviour patterns in the social media era.

In theory, this paper makes three major contributions. First, it applies Social Presence Theory to the context of short video platforms like TikTok, emphasizing emotional and audiovisual communication in trust development. Second, it combines information quality theory with eWOM mechanisms to explain how the credibility and attractiveness of user material moderate the relationship between social elements and trust. Third, it provides empirical evidence in the context of emerging markets by conducting a study of Indonesian students, giving a new viewpoint to the international literature on trust development on video-based social platforms.

Thus, this study not only fills theoretical gaps, but also assists policymakers, digital marketers, and content creators in developing successful communication methods to establish consumer trust in the age of a social interaction-based digital economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of TikTok-based social commerce, this study discusses the theoretical and conceptual basis that supports the relationship between social presence, user-generated content (UGC) quality, trust, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). In addition, previous research findings are used as empirical foundations to develop hypotheses that will be tested quantitatively in this section.

2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Background

2.1.1 Social Presence Theory

Short et al. (1976) established the notion of social presence, which Kreijins et al. (2022) described as the level of warmth, closeness, and human presence perceived in media communication. In the context of social media, social presence refers to how users feel "present" when interacting with material and other users. The more the social presence, the deeper the emotional connection and trust that emerges in digital communication.

New research shows that social presence has an impact on social interactions and information credibility on digital platforms. Lee (2025) explain that a strong sense of social responsibility encourages users to be more sceptical of the information presented in videos. As a result, in the context of TikTok, which is based on audiovisual content, social involvement might increase trust in information.

According to this study, social presence has a long-term impact on Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) because social interaction allows users to share experiences and opinions in an active manner. Aside from that, social presence has a long-term impact on customer trust through interpersonal communication mechanisms that have evolved in eWOM.

2.1.2 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) Theory

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a sort of interpersonal communication that occurs in digital media, in which customers communicate their experiences, thoughts, and suggestions online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Compared to traditional mass communication, eWOM has a large reach, high interactivity, and a higher level of trust because it is based on peer-to-peer communication.

Several studies have found that eWOM plays an important role in mediating the impact of social and informational factors on consumer trust. Bui et al. (2025) demonstrate that perceived social connection causes positive eWOM, which then leads to trust in the content. To put it another way, eWOM serves as a bridge between social interaction and digital trust.

Likes, comments, and the creation of films providing feedback or product recommendations are examples of eWOM on TikTok. This activity not only increases information flow, but it also improves social validity, which is linked to increased trust.

2.1.3 User Generated Content (UGC) Quality Theory

The quality of content produced by users (UGC quality) is determined by how much information, knowledge, and credibility the content possesses. DeLone and McLean (2003) explain that good information has qualities such as accuracy, relevance, and ease of understanding. In the context of social media, the quality of user-generated content is greatly influenced by the manner in which it is created, the amount of effort put into it, and the consistency of the information.

Zahrah et al. (2024) explain that high-quality UGC can improve perceived legitimacy and increase consumer trust in content. Aside from that, authentic content generates positive eWOM since users are more likely to create content that is useful and trustworthy.

This study found that UGC quality has an impact on eWOM and trust. Quality content not only improves the ability of users to share content (eWOM), but it also improves trust in the products or information provided by TikTok.

2.1.4 Trust Formation Theory

(Mayer et al., 1995) in Soleimani (2022) explain that consumer trust is the belief that other people (whether individuals or organizations) have integrity, competence, and fairness in their interactions. In the context of social media, trust is formed by combining information credibility, social perception, and positive user interactions.

Minh et al. (2024) argue that trust is the result of continual exposure to consistent and credible content. As more users interact with content that promotes honesty and transparency, the level of trust that exists grows. Because of this, social presence and UGC quality have become key factors in building trust through the eWOM mechanism.

2.1.5 Intervariable Relationships and Conceptual Models

According to the theory and the research findings, the relationship between variables in this study can be interpreted as follows:

1. Social Presence → eWOM: As social awareness grows, so does the opportunity for users to participate in eWOM communication.
2. UGC Quality → eWOM: High-quality content increases the likelihood of users sharing or distributing it.
3. Positive eWOM activity increases user trust in the credibility of content and information.
4. Social Presence & UGC Quality → Trust through eWOM: Both variables have a substantial impact on trust via eWOM, as social contact and information quality are critical in creating trust.

This conceptual research model presents eWOM as the key media variable influencing the relationship between social (social presence) and informational elements (UGC quality) and consumer trust.

2.1.6 Social Presence positively contributes to Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

In digital interactions, social presence fosters intimacy and authenticity, encouraging individuals to freely share their experiences and ideas. Thesia & Aruan (2023) found that social presence on TikTok increases user engagement and the intensity of eWOM because audiences feel more emotionally connected to creators who display genuine interactions. According to additional research (Ghenie et al., 2025) video content with high social presence enhances interpersonal communication and spreads positive opinions on social media. Therefore, it is considered that social presence encourages users to actively disseminate information.

2.1.7 UGC Quality positively contributes to Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

The quality of user-generated content (UGC) is crucial for driving eWOM activity because credible, informative, and honest UGC tends to foster trust and encourage other users to repost the content. Accoording by (Sang et al., 2024) that informative and credible UGC increases user engagement and purchase intent through stronger content quality perception mechanisms and eWOM.

In addition, research by Zahrah et al. (2024) found that good UGC significantly increases users' tendency to share reviews and product recommendations on the TikTok platform. In addition, Ekström & Eriksson (2024) show that the quality of UGC information serves as the basis for forming social opinions that encourage eWOM in digital media. Therefore, the quality of UGC can serve as the main driver of eWOM activity on social media.

2.1.8 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) positively contributes to Trust

In the digital ecosystem, consumer trust is greatly influenced by Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). Kanimozhi (2023) states that eWOM functions as a social signal that increases trust in products through users' trust in the opinions of others.

Lee (2025) trust is significantly formed when eWOM messages are considered authentic and non-commercial. In addition, Bui et al. (2025) state that emotional engagement generated by visual eWOM, such as video reviews from TikTok, increases affective trust.

2.1.9 Social Presence positively contributes to Trust

According to social presence theory, the possibility of building trust in digital interactions increases with greater perceptions of social presence. Thesia & Aruan (2023) found that social presence on TikTok Shop increases trust and repurchase intention.

Herrando et al. (2021) found that social presence increases perceptions of warmth and emotional connectedness, which are the basis of consumer trust. On the other hand, Lee (2025) explains that social presence in video communication is an important component in building emotional trust in social commerce environments.

2.1.10 UGC Quality positively contributes to Trust

Digital trust is greatly influenced by the quality of user-generated content. Zahrah et al. (2024) found that high-quality UGC increases trust through perceptions of authenticity and information disclosure.

Alamyar & Kurniawati (2024) explain that credibility and honesty of UGC factors shape users' cognitive trust in products on digital platforms. In addition, Ekström & Eriksson (2024) state that users tend to trust content sources that are considered authentic and relevant in the flood of digital information.

2.1.11 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) mediate the influence of Social Presence on Trust

Research implies that eWOM engagement frequently modulates the association between social presence and trust. Minh et al. (2024) in the Asian Journal of Marketing Research, explain that social interactions on digital media boost client trust, particularly when accompanied with favorable user feedback. Bui et al. (2025) also found that social presence promotes visual eWOM, which boosts user trust.

2.1.12Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) mediate the influence of UGC Quality on Trust

Through eWOM, the quality of user-generated content also indirectly influences trust. Zahrah et al. (2024) show that high-quality UGC increases the likelihood of users giving positive reviews, which in turn generates customer trust.

Kanimozhi (2023) states that eWOM helps foster digital trust and content perception, especially among young users of platforms such as TikTok.

2.2 Model Research

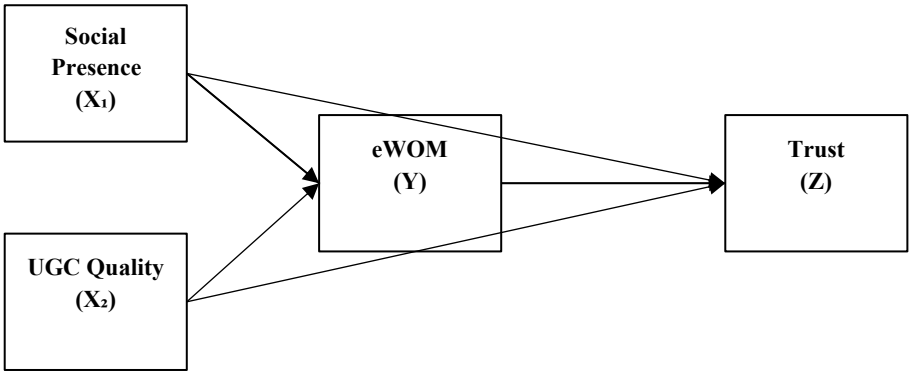


Figure 1. Research conceptual model

Source: Author (2025Seven hypotheses are offered in this research:

H1: Social Presence (X1) positively contributes to Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Y).
H2: UGC Quality (X2) positively contributes to Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Y).
H3: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Y) positively contributes to Trust (Z).
H4: Social Presence (X1) positively contributes to Trust (Z).
H5: UGC Quality (X2) positively contributes to Trust (Z).
H6: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Y) mediates the influence of Social Presence (X1) on Trust (Z).
H7: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Y) mediates the influence of UGC Quality (X2) on Trust (Z).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed exploratory quantitative approaches to analyze the influence and relationship between the variables in the research model: Social Presence (X_1), User Generated Content Quality (X_2), Electronic Word of Mouth (Y), and Consumer Trust (Z).

The explanatory technique was chosen because it is appropriate for examining the causal linkages between latent items using the theory proposed in Chapter 2. The data was analysed using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach., which is recommended for investigations with complicated models, mediating factors, and a moderate sample size (Hair et al., 2019).

3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The participants in this study were students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Jakarta State University (FEB UNJ), who actively used the TikTok platform for engagement and product information search.

Several factors were considered when selecting FEB UNJ students as research subjects:

a) Students are digital natives who are extremely active on video-based social media, making them relevant to the research environment.
b) FEB UNJ offers a choice of economics and business study programs that allow respondents to create an accurate perspective of trust formation in the context of digital marketing.
c) The university's academic environment promotes the use of social media for communication and promotion, allowing students to actively participate in the process of electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

- The respondent is an active student of FEB UNJ,
- Have watched, interacted, or created TikTok content in the last 6 months,
- Understand the concept of product recommendations or digital reviews.

The number of samples obtained was 185 respondents, in accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2021) who suggested a minimum of 10 times the number of indicators in the largest latent constructs. This size is adequate for PLS-SEM analysis and results in stable estimates.

3.3 Data and Measurement

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

3.4 Operational Definitions of Variables and Indicators

The operational definition of a variable is described as follows:

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Indicator	Source
Social Presence (X_1)	The level of perception of the user's presence, warmth, and social involvement in communication in digital media.	(1) Emotional presence, (2) Interactivity, (3) Social proximity.	Lee (2025)
UGC Quality (X_2)	Perception of the quality of content created by users, including the accuracy, authenticity, and credibility of information.	(1) Relevance, (2) Authenticity, (3) Visual and message quality.	Zahrah et al. (2024)
Electronic Word of Mouth (Y)	Communication between users on digital platforms regarding opinions, recommendations, or product experiences.	(1) Intensity of sharing, (2) Frequency of interaction, (3) Influence on other users.	Bui et al. (2025)
Consumer Trust (Z)	Consumer confidence in the credibility, integrity, and reliability of information sources or products on social media.	(1) Integrity, (2) Competence, (3) Message reliability.	Minh et al. (2024)

Source: Author (2025).

3.5 Data Analysis

1. Data analysis is carried out through two main stages: Analysis Outer Model (Measurement Model)
   This stage is used to assess the validity and reliability of the construct.
   - Convergent validity was tested through outer loading values (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (>0.50).
   - Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criteria and HTMT ratio (<0.90).
   - Reliability was tested using Composite Reliability (CR) (>0.70) and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.60).
2. Analysis Inner Model (Structural Model)
   This analysis is used to test the relationship between constructs through path coefficient (β), t-statistics, and p-value.
   - Significance was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.
   - R^2 was used to assess the predictive power of the model.
   - Effect size (f^2) and Predictive relevance (Q^2) were used to measure the strength of the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables.

   All analysis was carried out using SmartPLS software version 4.0.

3.6 Instrument Validity and Reliability Test

The research instrument has gone through a pre-research test (pilot test) on 30 respondents to ensure the clarity of the statement and the initial validity. The test findings suggest all items met the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value of > 0.30 and reliability (α) > 0.70, making it suitable for primary data collection.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Profile Respondent

This study involved 185 students from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Jakarta State University (FEB UNJ) who frequently use the TikTok platform. Data was collected based on the following demographics: age, gender, study program, frequency of TikTok use, and main activities on TikTok. Data collection was carried out by distributing an online questionnaire using Google Forms. In more detail, please note the following:

Table 1 Profile Respondents

Jenis Kategori	Description	Presentation
Age	< 20 years old	26.5%
	20 – 22 years old	65.9%
	> 22 years old	7.6%
Gender	Male	50.3%
	Female	49.7%
Study Program	Accounting	6.5%
	Digital Business	34.6%
	Management	10.8%
	Office Administration Education	4.3%
	Business Education	10.8%
	Economics Education	7.6%
	Accounting Education	3.2%
	Digital Office Administration	5.4%
	Public Sector Accounting	4.3%
	Digital Marketing	11.9%
	Other	0.5%
Frequency of Tiktok Use	Every day	65.9%
	3 to 5 times a week	21.6%
	1 to 2 times a week	12.4%
Main Activity on Tiktok	Watching videos	97.8%
	Creating content	36.2%
	Leaving comments or reviews	18.9%
	Purchasing products on TikTok Shop	42.2%
	Other	0.5%

Source: Author (2025).

The majority of respondents were in the age range of 20–22 years (65.9%), followed by the <20 years (26.5%) and >22 years (7.6%) groups. This shows that the study participants are mostly Generation Z, who are known to have a high level of digital activity and a tendency to rely on social media in the decision-making process, including in the context of consumption and product recommendations.

The number of male respondents was 50.3% and female respondents was 49.7%, which was relatively balanced. This balance shows that the phenomenon of social trading on TikTok is attractive to both genders, and there is no significant difference in how much FEB UNJ students are involved in online activities on the platform.

The largest number of respondents had a background in digital business (34.6%) from the study program, followed by digital marketing (11.9%), business management and education (10.8% each), and economic education (7.6%). These proportions demonstrate the relevance of the research context, as most respondents came from fields of study directly related to marketing, digital economics, and online consumer behaviour.

In terms of the frequency of TikTok use, as many as 65.9% of respondents use the application every day, 21.6% use it 3-5 times a week, and 12.4% only 1-2 times a week. According to the research, the majority of respondents are heavy TikTok users that interact with digital content on a regular basis and are exposed to UGC and eWOM.

The main activities carried out on TikTok are mainly watching videos (97.8%), creating content (36.2%), and buying items from the TikTok store (42.2%). The results show that UNJ FEB students are not only passive consumers but also create content and communicate digitally. The notions of social presence and social participation, which are the main variables in this study, are supported by these various activities.

4.1.2 Evaluation of Measurement Models (Outer Model)

A measurement model assessment was performed to verify the reliability and validity of the indicators representing each latent construct. The analysis using SmartPLS 4 indicated that all indicators had factor loadings exceeding 0.70, confirming that the items met the convergent validity standards suggested by Hair et al. (2021).

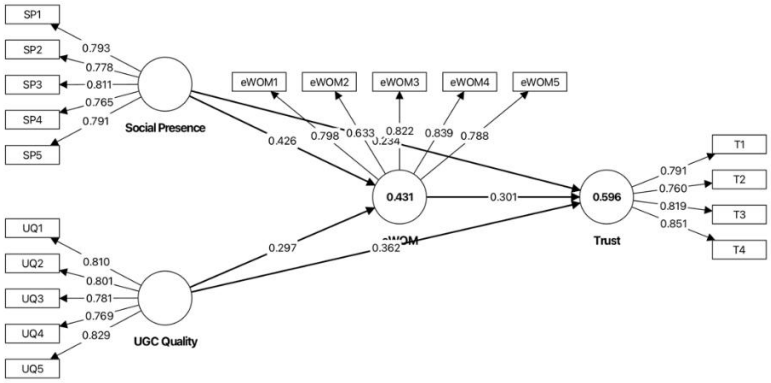


Figure. 1 Outer Loading Results

Source: Author's data analysis (2025).

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded 0.50, suggesting that the observed indicators accounted for more than half of the variance of their respective latent constructs.

Tabel 2 Result of Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach Alpha (CA), dan Composite Reliability (CR)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Social Presence	0.847	0.848	0.891	0.621
Trust	0.819	0.823	0.881	0.649
UGC Quality	0.858	0.859	0.898	0.637
eWOM	0.836	0.846	0.885	0.608

Source: Author's data analysis (2025).

Reliability tests revealed that all constructs were dependable because each construct's CR (composite reliability) and Cronbach's Alpha values were greater than 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency. As a result, these structures are acceptable for more examination.

Furthermore, the results of discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria demonstrate that each construct's AVE value has a bigger square root when compared to the correlation between constructs. The findings demonstrate that there are distinct empirical distinctions between each notion.

Table 3 Cross-Loadings Discriminant Validity

	Social Presence	Trust	UGC Quality	eWOM
SP1	**0.793**	0.513	0.476	0.474
SP2	**0.778**	0.480	0.477	0.468
SP3	**0.811**	0.539	0.554	0.479
SP4	**0.765**	0.494	0.445	0.487
SP5	**0.791**	0.535	0.557	0.514
T1	0.548	**0.791**	0.591	0.530
T2	0.452	**0.760**	0.514	0.475
T3	0.505	**0.819**	0.530	0.543
T4	0.584	**0.851**	0.563	0.547
UQ1	0.569	0.551	**0.810**	0.435
UQ2	0.466	0.559	**0.801**	0.425

	Social Presence	Trust	UGC Quality	eWOM
UQ3	0.509	0.520	**0.781**	0.472
UQ4	0.485	0.529	**0.769**	0.414
UQ5	0.518	0.567	**0.829**	0.519
eWOM1	0.430	0.515	0.419	**0.798**
eWOM2	0.398	0.416	0.414	**0.633**
eWOM3	0.512	0.568	0.505	**0.822**
eWOM4	0.561	0.556	0.469	**0.839**
eWOM5	0.481	0.465	0.402	**0.788**

Source: Author's data analysis (2025).

Thus, all indicators are declared valid and reliable, which means that the measurement model is able to describe theoretical constructs consistently and accurately.

4.1.3 Assessment of the Structural (Inner) Model

The structural model was applied to examine the relationships among the latent variables. The results of the path coefficient analysis revealed that all hypothesized links were positive and statistically significant, aligning with the proposed research hypotheses.

The R^2 coefficient for eWOM construction is 0.43, indicating that 43% of the variance in eWOM can be explained by social presence and UGC quality. Furthermore, the R^2 coefficient for the Trust construct is 0.59, indicating that Social Presence, UGC Quality, and eWOM together can explain 59% of the variation in consumer trust.

Hair et al. (2021) explain that, the data falls into the category of moderate to strong., indicating that the structural model has a good prediction of user behaviour on the TikTok platform.

In terms of concept, the findings implies that both social factors (social capital) and informational factors (content quality) play an important role in promoting eWOM and trust. Consumer trust in social media is influenced by a combination of strong interpersonal relationships and the credibility of the content produced.

In the context of TikTok, this implies that as the level of social interaction increases (e.g., through expression, communication, and interaction) and the quality of the content displayed increases, so does the user's desire to share information and participate actively in eWOM.

Tabe 4 R-Square Test results

	R - Squared	R – Squared Adjusted
Trust	0.596	0.589
eWOM	0.431	0.425

Source: Author's data analysis (2025).

4.1.4 Hypothesis Testing

The bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resampling yielded t-statistic values > 1.96 and p-values < 0.05, demonstrating that all proposed hypotheses received empirical support (see Table 5). These findings show that Social Presence and UGC Quality have a strong beneficial effect on eWOM and Trust, while eWOM has also been shown to have a significant impact on Trust.

Tabel 5 Hypothesis Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
eWOM → T	0.301	0.297	0.061	4.895	0.000	Significant
SP → eWOM	0.426	0.427	0.079	5.360	0.000	Significant
SP → T	0.234	0.239	0.081	2.905	0.004	Significant
UQ → eWOM	0.297	0.295	0.080	3.695	0.000	Significant
UQ → T	0.362	0.361	0.075	4.833	0.000	Significant
SP → eWOM → T	0.128	0.127	0.037	3.504	0.000	Significant Mediation
UQ → eWOM → T	0.089	0.088	0.031	2.900	0.004	Significant Mediation

Source: Author's data analysis (2025).

Conceptually, these findings suggest that a strong social presence and high-quality content enable TikTok users to participate in electronic word-of-mouth, hence increasing confidence in content and creators. Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that eWOM acts as a connecting mechanism through which social and informational

factors contribute to the formation of digital trust. These findings back with prior study (Bui et al., 2025; Zahrah et al., 2024; Thesia & Aruan, 2023), which highlights the relevance of social interaction and content credibility in establishing consumer trust in the social commerce environment.

4.2 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that all hypotheses suggested were accepted, suggesting that both social factors (Social Presence) and informational elements (UGC Quality) exert a significant influence on eWOM and Trust, with eWOM functioning as a mediator in these connections.

Theoretically, these results are consistent with the propositions of Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976), which claims that perceived social closeness in digital communication increases emotional involvement and trust among users. In the context of TikTok, more expressive types of engagement, such as eye contact, voice intonation, and natural communication styles, promote the development of a strong social presence and build user relationships. These findings are consistent with Thesia and Aruan's (2023) discovery that genuine interactions on audiovisual platforms boost users' motivation to participate in public communication, such as exchanging opinions and suggestions (eWOM).

Furthermore, the quality of user-generated content (UGC) has been shown to be a key factor in establishing trust. Authentic, relevant, and transparent content boosts perceived credibility, encouraging other users to emulate the practice of sharing information. These findings corroborate the findings of Zahrah et al. (2024) and Cheung & Thadani (2020), who found that information quality is a significant determinant of engagement and sharing intention on social media.

Meanwhile, eWOM positively contributes to Trust, demonstrating that digital trust is built through social validation among users. This finding is consistent with Bui et al. (2025) and Lee (2025), who found that the trustworthiness of user evaluations functions as a trust indicator in the social commerce environment. TikTok users support one other's impressions of authenticity and establish a sense of security about the content and items exhibited by commenting, creating video duets, and reposting.

The analysis also demonstrates that eWOM mediates the association between Social Presence and UGC Quality on Trust. This suggests that social presence and content quality increase trust indirectly, through social communication processes. In other words, trust develops when social interactions and credible information complement one another in the process of sharing digital experiences. This finding confirms Minh et al.'s (2024) research, which claims that communication between users is a transformative medium in the building of trust in the digital realm.

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that customer trust is influenced not only by the message transmitted, but also by the perceived "human presence" in digital interactions, particularly on video-based platforms like TikTok. The combination of emotional involvement (social presence) and content credibility (UGC quality) has been proven to raise the intensity of eWOM and boost younger consumers' trust in digital material.

4.3 Implications for Theory and Practice

4.3.1 Theoritical Implication

This research provides a contribution significantly to the development of Social Presence Theory and Information Quality Theory by broadening the scope of its application to video-based social media platforms, particularly TikTok. The study's findings show that social presence and user-generated content (UGC) quality influence digital trust via the eWOM mechanism. This expands on past research, which has been focused on text- or photo-based media. These findings further demonstrate that trust development in the digital environment is multimodal, with emotional (social warmth) and cognitive (information credibility) components. Thus, this study supports the notion that interpersonal communication and content credibility are two critical factors in the trust development model for next generation social media.

4.3.2 Practical Implication

In practical terms, the study's findings provide strategic counsel for business owners, digital marketers, and TikTok content creators seeking to establish consumer confidence. The capacity to establish authentic and quality interactions is critical for building trust on audiovisual platforms, in addition to promotional communications. As a result, creators and businesses must stress social presence features such as natural communication style, emotional expression, and active involvement with the audience in order to make interactions more personal and credible. Furthermore, content quality (clarity, relevance, and authenticity) must be maintained because it is the foundation for establishing trust, which fosters positive electronic word of mouth (eWOM). By balancing these two elements, firms may develop digital loyalty and improve the effectiveness of community-based marketing strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

This research aims to examine how Social Presence and User-Generated Content (UGC) Quality influence Consumer Trust through Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) among active TikTok users who are students of FEB UNJ. The study, which applied the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, found that all proposed hypotheses were statistically supported. These findings suggest that social and informational elements play a key role in shaping digital trust, with Social Presence and UGC Quality both directly and indirectly influencing Trust (via eWOM).

Conceptually, these findings support Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976) and Information Quality Theory by demonstrating that trust in social media is shaped not only by the quality of the material communicated, but also by warm and authentic social interactions between users. Within the framework of video-based platforms such as TikTok, audiovisual communication enables users to demonstrate more human expressions and communication styles, resulting in a sense of emotional connection and increased content believability.

The theoretical implications of this study include the reinforcement of the integrative model of Social Presence-UGC Quality-eWOM-Trust, which explains how social presence and information quality work together to shape digital trust. Meanwhile, from a practical standpoint, the study's findings suggest that organizations, content creators, and digital marketers should prioritize authenticity of communication, emotional involvement, and message quality and clarity in all material. This method has the potential to enhance favourable electronic word of mouth while also strengthening audience trust in businesses and information sources.

However, This research acknowledges several limitations that may be addressed in future studies. The research population is still confined to FEB UNJ students, thus the findings cannot be applied to all TikTok users. Furthermore, the variables examined continue to focus on social and informational characteristics, with no further investigation into other factors such as perceived enjoyment, trust disposition, or social capital. Future study should include respondents from more diverse backgrounds, include new moderating or mediating variables, and employ a mixed methods approach to acquire acquire a better understanding of the sprocess of trust development in audiovisual-based social media.

Thus, this study implies that meaningful social interactions and reliable information quality lead to digital trust, and eWOM processes play a significant role in connecting the emotional and cognitive components of user connections in the modern social commerce environment.

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