THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND EQUITY AND BRAND TRUST ON PURCHASING DECISIONS THROUGH COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF EXOTIC BRAND CORN SEED PRODUCTS AT DUTA TANI STORE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions with competitive advantage as a mediating variable for Exsotic brand sweet corn seed products at Duta Tani Store. The study is motivated by fluctuations in product sales over the past three years and the increasing competition in the agribusiness sector. This research uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The population consists of consumers who have purchased Exsotic brand sweet corn seeds at Duta Tani Store, with the sample selected using purposive sampling involving 60 respondents. Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The results show that brand equity does not significantly influence competitive advantage or purchasing decisions. In contrast, brand trust has a positive influence on competitive advantage. Furthermore, competitive advantage plays a role as a mediating variable in influencing purchasing decisions. Overall, the research model demonstrates strong predictive capability. These findings suggest that strengthening brand trust is an important strategy for Duta Tani Store in building competitive advantage and encouraging consumer purchasing decisions.

Keywords: *Brand Equity; Brand Trust; Competitive Advantage; Purchasing Decisions*

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INTRODUCTION

Increasingly fierce business competition, especially in the agribusiness sector, requires companies and agricultural businesses to not only build strong brands but also create competitive advantages to maintain consumer loyalty. In this context, brand equity and brand trust are two crucial elements in strengthening consumer perceptions of product value and credibility, which ultimately influence purchasing decisions (Anggraini & Reskiputri, 2024). Brand equity adds value to a product, encompassing perceived quality, loyalty, and brand appeal (Da et al., 2024). Research conducted by (Marlius & Darma, 2023) shows that brand equity has a significant influence on purchasing decisions for products such as mobile phones.

The stronger the brand equity, the more likely consumers are to purchase the product. Similar findings are also supported by (Oktaviany & Padmantyo, 2025), who stated that brand equity has a significant effect on purchase intention and customer satisfaction. This indicates that consumers are more likely to purchase products with a strong brand image because they are perceived to guarantee quality and satisfaction (Putra et al., 2024). In addition to brand equity, brand trust is also a factor that influences consumer behavior. Brand trust reflects consumers' belief in the reliability and credibility of a brand (Indira & Basuki, 2023). Research by (Aditria et al., 2023) shows that brand trust has a positive influence on purchasing decisions, where each one-point increase in brand trust increases consumer purchase intention. Another study by (Azhari & Maupa, 2024) revealed that brand trust not only directly influences purchasing decisions but also through price perception, which acts as a mediating variable in the relationship.

Competitive advantage plays a strategic role in linking brand equity and brand trust to purchasing decisions. (Liu & Wang, 2023) state that competitive advantage built through brand value and brand trust can increase consumer preference for a product and, in turn, influence purchasing decisions. Competitive advantage acts as a bridge that strengthens the relationship between consumer perceptions of brand value and their purchasing decisions (Barney, 1991).

Although several previous studies have focused extensively on the retail and e-commerce sectors, such as smartphones and fast food, research examining agribusiness products, particularly agricultural seeds, is still very limited. In the agricultural sector, seed purchasing decisions carry a higher level of risk because they are directly related to production results and the sustainability of farming businesses. The purchasing decision is the final stage in the consumer decision-making process after a series of considerations of various product alternatives (Rahayu & Cahyani, 2023).

Therefore, it is crucial to further examine the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions for Exsotic brand corn seeds at the Duta Tani Store, as well as the role of competitive advantage as a mediator in this relationship. This research was motivated by several issues encountered at the Duta Tani Store related to Exsotic corn seed products. Fluctuations in Exotic corn seed sales over the past three years indicate unstable consumer purchasing interest. In 2022, sales volume reached approximately 4.2 tons, but decreased to 4 tons in 2023, although it increased slightly to 4.8 tons in 2024. This condition indicates a change in farmer preferences regarding the brand of corn seed they purchase. Increasing competition with other corn seed brands, such as HONEY F1, NB SUPER F1, and SECADA 88 F1, has resulted in Exsotic's brand equity not being fully established in the minds of farmers, particularly in terms of perceived crop quality and disease resistance. Furthermore, farmer trust in Exotic corn seeds remains low, due to variable yields depending on land and weather conditions, which hinders the formation of consumer loyalty to the brand. Exsotic's competitive advantage needs to be

continuously improved, as competitors have begun introducing innovations in pest resistance, productivity, and more informative packaging.

These issues indicate that brand equity, brand trust, and competitive advantage have the potential to influence farmers' purchasing decisions for Exotic corn seeds. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions through the mediation of competitive advantage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This theory was developed by Ajzen (1991) to explain individual behavior influenced by intentions, attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These three factors form intentions that drive behavior, such as purchasing decisions. The TPB is used to understand the relationship between brand equity, brand trust, and competitive advantage in shaping purchasing decisions (Ajzen, 1991). Indicators:

1. Attitude toward the behavior: Positive or negative evaluation of a product purchase.
2. Subjective norms: Social influence on the purchase.
3. Perceived behavioral control: Perception of purchasing power.

Brand Equity

Brand equity is the value consumers place on a brand, influencing its perception and purchasing decisions. Kotler & Keller (2020) explain that brand equity encompasses brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty. Aaker (1991) adds that it is an asset that can enhance or diminish a product's value. Brand equity indicators include:

1. Brand awareness
2. Brand association
3. Perceived quality
4. Other proprietary brand assets

Brand Trust

Brand trust refers to consumers' belief that a brand is reliable and meets expectations. Kotler & Keller (2020) state that brand trust is built on a brand's consistency in delivering quality products. Indicators of brand trust according to Kotler & Keller (2020) include:

1. Brand reliability
2. Brand intentions
3. Brand predictability
4. Brand competence
5. Brand integrity

Purchasing Decision

A purchasing decision is the process by which consumers select a product that meets their needs. Kotler & Keller (2020) explain that this is influenced by internal and external factors, such as attitudes and perceptions of the brand. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2020), purchasing decision indicators include:

1. Need Recognition: Consumer awareness of the need for a product.
2. Information Search: Efforts to find information about the product.
3. Evaluation of Alternatives: Comparison of products based on important attributes.

4. Purchase Decision: The final choice to purchase the product.

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is a company's ability to provide greater value to consumers than competitors. Porter (2016) states that this is achieved through differentiation strategies and effective cost management. Indicators of competitive advantage, according to Porter in Arianty et al. (2016), are:

1. Differentiation Advantage: Differences that create added value for consumers.
2. Cost Advantage: Controlling costs to be lower than competitors.
3. Market Access Advantage: The ability to distribute products efficiently.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative method with a descriptive quantitative approach (Sugiyono, 2022). The research design aimed to examine the relationship between brand equity, brand trust, competitive advantage, and purchasing decisions. The population in this study was all consumers who had purchased Exsotic brand sweet corn seeds at the Duta Tani Store. The sample size of 60 respondents was selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criteria being consumers who had previously purchased the product (Otok et al., 2026).

Data collection was conducted through questionnaires distributed in person and online using Google Forms, with measurements using a Likert scale. Data analysis used Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The analysis included testing the measurement model (validity and reliability), as well as the structural model, which included the coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficients, effect size (f^2), and mediation tests. Model feasibility was evaluated through multicollinearity, Goodness of Fit (GoF), and Predictive Relevance (Q^2) tests (Otok et al., 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristic

The characteristics of the respondents in this study describe the profile of consumers who have purchased Exsotic brand corn seeds at the Duta Tani Store. Respondent descriptions include gender, age, education level, occupation, purchase frequency, and level of product understanding. Demographic of respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographics of Respondents

Indicators		Amount	Percentage
Sex	Male	40	66.7%
	Female	20	33.3%
	Total	60	100%
Age	17-21	1	1.6%
	22-26	6	10%
	27-31	13	21.7%
	>33	40	66.7%
	Total	60	100%
Education	Primary	5	8.3%
	Junior High School	9	15%
	Senior High School	25	41.7%
	Diploma/Bachelor	21	35%
	Total	60	100%
Occupation	Farmer	24	40%

	Farmer Worker	16	26.7%
	Agricultural Product Seller	11	18.3%
	Businessman	8	13.3%
	Student	1	1.7%
	Total	60	100%
Purchasing Frequency	1 Times	9	15%
	2-3 Times	15	25%
	> 3 Times	36	60%
	Total	60	100%
Level of Understanding	No understanding	3	5%
	Moderate understanding	17	28.4%
	Adequate understanding	20	33.3%
	High level of understanding	20	33.3%
	Total	60	100%

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the data, the majority of respondents in this study were male (66.7%), while female respondents accounted for 33.3%. The predominance of male respondents indicates that sweet corn seed purchasing decisions are generally made by those directly involved in agricultural activities. The majority of respondents were in the age group over 32, representing 66.7%. This indicates that sweet corn seed consumers are predominantly individuals of productive age and have relatively mature farming experience in making purchasing decisions.

The majority of respondents had a high school/vocational high school (SMA) or diploma/bachelor's degree. This level of education reflects the respondents' ability to understand product information and evaluate the quality of sweet corn seeds before making a purchase. The respondents were predominantly farmers and farm laborers. This indicates that the sweet corn seed products studied are used directly in agricultural activities, so respondents' perceptions of the product are based on actual experience.

The majority of respondents had made more than three purchases. This indicates a tendency for consumer loyalty to the Exsotic brand of sweet corn seeds. Most respondents were in the "understanding" or "very understanding" category regarding the Exotic brand of sweet corn seeds. This high level of understanding indicates that consumers have sufficient knowledge of the characteristics and quality of the products they purchase. Descriptive analysis of Brand Equity (X1) can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Analysis of Brand Equity (X1)

Indicator	Mean	Category
Brand Awareness	4.18	High
Brand Association	4.10	High
Perceived Quality	4.25	Very High
Other Brand Assets	4.05	High
Mean	4.15	High

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the data, the brand equity variable has an average value of 4.15, which is in the high category. This shows that consumers have a positive perception of the strength

of the Exsotic brand. The perceived quality indicator obtained the highest mean value, indicating that product quality is a major element in shaping brand equity in the eyes of consumers. Thus, descriptive analysis of brand trust is explained in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Analysis of Brand Trust (X2)

Indicator	Mean	Category
Brand Reliability	4.22	Very High
Brand Intentions	4.15	High
Brand Predictability	4.08	High
Brand Competence	4.20	Very High
Brand Integrity	4.18	High
Mean	4.17	High

Source : Processed Data , 2025

Based on the data, the brand trust variable has an average value of 4.17, which is categorized as high. The high mean value across all indicators shows that consumers have a strong level of trust in the exotic brand, particularly in terms of quality consistency and the brand's ability to meet consumer needs. After seeing the analysis of X2, it is a need to understand the analysis of competitive advantage. The descriptive analysis is shown in the Table 4.

Table 4
Descriptive Analysis of Competitive Advantage (Z)

Indicator	Mean	Category
Competitive Differentiation Advantage	4.12	High
Cost Leadership Advantage	4.05	high
Ease	4.18	High
Average	4.12	High

Source : Processed Data , 2025

Based on the data, the competitive advantage variable obtained an average score of 4.12, which is classified as high. This result shows that consumers consider Exsotic sweet corn seeds to have a good competitive advantage in terms of differentiation, price, and product availability in the market. Furthermore, the discussion of the next variable will be explained in more detail as presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Descriptive Analysis of the Purchasing Decision Variable (Y)

Indicator	Mean	Category
Recognition of Needs	4.20	Very high
Information Search	4.10	Tall
Alternative Evaluation	4.05	Tall
Buying decision	4.25	Very high
Average	4.15	Tall

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Convergent Validity Test

Convergent validity is tested by looking at the outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (Rudianto et al., 2024). Detail information about convergent validity test result can be seen in Table 10.

Table 6
Convergent Validity Test Results

Variables	Indicator	Outer Loading	Information
Brand Equity (X1)	X1.1	0.833	Valid
	X1.2	0.832	Valid
	X1.3	0.950	Valid
	X1.4	0.847	Valid
	X1.5	0.930	Valid
	X1.6	0.926	Valid
	X1.7	0.884	Valid
	X1.8	0.865	Valid
	X1.9	0.889	Valid
	X1.10	0.842	Valid
	X1.11	0.894	Valid
	X1.12	0.915	Valid
Brand Trust (X2)	X2.1	0.893	Valid
	X2.2	0.883	Valid
	X2.3	0.883	Valid
	X2.4	0.903	Valid
	X2.5	0.843	Valid
	X2.6	0.933	Valid
	X2.7	0.884	Valid
	X2.8	0.898	Valid
	X2.9	0.920	Valid
	X2.10	0.919	Valid
Competitive Advantage (Z)	Z.1	0.880	Valid
	Z.2	0.890	Valid
	Z.3	0.907	Valid
	Z.4	0.904	Valid
	Z.5	0.706	Valid
	Z.6	0.887	Valid
	Z.7	0.924	Valid
	Z.8	0.888	Valid
	Z.9	0.902	Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	Y.1	0.854	Valid
	Y.2	0.909	Valid
	Y.3	0.891	Valid
	Y.4	0.814	Valid
	Y.5	0.876	Valid
	Y.6	0.860	Valid
	Y.7	0.912	Valid
	Y.8	0.921	Valid
	Y.9	0.917	Valid
	Y.10	0.937	Valid
	Y.11	0.896	Valid

Source: Processed Data, 2025

Based on the test results, all indicators have outer loading values above the minimum required limit, and the AVE value of each variable is greater than 0.50. Thus, all indicators are declared valid and capable of representing the measured construct.

Discriminant Validity Test

A discriminant validity test was conducted to ensure that each construct had clear differences from other constructs (Liao et al., 2026).

Table 7
Results of the Discriminant Validity Test

Variables	Brand Equity (X1)	Brand Trust (X2)	Competitive Advantage (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)
Brand Equity (X1)	0.958			
Brand Trust (X2)	0.914	0.896		
Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.885	0.804	0.879	
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.828	0.763	0.822	0.890

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The test results show that the AVE root value of each construct is greater than the correlation between other constructs, so it can be concluded that the model meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted by looking at the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values (Liao et al., 2026). The reliability test result can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8
Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Information
Brand Equity (X1)	0.975	0.976	Reliable
Brand Trust (X2)	0.973	0.973	Reliable
Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.962	0.965	Reliable
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.974	0.974	Reliable

Source: Processed Data, 2025

All variables have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, so it can be concluded that the research instrument has a good level of internal consistency and reliability.

Measurement Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) value is used to measure the ability of independent variables to explain dependent variables (Gao, 2023). The R-Square test results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9
R-Square (R^2) Test Results

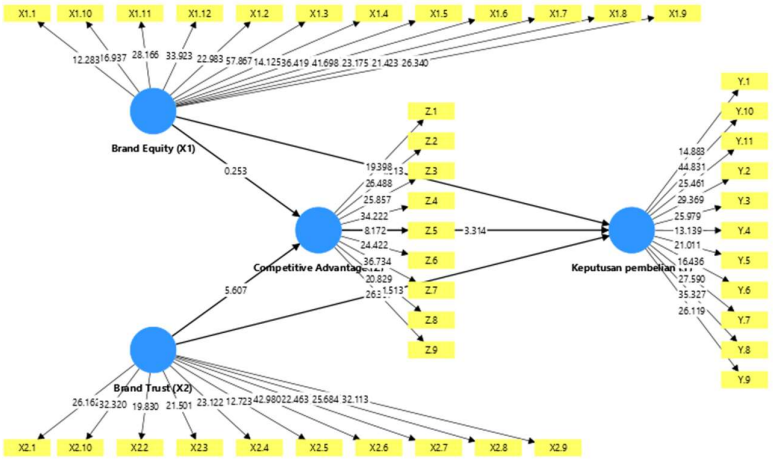
Variables	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.935	0.933
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.946	0.943

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The test results show that the R-Square value for the competitive advantage variable (Z) is 0.935 with an Adjusted R-Square of 0.933, which means that 93.5% of the variation in competitive advantage can be explained by the independent variables in the model. Meanwhile, the Purchase Decision variable (Y) has an R-Square value of 0.946 with an Adjusted R-Square of 0.943, which indicates that 94.6% of the variation in Purchase Decision can be explained by the variables in the research model. The very high R-Square values for both endogenous variables indicate that the structural model has very strong predictive power and is suitable for further hypothesis testing.

Path Coefficient Significance Test

The path significance test was conducted to test the direct influence between variables (Gao,2023). The path coefficient test results are presented in Figure 1 and Table 10.



Source: Processed Data, 2025

Figure 1
Data Processing Results

Table 10
Path Coefficient Significance Test Results

Relationship between variables	T-Statistics	P-Values	Information
Brand Equity (X1) → Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.372	0.800	Not significant
Brand Equity (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	1,613	0.107	Not significant
Brand Trust (X2) → Competitive Advantage (Z)	5,607	0.000	Significant
Brand Trust (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	1,513	0.130	Not significant
Competitive Advantage (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	3,314	0.001	Significant

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The path significance test results show that Brand Equity (X1) does not have a significant effect on competitive advantage (Z) with a T-statistics value of 0.372 and a p-value of 0.800, and does not have a significant effect on Purchase Decision (Y) with a T-statistics value of 1.613 and a p-value of 0.107. Brand trust (X2) has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage (Z) with a T-statistic value of 5.607 and a p-value of 0.000. However, brand trust (X2) does not have a significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) with a T-statistic value of 1.513 and a p-value of 0.130. Meanwhile, competitive advantage (Z) is proven to have a significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) with a T-statistic

value of 3.314 and a p-value of 0.001. Overall, these results show that brand trust plays an important role in shaping competitive advantage, and competitive advantage is a key factor that drives purchasing decisions, while brand equity does not have a significant direct effect in the research model.

Effect Size Test (f^2)

The effect size test (f^2) is used to determine the contribution of each exogenous variable to the endogenous variable in the structural model. The f^2 value indicates the extent to which an independent variable contributes to increasing the coefficient of determination (R-Square) of the dependent variable (Suhan et al., 2018). According to Hair et al. (2019), an f^2 value of 0.02 is categorized as small, 0.15 as medium, and 0.35 as large. The explanation of effect size result can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11
Effect Size Results (f^2)

Variables	Competitive Advantage (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)
Brand Equity (X1)	0.002	0.062
Brand Trust (X2)	1,092	0.057
Competitive Advantage (Z)	–	0.305

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The Effect of Brand Equity (X1) on Competitive Advantage (Z)

Based on the test results, the effect of brand equity (X1) on competitive advantage (Z) has an f^2 value of 0.002. This value is below the limit of 0.02, so it can be categorized as having a very small effect size. These results indicate that brand equity contributes very little to explaining the variation in competitive advantage. Thus, although brand equity is descriptively rated highly by respondents, its contribution to the formation of structural competitive advantage is relatively weak.

The Effect of Brand Trust (X2) on Competitive Advantage (Z)

The test results show that the effect of brand trust (X2) on competitive advantage (Z) has an f^2 value of 1.092, which is well above the threshold of 0.35. This value indicates that brand trust has a very large effect size and is a variable that makes a dominant contribution in explaining competitive advantage. This finding confirms that consumer trust in the Exsotic brand plays an important role in shaping the perception of product competitive advantage.

The Effect of Brand Equity (X1) on Purchase Decisions (Y)

The effect size test results show that the influence of brand equity (X1) on purchase decisions (Y) has an f^2 value of 0.062, which is in the small category. This indicates that brand equity has a limited contribution in directly increasing purchase decisions. This finding is in line with the path significance test results, which show that brand equity is not a major factor in driving consumer purchase decisions.

The Effect of Brand Trust (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y)

The effect of brand trust (X2) on purchase decision (Y) has an f^2 value of 0.057, which is also in the small category. However, brand trust still contributes to explaining purchase decisions, although not as much as its effect on competitive advantage. This shows that brand trust plays a more indirect role through the formation of competitive advantage.

The Effect of Competitive Advantage (Z) on Purchase Decisions (Y)

Based on the test results, competitive advantage (Z) on purchase decision (Y) has an f^2 value of 0.305, which is in the medium to large category. This value indicates that competitive advantage plays a fairly strong role in explaining the variation in purchase decisions. This finding indicates that competitive advantage is a key factor that drives consumers to make purchase decisions for Exsotic brand sweet corn seeds.

Overall, the results of the effect size test show that brand trust is the variable with the most dominant contribution in shaping competitive advantage, while competitive advantage plays an important role in influencing purchasing decisions. Conversely, brand equity has a relatively small effect size, both on competitive advantage and purchasing decisions, so its role in the structural model is limited.

Mediation Test

A mediation test was conducted to determine the role of competitive advantage in mediating the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions (Amin et al., 2024). The mediation test results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12
Effect Size Results (f^2)

Variables	Competitive Advantage (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)
Brand Equity (X1)	0.002	0.062
Brand Trust (X2)	1,092	0.057
Competitive Advantage (Z)	–	0.305

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The mediation test results show that competitive advantage (Z) acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand equity (X1) and brand trust (X2) on purchasing decisions (Y). The direct path coefficients show that the effect of brand equity on competitive advantage is 0.043, the effect of brand trust on competitive advantage is 0.926, and the effect of competitive advantage on purchasing decisions is 0.505. Meanwhile, the direct effect of brand equity on purchasing decisions is 0.202 and the effect of brand trust on purchasing decisions is 0.280.

The indirect effect value through competitive advantage is 0.489, while the total effect is 0.971. The Variance Accounted For (VAF) calculation shows a value of 50%, which is in the range of 20%–80%, so it can be concluded that competitive advantage partially mediates the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that competitive advantage plays an important role as an intermediary mechanism that strengthens the influence of brand equity and especially brand trust in driving purchasing decisions for Exotic brand sweet corn seeds.

Assumption and Model Feasibility Test Results

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity test is a lienar relationship between independent variables in multiple regression. The multicollinearity test is intended to see the relationship between each variable (Effiyaldi et al., 2022). Multicollinearity testing can be done by looking at the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. If the Tolerance value is more than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than 10, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity

in the regression model. On the other hand, if Tolerance ≤ 0.10 or VIF ≥ 10, it indicates symptoms of multicollinearity between the independent variables. The result of multicollinearity test result can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13
Multicollinearity Test Results

	VIF
Brand Equity (X1) -> Competitive Advantage (Z)	4,812
Brand Equity (X1) -> Purchase Decision (Y)	3,978
Brand Trust (X2) -> Competitive Advantage (Z)	4,766
Brand Trust (X2) -> Purchase Decision (Y)	4,194
Competitive Advantage (Z) ->Purchase Decision (Y)	3,650

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The multicollinearity test results show that all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below the tolerance limit (<5). The highest VIF value was found in the relationship between brand equity and competitive advantage, at 4,812, while the lowest value was found in the relationship between competitive advantage and purchase decision, at 3,650. These findings indicate that there are no multicollinearity issues in the model, so that all independent variables can be used simultaneously and the model is deemed suitable for further analysis.

Goodness of Fit (GoF) Test

Godness of Fit (GoF) is a test used to assess the level of suitability between the research model and the empirical data used. This test aims to find out whether the model built is feasible and able to explain the relationship between variables in the research. Goodness of Fit testing is carried out by looking at several model suitability indices such as Chi-Square (χ^2), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker Lewis Index), and GFI (Goodness of Fit Index). The test criteria are that the Chi-Square value is expected to be small, RMSEA ≤ 0.08, and CFI, TLI, and GFI ≥ 0.90, which indicates the model has a good level of suitability.

Decision making is carried out by comparing the analysis results with the cut-off value, where if the index value meets the specified criteria then the model is declared fit or suitable for use, whereas if it does not meet the criteria then the model is considered unfit and model improvements need to be made (Aziz, 2020). God of Test result can be seen in Table 14.

Table 14
Table of Average AVE Values

Variables	AVE value
Brand Equity (X1)	0.783
Brand Trust (X2)	0.803
Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.772
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.793
Average AVE	0.787

Endogenous Variables	R-Square Value
Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.935
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.946
Average R-Square	0.940

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The Goodness of Fit test results show that the GoF value is 0.86, obtained from an average AVE of 0.787 and an average R-Square of 0.940. This GoF value is well above the criterion threshold of 0.36, so it can be concluded that the research model has an excellent level of suitability and feasibility in explaining the relationship between the measurement model and the structural model as a whole.

Predictive Relevance Test (Q^2)

Predictive relevance test (Q^2) is a test used to assess the model's ability to predict observed data on endogenous variables. The test was carried out to find out how the structural was able to explain and predict the value of the dependent variable in the research. The predictive relevance value is obtained through calculating Q-square based on the R-square value of the endogenous variables in the model. if the Q^2 value > 0, then the model has predictive relevance or good predictive ability for research data. Conversely, if the Q^2 value ≤ 0, then the model is considered not to have adequate predictive ability. Thus, decision making is carried out by looking at the resulting Q^2 value, where the greater the Q^2 value indicates that the research model is better at predicting endogenous variables (Wicaksono et al., 2024). The result of Q^2 is explained in Table 15.

Table 15
Predictive Relevance Test Results (Q^2)

Endogenous Variables	Q^2 Predict	RMSE	MAE
Competitive Advantage (Z)	0.560	0.667	0.507
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.442	0.534	0.465

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The predictive relevance test results show that the Q^2 predicted value for the competitive advantage variable is 0.560 and for the Purchase Decision variable is 0.442, where all Q^2 values are above zero. This indicates that the model has good predictive capabilities. In addition, the relatively low RMSE and MAE values indicate a low level of prediction error, so that the model is not only structurally sound, but also has adequate predictive power for the observed data. Overall, the results of the multicollinearity, Goodness of Fit, and predictive relevance tests show that the research model is free from assumption problems, has an excellent level of suitability, and is able to accurately predict endogenous variables, so that the model is declared feasible and robust to explain the relationship between variables in this study.

The Influence of Brand Equity on Competitive Advantage

The results of the study indicate that brand equity does not significantly influence competitive advantage. This finding indicates that high brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality do not automatically create a competitive advantage for Exsotic brand sweet corn seed. In the context of agricultural products, competitive advantage is largely determined by functional factors and tangible benefits, such as crop productivity and seedling durability in the field. Therefore, brand equity serves as a symbolic value that is not strong enough to differentiate a product competitively without being supported by evidence of technical performance directly experienced by consumers (Jamaludin et al., 2025).

The Influence of Brand Equity on Purchasing Decisions

The test results indicate that brand equity does not significantly influence purchasing decisions. This finding suggests that consumers do not use brand strength as the primary basis for purchasing sweet corn seeds. Purchasing decisions for agricultural products tend to be rational and outcome-based, with considering consumer user experience, recommendations from fellow farmers, and the economic benefits gained (Aldiesi & Wahyudin, 2024). Although brand equity is descriptively high, its role in directly driving purchasing decisions is relatively limited.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Competitive Advantage

Unlike brand equity, brand trust has been shown to significantly influence competitive advantage. This indicates that consumer trust in the Exsotic brand is a key factor in shaping perceptions of competitive advantage. In the agribusiness context, brand trust plays a crucial role because consumers face high risks if a product does not deliver as expected (Kholidah et al., 2025). Brand trust creates confidence in consistent product quality and reliability, creating a differentiation that is difficult for competitors to imitate. This finding is supported by the effect size (f^2), which indicates a very dominant contribution of brand trust to competitive advantage.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions

The results of the study indicate that brand trust does not have a significant direct effect on purchasing decisions. This finding indicates that consumer trust in a brand is not sufficient to drive purchasing decisions without a tangible perceived competitive advantage (Mangginte et al., 2025). In other words, brand trust serves as a prerequisite that must first be translated into concrete benefits, such as product quality, competitive pricing, and easy market access, before ultimately influencing purchasing decisions.

The Influence of Competitive Advantage on Purchasing Decisions

The test results show that competitive advantage significantly influences purchasing decisions. This finding confirms that competitive advantage is a key factor driving consumers to choose Exsotic brand sweet corn seed products. Superiority in terms of quality, cost efficiency, and product availability are primary consumer considerations because they are directly related to the yield and risks of agricultural businesses (Mangginte et al., 2025). This finding also explains why brand equity and brand trust did not show a significant direct influence on purchasing decisions.

The Role of Competitive Advantage as a Mediating Variable

The results of the mediation test indicate that competitive advantage partially mediates the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions. This finding indicates that these two variables do not operate directly, but rather through the prior formation of competitive advantage. Thus, competitive advantage acts as a connecting mechanism that converts brand value and brand trust into tangible benefits perceived by consumers, ultimately driving purchasing decisions. This finding reinforces the position of competitive advantage as a strategic variable in the research model.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis and discussion of the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions, with competitive advantage as a mediating variable, it can be concluded that brand equity and brand trust do not directly influence purchasing

decisions but operate through the mechanism of competitive advantage. Brand equity has a positive but insignificant influence on both competitive advantage and purchasing decisions, indicating that brand strength alone is insufficient to create competitive advantage and drive purchasing decisions in the context of agricultural products. Conversely, brand trust has a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage, confirming that consumer trust is a key factor in establishing competitive advantage. Competitive advantage has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions and partially mediates the influence of brand equity and brand trust on purchasing decisions, with a Variance Accounted For (VAF) value of 50%. This finding indicates that competitive advantage acts as a key link that converts brand value and trust into purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, the results of the model feasibility test indicate that the research model has a very good level of fit and predictive ability, making it suitable for use in explaining the relationships between the variables in this study.

Companies are advised to prioritize strategies to increase brand trust, given its significant role in shaping competitive advantage. This can be achieved through consistent product quality, information transparency, and guaranteed results, which can increase consumer trust. Furthermore, companies need to continuously strengthen their competitive advantage through product innovation, cost efficiency, and clear differentiation, as these variables have been shown to be key factors driving purchasing decisions. Brand equity development also needs to be directed at actual consumer experiences so that it is not merely symbolic but can have a stronger impact on purchasing behavior.

Further research is recommended to add other relevant variables, such as price, service quality, customer satisfaction, or loyalty, to enrich the research model and increase its explanatory power regarding purchasing decisions. Furthermore, future research can be conducted on different objects and sectors to achieve broader generalizability of the results. The use of other methodological approaches or a comparison between PLS-SEM and alternative statistical methods is also recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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