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THE SOCIAL PROOF EFFECT: DOES BRAND IMAGE REALLY MATTER IN GEN Z'S SUNSCREEN CHOICES?

EFEK BUKTI SOSIAL: APAKAH CITRA MEREK BENAR-BENAR BERPENGARUH DALAM PILIHAN TABIR SURYA GENERASI Z?

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era, characterized by incessant global transformation, virtually every facet of society is undergoing profound change. In the domain of marketing, a salient trend has come to the fore: the mounting significance of buyer-seller interactions as a pivotal element in influencing purchase intent. The cosmetics industry, a sector of particular interest, exemplifies this dynamic shift, as it is closely linked to the formation of trust between consumers and the effectiveness of the products offered. The present study endeavors to furnish empirical evidence concerning the role of brand image in mediating interactivity and E-WOM in Gen-Z's purchasing decisions regarding Azarine sunscreen in Singkawang City. This study utilizes purposive sampling techniques to select respondents, with a final sample size of 100. The collected data was then analyzed using the Smart PLS 4 analysis method with SEM-PLS. The present study demonstrates that interactivity and E-WOM do not directly influence purchase intention; nevertheless, both significantly improve brand image. Brand image exerts a pivotal influence on purchase intention, thereby mediating the impact of interactivity and E-WOM. These findings align with social evidence demonstrating the strategic role of brand image in influencing consumer purchase intention.
Keywords: *Interactivity, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), Brand Image, Purchase Intention, Generation Z*

ABSTRAK

Di era kontemporer yang ditandai dengan transformasi global yang tak henti-hentinya, hampir setiap aspek masyarakat mengalami perubahan yang mendalam. Di bidang pemasaran, tren yang menonjol telah muncul: meningkatnya pentingnya interaksi antara pembeli dan penjual sebagai elemen kunci dalam mempengaruhi niat pembelian. Industri kosmetik, sektor yang menarik perhatian khusus, menjadi contoh pergeseran dinamis ini, karena erat kaitannya dengan pembentukan kepercayaan antara konsumen dan efektivitas produk yang ditawarkan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyediakan bukti empiris mengenai peran citra merek dalam memediasi interaktivitas dan E-WOM dalam keputusan pembelian Gen-Z terhadap tabir surya Azarine di Kota Singkawang. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik sampling purposif untuk memilih responden, dengan ukuran sampel akhir sebanyak 100. Data yang dikumpulkan kemudian dianalisis menggunakan metode analisis Smart PLS 4 dengan SEM-PLS. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa interaktivitas dan E-WOM tidak secara langsung mempengaruhi niat pembelian; namun, keduanya secara signifikan meningkatkan citra merek. Citra merek memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap niat pembelian, sehingga memediasi dampak interaktivitas dan E-WOM. Temuan ini sejalan dengan bukti sosial yang menunjukkan peran strategis citra merek dalam mempengaruhi niat pembelian konsumen.
Kata Kunci: Interaktivitas, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), Citra Merek, Niat Pembelian, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

Introduction contains brief and concise research backgrounds, and objectives. Theoretical support is included in this section, similar research that has been done can be stated.

In the era of digitalization, market competition has become increasingly intense, compelling companies to continuously innovate in capturing consumer attention. This phenomenon is evident in the skincare industry, which has experienced rapid growth

characterized by the emergence of fast beauty trends and marketing strategies oriented toward brand image development. Skincare products offer not only functional benefits for skin health but also emotional value through a strong brand identity. The diversity of skin-related issues among consumers creates opportunities for brands to establish a distinctive positioning and achieve top-of-mind awareness. One of the local brands that has successfully built a strong brand image amidst this competitive environment is Azarine.

Alongside technological advancements, social media has emerged as a primary platform for consumer–brand interactions. Interactivity occurring through two-way communication, such as comments and user-generated reviews, significantly shapes consumer perceptions of products. In this context, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) serves as a crucial mechanism affecting purchase decision from the consumer. Tang (2020) emphasized that interactivity enhances decision-making quality, particularly when consumers face complex tasks. However, the study by Tajuddin et al. (2020) reported that brand image does not moderate the correlation between E-WOM and purchase intention, suggesting inconsistencies in the role of brand image across different contexts.

Research that was done by Masakazu et al. (2025) demonstrated that interactivity, E-WOM, and brand image significantly influence purchase decisions, with brand image functioning as a mediating factor that strengthens the effects of interactivity and E-WOM on purchase intention. This finding underscores the importance of brand image not merely as a supportive element but as a key driver in maximizing the impact of digital communication on consumer behavior. Nevertheless, Tang (2020) argued that the effectiveness of interactivity is contingent upon media complexity, indicating that its influence may vary across different platforms. Similarly, Zahid and Ruswanti (2024) confirmed the significant effects of E-WOM and brand image on purchase decisions, yet Tajuddin et al. (2020) and Andani (2024) presented contradictory results, where E-WOM does not show any significant effect towards purchase intention. These discrepancies highlight an unresolved debate in the literature, warranting further empirical investigation.

Given these inconsistencies and the evolving digital landscape, a research gap exists in examining the mediating role of brand image within the correlation between interactivity, E-WOM, and purchase intention, particularly in the context of local skincare brands. Previous studies have predominantly focused on fashion industries or generalized contexts, limiting their applicability to skincare brands targeting generation z, a cohort known for its digital savviness and distinct consumption behavior. Therefore, this study aims to proof the mediating role of brand image on enhancing the relationship between interactivity, E-WOM, and purchase intention concerning Azarine sunscreen among Generation Z consumers.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on digital marketing, particularly regarding the strategic role of brand image as a mediator of consumer behavioral intentions in an online interaction context. Practically, the findings will provide actionable insights for skincare companies to design more effective marketing strategies that leverage interactivity and

consumer reviews to attract and retain generation z consumers, who represent a significant and growing segment in the skincare market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

A consumer's propensity to acquire a product is known as purchase intention (Sartika, 2021). Purchase intention, according to Resmawa (2017), denotes the point at which customers assess the information they have been given and consider making a possible purchase of a good or service. One of the actualizations or realizations that result from consumer purchasing behavior is consumer purchase intent. Therefore, consumer behavior theory can be used to explain purchase intent for a skincare product.

Interactivity

The results of the study by Rosuda and Samingan (2023) indicate that there is no connection between brand perceived interactivity and purchasing decisions. This claim runs counter to research by Firdaus et al. (2021), which shows that consumers place a high value on interactivity. According to the previously mentioned research, a responsive brand is communicated through interactivity, as demonstrated by the brand's interactions with customers on social media. According to the research, this interaction increases consumers' propensity to make purchases. In light of this contradiction, the researchers put forth the following hypothesis:

H_1 : Interactivity has a positive influence on purchase intention.

E-WOM

Research by Tajuddin et al. (2020) indicates that the quality, quantity, and expertise of E-WOM senders significantly influence purchase intention. These results highlight the critical role that electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) plays in influencing consumer purchase intention, especially in light of the widespread use of social media, which speeds up the exchange of information. As a result, E-WOM can act as a resource for customers, giving them a variety of viewpoints from other customers before they make a purchase. However, research by Mehyar et al. (2020) produced contradictory findings, namely that purchase intention is not significantly influenced by the credibility of E-WOM. These results demonstrate the existence of additional crucial elements that influence consumers' purchase intentions, such as the quality of reviews, which is based on the transparency, usefulness, and dependability of online reviews. Contradictory results about the effect of E-WOM on consumers' purchase intentions are found in a review of the content of previously published literature. In light of these conflicting findings, the present study puts forth the following hypothesis:

H_2 : E-WOM has a positive influence on purchase intention.

Brand Image

The internet has had a significant impact over the past 20 years. It has encouraged the growth of e-commerce websites, which has caused a change in consumer behavior toward online shopping. Additionally, Web 2.0 has incorporated interactive elements into Web 1.0. Numerous studies have shown that social media is an important application of Web 2.0 (Yadav and Rahman, 2017). Social media is essential because it provides a platform for consumer-brand interaction. It is evident that consistent and amicable interaction exerts a discernible influence

on a company's brand image. This assertion is corroborated by Yoo et al. (2015), who conceptualized interactivity as the dynamic interaction between consumers and brands through E-WOM, functioning as an intermediary. Research conducted by Yulianto et al. (2024) confirms that interactivity between brands and consumers is a crucial factor in social media for driving new progress in brand awareness, brand trust, and brand image. Nevertheless, research conducted by Widodo and Umarullah (2020) yielded different results, asserting that User Control, as one component of interactivity, exerts no significant effect on brand image. In accordance with the aforementioned literacy framework, the researchers hereby propose the following hypothesis:

H_3 : Interactivity has a positive influence on brand image.

Brand image has been demonstrated to be significantly shaped by electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), a type of digital communication (Wiryokusumo et al., 2021). The results of a previous study by Putera and Warmika (2020), which found that E-WOM has a significant and positive impact on brand image, further support this assertion. The findings of a study by Badir and Andjarwati (2020), which found that electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) does not significantly affect purchasing intention, contradict this claim. The influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) differs from that of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) because E-WOM employs online media, which results in minimal interaction between the information provider and recipient. Furthermore, the interaction that occurs is limited to written comments, which raises concerns about the credibility of the information shared. Therefore, a variable that can support E-WOM is required, namely brand image. According to the theoretical framework previously mentioned, the researcher hereby presents the following hypothesis:

H_4 : E-WOM has a positive influence on brand image.

Brand image and purchase intention are positively and significantly correlated, according to Ulan et al. (2022). It has been demonstrated that improving brand image increases consumer purchase intentions. Positive consumer perceptions are largely influenced by brand image (Chrysnaputra, 2020). This claim, however, is at odds with the results of Hariyanto and Wijaya (2022), who found that purchase intention is not significantly influenced by brand image. Based on this theory, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

H_5 : Brand image has a positive influence on purchase intention.

According to the findings of Purba and Jahja (2024), brand image has been determined to function as a mediator between social media marketing, which is considered part of interactivity, and consumers' purchase intention. A higher positive response is indicative of an increase in purchasing intention, and vice versa. Social media has been identified as a medium that fosters trust, credibility, and social proof validation, as well as influences audiences. In this study, researchers seek to further analyze the role of brand image as a mediator in the interactivity variable, focusing on social media's capacity to provide feedback on purchasing intention. Moreover, as indicated by the findings of Shafitry and Octaviani (2024), brand image does not exert a substantial influence on E-WOM as a mediator of purchasing intention. This finding stands in contrast to the conclusions of the study conducted by

Masakazu et al. (2025), which posits that brand image can function as a mediator between E-WOM and purchase intention. In consideration of the aforementioned implications, the researcher hereby proposes the following hypothesis:

H_6 : Brand image has the ability to mediate the impact of interactivity on purchase intention.

H_7 : Brand image has the ability to mediate the impact of E-WOM on purchase intention.

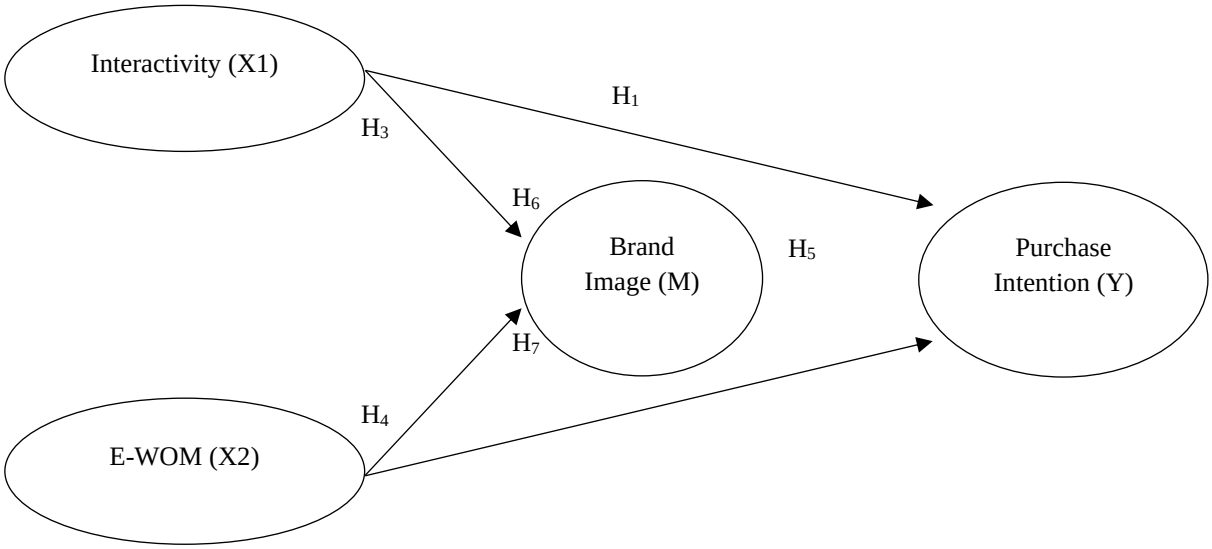

Figure 1. ***Research Model***
Source: Research Output (2025)

RESEARCH METHODS

The sample population in question comprises Gen-Z individuals residing in Singkawang City, who have been selected based on the purposive sampling approach. According to Sugiyono's (2022:143) findings, when conducting a multivariate analysis, such as a correlation or multiple regression analysis, the minimum required sample size is determined as the square root of the number of independent variables. The present study examines four variables, thus resulting in a sample size of 40. According to the preceding computations, a sample size of 40 from the Gen-Z population is necessary to satisfy the normal distribution assumption. Nevertheless, in the present study, the researcher will utilize a sample size of 100 respondents. In this study, researchers employed a non-probability sampling technique, whereby all members of the population are accorded an equal probability of being selected as samples (Valerry et al., 2021).

The measurement tool employed in this study was the Likert scale. According to Santika et al. (2023), the Likert scale is a methodological approach utilized to assess the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of individuals and groups. In the calculation process, the researcher will provide questions with answer options ranging from negative/lowest to positive/highest. The respondents' answers will be processed into data. The Likert scale ranges from 1 to 5, with 5 representing the highest possible score and 1 representing the lowest possible score.

The collected data underwent analysis using Structural Equation

Modelling – Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). Given the intricacies inherent in the structural model, the utilization of SEM-PLS was deemed essential to optimize the model's predictive capacity and elucidate the pivotal constructs that influence voters' inclination to select their preferred political candidate.

The collection of samples will be executed through a questionnaire distribution method that will be administered online via the Google Form platform. The selection of this method was predicated on its capacity to enable respondents to complete the questionnaire at a time and location of their choosing. The measurement of these constructs will be based on a study adapted from Masakazu et al. (2025) on the variables of interactivity, E-WOM, and brand image on purchase intention, with a total of 25 items that will be adjusted to the researcher's study.

The SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Modelling - Partial Least Squares) data analysis method was employed in this study, with the implementation of SmartPLS 4 software. Smart PLS was employed for data sets that exhibited non-normal distribution. Furthermore, goodness of fit was not a prerequisite for parameter estimation (Boubker & Douayri, 2020). This technique is frequently employed in the fields of management and marketing studies to examine causal relationships based on theoretical models and actual data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Validity Test

According to Sugiyono (2022: 175), the term "valid results" refers to those that demonstrate a similarity between the collected data and the actual data. Convergent validity is employed to ascertain the validity of each relationship between indicators and constructs or latent variables. Convergent validity is a concept that both underpins and represents a latent variable (Ghozali, 2016). According to Haryono (2016), a loading factor's significance depends on whether or not it reaches a value of ≥ 0.50.

The results of the factor loadings analysis for this study indicate that 24 statements related to interactivity, E-WOM, brand image, and purchase intention variables have factor loadings ≥ 0.50 and Y1.6 ≤ 0.50. Therefore, the 25th item will be deleted. Consequently, the 24 items in question are deemed valid. These findings suggest that the instrument statements effectively measure the correlation between the instrument scores and the variables, thereby strengthening the construct validity of the measurement model.

Table 1. ***Factor Loading Test Result***

Scale Items	Factor Loading
Interactivity	
1. Azarine's social media platforms effectively collect feedback from visitors like me.	0.766
2. I feel like Azarine's social media platforms genuinely interested in hearing my opinions and feedback	0.756
3. Azarine's social media platforms encourage me to provide feedback on their product and services	0.751
4. Azarine's social media platforms provide opportunities for me to engage in discussions and express my views	0.709
5. Azarine's social media platforms facilitate effective two-way communication between visitors and the brand	0.570
E-WOM	
1. I can easily find detailed information about Azarine sunscreen product on social	0.638

media platforms	
2. Social media platforms allow me to easily interact with other users who have experience with Azarine sunscreen products	0.614
3. I find substantial number of user-generated reviews about Azarine sunscreen products on social networking sites	0.574
4. I frequently see positive comments about Azarine sunscreen products from other users on social media	0.575
5. I often come across recommendations and suggestions for Azarine sunscreen products from other users on social media	0.761
6. The information I find on social media about Azarine sunscreen product is both high quality and helpful in assesing the price suitability	0.652
Brand Image	
1. I feel a positive emotional connection with the Azarine brand	0.715
2. I feel a sense of loyalty towards the Azarine brand	0.778
3. Azarine has a strong reputation as a reliable and trustworthy brand	0.653
4. Azarine is a leading brand in the sunscreen market	0.529
5. I believe Azarine sunscreen products are superior to other brands	0.688
6. Azarine sunscreen products offer better value than other brands	0.709
7. Azarine sunscreen products are unique and stand out from other brands	0.749
8. Azarine has a distinct and recognizable brand identity	0.633
Purchase Intention	
1. Using Azarine sunscreen aligns with my lifestyle and personal needs.	0.714
2. I intend to purchase Azarine sunscreen products in the future	0.682
3. If I use sunscreen regularly, I would choose Azarine over other brands	0.607
4. I would recommend Azarine sunscreen products to my friends and family	0.626
5. Azarine is a brand I would consider when purchasing sunscreen in the future	0.668
6. I would purchase Azarine sunscreen from a trusted seller	0.371

Source: Masakazu et al. (2025)

The findings, based on cross-loading testing, indicated that the correlation values between the indicators and the cross-loading variables in the interactivity, E-WOM, brand image, and purchase intention variables were greater than those between the indicators and other variables. The results of the discriminant validity test demonstrated consistent figures, with all indicators declared valid. This finding suggests that the model employed is well-suited for the task at hand and can effectively differentiate between different constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measuring instruments utilized in this study are valid.

Table 2. ***Cross Loading Test Result***

Code	Interactivity	E-WOM	Brand Image	Purchase Intention	Decision
X1.1	**0.767**	0.367	0.538	0.503	Valid
X1.2	**0.759**	0.530	0.525	0.517	Valid
X1.3	**0.748**	0.447	0.521	0.482	Valid
X1.4	**0.710**	0.541	0.538	0.506	Valid
X1.5	**0.566**	0.447	0.441	0.286	Valid
X2.1	0.399	**0.632**	0.310	0.246	Valid
X2.2	0.436	**0.607**	0.373	0.312	Valid
X2.3	0.298	**0.574**	0.273	0.242	Valid
X2.4	0.320	**0.573**	0.370	0.366	Valid
X2.5	0.473	**0.764**	0.524	0.547	Valid
X2.6	0.514	**0.659**	0.478	0.501	Valid

X3.1.1	0.572	0.427	**0.715**	0.540	Valid
X3.1.2	0.566	0.448	**0.777**	0.629	Valid
X3.2.1	0.452	0.501	**0.654**	0.555	Valid
X3.2.2	0.404	0.521	**0.529**	0.450	Valid
X3.3.1	0.470	0.402	**0.689**	0.634	Valid
X3.3.2	0.525	0.362	**0.713**	0.614	Valid
X3.4.1	0.497	0.404	**0.748**	0.523	Valid
X3.4.2	0.440	0.522	**0.631**	0.527	Valid
Y1.1	0.499	0.376	0.580	**0.722**	Valid
Y1.2	0.463	0.419	0.528	**0.699**	Valid
Y1.3	0.426	0.337	0.581	**0.597**	Valid
Y1.4	0.381	0.431	0.502	**0.660**	Valid
Y1.5	0.416	0.511	0.554	**0.675**	Valid

Source: Research Output (2025)

Reliability Test

In the context under consideration, the term "reliable" is understood to denote the attainment of data consistency across disparate time periods (Sugiyono, 2022: 175). Reliability of an instrument is determined by the magnitude of Cronbach's Alpha. Values greater than 0.6 are indicative of a reliable instrument.

As presented in the above table, the Cronbach's Alpha values were ascertained to be 0.756 for construct/variable interactivity, 0.713 for the E-WOM, 0.836 for brand image, and 0.694 for purchase intention. It was determined through the application of Cronbach's alpha analysis that the value of the Cronbach's alpha for each variable exceeded 0.60. Consequently, the study found that all variables demonstrated adequate reliability.

Table 3. ***Cronbach's Alpha Test Result***

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Interactivity	0.756	Reliable
E-WOM	0.713	Reliable
Brand Image	0.836	Reliable
Purchase Intention	0.694	Reliable

Source: Research Output (2025)

Model Fit

Within the paradigm of model fit validation assessment, a range of evaluations is conducted, encompassing SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), d-ULS, d-G, Chi Square, and NFI. The term SRMR is defined as the square root of the difference between the residuals from the sample covariance matrix and the hypothetical covariance model. As posited by Yamin (2022), this value functions as a metric for model fit, defined as the discrepancy between the data correlation matrix and the estimated model correlation matrix. Santoso and Rahardjo (2021) posit that an SRMR value less than 0.10 indicates an acceptable model fit. In addition to SRMR, other relevant metrics include d-ULS, d-G, and Chi Square, which are components of the model fit test.

Preliminary findings, as indicated by the model fit test table, suggest the potential for this model to analyze the relationship between latent variables. This is predicated on the assumption that the model accurately reflects the

data and possesses relevant predictive capabilities. An SRMS value of 0.097 < 0.10 indicates a satisfactory match between the observed data and the hypothesized model. This indicates that the observed covariance matrix and the model covariance matrix are closely aligned, suggesting that the model provides a satisfactory fit. The D-ULS value is 2.823 ≥ 0.05, indicating that the model structure does not deviate significantly and is deemed acceptable. This condition suggests that the model approximates the ideal relationship expected from the data. The value of d-G is 1.156 ≥ 0.05, indicating that the model exhibits a satisfactory global fit and the model relationship does not demonstrate substantial discrepancies from the actual data. The resultant chi-squared value of 557.454 exceeds the tabulated chi-squared value of 36.415, thereby demonstrating a significant departure from the expected distribution. This finding suggests that the model exhibits a strong degree of fit with the sample data, and the model's structural design effectively elucidates the interrelationships among the variables. As a result, the model used in this research is considered suitable. The NFI value of 0.542 is proximate to 1, indicating that the model exhibits a satisfactory degree of suitability, though it does not attain optimal levels. This model condition remains adequate for the purpose of data description.

Table 4. ***Model Fit***

Parameter	Provision	Parameter Value	Decision
SRMR	< 0.10	0.097	Fit
d-ULS	≥ 0.05	2.823	Fit
d-G	≥ 0.05	1.156	Fit
Chi Square	X^2 Statistics ≥ X^2 Table	557.454 ≥ 36.415	Fit
NFI	± 1	0.542	Fit

Source: Research Output (2025)

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The inner model utilizes the R^2 statistic, which is commonly referred to as the "R^2 test," to determine how well the independent variables are explained by the model. According to Haryono (2016), the established criteria for the R^2 test classification is as follows: an R^2 value of 0.67 is considered to be strong, an R^2 value of 0.33 is considered to be moderate, and an R^2 value of 0.19 is considered to be weak.

The results listed in Table 4 show that the Brand Image variable had an R-Square value of 0.556. This result implies that 56.6% of the brand image construct can be explained by the independent variables in the model, with other factors influencing the remaining 43.4%. The Purchase Intention variable, on the other hand, showed a result of 0.691, meaning that the independent variables included in the model account for 69.1% of the observed variance in this variable. The residual of 30.9% is deemed as external factors. This value indicates a moderate relationship. The model demonstrates proficiency in the explanation of the majority of factors influencing variable outcomes, excluding those originating from external sources. The phenomenon can be attributed to marketing's dynamic nature, which is characterized by the perpetual evolution of consumer preferences and mindsets, particularly

within the context of the digital landscape.

Table 5. Coefficient of determination (R-Square) test result

Dependent Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Image	0.566	0.557
Purchase Intention	0.691	0.682

Source: Research Output (2025)

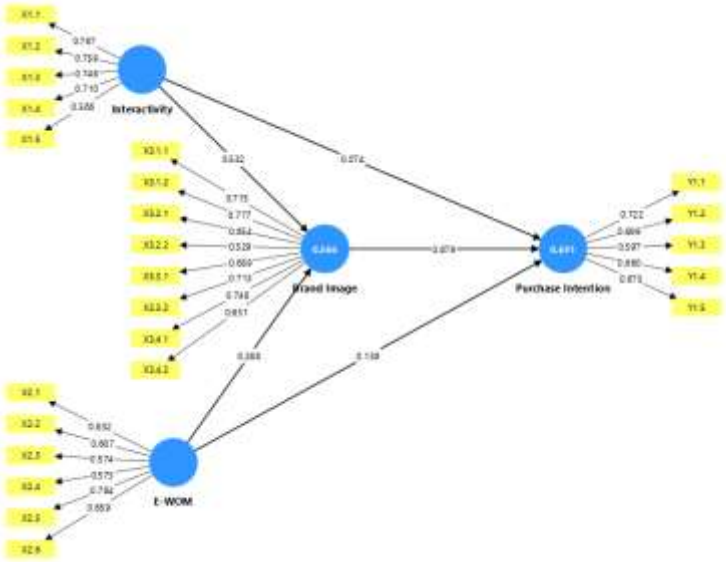

Figure 2. ***Output SEM-PLS Algorithm R Square (R2)***

Source: Research Output

Hypothesis Test

Table 6. ***Direct Effect Test Result***

Hypothesis	β	T Values	P Values	Decision
H1. Interactivity -> Purchase Intention	0.074	0.511	0.305	Rejected
H2. E-WOM -> Purchase Intention	0.139	1.432	0.076	Rejected
H3. Interactivity -> Brand Image	0.532	3.465	0.000	Accepted
H4. E-WOM -> Brand Image	0.288	1.977	0.024	Accepted
H5. Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.679	5.275	0.000	Accepted

Source: Research Output

The results show that interactivity has little effect on purchase intention, as shown by the β value of 0.074, the T value of 0.511 (less than 1.64), and the P value of 0.305 (greater than 0.05). The results of this study point to a non-linear relationship between purchase intention and interactivity, whereby an increase in interactivity causes a decrease in purchase intention. This result implies that the Azarine brand's interactive elements have little effect. Even though Azarine regularly creates cohesive relationships on social media, Purchase Intention is not significantly impacted by these interactions. Based on the previously mentioned findings, H1 is therefore rejected.

The findings indicate that E-WOM exerts a negligible influence on Purchase Intention, as evidenced by a β value of 0.139, a T value of 1.432 < 1.64, and a P value of 0.076 > 0.05. The findings of this study suggest a non-linear relationship between E-WOM and Purchase Intention, indicating that an increase in E-WOM is associated with a decrease in Purchase Intention. This finding indicates that, despite the abundance of favorable commentary regarding Azarine sunscreen on social media platforms, consumers' purchasing

decisions continue to necessitate further scrutiny. One potential explanation for this phenomenon is that consumers exhibit a preference for opinions from their immediate social circle (i.e., family and friends) over reviews from unknown online sources. In light of the aforementioned findings, the H2 hypothesis can be rejected.

The results show that brand image is significantly improved by interactivity. A significant beta value of 0.532, a highly statistically significant t value of 3.465, and a p value of 0.000 less than 0.05 all support this claim. The results show that brand image and interactivity are directly correlated. This implies that a higher level of interaction is linked to a better brand image. Positive comments and YouTube advertisements show that there is constant interaction. It is clear that H3 is supported by the previously mentioned findings.

The β value of 0.288, T value of 1.977 > 1.64, and P value of 0.024 < 0.05 indicate that E-WOM has a significant positive impact on brand image. This study provides a fresh viewpoint on the connection between brand image and E-WOM. The findings suggest a direct and statistically significant correlation between the two variables, indicating that an augmentation in E-WOM will concomitantly lead to an enhancement in Brand Image. The phenomenon is further compounded by the experiences of loyal consumers. Through their testimonies, these consumers contribute to the dissemination of information regarding Azarine sunscreen. This, in turn, exerts a significant influence on the brand's image. In consideration of the aforementioned findings, it can be concluded that the H4 model is substantiated.

The β value of 0.679, the T value of 5.275 (above 1.64), and the P value of 0.000 (less than 0.05) show that brand image has a significant positive impact on purchase intention. According to the current study, purchase intention and brand image are directly correlated. This suggests that purchase intention rises in tandem with improved brand image. The results indicate that consumer behavior is significantly influenced by brand image, leading them to buy Azarine sunscreen. One could argue that Azarine's strategic positioning as a brand that appeals to consumers, especially members of Generation Z, further supports this claim. The conclusion of H5 is strongly supported by the findings.

Table 7. ***Indirect Effect Test Result***

Hypothesis	β	T Values	P Values	Decision
H6. Interactivity -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.361	4.055	0.000	Accepted
H7. E-WOM -> Brand Image -> Purchase Intention	0.196	1.658	0.049	Accepted

Source: Research Output (2025)

The findings of the present study demonstrate that interactivity exerts a significant indirect effect on purchase intention through brand image, with a β value of 0.361, a T value of 4.055 (>1.64), and a P value of 0.000 (<0.05). This finding indicates that effective interactivity can enhance brand image, which in turn can contribute to increased purchase intention. The interactive communication between consumers and Azarine in building the brand has rendered it highly relevant to consumers. Azarine's business strategy encompasses not only the pursuit of profit but also the establishment of emotional connections with consumers. This approach engenders a brand image that is readily recognized by enthusiasts of sunscreen products, exerting a considerable influence on consumers' purchase intentions. The direct

relationship between interactivity and purchase intention is non-significant. Instead, brand image acts as full mediation, indicating that brand image strengthens the influence of interactivity on purchase intention. In view of these findings, it can be concluded that H6 is accepted.

The results of the analysis indicate that E-WOM exerts a positive and statistically significant indirect effect on purchase intention, functioning as a mediator through brand image. The existence of an indirect effect is supported by the observed β value of 0.196, the T value of 1.658 (greater than 1.64), and the P value of 0.049 (less than 0.05). The results of this study suggest that the role of E-WOM in influencing Purchase Intention through Brand Image has been statistically substantiated. This finding suggests that a robust brand image can function as a positive mediator for E-WOM, thereby encouraging purchase intentions. The present study hypothesizes that Azarine can rely on E-WOM and brand image to encourage purchase intention of sunscreen products. In light of the aforementioned findings, it can be concluded that H7 is accepted.

Table 8. ***Effect Size Test Result***

Variable	Interactivity	E-WOM	Brand Image	Purchase Intention
Interactivity			0.376	0.007
E-WOM			0.110	0.032
Brand Image				0.649
Purchase Intention				

Source: Research Output (2025)

Pursuant to the findings of the effect size test (see Table 8), it was ascertained that the effect of interactivity on purchase intention exhibited an f^2 value of 0.007. This observation indicates that interactivity exerts a negligible or minimal effect on purchase intention. Conversely, the interactive component of brand image demonstrated an f^2 value of 0.376, indicating that interactivity exerts a significant influence on enhancing brand image. Additionally, the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) on purchase intention demonstrates an f^2 value of 0.032, signifying a moderate effect. Concurrently, the E-WOM on brand image exhibited an f^2 value of 0.110, indicative of a moderate effect. In conclusion, the brand image's impact on purchase intention demonstrates an f^2 value of 0.649, signifying that brand image exerts a substantial and prevailing influence on the augmentation of purchase intention. This finding underscores the pivotal role that brand image plays in influencing consumer purchase intention.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The present study sought to examine the impact of interactivity and electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) on purchase intention, with brand image serving as a mediating variable, among Generation Z consumers in Singkawang City regarding Azarine sunscreen products. The findings indicate that interactivity and E-WOM do not have a substantial direct impact on purchase intention. Nevertheless, both factors evince a substantial positive impact on brand image, which in turn exerts a robust and significant influence on purchase intention. In addition, the

relationship between interactivity, purchase intention, and E-WOM was found to be significantly influenced by brand image, indicating that these effects occur primarily through improvements in brand image rather than direct pathways. The findings of this study underscore the strategic role of brand image as a primary mechanism through which interactivity and E-WOM influence consumer behavior, thereby reinforcing its significance in digital marketing strategies.

The managerial implications of this study suggest that Azarine's management should prioritize factors that significantly influence the purchasing decisions of potential consumers, particularly interactivity and brand image. Indicators of interactivity, such as responses to comments, encouragement of feedback, opportunities for re-engagement, and two-way communication facilities on social media, have been proven effective in building a positive brand image and encouraging purchase intent. Concurrently, the role of E-WOM in shaping brand image is acknowledged, yet its direct effect on purchase intention remains negligible. Therefore, optimization efforts should focus on leveraging E-WOM to strengthen brand perception, as this indirect pathway serves as the primary driver of purchase intention.

The limitations of this study are attributable to the sample selection, which was restricted to Generation Z in Singkawang City. Given the unique demographic characteristics and technology adoption rates in Singkawang compared to other regions in West Kalimantan, it is imperative to exercise caution when generalizing these findings to a broader population. Another challenge is the time and cost constraints for conducting research in other cities with different consumer characteristics.

It is suggested that future researchers consider broadening the geographic scope of the study to encompass additional cities in West Kalimantan or other regions of Indonesia. The primary objective of this expansion would be to conduct a comparative analysis of consumer behaviors across diverse demographic contexts. This approach would allow for the validation of the mediating role of brand image in different environments. Future studies could entail an exploration of a range of social media platforms, with the incorporation of additional variables such as consumer trust or engagement. These factors would improve the study's robustness and generalizability, enabling a more thorough comprehension of the connection between social media use and consumer behavior. This approach would facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing purchase intention for skincare companies, thereby enabling the development of effective strategies to cultivate robust brand loyalty across a range of market segments.

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