



Brand Equity and Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions Somethinc Products with E-WOM as Intervening Variable (Case Study: Djuanda University 2023/2024 Students)

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions with electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as an intervening variable. The study involved a population of 514 individuals, with a sample of 100 respondents selected using a quota sampling technique. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaire distribution, and observations. The data analysis was conducted using path analysis with the assistance of SPSS version 27.00. The findings indicate that brand equity and brand trust positively and significantly impact E-WOM. Furthermore, brand equity, brand trust, and E-WOM positively and significantly influence purchasing decisions. Additionally, brand equity and brand trust indirectly affect purchasing decisions through E-WOM.

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry in Indonesia continues to grow rapidly in line with changes in economic, social, and technological structures, as well as the high interest of the public, especially women, in beauty products. Global trends influence the perception that appearance, including facial and body skincare, has become a priority not only for women but also for men. The Food and Drug Supervisory Agency recorded that cosmetics are the product category with the highest distribution permits, reaching 411,410 products in the last five years, with dominance by SMEs (83%) and a market value reaching IDR 98 trillion in 2021. West Java is one of the provinces with a significant contribution to the local cosmetics industry, while Bogor Regency, with the largest population in Indonesia, shows a high demand for beauty products. Additionally, social media plays a significant role in supporting communication between producers and consumers, with 167 million active social media users and 212.9 million internet users in Indonesia as of early 2023. Technology and social media have become key factors in driving the growth of the beauty industry in the country.

Somehinc is one of the local beauty brands that has successfully increased its sales significantly, especially after going viral on social media platforms such as TikTok in early 2022. Founded by Irene Ursula in March 2019, Somehinc was established to meet the needs of millennials for high-quality skincare and makeup that is safe, halal, and meets international standards. Somehinc's products, such as toner, serum, sunscreen, and moisturizer, can even be used from the age of 11. According to Compass (2022), Somehinc has achieved total sales of IDR 52.2 billion and has become the best-selling brand with the highest sales growth in e-commerce. Public awareness of this brand is very high, demonstrating its success in leveraging social media to build popularity and boost sales. Many business players, including Somehinc, utilize the internet as a platform for various commercial activities such as buying and selling transactions, online product promotions, and building a positive brand image through customer reviews to attract potential consumers. According to Korl and Zdonek (2021:53), social media facilitates access to information and various human activities, whether through digital platforms or print media, in line with technological advancements in the modern era. Additionally, Mehta and Funde (2014:17) state that the availability of information about a product plays a role in increasing consumer interest, which ultimately influences their purchasing decisions.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2016:177), consumer purchasing decisions are related to selecting the most preferred brand. The indicators used to measure purchasing decisions, as stated by Kotler and Armstrong (2016:188), include product selection, brand choice, distribution channels, purchase timing, purchase quantity, and payment methods. Based on a pre-survey conducted on 30 female students at Djuanda University, it was found that 57% of respondents stated that their purchasing decisions were influenced by brand choice, purchase timing,

and payment methods. Meanwhile, the remaining 43% believed that these factors did not significantly affect their purchasing decisions. The factors influencing purchasing decisions, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2016:202), include product information (brand equity), brand trust, recommendations from others through electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), as well as consumer desires and needs.

One factor influencing purchasing decisions is brand equity. According to Kotler and Keller (2012:335), brand equity refers to the added value given to a product or service. Kotler (2012:337) identifies several indicators for measuring brand equity, including differentiation, relevance, and the level of consumer knowledge about the brand. To analyze the effect of brand equity on purchasing decisions, a pre-survey was conducted through interviews with 30 female students at Djuanda University. The results showed that 74% of respondents found it difficult to recall the Somethinc brand, did not consistently use the products, and did not consider them a primary choice based on quality.

Another factor contributing to purchasing decisions is brand trust. Heriyanto (2017:4) defines brand trust as the level of consumer confidence in a brand, influenced by their perception of the company's ability to provide products that meet buyers' needs and expectations. According to Hariyanto (2017:81-93), the indicators used to measure brand trust consist of the dimension of viability and the dimension of intentionality. Based on a pre-survey of 30 female students at Djuanda University, 80% of respondents believed that Somethinc did not yet have a strong reputation, and the offered products were not perceived as meeting the expected quality standards.

Additionally, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is also a factor that can influence consumer purchasing decisions. Henning (2004:38) defines E-WOM as positive or negative opinions expressed by prospective consumers, loyal customers, or former customers about a product or service marketed by a company, which are then disseminated through digital platforms. Goyette et al. (2010:12) explain that indicators for measuring E-WOM include intensity, credibility, and the content of the messages conveyed. Based on the results of a pre-survey of 30 female students at Djuanda University, 87% of respondents stated that they did not obtain complete information about Somethinc products through social media.

The pre-survey results indicate that the purchasing decision for Somethinc products is suspected to be influenced by brand equity, brand trust, and electronic word of mouth. Additionally, this research is motivated by a research gap, namely differences in findings from previous studies. Ika (2013) found that brand equity influences purchasing decisions, while research conducted by Intan

et al. (2019) showed different results, where brand image, brand equity, and brand trust did not impact purchasing decisions. Furthermore, a study by Ingrit and Marliza (2022) concluded that brand trust affects purchasing decisions; however, this result contradicts the findings of Pratama et al. (2023), which state that the brand trust variable does not significantly impact purchasing decisions. Research conducted by Fauziah and Risky (2024) indicates that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) plays a role in influencing purchasing decisions, whereas a study by Ni Putu et al. (2023) produced contrary findings, indicating that E-WOM does not influence purchasing decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Equity on Electronic Word of Mouth

Supranto and Limakrisna (2011:132) state that brand equity refers to the value consumers assign to a brand, which goes beyond the product's functional characteristics and attributes. Meanwhile, Goyette et al. (2010:10) define electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as a form of informal online communication that is non-commercial, where individuals share opinions about a product or service directly, via phone, email, or other communication methods.

H1: Brand equity positively affects electronic word of mouth.

Brand Trust on Electronic Word of Mouth

Khasanah et al. (2017:68) state that brand trust is the tendency of customers to trust a brand despite potential risks, as they expect the brand to deliver positive results. Henning (2004:38) defines electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as positive or negative opinions expressed by prospective, loyal, or former customers about a product or service offered by a company, disseminated through the internet.

H2: Brand trust positively affects electronic word of mouth.

Brand Equity on Purchasing Decisions

Brand equity refers to the value given by consumers to a brand, which contributes to forming a positive or negative image. This brand image can influence potential customers' decisions in choosing the product or service offered. According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 335), brand equity is the additional value attached to a product or service. Meanwhile, Kotler and Armstrong (2016: 177) explain that consumer purchasing decisions are based on choosing the brand they like best. Research conducted by Ika (2013) shows that brand equity has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions.

H3 : Brand equity has a positive effect on purchasing decisions

Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions

Heriyanto (2017: 4) defines brand trust as the level of trust that can be built by a company product, because the other party has the ability to operate optimally in accordance with consumer needs and preferences. Meanwhile, Kotler and Armstrong (2016: 177) explain that consumer purchasing decisions are based on choosing the most desirable brand. Research conducted by Payne and Frow

(2017) shows that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions.

H4 : Brand trust has a positive effect on purchasing decisions

Electronic Word Of Mouth on Purchasing Decisions

Von dem Esche and Henning-Thurau (2014) define electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as reviews or statements that can be accessed by current consumers, potential consumers, and previous customers about a product or company. This information is widely available to individuals and institutions through internet media, so E-WOM can be considered a digital form of conventional word of mouth (WOM) communication. Research conducted by Akbar and Sunnarti (2018) revealed that electronic word of mouth has an influence on purchasing decisions.

H5 : Electronic word of mouth has a positive effect on purchasing decisions

Brand Equity on Purchasing Decisions Through Electronic Word Of Mouth

Supranto and Limakrisna (2011: 132) define brand equity as the value given by consumers to a brand that goes beyond the characteristics or functional attributes of the product. Buchari Alma (2014: 96) explains that purchasing decisions are influenced by various factors, such as economics, technology, politics, culture, as well as marketing elements such as products, prices, locations, promotions, physical evidence, people, and processes. Meanwhile, E-WOM is an effective and fast marketing strategy in influencing potential consumers, so it is one of the determining factors in purchasing decisions.

H6 : Brand equity affects purchasing decisions with E-WOM as an intervening variable.

Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions Through Electronic Word Of Mouth

Heriyanto (2017: 4) states that brand trust is the level of trust in a brand that is built through product quality and suitability for consumer needs. Kotler and Armstrong (2008: 181) explain that consumer purchasing decisions are based on choosing the most preferred brand. Henning-Thurau (2004) defines electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as positive or negative opinions from consumers, both potential and former customers, which can be widely accessed on the internet. Sa'adah's research (2018) shows that social media has a direct effect on purchasing decisions with E-WOM as an intermediary variable. Putri (2022) also found that viral marketing and social media contribute to purchasing decisions through E-WOM as an intervening variable.

H7 : Brand trust affects purchasing decisions with E-WOM as intervening.

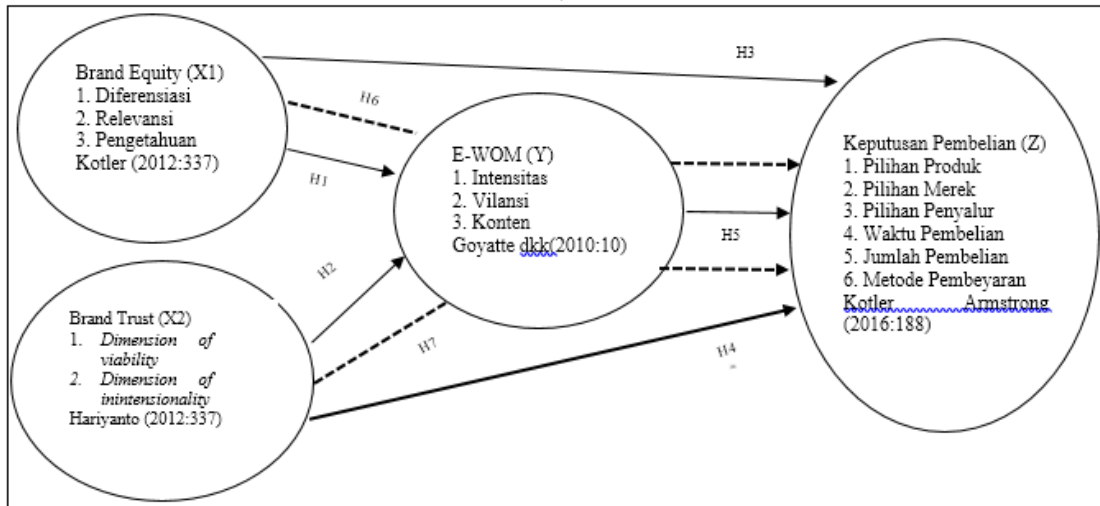


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative method with a descriptive approach and path analysis. The research sample is taken from a population of 514 female students at Djuanda University using a quota sampling technique. Data collection is conducted through interviews, questionnaires, and observations to obtain primary data. The collected data is then analyzed using path analysis with the assistance of SPSS version 27.00 software.

RESEARCH RESULT

Employee Characteristics

The characteristics of respondents were obtained through a questionnaire distributed to 100 female students at Djuanda University, categorized based on several characteristics as follows:

Table 1. Recapitulation of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Majority	Percentage (%)
Faculty	FAIPG and FEB	28
Age	20-30 years	97
Duration of Product Use	1-2 years	51
Number of Purchases	>2 times	56

Table 1 shows that most respondents came from the Faculty of Islamic Religion and Teacher Education (FAIPG) and the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB). The respondents' age range was between 20 and 30 years old, with a

product usage duration of approximately 1 to 2 years and a purchase frequency of more than twice.

Instrument Testing

Instrument testing was conducted through validity and reliability tests. The validity criteria were set such that if the calculated r-value (r-count) ≥ 0.3 , the data is considered valid for hypothesis analysis. The test results showed that all r-count values exceeded 0.3, indicating that all statements were valid.

Reliability in this study was measured using Cronbach's Alpha (α), where a variable is considered reliable if its value exceeds 0.6. The analysis results indicated that all variables had Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.6, confirming that the obtained data was consistent and suitable for this study.

Path Analysis

This study involved two equation models calculated using path analysis via IBM SPSS Version 27.00.

- The first equation model is a path analysis of variable X on Z, showing the influence of brand equity (X1) and brand trust (X2) through electronic word of mouth (Y).
- The second equation model is a path analysis of variable X through Y on Z, illustrating the influence of brand equity (X1), brand trust (X2), and electronic word of mouth (Y) on purchase decision (Z).

The two structural equations from the path analysis in this study are as follows:

1. $Y = 0.404X1 + 0.380X2 + 0.557$
2. $Z = 0.155X1 + 0.222X2 + 0.570Y + 0.329$

The path coefficients from the first and second structural equations can be presented in a diagram to facilitate better understanding, as illustrated in the following figure.

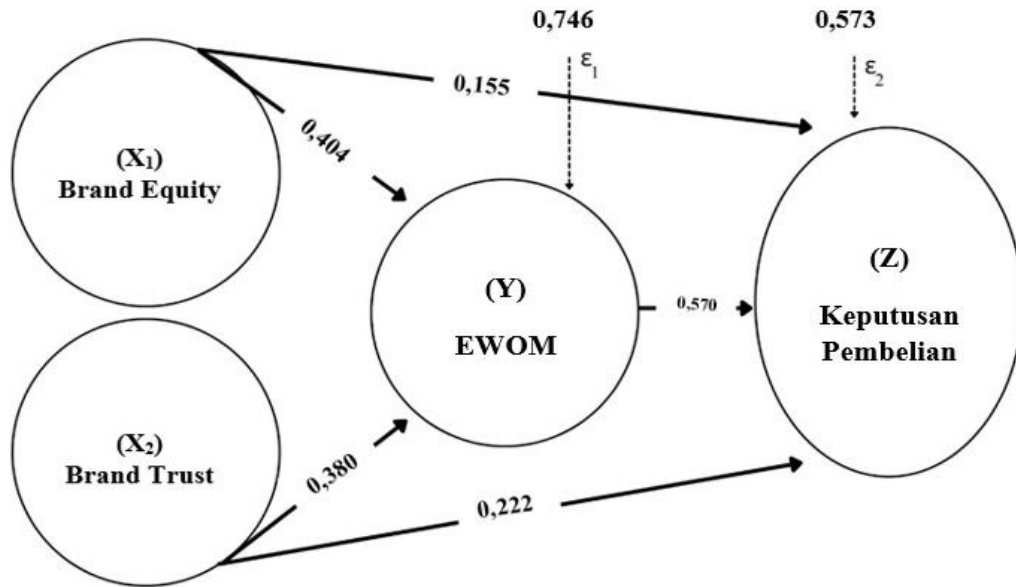


Figure 2. Research Path Diagram

Based on Figure 2, the results of the calculations for direct and indirect effects between variables can be explained through the following table:

Table 2. Path Analysis Results

Variable	Effect Type	Electronic Word of Mouth	Purchase Decision	Total	Description
Brand Equity	Direct	-	0.155	0.155	-
	Indirect	0.404	0.570	0.230	Mediation exists
	Total	-	-	0.385	-
Brand Trust	Direct	-	0.222	0.222	-
	Indirect	0.380	0.570	0.216	Mediation exists
	Total	-	-	0.438	-

Based on the path analysis test results in Table 2, it was found that brand equity influences purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly through electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as a mediating variable. The direct effect is recorded at 0.155 (15.5%), while the indirect effect reaches 0.230 (23.0%). Overall, the total effect of brand equity through this relationship is 0.385 (38.5%).

Furthermore, brand trust also impacts purchase decisions, both directly and through E-WOM. The direct effect is 0.222 (22.2%), while the indirect effect is 0.216 (21.6%), leading to a total effect of 0.438 (43.8%).

Hypothesis Testing Results

The hypothesis testing in this study consisted of **t-tests** for direct effects and **Sobel tests** for indirect effects through the mediating variable. The following table summarizes the overall hypothesis testing results:

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing Summary

No	Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Conclusion
1	There is a positive and significant effect of brand equity on E-WOM.	4.779 > 1.660	Positive and significant effect
2	There is a positive and significant effect of brand trust on E-WOM.	4.497 > 1.660	Positive and significant effect
3	There is a positive and significant effect of brand equity on purchase decisions.	2.133 > 1.660	Positive and significant effect
4	There is a positive and significant effect of brand trust on purchase decisions.	3.099 > 1.660	Positive and significant effect
5	There is a positive and significant effect of E-WOM on purchase decisions.	7.274 > 1.660	Positive and significant effect
6	There is a positive and significant effect of brand equity on purchase decisions through E-WOM.	3.81 > 1.96	Positive and significant effect
7	There is a positive and significant effect of brand trust on purchase decisions through E-WOM.	3.97 > 1.96	Positive and significant effect

DISCUSSION

Brand Equity on Electronic Word of Mouth

The statistical test results show that the calculated t-value is greater than the t-table value (4.779 > 1.660) with a significance level of 0.001, which is smaller than

0.050. Based on these results, it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted. In other words, brand equity has a direct, positive, and significant influence on electronic word of mouth (E-WOM). Consumer responses to brand equity, particularly in the differentiation indicator, show that 51 respondents (51%) agree that Somethinc is easily recognizable due to its familiar and distinct name compared to other brands. The next highest-scoring statement in the knowledge indicator reveals that 95 respondents (95%) disagreed with the statement regarding product quality making them interested in purchasing. This indicates that respondents do not strongly agree that product quality is a key factor in their purchase interest.

Brand Trust on Electronic Word Of Mouth

The statistical test results indicate that the t-value is greater than the t-table value ($4.497 > 1.660$) with a significance value of 0.001, which is smaller than 0.050. This indicates that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, concluding that brand trust has a direct, positive, and significant influence on electronic word of mouth (E-WOM). Looking at employee responses to brand trust in the Dimension of Viability indicator, 56 respondents (56%) agreed, indicating that Somethinc has a good reputation and has successfully built a positive brand image among students.

Brand Equity on Purchase Decisions

The statistical test results show that the t-value is greater than the t-table value ($2.133 > 1.660$) with a significance level of $0.001 < 0.050$, leading to the rejection of H_0 and the acceptance of H_a . This proves that brand equity has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions, aligning with the findings of Intan Ali et al. (2019). Consumer responses to brand equity in the differentiation indicator reveal that 51 respondents (51%) agreed, showing that Somethinc is easily recognizable due to its familiar and distinctive name compared to other brands. The next highest-scoring statement in the knowledge indicator shows that 95 respondents (95%) disagreed, indicating that respondents do not strongly associate product quality with purchase interest.

Brand Trust on Purchase Decisions

The statistical test results show that the t-value is greater than the t-table value ($3.099 > 1.660$) with a significance level of $0.001 < 0.050$, leading to the rejection of H_0 and the acceptance of H_a . This indicates that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, in line with the research of Intan Ali et al. (2019). Employee responses to brand trust in the Dimension of Viability indicator reveal that 56 respondents (56%) agreed, showing that Somethinc has a good reputation and has successfully established a positive brand image among students.

Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions

The statistical test results show that the t-value is greater than the t-table value ($7.274 > 1.660$) with a significance level of $0.001 < 0.050$, leading to the rejection of H_0 and the acceptance of H_a . This proves that electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions, aligning with the findings of Ingrit and Marliza (2022). Student responses to purchase decisions in the intensity dimension indicator show that 61 respondents (61%) agreed. This is because consumers have obtained clear information about Somethinc product choices through social media, making it easier for them to access relevant details. The next highest-scoring statement is in the content indicator, where 61 respondents (61%) agreed, indicating that Somethinc products are easy to find, and consumers recognize the willingness of others to help promote the product.

Brand Equity on Purchase Decisions Through Electronic Word of Mouth

The Sobel test results show that the Z-value is 3.81, which is greater than the Z-table value ($3.81 > 1.96$). This confirms that electronic word of mouth mediates the influence of brand equity on purchase decisions. These results indicate that brand equity indirectly affects purchase decisions through electronic word of mouth, highlighting its crucial role in shaping consumer decisions regarding Somethinc products.

Brand Trust on Purchase Decisions Through Electronic Word of Mouth

The Sobel test results show that the Z-value is 3.97, which is greater than the Z-table value ($3.97 > 1.96$). This confirms that electronic word of mouth mediates the influence of brand trust on purchase decisions. These results emphasize that brand trust indirectly influences purchase decisions through electronic word of mouth. A high level of brand trust encourages positive reviews, increases purchase interest, and fosters consumer loyalty, which contributes to higher sales of Somethinc products.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and hypothesis testing, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Brand equity has a positive and significant impact on electronic word of mouth for Somethinc products.
2. Brand trust has a positive and significant impact on electronic word of mouth for Somethinc products.
3. Brand equity contributes positively and significantly to purchase decisions for Somethinc products.
4. Brand trust has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions for Somethinc products.

5. Electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions for Somethinc products.
6. Brand equity indirectly influences purchase decisions through electronic word of mouth as a mediating variable.
7. Brand trust indirectly affects purchase decisions with electronic word of mouth as an intervening variable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations can be provided:

1. Consumer responses to brand equity indicate the highest level of disagreement on the product quality indicator as a factor in attracting purchase interest. This suggests that the product quality has not fully captured consumer attention.
2. Brand trust received the lowest rating in the Dimension of Viability indicator, suggesting that Somethinc products are not yet fully meeting consumers' skincare needs.
3. Electronic word of mouth received the lowest score in the intensity indicator, indicating that information about Somethinc products on online platforms is still unclear to consumers.
4. Purchase decisions showed the lowest rating in the product choice indicator, meaning that the main factor in choosing Somethinc is not based on product quality and safety.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study can serve as a reference for future research. It is recommended to explore other variables that may influence purchase decisions to obtain more diverse results and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting consumer decision-making.

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