

Economic and Business Horizon

ISSN: 2963-2765

Economic and Business
Horizon

Volume: 04

Issue: 02

Year: 2025

Page: 67-78

Citation:

Puspadini, A., Hidayat, A. S., Khasanah, I. & Yoestini. (2025). E-WOM's Impact on Purchase Intention Through Brand Awareness and Perceived Quality. *Economic and Business Horizon* 4(2), 67-78.

E-WOM's Impact on Purchase Intention Through Brand Awareness and Perceived Quality

Alifa Puspadini^{*1}, Muhammad Sondang Hidayat¹, Imroatul Khasanah¹, Yoestini¹

¹ Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia

^{*} Corresponding author: Alifa Puspadini (alifapuspadini17@gmail.com)

Abstract

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has become a strategy widely adopted by companies to promote their products, especially in line with the advancement of the digital era. Businesses continue to strive to maintain strong engagement with customers. This study examines the effect of E-WOM on consumer purchase intention, with brand awareness and perceived quality as mediating variables (case study on Sea Makeup cosmetic products in a region). These variables include E-WOM as an independent variable, brand awareness and perceived quality as mediators, and purchase intention as the dependent variable. The sample consisted of 135 female respondents aged 16–54 years in Semarang who knew or had purchased Sea Makeup products. Data were collected through purposive non-probability sampling using a questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS was used for the analysis. The findings indicate that E-WOM positively influences brand awareness and perceived quality, both of which in turn positively influence purchase intention. E-WOM also has a direct impact on purchase intention positively.

Keywords

Brand Awareness, Electronic Word of Mouth, Perceived Quality, Purchase Intention.

1. Introduction

Appearance is an important thing that every individual needs to carry out daily activities. Of course, everyone wants to look perfect. One aspect that can support one's appearance is cosmetics. The high use of cosmetics today and the increasing desire to be able to look attractive in public are utilised by several companies to compete with each other. They target women as the main consumers in attracting attention. This has made the cosmetics industry grow rapidly in Indonesia. According to kemenperin.go.id, until 2024, the cosmetics industry in Indonesia has increased and is estimated to reach 1,292 companies, consisting of large and small companies. Small and medium industries dominate with a percentage of 83% of the total number of companies. Internationally, the cosmetics sector shows bright prospects with a projected market value of USD 677.2 billion by 2025 and a growth rate of around 3.37%. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Industry (2023) also stated that the value of global cosmetics imports in Indonesia reached US\$134.98 million in 2023. Based on these data, it can be concluded that Indonesia is a potential market for cosmetic industry entrepreneurs, both local and international cosmetics.

Sea Makeup, a local cosmetic brand founded in 2021 by PT Sea Beauty Indonesia, offers products suitable for all skin types, including sensitive skin, due to their skincare content (sociolla.com). Within four years, it gained popularity on Shopee and TikTok Shop, with products like cleansing balm and two way cake refill ranking first in sales. Despite this success, sales remain unstable, with a 25% decline reported in March 2025 (Magdalene.com), indicating a need for strategic improvements to sustain growth.

Consumers are invaluable assets, so companies must understand behaviors like purchase intention. Spears & Singh (2004) define purchase intention as a consumer's plan to buy a brand, often driven by confidence in the product. This trust can be reinforced by strong brand equity, particularly brand awareness and perceived quality (Schmitt et al., 2010; Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). Brand awareness refers to the ability to recognize and recall a brand (Pegoraro et al., 2017; Sylvia & Ramli, 2023), while perceived quality is a consumer's overall evaluation of a product, influencing their purchase decisions.

Brand awareness and Perceived quality according to Homer (2008) are influenced by information and communication between consumers. Natalia and Aprillia, (2025) stated one form of information that is often accessed by consumers is word of mouth. Along with the development of digital technology, information can now be accessed more quickly and widely via the internet. One form of information is electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), which is an opinion or review that is spread online. Information obtained through E-WOM can influence consumer perceptions of brand image and product quality, which in turn becomes an important factor in making purchasing decisions. This research seeks to assess the impact of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on consumers' intention to make a purchase, by considering the role of brand awareness and perceived quality as intermediary variables, in the context of Sea Makeup cosmetic products in Semarang City. The issues raised are based on Sea Makeup's declining market share and low purchase intention among Semarang consumers, as seen from the pre-survey. This study uses a quantitative approach with survey methods through questionnaires and analysis with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) models through AMOS software (Nuzula & Wahyudi, 2022; Jeybi & Alfonsius, 2024). The relevance of this study lies in the context of the development of the local cosmetics industry in the digital era, where the power of online communication and brand perception determines marketing success. It is hoped that this research can contribute both theoretically in the development of digital marketing literature, as well as practically as a reference for more effective promotional strategies for business actors in the local beauty industry.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses the purpose of the literature review which represents the theoretical core of the article. Literature review not only presents a summary of previous relevant research, but also evaluates and synthesizes the work of others reviewed by researchers.

2.1. The Role of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Awareness

Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) has become a powerful communication tool in the digital era, significantly affecting how consumers perceive brands. Unlike traditional marketing channels, EWOM allows consumers to share their experiences, reviews, and opinions with a broad audience through various digital platforms, thus influencing brand awareness. According to Seo et al. (2020), positive EWOM disseminated through social media enhances brand impressions by shaping favorable consumer perceptions, which in turn builds stronger brand recognition. The interactive and viral nature of EWOM makes it easier for consumers to obtain relevant product information, increasing their familiarity with and recall of a brand (Goyette et al., 2010). Research by Ryzan et al. (2005) also reinforces the notion that EWOM significantly contributes to increasing brand awareness. This influence is rooted in the trust consumers place in peer-generated content, which often holds more credibility than direct advertising. As stated by Pegoraro et al. (2017), strategic use of digital communication platforms to stimulate EWOM can effectively raise public awareness and recognition of a brand.

The empirical findings of this study support the hypothesis that EWOM positively and significantly affects brand awareness. Based on the SEM analysis, the parameter estimate for this relationship is 0.359, with a critical ratio (CR) of 3.564 and a significance level of 0.001, indicating statistical significance. This result aligns with earlier theoretical assertions and highlights the strategic importance of EWOM in brand-building efforts, particularly in highly connected digital environments (Pahaganas et al., 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that EWOM serves as a critical factor in enhancing brand awareness, acting as both an informative and persuasive mechanism in consumers' decision-making processes.

H1: Word of Mouth has a significant effect on Brand Awareness.

2.2. The Role of Electronic Word of Mouth on Perceived Quality

Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) not only affects consumer awareness of a brand but also significantly shapes their perceptions of product quality. In a digital environment saturated with information, consumers often rely on the opinions and experiences of others to assess the credibility and reliability of a product. Positive EWOM—such as favorable reviews, testimonials, and user ratings—can enhance perceived quality by building consumer trust. As highlighted by Evgeniy et al. (2019), EWOM has a positive and significant effect on perceived quality, with user-generated content serving as a powerful validator of product excellence. The psychological mechanism behind this influence lies in the perceived authenticity and impartiality of EWOM. Unlike traditional advertising, EWOM is seen as more trustworthy, as it originates from fellow consumers who are presumed to have no vested interest. Yan et al. (2018) and Batjo et al. (2022) argue that such consumer-to-consumer communication reduces perceived risks, strengthens beliefs about product performance, and increases confidence in the product's ability to meet expectations.

Empirical evidence from this study confirms the significant impact of EWOM on perceived quality. The parameter estimate obtained is 0.353, with a critical ratio (CR) of 3.438 and a significance level of 0.001. These findings statistically support the second hypothesis (H2), indicating that EWOM effectively improves how consumers

evaluate product quality. EWOM functions as a critical driver of perceived product quality by influencing consumer beliefs through credible, user-based narratives. This influence becomes especially valuable in markets where direct product experience is limited, reinforcing EWOM's role in shaping consumer evaluations and eventual purchasing decisions (Homer, 2008; Garvin, 2010; Evgeniy et al. 2019).

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth has a significant effect on Perceived Quality.

2.3. The Role of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention

Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) has emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping consumer purchase behavior. Acting as a digital form of peer recommendation, EWOM offers potential buyers valuable insights into product performance, usability, and overall satisfaction. According to Yan et al. (2018), EWOM positively influences purchase intention, primarily because it functions as social proof—helping consumers reduce uncertainty in decision-making. Bataineh (2015); Farzin and Fattahi (2018) further emphasize that EWOM significantly impacts consumer desire to buy by enhancing brand credibility and perceived reliability. The current study reinforces these perspectives through empirical validation. The parameter estimate for the influence of EWOM on purchase intention is 0.235, with a critical ratio (CR) of 2.342 and a significance level of 0.019. These results indicate that the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted, showing a positive and significant relationship between EWOM and consumer purchase intention.

EWOM's strength lies in its ability to simulate real-life recommendations in a scalable digital format. As Seo et al. (2020) and Pradana et al. (2022) explain, consumers often view EWOM on social media and online platforms as more authentic than brand-generated advertising, thereby influencing their willingness to make a purchase. The accessibility and abundance of such information allow consumers to compare different opinions and experiences, building confidence in their choices. Thus, EWOM does not merely inform—it persuades. By creating a virtual community of endorsements, EWOM stimulates consumer interest and plays a vital role in driving purchasing decisions (Spears & Singh, 2004). This underscores its strategic importance in modern marketing and e-commerce.

H3: Word of Mouth has a significant effect on Purchase Intention.

2.4. The Role of Brand Awareness on Purchase Intention

Brand awareness plays a crucial role in influencing consumer purchase intention by enhancing recognition, familiarity, and trust toward a product or brand. When consumers are aware of a brand, they are more likely to consider it during the decision-making process, as it reduces the cognitive effort required to assess unfamiliar options. As Tan et al. (2021) Astuti and Rahmawati, (2023) point out, brand awareness creates a mental shortcut that guides consumer preferences, particularly in highly competitive markets. This study supports the positive relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention. The analysis reveals a parameter estimate of 0.477, with a critical ratio (CR) of 4.198 and a significance level of 0.001. This statistically confirms the fourth hypothesis (H4), indicating that increased brand awareness significantly boosts consumer likelihood to purchase.

Several mechanisms explain this effect. First, well-known brands are generally associated with consistent quality, which builds consumer trust (Sharifpour et al., 2016). Second, brand awareness improves recall and recognition, which are critical in environments crowded with competing messages. Pegoraro et al. (2017); Zahid and Ruswanti, (2024). Emphasize that digital platforms, especially social media, are instrumental in amplifying brand exposure, thereby increasing awareness and

indirectly influencing purchase intention. Furthermore, high brand awareness can reduce perceived risk, especially for first-time buyers. As consumers often equate familiarity with reliability, they are more inclined to choose brands they recognize. In conclusion, the strategic cultivation of brand awareness not only strengthens market presence but also directly impacts consumer purchasing decisions.

H4: Brand Awareness has a significant effect on Purchase Intention.

2.5. The Role of Perceived Quality on Purchase Intention

Perceived quality is a consumer's subjective evaluation of a product's overall excellence and is a critical determinant of purchase behavior. Unlike objective measures of quality, perceived quality is shaped by consumer expectations, brand associations, and prior experiences. Sultan et al. (2020) suggest that when consumers believe a product possesses superior quality, they are more inclined to buy it due to the value and satisfaction it promises. The findings of this study align with this view, revealing that perceived quality significantly influences purchase intention. The parameter estimate for this relationship is 0.549, with a critical ratio (CR) of 4.727 and a significance level of 0.001. This strongly supports the fifth hypothesis (H5), confirming that perceived quality is a powerful motivator of consumer buying decisions.

Several theoretical underpinnings support this relationship. According to Garvin (2010), quality encompasses multiple dimensions—such as performance, durability, and reliability—which consumers evaluate before making a purchase. When these perceptions are positive, they translate into higher purchase intention. Viopradina and Kempa (2021) also found that consumers are more likely to choose brands they perceive as offering better quality, particularly in markets where functional differentiation is limited. Perceived quality acts as a form of assurance, reducing doubts and enhancing confidence in the product's ability to meet needs. Therefore, businesses that focus on enhancing quality perceptions through effective marketing communication and customer experience management are more likely to increase consumer willingness to purchase.

H5: Perceived Quality has a significant effect on Purchase Intention.

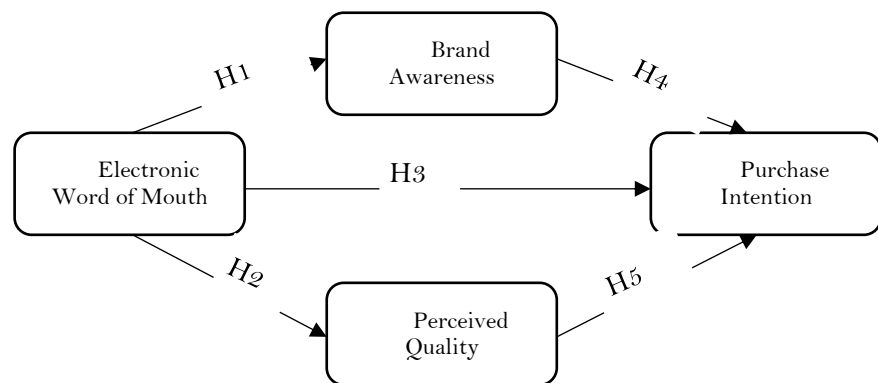


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methods

This research investigates four key variables: Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention. In the context of this study, purchase intention serves as the dependent variable, whereas

Electronic Word of Mouth functions as the independent variable. Brand awareness and perceived quality serve as intervening variables that mediate the relationship between EWOM and the final consumer decision. These variables are strategically selected due to their relevance and proven influence in contemporary consumer behavior literature, particularly in the digital marketing context. EWOM variables are measured through three indicators, namely intensity, opinion valence, and content, as proposed by Goyette et al. (2010). These indicators reflect the volume of information shared, the sentiment or tone of consumer opinions, and the substance of the shared message. Together, they provide a comprehensive overview of how electronic word of mouth circulates and influences online consumer communities.

For brand awareness, measurement is carried out using four indicators: brand recall, brand recognition, purchase intention, and consumption experience, referring to research by Dhurup et al. (2014). These indicators are essential for evaluating how familiar consumers are with a particular brand and how that familiarity translates into action. Perceived quality is assessed based on four aspects: product durability, variety, performance, and convenience, following the quality dimensions proposed by Garvin (2010). These dimensions are crucial in shaping consumer evaluations of a product and determining whether it meets or exceeds expectations. Meanwhile, the purchase intention variable is measured through four dimensions: interest in making transactions, interest in providing references, preference for products, and interest in exploring products, as described by Ferdinand (2006). These dimensions cover the breadth of consumer inclination toward purchasing, endorsing, and engaging with the product.

The population in this study comprised women aged 16 years and above. The method utilized for sampling is non-probability sampling, particularly a form known as purposive sampling. Respondent selection criteria include knowledge and experience of Sea Makeup cosmetic products and residency in Semarang City, ensuring that participants have relevant exposure to the brand. The analytical approach employed was Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which consists of seven key phases. These phases include creating a theoretical model, preparing the path diagram and structural equations, choosing the type of input matrix and estimation technique, identifying the model, assessing the goodness of fit metrics, interpreting the findings, and making adjustments to the model if needed. The analysis process was conducted using SPSS AMOS software version 24.0, which enables robust modeling and validation of complex causal relationships among variables.

4. Results

This study involved 135 respondents from three different age groups, with a dominance of the age group 16-24 years as many as 105 people. The majority of respondents are students, reaching 94 people or around 69.6%, followed by the employee group as many as 24 people (17.8%). In terms of monthly expenditure on cosmetics, the most respondents were recorded in the range of Rp100,100 to Rp250,000, with a total of 45 individuals (33.3%), while the second largest expenditure was in the range of Rp250,100 to Rp350,000 which involved 37 individuals (27.4%) of the overall respondents.

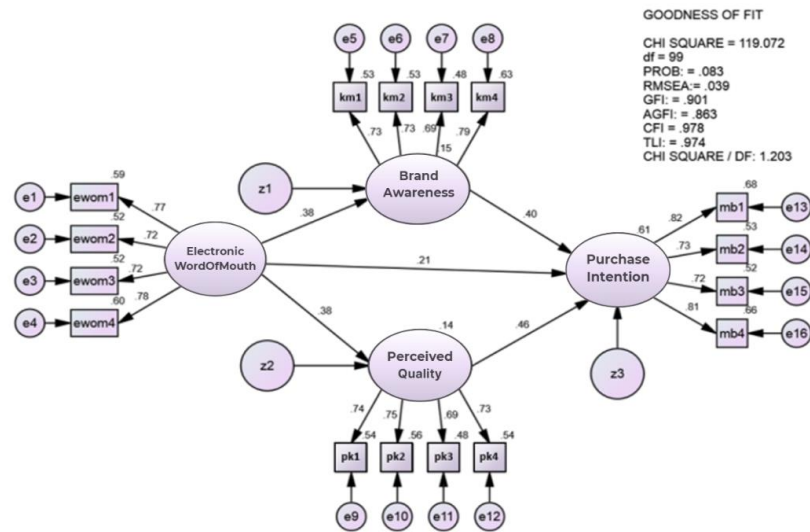


Figure 2. Full Structural Model Results

The image presents the results of a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, illustrating the relationships between variables in a study examining the influence of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) on purchase intention, with brand awareness and perceived quality acting as mediating variables. Each latent variable is measured through several observed indicators. For instance, E-WOM is measured using four indicators (ewom1–ewom4), brand awareness through four items (km1–km4), perceived quality by four dimensions (pk1–pk4), and purchase intention by four components (mb1–mb4). The numbers above the arrows indicate loading factors, representing the strength of each indicator's contribution to its respective construct. The model also displays path coefficients between latent variables. E-WOM shows a positive influence on brand awareness (0.38), perceived quality (0.38), and directly on purchase intention (0.21). The strongest effect is observed from perceived quality to purchase intention (0.46), suggesting that consumers' perception of quality plays a crucial role in shaping their buying interest. In the top right corner, the goodness of fit indices are reported, including RMSEA = 0.039, CFI = 0.978, and TLI = 0.974, all of which fall within acceptable thresholds, indicating an excellent model fit. This confirms that the proposed theoretical model is statistically sound and appropriate for testing the causal relationships among the studied variables.

Table 1. SEM Model Feasibility Test Results

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Results	Model Evaluation
Chi – Square	Small (<195.973)	119.072	Good
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.083	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.039	Good
Chi Square / df	≤ 1.20	1.203	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.901	Good
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.863	Marginal
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.978	Good
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.974	Good

The results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the overall structural model are presented in Table 1. Based on the Goodness of Fit criteria, this model shows results that exceed the required cut-off values. The chi-square value is 119.072

with a probability of 0.083 which is above the 0.05 threshold. The GFI, TLI, and CFI indices each showed numbers above 0.90, namely GFI of 0.901, TLI of 0.974, and CFI of 0.978. Meanwhile, the RMSEA value of 0.039 is still below the maximum limit of 0.08, thus fulfilling the eligibility criteria. However, the AGFI value of 0.863 is still slightly below the cut-off limit. Overall, these results indicate that the model used can be categorised as a fit model.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

		Estimate	Std Est	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand Awareness	<-- Electronic WOM	0.359	0.385	0.101	3.564	***
Perceived Quality	<-- Electronic WOM	0.353	0.381	0.103	3.438	***
Purchase Intention	<-- Electronic WOM	0.235	0.212	0.100	2.342	0.019
Purchase Intention	<-- Brand Awareness	0.477	0.402	0.114	4.198	***
Purchase Intention	<-- Perceived Quality	0.549	0.461	0.116	4.727	***

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis regarding the significant influence between variables with a significance level of 0.05. Each indicator has a critical ratio value that exceeds 1.96, so it can be concluded that the indicators are able to represent the variables they measure well. Therefore, the model for endogenous constructs is declared feasible. In addition, the loading factor values of the indicators in this model are all above 0.50, which indicates that the model has met the Convergent Validity criteria. The results presented in the table indicate a significant relationship between the Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) variable and both brand awareness and perceived quality. Furthermore, E-WOM, brand awareness, and perceived quality are all found to have a significant effect on purchase intention. The table presents the results of hypothesis testing using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), highlighting the direct and indirect effects between Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention. The "Estimate" column shows the unstandardized regression coefficients, while "Std Est" provides the standardized estimates, which facilitate comparison across paths. The "S.E." (standard error), "C.R." (critical ratio), and "P" (significance value) indicate the statistical strength and significance of each relationship.

The results reveal that E-WOM has a statistically significant and positive effect on both brand awareness (standardized estimate = 0.385, $p < 0.001$) and perceived quality (0.381, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, E-WOM has a direct but smaller effect on purchase intention (0.212, $p = 0.019$), indicating that while E-WOM directly influences consumers' willingness to purchase, its impact is stronger when mediated through other variables. Notably, both brand awareness and perceived quality significantly influence purchase intention, with perceived quality (0.461) exerting a slightly stronger effect than brand awareness (0.402). These findings imply that E-WOM not only directly shapes consumer buying intentions but also enhances their perception of the brand and its quality, which in turn drives stronger purchase intentions. The significant critical ratios (all above 1.96) and p-values (mostly < 0.001) support the robustness of these relationships. Hence, the model demonstrates that both mediating variables play an essential role in strengthening the effect of E-WOM on consumer behavior.

5. Discussion

The results of the analysis show that the electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) variable is measured using three main indicators. Based on Table 2, the estimated value of the parameter of the influence of electronic word of mouth on brand

awareness is 0.359 with a critical ratio (CR) value of 3.564. This CR value exceeds the minimum limit of 1.96 with a significance level of 0.001. Thus, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis (H1) is accepted and accepted. These results indicate that Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness. The estimated value of the parameter of the influence of electronic word of mouth on perceived quality is 0.353 with a critical ratio (CR) value of 3.438. The CR value exceeds the minimum limit required, which is more than 1.96 and is supported by a significance level of 0.001. Thus, the second hypothesis (H2) can be accepted. Kurniawati and Nuvriasari (2024) stated that in other words, electronic word of mouth is proven to have a positive and significant effect on perceived quality. In addition, the estimated parameter of the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on consumer purchasing interest is 0.235, with a critical ratio (CR) of 2.342. Because this CR value exceeds the minimum threshold of 1.96 and a significance level of 0.019, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted. In agreement with Ferdiansyah et al. (2025) these results indicate that E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchasing interest.

Appearance significantly influences daily life, boosting demand for cosmetics, especially among women. Indonesia's cosmetics industry, dominated by small and medium enterprises (83%), is growing rapidly with 1,292 companies by 2024 and a global market value projected at USD 677.2 billion by 2025 (Kemenperin, 2023). Sea Makeup, a local brand popular on Shopee and TikTok Shop, saw a 25% sales drop in early 2025, indicating a need for better marketing strategies (Magdalene.com, 2025). Purchase intention, or the consumer's plan to buy driven by trust, is shaped by brand equity—particularly brand awareness and perceived quality (Spears & Singh, 2004; Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) influences these factors by spreading online reviews that affect consumer perceptions and decisions (Homer, 2008; Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). Studying E-WOM's effect on purchase intention with brand awareness and perceived quality as mediators offers valuable insights for local brands like Sea Makeup to enhance competitiveness in the digital era (Seo et al., 2020).

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on purchase intention through brand awareness and perceived quality, focusing on Sea Makeup cosmetic products. The research tested five hypotheses involving four variables. The results show that E-WOM has a significant and positive effect on brand awareness, meaning that increased positive E-WOM activity raises consumer recognition of Sea Makeup, while decreased E-WOM weakens brand perception. Similarly, E-WOM positively influences consumer perceptions of product quality; positive online reviews enhance perceived quality, whereas negative feedback lowers it. Furthermore, E-WOM directly affects purchase intention—more positive reviews boost consumers' willingness to buy, while negative information diminishes it. Brand awareness and perceived quality themselves also significantly increase purchase intention, as greater recognition and trust lead consumers to prefer Sea Makeup products.

However, the study has limitations that affect the generalizability of its findings. The sample was limited to women aged 16 and above from Semarang City, with a majority being students (69.6%) and young adults aged 16-24 (77.8%), resulting in a skewed demographic. Additionally, incomplete responses to open-ended questions may have reduced data richness. Despite these constraints, the study highlights the crucial role of E-WOM, brand awareness, and perceived quality in shaping consumer purchase intentions, offering valuable insights for cosmetic brands aiming to improve marketing strategies in a competitive digital landscape.

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