The influence of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on purchase intention through brand image as a mediating variable

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the mediating role of brand image in the relationships between social media marketing (SMM), electronic word of mouth (EWOM), and purchase intention among skincare consumers in Central Java. As digital platforms are increasingly influencing consumers to make decisions in the beauty industry, understanding the mechanisms through which online marketing activities influence purchase intention has become a critical area of research. Employing a quantitative research from 175 social media users, from questionnaire distributed online using a convenience sampling technique. The data analysis used was SEM with SmartPLS. It was found that SMM and BI exert significant positive effects on PI, indicating that engaging digital marketing activities and favorable brand perceptions play important roles in encouraging consumers' willingness to purchase skincare products. In contrast, EWOM does not directly influence PI. However, both SMM and EWOM significantly contribute to the formation of BI. Furthermore, the mediation analysis demonstrates that BI fully mediates the relationship between EWOM and PI and partially mediates the relationship between SMM and PI. These results suggest that consumers' responses to online information and marketing communications are largely shaped through the development of positive brand perceptions. The study contributes to the digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by highlighting the strategic importance of BI as a key mechanism through which social media engagement and online consumer communications translate into stronger PI in the skincare industry.

Keywords: *Purchase Intention; Social Media Marketing; Electronic Word of Mouth; Brand Image*

INTRODUCTION

The skincare industry in Indonesia continues to show significant development, accompanied by heightened public awareness on the significance of skincare (Bali JPNN, 2025). According to data from Kementerian Perindustrian, domestic cosmetics and skincare market is growing at a rate of around seven percent per year, indicating a high level of interest in quality beauty products (Bali JPNN, 2025). Furthermore, projections indicate that revenue from the Indonesian beauty industry is expected to rise by 48% between 2021 and 2024, reaching an estimated US$1.94 billion by 2024 (Kontan, 2024). Skincare is the dominant segment in the Indonesian beauty industry, accounting for approximately 30% of the market share (Market Research, 2025).

Increasing of social media significantly impacts the expansion of the skincare market in Indonesia, as the swift rise in social media users has heightened consumer knowledge and involvement in the beauty industry (Market Research, 2025). In line with this, survey by Populix (2025) regarding information sources for discovering skincare trends indicate that as many as 65% of respondents were inspired by various social media including Tiktok, Instagram, and YouTube. This percentage is higher than reviews or comments on marketplaces or e-commerce (27%), suggestions from acquaintances or relatives (23%), and endorsements from influencers (19%).

Social media also creates a space for the exchange of values, ideas, and information, and is utilized to increase user engagement and establish a strong brand presence, thus stimulating purchase intentions (Edrees, 2025). Hu & Zhu (2022) found that using social media to gain knowledge or social interaction increases user's purchase intention. In addition, social media has grown as a important channel for promoting products and services, significantly influencing PI (Mubdir et al., 2024).

Studies conducted by Qiao & Sun (2024), Salhab et al. (2023), and Nguyen et al. (2020) demonstrate a favorable association between SMM and PI. SMM enables the swift spread of viral promotions, effectively capturing consumer interest and enhancing PI (Zeqiri et al., 2025). The use of relevant and valuable content also allows marketers to project customer behavior, increase the popularity of brand posts, and expand the reach of new consumers, which has implications for increased purchase intention (Moslehpour et al., 2022). Conversely, studies by Ali & Naushad (2023) and Mauliza & Fadhilla (2025) indicated that SMM has neither a significant impact nor a favorable effect on PI.

The rise of social media has significantly amplified the quantity of online user generated evaluations, referred to as EWOM (Tafolli et al., 2025). Research from Kaushal et al. (2023), Mahmud et al. (2024), and An & Ngo (2025) demonstrated that EWOM positively affects consumer purchase intentions. Consumers see EWOM as a main source of information, irrespective of its positive or negative nature, in forming purchase intentions (Kaushal et al., 2023). Research by Fazri & Evanita (2025) Different results indicate that EWOM communication via electronic media has not been shown to significantly influence PI.

Intention to purchase increases escalates when a person has a positive perception of the BI of a particular product (Duong et al., 2025). BI is considered a significant factor that positively influences PI, as a brand's reputation is often associated with increased purchasing intentions of consumers (Lien et al., 2015). Research by Ali & Naushad (2023), Aslam et al. (2019), and Kaushal et al. (2023) indicates that BI exerts a favorable and significant influence on PI. Conversely, research by Mauliza & Fadhilla (2025) yields different results, indicating that BI does not appear to affect purchasing intentions.

Notwithstanding the continued expansion of social media and the significant development rate of the Indonesian skincare sector (Market Research, 2025), the

increase in purchase intention does not always align with the digital marketing tactics utilized by skincare brands. This finding is proven through how consumer PI are affected by the efficacy of SMM, EWOM, and BI. Several studies have shown that these three variables significantly influence PI; however, other studies have also yielded conflicting findings. These inconsistencies in findings suggest the need for further research. This study also focuses on social media users of skincare products in Central Java, where the population has a strong interest in the beauty industry, driving the increasing demand for skincare products (Pratiwi, 2024).

Referring to the description and findings of previous research that have been explained, it is evident that gaps exist between studies. Therefore, this study seek the impact of SMM and EWOM on PI, with BI serving as a mediating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESES

Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory

The model elucidates a perceived environmental cue (R) that can affect an individual's internal processes (O), hence resulting in either affirmative or adverse reactions to the stimuli (R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974, as cited in Zhu et al. 2020). A stimulus is characterized as an element that influences mental and cognitive conditions, after the psychological or cognitive stages are passed, an organism responds to the stimulus through internal or external reactions with attitudes reflect internal reactions, while behavior reflects external reactions (Lee & Chen, 2021). The organism is positioned as a mediator, connecting stimulus to behavior and regulating the formation of the final response (Lee & Chen, 2021).

S-O-R in the field of marketing is often applied to explain that the internal state of an organism (O) including emotions, perceptions, and cognition is affected by external stimuli (S), subsequently eliciting a response (R) (Bui et al., 2025). Stimulus (S) in this study refers to factors that shape consumer behavior, particularly SMM variable and EWOM variable. BI represents an internal evaluation process and serves to link stimulus to response. In this research, the response in question is PI. The assumption of this theory reveals that the cause of behavioral change is influenced by the extent to which the quality of the stimulus interacting with the organism (Sujarwa, 2024).

Purchase Intention (PI)

PI is described by Kaushal et al. (2023) as the probability of a consumer purchasing a product, contingent upon their search for and assessment of information pertaining to that product. PI also signifies a consumer's inclination to acquire, which is formed from psychological, social, and informational factors (Edrees, 2025). According to Kim (2020) before deciding to purchase, consumers typically form expectations based on available product information. Consequently, buying intention signifies a consumer's preparedness to shop, shaped by their evaluation and disposition towards the product (Kim, 2020). In this study, four indicators are used to measure purchase intention, as referred to by An & Ngo (2025), namely future intention, desire, likelihood, and plan to buy.

Social Media Marketing (SMM)

SMM enable companies with the opportunity to produce pertinent and beneficial information for consumers, ultimately increasing their engagement (Salhab et al., 2023). This strategy is characterized by segmentation and personalization, facilitating advertisers in the creation and dissemination of branded content that corresponds with user preferences and community engagement (Nurlatifah et al., 2025). This study operationalized the SMM utilizing 12 indicators derived from An & Ngo (2025), consisting of the possibility of information sharing, ease of expressing opinions, regular interaction, availability of needed information, fulfillment of user needs, personalized information search, up-to-date information, content according to the latest trends, trend availability, enjoyment in using brand social media, exciting experience, and content attractiveness.

Electronic Word Of Mouth (EWOM)

The progression of the internet facilitated the flow of ideas and emotions being carried out through a novel communication medium termed EWOM, or abbreviated as EWOM (Kaushal et al., 2023). EWOM denotes the transparent dissemination of information about opinions and experiences about products, especially through social media with other consumers (Edrees, 2025). This form of EWOM communication is informal and non-commercial, EWOM encompasses positive and negative opinions about a product expressed by current and former customers (Tafolli et al., 2025). This variable was assessed by five indicators defined by Mahmud et al. (2024): review checking before purchase, paying attention to user experience, interaction with reviewer, information seeking, and review dependence.

Brand Image (BI)

The BI is a representation of consumer perception, encompassing its quality and distinctive attributes (Chatterjee & Basu, 2023). Pramono et al. (2020) asserted that BI reflects how consumers view a company's products based on the perceptions formed in their minds. Furthermore, brand image is also interpreted as a consumer interpretation formed by individuals towards a brand based on past experiences, which includes beliefs associated with it (Edrees, 2025). In this study, measurement of brand image variables is carried out using four indicators formulated by by Aslam et al. (2019): different image compared to other products, clean brand image, well-established brand, dan brand differentiation on social media.

Influence Between Variables

SMM affects consumer reactions regarding purchase intention, as indicated by Nguyen et al. (2020), who assert that it greatly influences consumer PI. This phenomenon arises as consumers increasingly eschew traditional media for product information prior to making purchases (Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Through SMM, companies can create content that is relevant and provides benefits to consumers so they can maximize engagement of consumer (Salhab et al., 2023). SMM serves a crucial function in influencing individual PI due to its high level of consumer usage. It enables customers to evaluate products comprehensively and compare prices and features by using the platform, namely WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and also Facebook (Ali & Naushad, 2023). Prior studies indicate that SMM positively affects PI (Khan, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2020; Nurlatifah et al., 2025; Qiao & Sun, 2024; Salhab et al., 2023).

Drawing from these findings, the hypothesis may be articulated:

H1: SMM has a positive effect on PI of skincare products among consumers in Central Jawa

According to An & Ngo (2025), EWOM substantially influences the formation of buying intention. EWOM emphasizes strong persuasion through digital communication between users (Mahmud et al., 2024). EWOM originating from other people on social media can influence consumer PI (Sulthana & Vasantha, 2019). Based to Duong et al. (2025), EWOM acts as a source of various strong information and endorsements, thus influencing consumer PI. While a social media platform has characteristics, such as visual emphasis and engaging videos, and the more detailed aspects of these platforms improve the effectiveness of EWOM quality because various interaction styles provide benefits in the form of increased PI (Kohler et al., 2023). Research demonstrates that EWOM positively influences customers' PI (An & Ngo, 2025; Kaushal et al., 2023; Mahmud et al., 2024).

Drawing from these findings, the hypothesis may be articulated:

H2: EWOM has a positive effect on PI of skincare products among consumers in Central Java

The efficacy and caliber of social media platforms in disseminating information and marketing techniques influence the establishment of a favorable BI in consumers' perceptions (Nurlatifah et al., 2025). Lady et al. (2025) assert that SMM has emerged as a potent tool for establishing BI. SMM efforts that foster memorable interactions, activities like innovative promotions and constructive feedback contribute to forming favorable consumer perceptions of the brand (Waworuntu et al., 2022). The experience gained from SMM increases the emotional bond between the brand and consumers, thus encouraging the establishment of a positive BI (Dong et al., 2021). Empirical evidence demonstrates that SMM is beneficial contributes to BI development (Harvina et al., 2022; Lady et al., 2025; Mauliza & Fadhilla, 2025; Putri & Hadi, 2025; Salhab et al., 2023).

Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is posited:

H3: SMM has a positive effect on BI of skincare products among consumers in Central Java

EWOM elicits responses depending on consumer views of the brand, positive EWOM can improve brand image by cultivating confidence in the brand through shared information (Shaheer et al., 2024). According to Farzin and Fattahi (2018), effective EWOM can enhance brand image by elevating perception. EWOM can be considered credible if it is consistent or in line with previous input and is corroborated by likes (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). The more frequently consumers conduct information search activities using EWOM, the greater its capacity to affect a business's BI in the perceptions of consumers (Atika et al., 2017). Evidence indicates that EWOM exerts a favorable impact on BI (Aslam et al., 2019; Duong et al., 2025; Fazri & Evanita, 2025; Kaushal et al., 2023; Lady et al., 2025; Shaheer et al., 2024).

Accordingly, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H4: EWOM has a positive effect on BI of skincare products among consumers in Central Java

BI reflects how consumers perceive and form collective impressions of a brand, which is crucial for influencing purchase intention (Bibi et al., 2025). Consumers view a brand based on the brand associations they have in their memory, which positively affect

PI (Lady et al., 2025). Therefore, PI is likely to increase individuals possess a favorable assessment of the brand image (Duong et al., 2025). The intensity of a product's BI is positively correlated with the likelihood of consumer PI (Razy & Lajevardi, 2015). This shows that an established BI encourages higher consumer PI (Nurlatifah et al., 2025). Research has demonstrated a positive impact of BI on consumers' PI (Ali & Naushad, 2023; Aslam et al., 2019; Harvina et al., 2022; Kaushal et al., 2023; Nurlatifah et al., 2025; Putri & Hadi, 2025; Salhab et al., 2023).

Accordingly, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H5: BI has a positive effect on PI of skincare products among consumers in Central Java

According Ali & Naushad (2023) social networking site effectiveness and quality of social networking sites, including the use of SMM as a means to find information and for marketing, play a role in building a positive brand image for customers, hence indirectly influencing their buy intentions. According to Lady et al. (2025), brand image acts as an important mediating linking external factors, such as SMM and PI, a well-perceived BI can alleviate consumer discomfort, enhance trust, and foster positive relationships that influence purchasing behavior. Prior studies have validated that BI mediates the effect of SMM on PI (Ali & Naushad, 2023; Faisal & Ekawanto, 2022; Harvina et al., 2022; Putri & Hadi, 2025; Salhab et al., 2023).

Based on these facts, the hypothesis is established:

H6: BI mediates the effect of SMM on PI of skincare products among consumers in Central Java

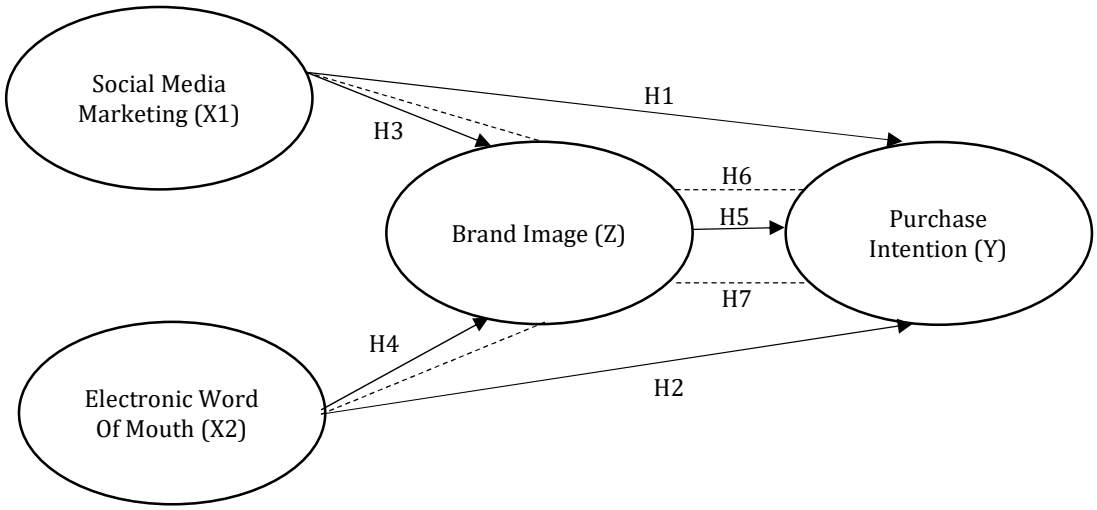
Consumers see EWOM as credible because to its authenticity and the ease of accessing reviews and testimonials, which enhances brand image and may influence buy intentions (Shaheer et al., 2024). EWOM works as the main platform where consumers talk about products, significantly contributing to the development of a favorable BI and subsequently fostering PI (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019). BI has demonstrated the ability to mediate between EWOM and PI (Edrees, 2025; Fazri & Evanita, 2025; Kaushal et al., 2023; Lady et al., 2025; Shaheer et al., 2024).

Drawing upon the results of prior research, the subsequent hypothesis may be articulated:

H7: BI mediates the effect of EWOM on PI BI mediates the effect of SMM on PI of skincare products among consumers in Central Java

Research Framework

A a research framework provides a logical sequence that depicts the connections between research variables based on relevant theoretical foundations and previous empirical findings (Hanifah et al., 2025). Figure 1 shows the relationship between SMM, EWOM, BI, and PI.



Source: Constructed by the author, 2025

Figure 1
Research Framework

METHOD

A quantitative method is used in this study, a technique frequently employed to assess the impact between variables (Damanik et al., 2025). This study was constructed to investigate the impact of SMM and EWOM on PI, with BI serving as a mediating variable. Population in this research comprises social media users of skincare products in Central Java. The minimum sample of 96.04 was calculated using the Lemeshow formula (Hibah et al., 2025).

In selecting the sampling technique, non-probability sampling was used because the population size was not known with certainty (Cahyanto, 2022), namely convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was chosen to ensure comfort and ease of data collection (Ali & Naushad, 2023). Primary data was collected using a questionnaire distributed. The questionnaire was shared online via Google Forms, which allows for reaching more respondents while reducing the risk of data corruption. The questionnaire also contains questions structured based on indicators for each research variable used.

For data analysis, this work employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), executed with SmartPLS version 4. The PLS-SEM approach comprises two components: an outer model or measurement and inner model or structural (Hair et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Primary data were collected by the researcher using questionnaires distributed via a Google Form link. Data collection took place between October 31 and November 5, 2025. Of the total responses received, 191 participants were recorded; however, only 175 could be processed for analysis. This sample size satisfied the minimum requirement calculated

using the Lemeshow formula. 17 participants were unusable because respondents answered "No" to the screening question but still completed the questionnaire.

The following is a profile of respondents, categorized by gender, age, and occupation.

Table 1
Description of Respondent

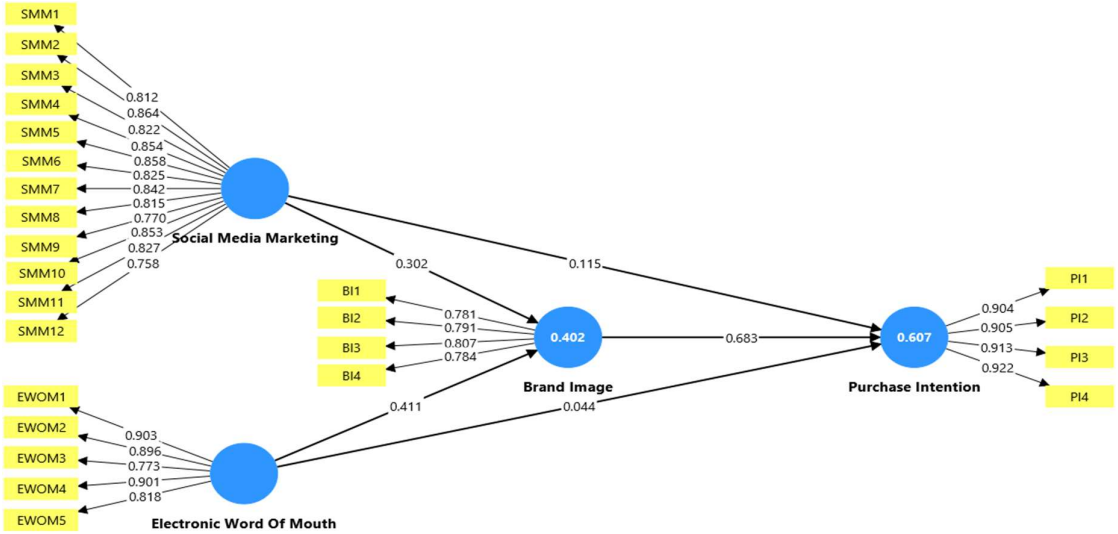
Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	166	95%
Male	9	5%
Total	175	100
Age		
17 to 20 (years)	44	25%
21 to 30 (years)	124	71%
31 to 40 (years)	6	3%
Over 40 (years)	1	1%
Total	175	100
Job		
Students	116	66%
Civil Servants	4	2%
Private Employee	33	19%
Self-Employed	15	9%
Others	7	4%
Total	175	100

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

The results show a gender predominance of 166 female respondents (95%), while 9 male respondents (5%). It can be inferred from the results that social media users of skincare products in Central Java tend to be female rather than male, indicating a predominance of female participation in this study. Meanwhile, the dominant age group was 21-30 years old, with 124 respondents (71%). Furthermore, the number of respondents by occupation was dominated by 116 students (66%).

Outer Model Evaluation (Measurement Model)

This data analysis commences with an assessment of the outer model to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument. The outer model describes the interaction among the latent variable and its measures (i.e., indicators), encompassing evaluations of both reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2021). Following the conceptual framework presented earlier, the measurement model was assessed through outer model evaluation, as depicted in Figure 2.



Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Figure 2
Outer Model Path Diagram

The evaluation of convergent validity was performed by outer loadings using SmartPLS 4 software. Each statement item was considered valid if its outer loading was above 0.708 and its AVE value exceeded 0.50 (Hair et al., 2021). The results of the outer loadings and AVE assessment are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Outer Loadings & Average Variance Extracted

Variabel	Item	Outer Loadings	AVE
PI (Y)	PI (1)	0.904	0.830
	PI (2)	0.905	
	PI (3)	0.913	
	PI (4)	0.922	
SMM (X1)	SMM (1)	0.812	0.682
	SMM (2)	0.864	
	SMM (3)	0.822	
	SMM (4)	0.854	
	SMM (5)	0.858	
	SMM (6)	0.825	
	SMM (7)	0.842	
	SMM (8)	0.815	
	SMM (9)	0.770	
	SMM (10)	0.853	
	SMM (11)	0.827	
	SMM (12)	0.758	
EWOM (X2)	EWOM (1)	0.903	0.740
	EWOM (2)	0.896	
	EWOM (3)	0.773	
	EWOM (4)	0.901	
	EWOM (5)	0.818	

BI (Z)	BI (1)	0.781	0.625
	BI (2)	0.791	
	BI (3)	0.807	
	BI (4)	0.784	

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The AVE values for all variables surpassed 0.5, and each indicator's outer loading exceeded 0.708, indicating that the variables and indicators utilized in this study are valid.

Discriminant validity evaluates the distinctiveness of a concept from other constructs within a structural model, supporting the use of the HTMT as a more effective method for assessing discriminant validity. An HTMT score under 0.90 signifies the attainment of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2021). Table 3 presented evidence regarding discriminant validity based on the HTMT criteria.

Table 3
Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	BI	EWOM	PI
EWOM	0.673		
PI	0.819	0.547	
SMM	0.597	0.609	0.535

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Test results indicate that all variable pairs had HTMT values below 0.90, demonstrating that each construct has larger variance with its corresponding items than with items from other constructs.

The purpose of reliability testing is to ascertain that an instrument accurately, consistently, and precisely measures a construct (Anjar & Riski, 2024). For internal consistency, cronbach's alpha (above 0.70) and composite reliability (above 0.70) (Hair et al., 2021). The reliability of each construct, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values, is reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)
PI	.932	.951
SMM	.957	.962
EWOM	.911	.934
BI	.806	.870

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The results indicate that the variables of PI, SMM, EWOM, and BI satisfy the reliability criterion, as demonstrated values exceeding 0.70.

Before evaluating the assumptions of inner model, it is essential to examine the presence of multicollinearity between variables by utilizing the inner VIF statistic. Inner VIF value is below 5, the research model is deemed free from multicollinearity. Potential multicollinearity issues among the predictor constructs were shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Inner VIF

	Purchase Intention	Brand Image
Social Media Marketing	1.640	1.488
Electronic Word Of Mouth	1.770	1.488
Brand Image	1.672	

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The analysis indicates that inner VIF values under 5 reflect a low level of multicollinearity, confirming that SEM-PLS parameter estimates remain robust and free from bias.

Inner Model

To examine the relationships between latent variables, the inner model is evaluated (Hair et al., 2021). This study employed a bootstrapping approach to evaluate the inner model and provide predicted results.

The model fit assesses how well a structural equation model corresponds with the actual data. The SRMR is a frequently utilized metric for this objective. An SRMR score under 0.08 signifies a favorable model fit (Henseler, 2017). The SRMR results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
SRMR

	Estimated model
SRMR	0.063

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The model estimation results show a value of 0.063, the model is fit effectively with the data and is adequately explained by it.

The R-Square statistic measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by independent variables, the R^2 values are categorized as follows: 0.75 indicates strong correlation, 0.50 indicates moderate correlation, and 0.25 indicates weak correlation (Hair et al., 2021). The R-square (R^2) values reported in Table 7.

Table 7
R-Square (R^2)

	R-square
BI	0.402
PI	0.607

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

In this study, SmartPLS 4 results show that the R-squared value for BI is 0.402, indicating that SMM and EWOM account for 40.2% of the variance in BI, classifying the model as weak but approaching moderate. The R-squared value for PI is 0.607, indicating that SMM, EWOM, BI explain 60.7% of its variance, which represents a moderate model.

F-square (F^2) facilitates the assessment of the influence of exogenous constructs on endogenous latent variables, with thresholds of 0.02 → small, 0.15 → medium, and 0.35 large impact (Hair et al., 2017). The F-square (F^2) is detailed in Table 8.

Table 8
F-Square (F^2)

	F-Square
SMM → PI	0.020
EWOM → PI	0.003
SMM → BI	0.102
EWOM → BI	0.190
BI → PI	0.710

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Research indicates that SMM has a small impact on PI (0.020), and EWOM also demonstrates a small influence on PI (0.003). SMM has a small impact on BI (0.102), whereas EWOM has a moderate influence to BI (0.190). The BI has a large impact PI (0.710).

Predictive relevance testing is the capacity of exogenous variables to accurately forecast the endogenous variables they affect, Q-Square value beyond zero indicates that the model has predictive accuracy and relevance (Hair et al., 2017). Checked through Q-square (Q^2), is shown in Table 9.

Table 9
Q-Square (Q^2)

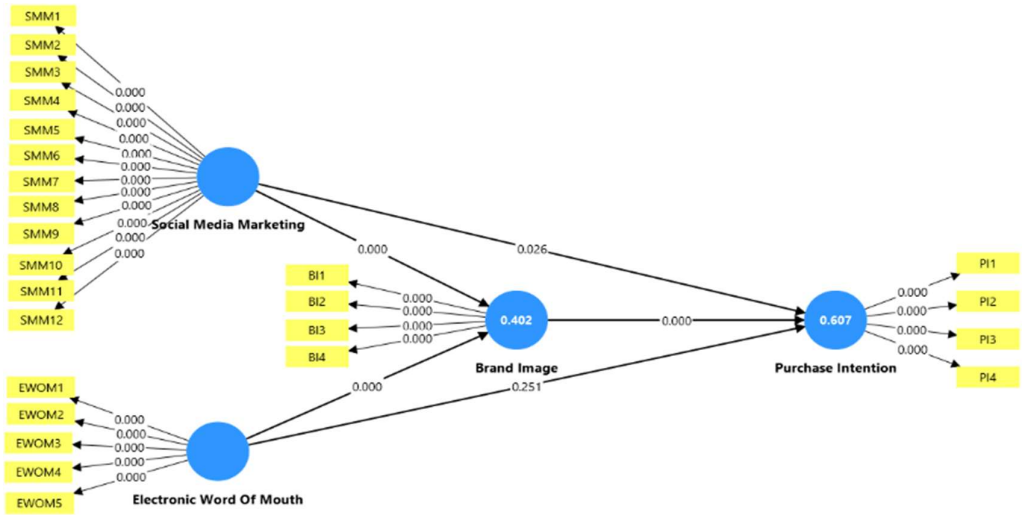
	Q^2 Predict
BI	.372
PI	.301

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The Q-Square for brand image (Z) was calculated to be 0.372, which confirms that SMM (X1) and EWOM (X2) possess predictive relevance for brand image. Likewise, a Q-Square of 0.301 for purchase intention (Y) indicates that SMM (X1), EWOM (X2), and BI (Z) collectively have predictive relevance for purchase intention.

Path Coefficients

Hypothesis testing in this research was performed using the bootstrapping procedure, emphasizing path coefficients to evaluate the significance of variable relationships. The primary objective was to obtain P-values that indicate statistical significance. A significance level of 5% was applied, meaning that P-values below 0.05 are considered statistically significant (Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, the T-statistic can be used to assess significance, whereby values greater than 1.645 (one-tailed) indicate a statistically significant effect. The estimated structural relationships between the constructs are shown in Figure 3.



Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Figure 3
Path Coefficient

Direct Effect Test

The direct effect test was conducted by analyzing using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS 4. The significance of the direct effects is presented in Table 10.

Table 10
Direct Effect

	Original sample (O)	T-statistic	P-values	Result
SMM -> PI	0.115	1.951	0.026	Sig
EWOM -> PI	0.044	0.671	0.251	Not Sig
SMM -> BI	0.302	3.377	0.000	Sig
EWOM -> BI	0.411	4.794	0.000	Sig
BI -> PI	0.683	12.071	0.000	Sig

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The findings from hypothesis testing performed by SmartPLS 4 demonstrate that SMM has a strong positive impact on PI, as indicated by a T-statistic of 1.951 and a P-value of 0.026. This finding suggests that SMM are associated with higher consumer PI, particularly among users of skincare products in Central Java. In line with the findings of Qiao & Sun (2024), who reported that SMM significantly enhances purchase intention by providing personalized content that aligns with users' interests and behavioral patterns.

Hypothesis testing results processed using SmartPLS 4 revealed that EWOM and PI have an insignificant influence witha T-statistic of 0.671 and a P-value of 0.251. The results further demonstrate that an increase in EWOM is associated with a decline in consumers' intention to make a purchase, especially among social media users of skincare products in Central Java. This finding aligns with research by Fazri & Evanita (2025), the analysis showed that PI was not significantly affected by EWOM. It is possible that EWOM (although important) is not the primary factor influencing purchase intention for most consumers (Fazri & Evanita, 2025).

The hypothesis testing results derived by SmartPLS 4 demonstrate that SMM has a strong positive impact on BI, with a T-statistic of 3.377 and a P-value of 0.000. The

findings indicate that higher levels of social media marketing activity are associated with stronger brand image. This demonstrates that SMM is instrumental in fostering positive brand perceptions, especially among social media users of skincare products in Central Java who actively interact and seek information through digital platforms. These results are consistent with the research by Salhab et al. (2023), which highlighted that the quality and effectiveness of SMM significantly contribute to shaping a positive brand image.

Hypothesis testing demonstrated that EWOM exerts a positive and significant influence on BI, evidenced by a T-statistic of 4.794 and a P-value of 0.000. The results suggest that EWOM contributes significantly to the formation and reinforcement of brand image, particularly among social media users of skincare products in Central Java who actively engage with and seek information through social media. The findings are corroborated by the study of Kaushal et al. (2023), which confirms that EWOM positively and significant impacts BI.

The analysis indicated that BI has a positive and significant impact on PI, with a T-statistic of 12.071 and a P-value of 0.000. This indicates that as the BI perceived by consumers strengthens, their purchase intentions also increase, particularly among skincare product users active on social media in Central Java. These results corroborate the study by Putri & Hadi (2025), which found that a favorable brand image significant enhances consumers' PI.

Indirect Effect Test

The indirect effect test was conducted by examining specific indirect effects using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS 4. Furthermore, the indirect (mediating) effects are reported in Table 11.

Table 11
Indirect Effect

	Original sample (O)	T-statistic	P-values	Result
SMM -> BI -> PI	0.206	3.250	0.001	Sig
EWOM -> BI -> PI	0.281	4.668	0.000	Sig

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Hypothesis testing indicate that SMM has a indirect influence on PI via BI, with a T-statistic of 3.250 and a P-value of 0.001. Given that the direct effect of SMM on PI is also significant, BI role a partial mediation. This suggests that when SMM strategies are effectively implemented, they enhance the BI in consumers' minds, which subsequently elevates their PI, especially among social media users of skincare products in Central Java who are consistently exposed to digital marketing campaigns and brand interaction. This finding are aligns with the research of Ali & Naushad (2023), who reported that SMM influences PI via BI as a mediating variable. SMM that prioritizes relationship building, engagement, and engaging content can optimize the impact on BI, thereby driving higher PI (Ali & Naushad, 2023).

The analysis reveals that EWOM exerts a positive and significant indirect influence on PI via BI, evidenced by a T-statistic of 4.668 and a P-value of 0.000. Since the direct effect of EWOM on PI is not significant, brand image serves as a full mediation, meaning the impact of EWOM on PI is entirely channeled through BI. Consequently, higher exposure to positive EWOM reinforces consumers' perception of the brand, which subsequently drives higher purchase intentions, especially among social media users of

skincare products in Central Java. This discovery aligns with Kaushal et al. (2023), who reported that BI substantially mediates the connection between EWOM and PI.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The research results demonstrate that the PI of social media users of skincare products in Central Java is highly affected by SMM and BI, but not directly via EWOM. SMM and EWOM has been shown to increase PI, while EWOM has no significant direct impact on PI. Furthermore, SMM and EWOM significantly influence BI formation.

Furthermore, BI holds a pivotal position within the overall research model. BI not only significantly influences PI but also serves as a mediating pathway explaining mechanism that clarifies how SMM and EWOM enhance PI. In the context of SMM, BI acts as a partial mediation, while in the case of EWOM, BI acts as a full mediation. This indicate that the effect of EWOM on PI is entirely dependent on its ability to strengthen the consumers' BI initially.

This study's findings highlight the critical importance of brand image for skincare companies, particularly in a digital landscape where consumer interactions and decisions are significantly shaped by online material and discussions. Therefore, businesses are advised to optimize creative, interactive, and consistent social media marketing strategies while simultaneously encouraging positive electronic word of mouth through satisfying customer experiences. Strengthening brand image through these measures is likely to enhance consumer purchase intention**.**

This study has several limitations: respondents were predominantly individuals aged 21–30, most of whom were students. Therefore, the findings are less generalizable to other age groups and professions. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires with the cross-sectional approach reflecting conditions solely at one point, potentially introducing common method bias. Therefore, future research utilize samples with a broader age range and varied career backgrounds to facilitate the generalization of findings to a larger population. Furthermore, data collection methods can be expanded beyond self-report questionnaires to include interviews and other methods.

Future research is suggested to include other relevant variables, such as customer trust and perceived value, as these are closely related to the consumer decision-making process in digital environments. Customer trust is important because it reduces the perceived risk of online transactions, while perceived value reflects how consumers evaluate the benefits relative to the costs in purchasing decisions. Besides that, future research may also consider utilizing longitudinal research designs so that future studies may offer a clearer understanding of the development of consumer perceptions, attitudes, and buying intentions, thereby providing a more thorough perspective on digital marketing dynamics.

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