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## **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING, E-WOM, AND BRAND AMBASSADOR ON CONSUMER'S PURCHASE DECISION ON THE SKINCARE PRODUCT IN INDONESIA: BRAND IMAGE AS A MEDIATOR**

**Siti Marliya and Tafiprios**

Mercu Buana University, Faculty of Economics and Business  
Jakarta, Indonesia

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research explores consumer behavior in the cosmetics market that tends to switch brands and how this behavior can affect brand image. In the context of skin care products in Indonesia, this study examines the impact of social media marketing, E-WOM (electronic word of mouth), and the role of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions. In addition, this study investigates the mediating role of brand image in linking these digital marketing factors to consumer purchase intent. This research method is quantitative, namely a causal research design with a population of local skin care product users in Indonesia, sampling using guidelines where to determine the sample size in the study is five to ten times greater than the indicators used to measure each construct. A total of 367 respondents were collected through an online survey using purposive sampling techniques. Data analysis using the Partial Least Square (Smart-PLS) program. The results indicate that social media marketing, E-WOM and brand ambassadors have a direct impact on purchasing decisions, while social media marketing does not have a significant direct impact on brand image and not for e-WOM and brand ambassadors who are found to have a significant influence. Brand image has the strongest impact on purchase decisions and brand ambassadors have the strongest impact on brand image. The results also show that brand image acts as a mediator in influencing social media marketing on purchase intention with indirect only mediation, as well as influencing E-WOM, and brand ambassadors on purchase intention with partial mediation. These results provide a deeper understanding of consumer buying behavior in skin care products and the importance of brand image in the process.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media Marketing, E-Wom, Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, Purchase Decision.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the skin care products industry, the increasing perception of the appearance and quality of one's skin, combined with the increasing purchasing power of people around the world, is a major factor driving the growth of the skin care products industry market [1]. The development of the use of

skincare for facial skin care in Indonesia is evidenced by the data on the market share of the Indonesian cosmetic industry from 2010 to 2023 which is increasing every year [2]. Indonesia is the largest consumption country of halal cosmetics after India based on a 2021 report [3]. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) has announced data related to imports of cosmetics and toilet equipment, which includes products such as beauty supplies, skin care, manicure/pedicure, with a total value of around US \$ 22.6.74 million (exchange rate of Rp14,500 = around Rp3.29 trillion). This figure shows an increase of almost 30% compared to the value of cosmetic imports in 2016 which only amounted to US \$ 175.48 million (Rp2.54 trillion). BPS also noted that imports of beauty products, including cosmetics, care products, and soaps, during the January-July 2018 period reached US \$ 431.2 million, an increase of 31.7% compared to the previous year [4]. One of the beauty products is skincare which is not only useful for treating the skin but also functions as a beauty product [5].

In the midst of growing awareness among women and men to implement skincare routines, local skincare brands have sprung up offering skin care products with a myriad of benefits. Plus points from this local skincare brand tend to be easy to get and the price is quite affordable. Currently, local beauty brands are increasingly on the market [6]. With a formula made to meet the skin needs of the Indonesian people which includes a tropical climate, this local skincare brand can be more suitable compared to skincare formulas from outside countries where it is a cold climate [7]. In addition, since the emergence of local beauty brands, skincare has shown its existence where in 2019-2022, local skincare beauty brands compete with each other to occupy the top position as the favorite local skincare. The behavior of the cosmetics market that often changes brands (brand switching) is due to the fact that as many as 88% of consumers in Indonesia tend to prefer to try different brands when buying the same product [8]. Consumers who tend to try different brands can affect brand image. When consumers try different brands, the brand image can be fickle or unstable, as consumers have different experiences with each brand they try. Therefore, to maintain and strengthen a positive brand image, cosmetic manufacturers need to understand this consumer behavior and continue to build strong relationships with customers in order for them to stay loyal to a particular brand. And the behavior of the cosmetics market that likes to switch brands (brand switching) can have a significant impact. Consumers who tend to try different brands in cosmetic product categories have a more dynamic decision-making process.

**Table 1: Favorite Local Skin Care Brands in 2019 – 2022**

| NO | 2019             | 2020                  | 2021              | 2022           |
|----|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1  | Wardah           | Somthinc              | Somethinc         | Somethinc      |
| 2  | Make Over        | Avoskin               | You Cosmetic      | Scarlett       |
| 3  | Emina            | Votre Veu             | Avoskin           | Ms Glow        |
| 4  | Somthinc         | Lacoco                | Blp Beauty        | Avoskin        |
| 5  | Elshe Skin       | The Aubree            | Studio Tripok     | Whitelab       |
| 6  | Lt Pro           | Eleskin               | Rollover Reaction | Azarin         |
| 7  | N,Pure           | Sensatntial Botanical | Secondate         | Wardah         |
| 8  | Avoskin          | N,Pure                | Dear Me Beauty    | Erha           |
| 9  | Lux Crème        | Bhumi                 | Bio Beauty Lab    | Emina          |
| 10 | Mineral Botanica | Skin Dewi             | Luxcreme          | Bio Beauty Lab |

Based on the information that has been provided earlier, the increasing popularity of sales of skincare products from local beauty brands has a positive relationship with the purchasing decision-making process of consumers. The stages in this process include the introduction of needs, consideration of various options, and finally the selection of specific products and brands. Many factors influence this process, as has been identified in previous studies mentioned in the literature, such as Suleman et al., [9], Wardani et al. [10], Rahmawati [11], Clarissa [12] which focuses on the role of brand ambassadors. In addition, Purwanto et al. [13], Tannady et al. [14], Siregar et al. [15] highlight brand image. Hanaysha [16], Pop et al. [17], Frimayasa & Nasution [18] discuss the role of social media marketing. There are also electronic factors such as Asnawati et al. (2022), Saraswati & Giantari [19], Munandar [20] which refers to electronic word of mouth (e-wom). Other factors include purchase interest Putra et al., [21]; Khomsin et al., [22]; Fadilla, [23], sales promotion Helmi et al., [24]; Wangsa et al., [25]; Haudi et al., [26], product quality (Jodi et al., [27]; Waluya et al., [28]; Rindi et al., [29]; Barreto et al., [30]), sales promotion content (Pradana et al., [31]; Oktaviani et al., [32]; Budiyo et al., [33], lifestyle Setyowati, [34]; Hidayanti & Rejeki, [35]; Rusdiyanto et al., [36].

Based on the survey results, some of the main factors that strongly influence purchasing decisions are social media marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (e-wom) recommendations, and the role of brand ambassadors. On the other hand, the factor that has the lowest influence and is considered less

dominant is brand image. This finding is in line with several previous studies showing that social media marketing has an important role in driving purchasing decisions as mentioned in research by Hanaysha, [16]; Pop et al., [17]; Frimayasa & Nasution, [18], along with the positive influence of e-wom as seen in research by Asnawati et al., [37]; Saraswati & Giantari, [19]; Munandar, [20], and the role of brand ambassadors as found in research by Wardani et al., [10]; Rahmawati et al., [11]; Clarissa, [12].

The results of empirical research on the factors influencing brand image and purchasing decisions have been conducted by a number of researchers, and differences in research results were found. Some researchers have found that social media marketing factors have a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions as observed in a study by Hanaysha, [16]; Pop et al., [17]; and Frimayasa & Nasution, [18]. However, a study conducted by Dedi [18] indicated that social media marketing has no influence on purchasing decisions.

Just like in terms of social media marketing, the e-wom factor also faces mixed findings. Some researchers have found that e-wom positively and significantly impacts purchasing decisions (as seen in the study by Asnawati et al., [37]; Saraswati & Giantari, [19]; dan Munandar, [20]. However, research conducted by Bahi [38], Astuti & Rahmawati [39], and Badir & Andjarwati [40] concluded that e-wom has no influence on purchasing decisions.

The results of research on brand ambassador factors also showed differences in findings. Some researchers have found that the role of brand ambassadors has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions as observed in the study by Wardani et al., [10]; Rahmawati et al., [11]; and Clarissa, [12]. However, research conducted by Hafilah & Chaer [41] and Purnandika et al. [42] found that brand ambassadors had no influence on purchasing decisions.

Research has also revealed variations in findings about the influence of brand image on purchasing decisions. Some researchers, such as Purwanto et al. [13], Tannady et al. [14], and Siregar et al. [15], found that brand image has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions. However, research conducted by Purnamawati et al. [43], Wijaya & Annisa [44], Agustin et al. [45], and Bahalwan & Indayani [46] found that brand image had no influence on purchasing decisions.

The purpose of this study is to carefully investigate and confirm the impact of social media marketing, E-WOM (electronic word of mouth), and the role of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions for skin care products in the Indonesian market. This study will examine the role played by brand image as a mediator in the relationship between these variables. Through this research, we will seek to understand more deeply how the interactive influence of digital marketing factors, namely social media, recommendations from fellow consumers, and support from brand ambassadors, contribute to consumer behavior in deciding to buy skin care products. The results of this study are expected to provide a clearer insight into the dynamics of the skin care product market in Indonesia and the extent to which brand image plays a role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. The findings from this

study are expected to provide practical benefits to the skin care industry in designing more effective marketing strategies and understanding consumer patterns better.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Purchase Decision**

Purchasing decisions are thought processes that lead consumers from identifying needs, generating choices, and choosing specific products and brands. Thus, it can be viewed as a series of options before committing to the act of purchase itself [47]. Purchasing decisions cover many aspects of where to make a purchase, what brand, model for purchase, when to make a purchase, how much to spend, and what payment method to use. This decision is significantly influenced by product packaging [48]. [49] Explain that purchasing decisions are the way individuals, groups or organizations choose, buy, use and utilize goods, services, ideas and experiences to meet desired needs. According to [50] purchasing decisions are an integration process used to combine knowledge to evaluate two or more alternative behaviors and select one of them. Purchasing decisions involve a sequence of choices formed by the consumer before the purchase that begins after he or she has a willingness to satisfy a need [51].

The consumer must reach a decision with respect to the place of purchase, brand, model, desired purchase quantity, time to buy, amount of money to be spent and method of payment [52]. These decisions can be influenced by marketers by providing information about their products or services that can inform the consumer appraisal process [53]. [51] states that consumers typically seek relevant information about consumption-related needs from their past experiences before seeking external sources of information. In other words, past purchase experiences are considered internal sources of information that consumers rely on before making decisions. In addition, some consumer decisions will most likely be shaped by integrating past purchase experiences as well as marketing programs and non-commercial sources of information.

### **2.3 Brand Image**

Image is people's perception of a company or product. Image is influenced by many factors beyond the control of the company. The definition of image according to [54] is a person's beliefs, ideas, and impressions of something. Image is an impression, impression, feeling or perception that exists in the public about a company, an object, person or institution. For companies, image means people's perception of the company's identity. This perception is based on what the public knows or thinks about the company in question. Therefore, the same company does not necessarily have the same image in front of people [55].

According to [56] a brand as a name, term, mark, symbol, design, or a combination thereof is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and distinguish them from competing goods or services. In line with [57] defines a brand as a name, term, mark, symbol, design, or combination to mark the product or service of one seller or group of sellers and distinguish it from competitors. Brand image is the consumer's perception of the brand as a reflection of the associations

that exist in the mind or mind of the consumer [58]. Brand image is the thoughts and views of consumers towards a brand after consumers experience the brand [59]. Brand image is understood in the minds of consumers through the liking, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations [60].

### **2.3 Social Media Marketing**

Social media consists of two words, namely media and social. According to [61] media comes from the Greek "Medius" which means medium or intermediate tool used for a specific purpose. Whereas according to [62] social is the action of an individual as long as his action has a subjective meaning or meaning for himself and is directed to the actions of others. According to [63] the term social media first appeared and was introduced in 1954, but only emerged in 1995 as a whole with the look of Classmate.com, focusing on relationships between former schoolmates and sixdegrees.com in 1997 that create indirect bonds in a friendship.

[58] It defines social media as a means for consumers to share text, image, audio and video information with each other and with companies and vice versa. [64] Social media is an interactive platform e.g. Facebook and Twitter, where companies can share information about their brands and products, and where customers can communicate and share content with people within their network. [65] defines social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. According to [66] the definition of social media marketing is one of the marketing strategies used by business people to be part of a network with people through the internet or online. [67] Describes social media marketing as any form of direct or indirect marketing used to build awareness, experience, recognition, recall, and take action, of brands, businesses, products, people, or other things packaged using tools on the social web such as blogging, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking and content sharing.

### **2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth**

Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is defined as informal oral communication that occurs directly from positive or negative experiences related to a product or service through various media that explains how e-wom occurs naturally among consumers when marketers carry out information through advertising and promotion [68], ], the marketer influence model explains that respected, influential and trusted marketers can influence consumers to spread e-wom; And the network production model reflects the deliberate and direct use of marketing tactics to influence consumers and the introduction of messages that do not flow indirectly but are exchanged between members [69].

According to [70], e-wom is an offer made by people in the form of oral, written, or electronic communication related to the experience of either buying or using products and services, also a form of communication mix that is of course expected. can communicate something to other consumers. With the advent of information technology and the internet, E-WOM has emerged as a means of information communication through the internet that allows communication between space and time [71]. [72] states that E-WOM communication has speed in conveying information and can be accessed

easily.

E-WOM communication can be done in various ways such as email blogs, discussion forums, online communities, discussion rooms, survey sites and social media [73]. Communication through E-WOM plays an important role in consumer decision making. E-WOM is used as a result of post-purchase behavior or as a driver for purchasing actions [74]. The two main differences that distinguish E-WOM and traditional WOM according to [75] are the freer and faster flow of information wherever and whenever. e-wom is more effective compared to WOM communication in the real world, due to greater accessibility and high reach [76].

### **2.5 Brand Ambassador**

The term brand ambassador, brand endorser or celebrity endorser is commonly used as an advertising spokesperson or promotional model for a brand. Brand ambassadors can be used by companies to increase their sales, either in the form of goods or services [77]. In marketing, the selection of brand ambassadors is very important. The characteristics of a public figure will affect the promotion carried out by a company [78]. Brand ambassador according to [79] is a supporter of advertising or also called a product spokesperson or a brand chosen from famous people or unknown people who have an attractive appearance in order to attract the attention and memory of consumers. The way they work to promote a brand is one of them casually in the media or can also be called sales subtly in order to attract consumers [80].

*Brand ambassador defined by* [81] is someone who has a passion for a brand, is willing to introduce a brand and is willing to voluntarily tell information related to a brand [82]. In line with the previous opinion, according to [83] a brand ambassador is someone who is famous as an artist (public figure) in the public eye for his achievements that have been obtained outside of the image formed for the product. [84], a brand ambassador is someone who has his own interest in the brand, can promote the brand well and sincerely provide information about the brand.

### **2.6 Hypothesis Development**

The presence of social media is an alternative media to establish communication with customers. Social media has become a platform where consumers interact with a brand [85], such interactions have a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions [86]. The use of social media will help improve purchasing decisions [87], as social media will increase active user participation and will influence consumer behavior [88], by changing the consumer decision-making process in purchasing [89]. Communication on social media will increase purchase intent [90] leading to purchase decisions [91]. Then the hypothesis proposed is as follows:

#### **Hypothesis 1. Social Media Marketing Affects Purchase Decisions**

There is also a relationship between the electronic word of mouth on purchase decision which according to research [92] shows that electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchasing

decisions. According to research [92], E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Decisions. According to [93], E-WOM positively influences purchasing decisions. Research conducted by [94], found that e-wom communication as a whole has a very positive influence on purchasing decisions. [95]; [96] stated that e-wom had a significant influence on purchasing decisions. [97] In his research, stated that e-wom influences purchasing decisions. In research conducted by [98] the results showed that electronic word of mouth (e-wom) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Then the hypothesis proposed is as follows:

### **Hypothesis 2. E-WOM Affects Purchase Decision**

It is mentioned that a brand ambassador is usually a person who can represent a product or company that is expected to talk about the product represented so that in the end it will have a significant impact on increasing sales. Companies use brand ambassadors to influence or engage consumers. This is so that consumers are interested in making purchases, especially because of the selection of brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions [99]. The higher one's perception of brand ambassadors, the higher the purchase decision. According to several studies, brand ambassadors influence consumer purchasing decisions [100], [101]. Therefore, in this study, hypothesis one was determined as follows:

### **Hypothesis 3. Brand Ambassadors Influence Purchase Decisions**

According to [102] and [26] creating a positive brand image requires a marketing plan to attribute solid design, preferences, and specialties in the minds of consumers. Every brand will actively market or social media marketing to the public. Previous studies such as [103], [104], [105], [106] have all shown that social media communications and marketing activities disseminated and anchored on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, contribute to the development of brand equity and the brand image included therein. According to [107], [102], and [26] stated from the results of his research that there is a significant and positive impact on marketing using social media with brand image. Based on the research that has been described, several hypotheses can be formulated, namely:

### **Hypothesis 4. Social Media Marketing Affects Brand Image**

Word of mouth marketing is a good or bad judgment designed about product characteristics, corporate identity, or widely designed media over the internet. Viral marketing or electronic word of mouth is marketing using the internet to build word of mouth information to support business and marketing goals. More positive word of mouth will lead to a higher quality display, otherwise it may lead to a lower quality display. [108] found that customers evaluate e-WOM information more rigorously and devote additional time with e-WOM to building expectations or brand image. Furthermore, customers with high engagement form greater expectations or a superior product image in their minds. Using social media as a platform of consumer expression, consumers enthusiastically engage in the formation and enhancement of the meaning of a brand as a common object [109]. Research [110], [107], [102],



[26] shows that word of mouth marketing can have a positive and significant effect on brand image. The next hypothesis that can be proposed based on the explanation of the theory above is:

#### **Hypothesis 5. Electronic Word Of Mouth Affects Brand Image**

In research that states that brand ambassadors have a significant positive influence on brand image [111]. Consumers perceive celebrities as influencing their beliefs and attitudes towards products. The use of brand ambassadors who are considered representative can give identity to the Garnier brand. In his research [112] brand ambassadors positively influence brand image. This shows that the use of brand ambassadors affects the image of a brand [113]. Brand ambassador variables can be interpreted to affect the image of the brand. One dimension of the brand ambassador variable is attraction [114]. This refers to the attractive appearance of the contracted public figure who can support the product or brand. Hereby proposed the following hypothesis:

#### **Hypothesis 6. Brand Ambassadors Influence Brand Image**

A brand image is a distinguishing name or symbol (such as a stamp, logo, or packaging) to identify a good or service and distinguish it from competitors. Brands are valuable because they influence consumer choices in purchasing decisions [115]. In purchasing decisions, consumers really choose products that suit their needs and desires. Brand image has an influence on the purchasing decisions made by customers. Brand or brand is something that is most seen by some people. Merek-merek terkenal memiliki daya tarik lebih untuk keputusan pembelian. Well-known brands have more appeal for purchasing decisions. Customers usually trust a well-known brand more because it is considered to have its own advantages over a product [116]. Well-known brands have more appeal for purchasing decisions. Customers usually trust a well-known brand more because it is considered to have its own advantages over a product [117], [118], [119], [120], [121] which states that brand image has an influence on purchasing decisions. Based on previous research, it was revealed that brand image influences purchasing decisions. Thus deciding on the following hypothesis:

#### **Hypothesis 7. Brand Image Influences Purchase Decisions**

In his research [122], [123], and [124] there is an influence of social media marketing on brand image. In his other research [124], [14], and [125] has the results of brand image research on the influence of purchase decisions. [126] and [109] there is an influence of e-WOM on brand image. In his other research [124], [14], and [15] has the results of brand image research influential on purchase decisions. [127] and [127] there is an influence of brand ambassadors on brand image. In his other research [124], [14], and [15] has the results of brand image research influential on purchase decisions. Then the proposed mediation hypothesis is as follows:

#### **Hypothesis 8. Brand Image Mediates Social Media Marketing Relationship to Purchase Decision**

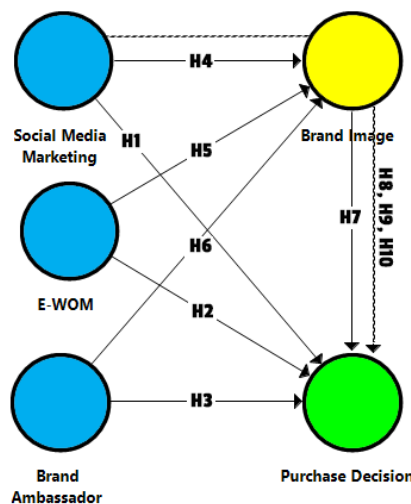
#### **Hypothesis 9. Brand Image Mediates E-wom's Relationship to Purchase Decisions**

**Hypothesis 10. Brand Image Mediates Brand Ambassador Relationship to Purchase Decision**

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 Research Design**

The research method used in this study is quantitative method because according to [128] quantitative method is carried out with research data in the form of numbers and analyzes using statistics. Then, this research is causality research (cause and effect research) known as explanatory research (explanatory research) conducted to identify the level and nature of cause-and-effect relationships. According to [128], causal research is research that explains the causal relationship of independent variables and dependent variables. This study consists of 3 independent variables, namely social media marketing, e-wom, and brand ambassador with two dependent variables, namely brand image and purchase intention.



**Figure 1: Research Model**

**3.3 Operational Variable and Item Scale Development**

Exogenous variables in this study consist of brand image and purchase decision. Where the brand image variable in this study is defined as consumers' thoughts and views on a brand after consumers experience the brand. Where this variable is measured using eight indicators adapted from [129]. Furthermore, the purchase decision variable in this study is defined as a thought process that leads consumers from identifying needs, producing choices, and choosing certain products and brands. Where this variable is measured using eight indicators adapted from [50]. Meanwhile, endogenous variables in this study consisted of social media marketing, e-wom, and brand ambassadors. Social media marketing variables defined the means for consumers to share text, image, audio and video information with each other and with companies and vice versa. Where this variable is measured using eight indicators adapted from [130]. Furthermore, the variable e-wom is defined as offers made

by people in the form of oral, written, or electronic communication related to the experience of either buying or using products and services, also a form of communication mix that is of course expected. Where this variable is measured using six indicators adapted from [131]. Finally, the brand ambassador variable is defined as someone who has a passion for a brand, is willing to introduce a brand and is willing to voluntarily tell information related to a brand. Measured using six indicators adapted from [132].

### **3.4 Population and Sample**

Data was collected from 367 respondents who had made local skincare purchases. The study was conducted using a survey method using a structured questionnaire. Before distributing survey questionnaires, we conduct pilot tests to administer content due diligence, to ensure that items on the test are relevant and to represent the constructs they are designed to measure [133], [133]. This test causes small changes in the language and description of some items in the questionnaire instrument. Factor analysis is performed to define and summarize some quality of service and a set of manageable fundamental variables, known as dimensions.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **4.1 Participants and Respondents' Profile This**

This research data was obtained from questionnaires distributed online to research subjects, namely local skin care brand admirers totaling 367 respondents. From 102 research data, it can be seen that the majority of respondents' gender is dominated by the "Female" gender as many as 298 respondents (81%). It can be concluded that the majority of respondents have a female gender. For age, it can be seen that the majority of respondents' ages are dominated by the age of "26 – 33 years" as many as 164 respondents (45%). It can be concluded that the majority of respondents have the age of 26 – 33 years. In terms of education, the majority of respondents were dominated by the last education "Bachelor (S1)" as many as 189 respondents (51%). It can be concluded that the majority of respondents' final education is Bachelor (S1). In terms of employment status, the majority of respondents were dominated by "Private Employees" as many as 142 respondents (39%). It can be concluded that the majority of respondents' employment status is private employees. For income, the majority of respondents have an income of "Rp.7,500,000 – Rp.10,000,000" as many as 137 respondents (37%) so it is concluded that the majority of respondents have income above the average minimum wage.

### **4.1 Data Analysis Through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Technique**

This study followed a two-step data analysis procedure, namely structural equation modeling (SEM) as suggested by [134]. SEM is a popular and widely used data analysis technique in behavioral science [135]. In the first step, the outer model, or measurement model, is examined to check construct reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The second step is focused on evaluating deep models, or structural models, to investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variability. This test uses partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS version 3.3.

### 4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

This study followed a two-step data analysis procedure, namely structural equation modeling (SEM) as suggested by [134]. Convergent validity is assured when scores from two instruments measuring the same concept are highly correlated [136]. According to [137], one should examine the outer loading factor and the extracted mean variance (AVE) to assess the convergent validity of the reflective construct. Outer loadings are also called reliability indicators, and their value should be 0.708 and above [137]. Other items, with values between 0.782 and 0.980, are considered acceptable because they are above 0.708 [138]. With respect to construct reliability, that is, alpha (CA) and Cronbach composite reliability (CR), values greater than 0.70 [137] would be considered acceptable. In this study, the values ranged from 0.871 to 0.941 and 0.903 to 0.953, respectively, which reached the threshold. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a general measure of convergent validity where values higher than 0.50 would be considered satisfactory. The results showed that the AVE ranged between 0.608 and 0.772, thus confirming the convergent validity [137]. These results are shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

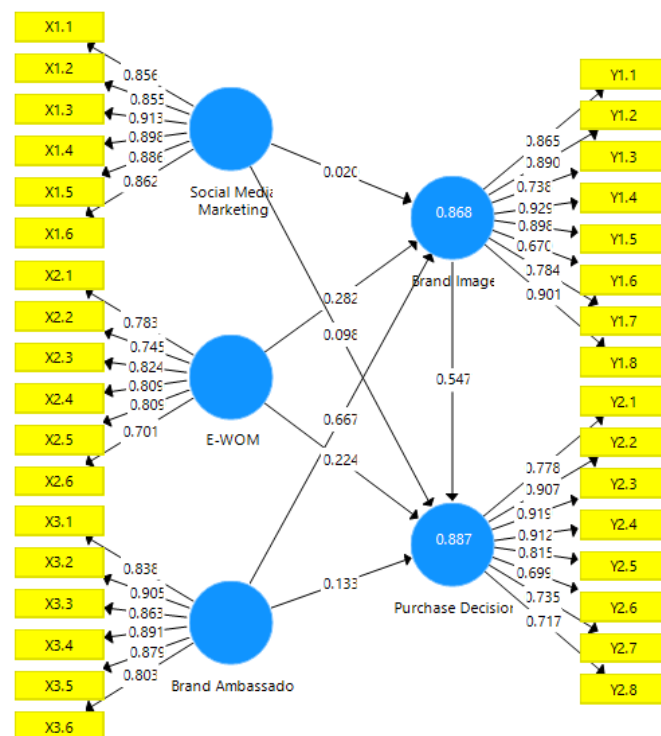


Figure 2: Measurement model

The validity of the discriminant is assessed through the Fornell and Lacker criteria and the HTMT criteria. The Fornell and Lacker ratios are used to assume that the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation value for each pair of study constructs [137]. As shown, the square root of AVE is greater than the respective row and column values, indicating that these variables are free from

discriminant validity. The validity of the discriminant was further examined through the HTMT technique proposed by HTMT refers to the ratio of correlations in constructs to correlations between constructs [139]. The results showed that HTMT's criteria met HTMT90 or HTMT85 [140]. The highest square root is 0.727, which satisfies the threshold value [140]. These two criteria indicate that the validity of the discriminant has been ascertained.

**Table 2: Measurement Model, Item Loadings, Construct Reliability And Convergent Validity. Constructs**

| Constructs                 | Items                 | Loadings (>0,5) | Cronbach's Alpha (>0,7) | Composite Reliability (>0,7) | Average Variance Extracted (>0.5) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Product selection          | Product advantages    | 0.778           | 0.926                   | 0.940                        | 0.664                             |
|                            | Product benefits      | 0.907           |                         |                              |                                   |
| Brand selection            | Interest in the brand | 0.919           | 0.938                   | 0.949                        | 0.703                             |
|                            | Habits on the brand   | 0.912           |                         |                              |                                   |
| Choice of Purchase Channel | Services provided     | 0.815           | 0.938                   | 0.949                        | 0.703                             |
|                            | Ease of getting       | 0.699           |                         |                              |                                   |
|                            | Compliance            | 0.735           |                         |                              |                                   |
| Time of Purchase           | Perceived advantages  | 0.717           | 0.938                   | 0.949                        | 0.703                             |
|                            | Popularity            | 0.865           |                         |                              |                                   |
| Corporate Image            | Credibility           | 0.890           | 0.938                   | 0.949                        | 0.703                             |
|                            | The wearer himself    | 0.738           |                         |                              |                                   |
| Product Image              | Lifestyle             | 0.929           | 0.938                   | 0.949                        | 0.703                             |
|                            |                       | 0.898           |                         |                              |                                   |

|                    |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                    | Personality                         |       |       |       |       |
| User Imagery       | The product                         | 0.670 |       |       |       |
|                    |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    | Users                               | 0.784 |       |       |       |
|                    | Guarantee                           | 0.901 |       |       |       |
| Entertainment      |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    |                                     | 0.856 | 0.941 | 0.953 | 0.772 |
|                    | Pull                                |       |       |       |       |
|                    | Trendy                              | 0.855 |       |       |       |
| Informative        | Contemporary                        | 0.913 |       |       |       |
|                    | Customization                       | 0.898 |       |       |       |
| Interactive        | Exchange Information                | 0.886 |       |       |       |
|                    |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    | Opinion                             | 0.862 |       |       |       |
| Intensity          |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    | Frequency of interaction with users | 0.783 | 0.871 | 0.903 | 0.608 |
|                    |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    | The Number of Reviews               | 0.745 |       |       |       |
| Valence of Opinion | Recommendations from users          | 0.824 |       |       |       |
|                    |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    | Positive User Comments              | 0.809 |       |       |       |
| Content            |                                     |       |       |       |       |
|                    | Pricing Information                 | 0.809 |       |       |       |

|             |                                      |       |       |       |       |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|             | Product Quality Information          | 0.701 |       |       |       |
| Visibility  | Popularity                           | 0.838 | 0.932 | 0.946 | 0.746 |
|             | Achievement                          | 0.905 |       |       |       |
| Credibility | Skill                                | 0.863 |       |       |       |
|             | Belief                               | 0.891 |       |       |       |
| Power       | Appeal in Conveying the Message      | 0.879 |       |       |       |
|             | The power of celebrities to persuade | 0.803 |       |       |       |

#### 4.2 Structural Model Assessment

After examining the measurement model for reliability and validity, the structural model is analyzed for hypothesis testing. Table 3 and Figure 3 show that all five hypotheses are accepted. Social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.098$ ,  $t = 3.547$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a positive effect on purchase decisions. Similarly, the value of e-wom ( $\beta = 0.224$ ,  $t = 4.536$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) also had a significant effect on purchase decisions, brand ambassadors ( $\beta = 0.133$ ,  $t = 2.444$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had a significant impact on purchase decisions. Social media marketing ( $\beta = 0.020$ ,  $t = 0.858$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) did not have a significant effect on purchase decisions, while e-wom values ( $\beta = 0.282$ ,  $t = 6.355$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had a significant effect on brand image, brand ambassadors ( $\beta = 0.667$ ,  $t = 18.021$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had an impact Significant to Purchase Decision. The brand image value ( $\beta = 0.547$ ,  $t = 10.006$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a significant effect on purchase decisions. Thus, all direct effect hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, and H7) accepted for H4 are rejected. The findings also show that brand image has the strongest impact on purchase decisions and brand ambassadors have the strongest impact on brand image.

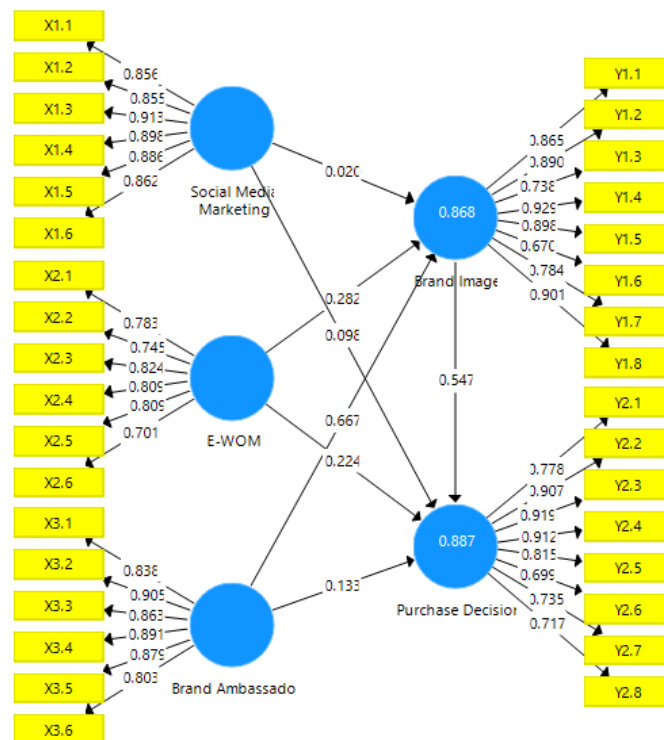
To investigate the indirect effects of relationships, bootstrapping methods, as suggested by [141], are applied to ensure precise results when measuring the confidence interval of indirect relationships (CI).

The results showed that social media marketing had an indirect effect on purchase decisions through brand image ( $\beta = 0.011$ , LCL = -0.014, UCL = 0.037,  $p < 0.05$ ). Because the direct effect is insignificant and the indirect effect is significant, brand image was found to be a successful mediator in this relationship. Thus, the fourth hypothesis, H8, is accepted (Figure 4). Similarly, e-wom has specific indirect effects on purchase decisions through brand image ( $\beta = 0.154$ , LCL = 0.103, UCL = 0.214,  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition to brand image, brand ambassadors have specific indirect effects on purchase decisions through brand image ( $\beta = 0.365$ , LCL = 0.286, UCL = 0.458,  $p < 0.05$ ). Because the direct effect and indirect effect are significant, brand image was found to be a successful mediator in this relationship. Thus, H9 and H10 are supported (see Table 4).

**Table 3: Structural Path Analysis: Direct Effect**

| Path         | Beta  | St. Error | T-Values | P-Values | Bias Corrected at 95% Confidence Intervals |             | Decision      |
|--------------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|--|-------------|---------------|
|              |       |           |          |          | Lower Level                                | Upper Level |               |
| H1: SM -> PI | 0.098 | 0.028     | 3.547    | 0.000    | 0.047                                      | 0.153       | Supported     |
| H2: EW -> PI | 0.224 | 0.049     | 4.536    | 0.000    | 0.127                                      | 0.314       | Supported     |
| H3: BA -> PI | 0.133 | 0.055     | 2.444    | 0.015    | 0.020                                      | 0.235       | Supported     |
| H4: SM -> BI | 0.020 | 0.023     | 0.858    | 0.391    | -0.024                                     | 0.068       | Not Supported |
| H5: EW -> BI | 0.282 | 0.044     | 6.355    | 0.000    | 0.197                                      | 0.363       | Supported     |
| H6: BA -> BI | 0.667 | 0.037     | 18.021   | 0.000    | 0.593                                      | 0.735       | Supported     |
| H7: BI -> PI | 0.547 | 0.055     | 10.006   | 0.000    | 0.442                                      | 0.668       | Supported     |





**Figure. 3: Structural Model: Hypotheses Testing**

In terms of the explanatory strength of this model, we consider that the R-square values of 0.868 for brand image and 0.887 for purchase decision indicate moderate to substantial effects (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, researchers examined predictive relevance using the Stone-Geisser blindfolding sample reuse method, which showed a Q-square value greater than 0. Thus, the research model was effectively predicted for brand image ( $Q^2 = 0.6060$ ) and purchase decision ( $Q^2 = 0.581$ ) (Hair et al., 2017). Finally, with an assessment of the variance of endogenous variable determinants, effect sizes were also evaluated in this study.

F2 shows the influence of certain exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables through the means of change R2 (Chin, 1998). Therefore, calculations of effect size (Cohen, 1988) reveal f2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively, indicating weak, medium, and strong effects. Table 4 shows the calculation and effect size results of each latent variable. Thus, social media marketing, e-wom, and brand ambassadors have a measure of influence of 0.045, 0.100, and 0.022 respectively on purchase decisions. In accordance with the criteria (Cohen, 1988), social media marketing and e-wom have a medium effect on purchase decision, while brand ambassadors are considered to have little influence on purchase decisions.

**Table 4: Structural Path Analysis: The Mediation effect of Brand Image**

| Path                | Direct Effect<br>Beta | Indirect Effect<br>Beta | Bias Corrected at 95% Confidence Intervals |             | Mediation Status |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------|------------------|
|                     |                       |                         | Lower Level                                | Upper Level |                  |
| H8: SM -> BI -> PI  | 0.098                 | 0.011                   | -0.014                                     | 0.037       | Indirect Only    |
| H9: EW -> BI -> PI  | 0.224                 | 0.154                   | 0.103                                      | 0.214       | Partial          |
| H10: BA -> BI -> PI | 0.133                 | 0.365                   | 0.286                                      | 0.458       | Partial          |

**5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This research found that social media marketing, e-wom, and brand ambassadors are able to directly drive purchase decisions. This is because social media marketing can help in building credibility and trust in local skincare brands. When consumers see positive content and recommend products from brand ambassadors or from e-wom reviews, users feel more confident in making a purchase. E-wom involves product reviews and recommendations from other users on social media platforms. It provides social proof that the product has been used and recognized by others. Consumers tend to prefer products that have received positive reviews from fellow consumers. Brand ambassadors are often well-known figures or celebrities who have a big influence on social media. When they advertise local skincare products, this can increase the appeal of the product and create a desire to try the product. The results in this study are in line with findings from previous studies where [142], [143], and [29] found that social media marketing has a significant effect on purchase decisions. Also in line with [144] and [145] which found that e-wom has a significant effect on purchase decisions. And in line with findings from previous studies where [10] and [81] found that brand ambassadors have a significant influence on purchase decisions. Furthermore, this study found that e-wom and brand ambassadors are able to directly encourage the occurrence of local skin care brand image. While social media marketing has no effect and is not able to directly encourage the occurrence of local skin care brand image. This can be due to E-wom often coming from actual users or consumers and being perceived as more credible than promotional messages created by the brand itself. Brand ambassadors, especially if they are well-known figures or experts in the field of skin care, can give additional legitimacy to the brand. Meanwhile, messages from social media marketing are often considered less credible because they can be seen as an attempt by brands to promote themselves. Brand ambassadors who have a large fan base or a large following on their social media can have a significant influence on brand image. Similarly, e-wom spreading quickly on social media platforms can create a positive buzz around local skincare products. Social media marketing is less effective in achieving the same level of influence. The results in this study are not in line with the findings of previous studies where [142], [81] and [123] found that

social media marketing has a significant effect on brand image. But in line with [109], [110], [146], [102], and [147] which found that e-wom has a significant effect on brand image. And in line with the findings of previous research where [112] which found that brand ambassadors have a significant effect on brand image.

This research reveals that in the context of local skincare products, brand image plays an important role as a mediator between E-wom and brand ambassadors with purchasing decisions. Specifically, this mediation happens partially, which means that although E-wom and brand ambassadors provide strong reviews and recommendations, their influence on purchasing decisions is only partially explained through the role of brand image. Factors such as content quality, credibility, and message consistency can contribute to this partial mediation. On the other hand, in the relationship between social media marketing and purchasing decisions, brand image acts as a full mediator. This indicates that social media marketing, when implemented well and focused on creating a positive brand image, has an immediate and powerful impact on purchasing decisions, with brand image fully explaining the relationship. This difference can be due to the different levels of control brands have over content and messaging in social media marketing, as well as differences in perceived credibility and influence between different marketing elements. As such, the research provides valuable insight into how marketing factors influence brand image and ultimately consumer purchasing decisions in the context of local skincare products.

The results of this study carry significant managerial implications for local skincare businesses. The finding that social media marketing, E-wom, and brand ambassadors have a direct impact on purchasing decisions suggests that companies need to prioritize investment and effort in building strong relationships with users who can provide positive recommendations and with brand ambassadors who have a major influence on social media. In addition, the discovery that E-wom and brand ambassadors directly affect brand image, while social media marketing has no impact on brand image, underscores the importance of careful management of online reputation. Companies should actively monitor and respond to reviews and comments on social media platforms and product reviews. However, it also highlights the need to evaluate and improve social media marketing strategies to be more effective in creating a positive brand image. Coordination between marketing elements is also important, with companies ensuring that social media marketing, E-wom, and brand ambassadors support each other and work together to achieve larger marketing goals. In this effort, advanced analysis and performance measurement will help managers to better understand the interaction between these marketing elements, and to adapt their strategies according to the needs and changes in consumer preferences in a dynamic marketplace.

The finding that brand image acts as a mediator with partial mediation in the relationship between e-wom and brand ambassadors with purchasing decisions of local skincare products shows that the positive influence of e-wom and brand ambassadors has not been fully explained by brand image. This indicates that there are other factors that also influence purchasing decisions apart from brand image,

such as price, product quality, or external factors. Managerially, companies must pay attention to the important role of brand image in the influence of e-wom and brand ambassadors, and at the same time consider other elements in their marketing strategy. In addition, the finding that brand image mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions in full mediation highlights the importance of content and messaging managed on social media platforms. Companies should focus on creating a positive brand image through a strong social media marketing strategy focused on the target audience. Performance analysis continuously and responsive to changes in consumer preferences will help companies to optimize their marketing efforts and achieve better business goals.

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