

The Mediating Role of Brand Trust in the Influence of E-WOM and Product Quality on Purchase Decisions for Natural Cosmetics in Bali

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of the business world in the era of globalization also impacted the cosmetics industry. Consumers became more critical and selective in their purchase decisions, which were influenced by factors like electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), product quality, and brand trust. This study analyzed the impact of e-WOM and product quality on purchase decisions, with brand trust as an intervening variable. Using a quantitative method with a questionnaire, data were collected from 105 respondents in Bali. The results showed that e-WOM and product quality both had positive and significant effects on purchase decisions and brand trust. Brand trust partially explained the influence of e-WOM and product quality on purchase decisions. Future studies may explore additional factors and include more respondents for greater accuracy.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid growth and increasing competition in the business world today, especially in the cosmetics industry, are driven by advancements in technology and communication systems. According to the Indonesian Cosmetics Association (PPA), the number of cosmetics companies in Indonesia grew by 21.9%, from 913 in 2022 to 1,010 in 2023. Cosmetics have become a lifestyle trend, attracting not only women, but also consumers interested in health benefits. The trend toward natural products, spurred by advances in pharmaceutical chemistry, has led to the development of natural cosmetics, opening opportunities for this industry to grow (Aminudin et al., 2019). The European Union defines natural cosmetics as products made from natural ingredients like plants, minerals, or oils to replace or reduce synthetic substances (Murargo, 2021). Indonesia, with its rich biodiversity, has about 30,000 identified plant species, of which 950 are medicinal. These natural ingredients are increasingly used in herbal medicines and now in cosmetics (Research Series, 2021). However, the rise in hazardous chemicals found in cosmetics, as reported by BPOM, with 62 items in 2022 and 181 in 2023, has made consumers more selective, preferring natural products for safety. This shift is driven by concerns over the long-term safety of chemical use in cosmetics (Anwar & Wianto, 2022).

The development of natural cosmetics has been implemented by several industries (Putri et al., 2021). The high demand for natural cosmetics has led to the growth of various businesses, particularly in Bali, where products like body scrubs and spa treatments made from natural ingredients are popular (BPOM, 2019). The rising competition in Bali's natural cosmetics industry has led companies like CV. Nadis Herbal, which has operated since 2011, to focus on natural and herbal products. Using 90% of raw materials from local Balinese farmers, CV. Nadis Herbal offers a range of products from hair and facial care to body care. By offering diverse products, the company meets various consumer preferences and lifestyles, increasing the chances of attracting a wide customer base. Despite this, sales of CV. Nadis Herbal's products from 2018 to 2023 have generally declined. Additionally, the production process for natural cosmetics still relies on traditional methods, such as manual processing and sun drying, which are weather-dependent and affect product quality and consistency. The decline in sales and increased competition make it crucial for the natural cosmetics industry to understand the factors influencing consumer purchase decisions to boost sales.

Purchase decisions are a critical aspect of consumer behavior, as they relate to buying products and can increase a company's sales, ensuring long-term business sustainability (Saputra, 2022). Purchase decisions are influenced by electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Before purchasing, consumers often seek information about a product's pros and cons through online reviews (Islamiati et al., 2023). Positive e-WOM can significantly influence purchase decisions, as previous research has shown (Nurhasanah et al., 2020; Angel et al., 2021; Rufaida, 2021; Saraswati & Giantari, 2022; Sudirman et al., 2023; Anggraini & Hadi, 2023; Nyagadza et al., 2023). Consumers who have

purchased a product may post positive or negative comments, influencing others to buy. However, some studies suggest that e-WOM does not significantly impact purchase decisions (Suharyanto & Rahman, 2022; Sualang et al., 2023).

Positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) significantly enhances brand trust, influencing consumer purchase decisions (Dewi & Sudiksa, 2019; Charvia & Erdiansyah, 2020; Eneizan et al., 2020; Noviandini & Yasa, 2021; Mirza et al., 2021; Nur & Octavia, 2022; Agustina & Mahendri, 2023). Product quality also plays a critical role, as high-quality products that meet consumer needs drive purchase decisions (Islamiati et al., 2023; Gunawan & Pertiwi, 2022). While most studies find a significant impact of product quality on purchase decisions (Puspitaningtya & Saino, 2019; Widiastiti et al., 2020; Rihayana et al., 2021; Kanya & Adilla, 2022; Saputra, 2022; Marwida et al., 2023), some research suggests it may not always be significant (Febyana et al., 2023). Product quality is closely linked to brand trust, as it affects consumer perception and fosters long-term trust (Marcheliano & Wijaksana, 2019; Lailiyah, 2020; Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Gunawan & Pertiwi, 2022; Damayanti et al., 2023; Sofian, 2023). Brand trust is a crucial determinant of purchase decisions (Rahayu & Harsono, 2018; Sofian, 2023), with positive brand trust significantly increasing purchase decisions (Eneizan et al., 2020; Nurhasanah et al., 2020; Amanda & Fitri, 2022; Oktaviani et al., 2022; Kuant & Erdiansyah, 2022; Pitaloka & Widiatami, 2022).

Although research on e-WOM's impact on natural cosmetics purchase decisions is limited, natural cosmetics entrepreneurs must innovate and enhance product quality to build market trust and boost sales. Recommendations and consumer trust play a vital role in strengthening purchase decisions.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains the factors that drive individuals to engage in specific behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). The primary factor in this theory is the individual's intention to perform a particular behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior includes three key concepts in the formation of intentions: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. This theory is highly relevant for explaining consumer behavior in making purchase decisions, as it illustrates that behavior is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which together form intentions that influence a person's actions. In the context of purchasing decisions, the Theory of Planned Behavior helps understand and explain how consumers' intentions to make a purchase are formed.

Purchase Decision

A purchase decision refers to consumer behavior that involves seeking and reviewing product information, which then leads to a desire to buy a product (Yulindasari & Fikriyah, 2022). It is the process of determining and selecting a product or service that will be used by the consumer (Kotler, 2009, in

Nur & Octavia, 2022). A purchase decision is a decision-making process that determines whether or not a purchase will be made, starting with awareness of a need or desire (Amanda & Fitri, 2022). The measurement of purchase decisions, as described by Kotler & Armstrong (2021), involves five stages in the purchase decision-making process: (1) Need Recognition (2) Information Search (3) Evaluation of Alternatives (4) Purchase Decision (4) Post-Purchase Behavior, where consumers take further action after the purchase, based on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is a form of communication, whether positive or negative, made by capable consumers, honest consumers, and former users of products or services, regarding goods or services sold by a company (Kotler & Keller, 2016). e-WOM is information about a product conveyed by other consumers through the internet, including both positive and negative statements about the product (Anjaswati & Istiyanto, 2023). e-WOM involves communication through the exchange of information over the Internet (Hasanah & Nasution, 2023). Amanda & Fitri's (2022) research identifies the following e-WOM indicators:

1. Intensity refers to the number of opinions written by consumers on a social networking site.
2. Valence of Opinion refers to both positive and negative opinions about products, services, and brands.
3. Content refers to the content of information on social networking sites related to products and services.

e-WOM involves consumer opinions about products, which can be positive or negative. Tjiptono (2020) notes that e-WOM acts as a recommendation for potential buyers. As e-WOM communication via the internet becomes more sophisticated, it increasingly impacts purchase decisions. Positive reviews from users strengthen others' purchasing choices (Handayani, 2023). e-WOM significantly affects purchase decisions and is crucial for online shopping (Nur & Octavia, 2022). Studies show that e-WOM influences purchase decisions on platforms like Tokopedia (Nurhasanah et al., 2020), Bilibli.com (Angel et al., 2021), Shopee (Yulindasari & Fikriyah, 2022), and for Bittersweet by Najla's dessert boxes (Handayani & Purnama, 2023). Additionally, e-WOM impacts visitation decisions based on Instagram recommendations (Silaban et al., 2023) and MS Glow skincare purchases (Sudirman et al., 2023). It also affects purchase intentions for indigenous fruits in Zimbabwe (Nyagadza et al., 2023).

e-WOM is crucial for establishing brand trust (Nur & Octavia, 2022). Sumarwan (2004) defines trust as belief in a product's attributes. Research indicates that e-WOM enhances brand trust for products like Maybelline (Dewi & Sudiksa, 2019), OVO (Charvia & Erdiansyah, 2020), and Traveloka (Noviandini & Yasa, 2021). It also improves trust among Berrybenka (Mirza et al., 2021), Opensooq users (Eneizan et al., 2020), TripAdvisor travelers during

COVID-19 (Nilashi et al., 2022), and TikTok users (Agustina & Mahendri, 2023). Based on theory and previous studies, the following hypotheses are formulated:
H1: e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions.
H2: e-WOM has a positive and significant influence on brand trust.

Product Quality

Product quality refers to the characteristics of a product or service that depend on its ability to satisfy consumer needs, both explicit and implicit (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Product quality is the ability of a good to deliver results or performance that meets or exceeds customer expectations (Handayani & Purnama, 2023). Research examining the effectiveness of product quality uses five indicators:

1. Performance, which refers to the benefits a product provides for consumers.
2. Conformance to Specification, which measures how well the design and operational characteristics meet established standards.
3. Durability, which relates to how long a product can continue to be used.
4. Aesthetic, which refers to the appeal of a product to the senses.
5. Perceived Quality, which includes the product's reputation, taste, and the company's responsibility for the product consumed by customers.

Products with good quality, such as being reliable, having distinctive characteristics, and meeting consumer specifications, will satisfy and attract consumers, leading to a higher desire to purchase (Rihayana et al., 2021). Previous studies, as noted by Widiastiti et al. (2020), show that product quality influences purchase decisions for iPhone products in Denpasar. Saraswati & Giantari (2022), who studied Samsung smartphone consumers in Denpasar, also found that product quality affects consumer purchase decisions. Saputra's (2022) research involving 100 consumers who bought and used Xiaomi smartphones in Cirebon proves that product quality positively influences purchase decisions. Marwida et al. (2023) find that product quality is effective in increasing purchase decisions among users of Taman Prakerti Bhuna services in Bali. Additionally, Sepfiani et al. (2023) state that product quality influences purchase decisions for Cosrx skincare products.

Brand trust influences the sustainability of a brand because if consumers do not trust a brand, it will be difficult for products carrying that brand to thrive in the market (Dewi & Sudiksa, 2019). Consumer trust in a brand is crucial and is one of the factors supporting a company's survival. Marcheliano & Wijaksana's (2019) research on 100 Crocs original product consumers in Bandung shows that good product quality increases brand trust. Laili & Susanta's (2021) research also proves the influence of product quality on brand trust. Previous studies by Oktasari et al. (2021) on Chanel luxury bag consumers in Malang show that good product quality significantly influences brand trust. Saraswati & Giantari (2022) note that product quality influences brand trust among Samsung smartphone consumers in Denpasar. Oktaviani et al. (2023) state that product quality has a significant impact on brand trust among Erigo

Fashion consumers in Cirebon. Based on this theory and previous studies, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: Product quality has a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions.

H4: Product quality has a positive and significant impact on brand trust.

Brand Trust

Brand trust refers to the consumer's belief in a product, where the product or brand is expected to provide a certain level of satisfaction according to the consumer's preferences when shopping, thereby meeting their needs (Anjaswati & Istiyanto, 2023). According to Manulang (2015), brand trust is the consumer's willingness to rely on a brand despite the risks involved, where expectations of the brand lead to positive outcomes.

Rufaida (2021) suggests that brand trust can be measured through purchasing decisions: (1) Brand Reliability: refers to the brand's ability to fulfill its promised value, which is essential for consumers. (2) Brand Intentions: indicates the brand's ability to prioritize consumer interests during unexpected issues.

Indicators that determine the level of consumer trust in a brand, as cited from Kuant & Erdiansyah's (2022) research, include:

1. Duration: One way to observe consumer trust in a brand is by assessing how long consumers, as product users, continue to purchase or use the product consistently.
2. Consumer Sincerity: The level of trust in a brand can also be observed through the sincerity of consumers when using the product.
3. Consumer Honesty: Trust can be gauged by the honesty consumers display when using a particular product or brand.

Brand trust represents a consumer's belief that a brand can deliver on its promises, such as product quality or service standards. Higher brand trust generally increases the likelihood of purchase decisions (Nurhasanah et al., 2020). Research confirms that brand trust significantly influences purchase decisions across various contexts: Eneizan et al. (2020) on the Opensooq website in Jordan, Rufaida (2021) among Blibli.com users, Amanda & Fitri (2022) among duo sister hijab consumers, Oktaviani et al. (2022) for Camille Beauty organic face masks, Dewi & Hasanah (2023) for Wardah products in Indonesia, Pitaloka & Widiatami (2022) for eco-friendly beauty products, and Bukhari et al. (2023) for Western-imported food products in Pakistan.

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) enhances brand trust, which in turn affects purchase decisions. Frequent e-WOM increases brand trust and purchase likelihood. Dewi & Sudiksa (2019) found that brand trust mediates e-WOM's effect on purchase decisions for Maybelline products. Similarly, Noviantini & Yasa (2021) showed that positive e-WOM boosts brand trust and influences decisions on Traveloka. Other studies by Mirza et al. (2021), Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022), and Nur & Octavia (2022) support the significant mediating role of brand trust. Product quality also plays a crucial role, as it enhances brand trust and speeds up purchase decisions. High product quality leads to quicker consumer decisions and is further influenced by brand trust. Diyanti & Giantari (2021) found that product quality affects iPhone purchase

decisions through brand trust. Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022) observed that quality impacts consumer trust in Safi skincare, and Damayanti et al. (2023) noted that good product quality increases consumer confidence in Unilever Indonesia's products. Based on the theory and previous studies, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H5: Brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

H6: e-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions through brand trust.

H7: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions through brand trust.

The conceptual framework of the research is illustrated as follows:

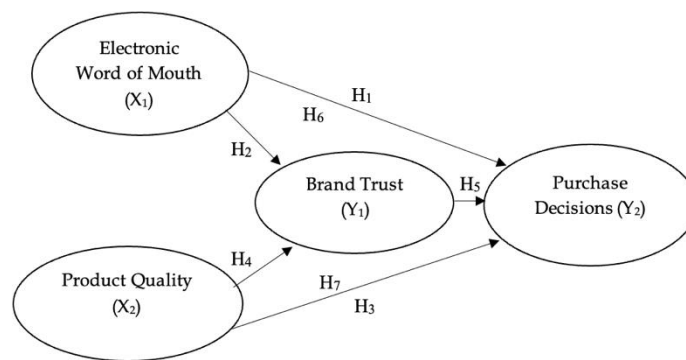


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The research, conducted in Badung Regency, Bali, targeted individuals who were informed about and had purchased natural cosmetic products. Badung Regency was chosen due to its high concentration of cosmetics industries using natural raw materials in Bali Province. The study focused on individuals aged 17 and older who met these criteria. Following Hair et al. (2010), a minimum sample size of 105 was determined based on 21 indicators and a ratio of 5 respondents per indicator. Data were collected through a survey using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS) was employed for data analysis. This method was used to explore the relationships between e-WOM, product quality, brand trust, and purchase decisions.

RESULTS

Measurement Model Testing

The parameter significant test results showed that the p-value for all indicators was less than 0.05, indicating that all indicators measured their constructs significantly. The p-value for each indicator is displayed in Table 1. The research results indicated that the loading factor values for all indicators were above 0.5, meaning that all indicators measured their latent constructs well. The loading factor values for each indicator are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Construct Validity

Construct	Indicator/ Item	P value	Loading factor	AVE	CR
Electronic Word of Mouth (X₁)	X _{1.1} Intensity	<0.001	0.758	0.649	0.917
	X _{1.2} Valence Of Opinion	<0.001	0.822		
	X _{1.3} Content	<0.001	0.793		
	X _{1.4} Concern for Other Consumers	<0.001	0.797		
	X _{1.5} Helping the Company	<0.001	0.843		
	X _{1.6} Express Positive Feelings	<0.001	0.816		
Product Quality (X₂)	X _{2.1} Performance	<0.001	0.774	0.619	0.890
	X _{2.2} Conformity to specifications	<0.001	0.782		
	X _{2.3} Durability	<0.001	0.783		
	X _{2.4} Aesthetics	<0.001	0.825		
	X _{2.5} Perceived quality	<0.001	0.770		
Brand Trust (Y₁)	Y _{1.1} Brand Reliability	<0.001	0.797	0.662	0.907
	Y _{1.2} Brand Intentions	<0.001	0.726		
	Y _{1.3} Time period	<0.001	0.870		
	Y _{1.4} Satisfaction	<0.001	0.824		
	Y _{1.5} Credibility	<0.001	0.843		
Purchase Decisions (Y₂)	Y _{2.1} Recognition of needs	<0.001	0.774	0.629	0.894
	Y _{2.2} Information search	<0.001	0.753		
	Y _{2.3} Evaluation of alternatives	<0.001	0.773		
	Y _{2.4} Purchase decision	<0.001	0.847		
	Y _{2.5} Post-purchase behavior	<0.001	0.816		

Source: data processed in 2024

AVE indicated the level of convergence of all indicators towards the measured latent constructs. The research results in Table 1 showed that the AVE values for all constructs were greater than 0.5, meaning that the constructs had adequate convergence. The CR value indicated internal consistency, with CR values above 0.6 reflecting good reliability (Hair et al., 2010: 710). The research results showed that the CR values for each construct were above 0.7. This meant that all indicators consistently reflected the same latent construct. The CR values for each construct are presented in Table 1.

Discriminant validity was tested by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$) for each variable with the correlation values among the variables in the model. The research results indicated that the $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ for the variables electronic word of mouth and brand trust was greater than the correlation values among the variables in the model. This demonstrated that these variables had good discriminant validity.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

Construct	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	<i>e</i> -WOM	Product Quality	Brand Trust	Purchase Decisions
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i>	0.649	0.805				
Product Quality	0.619	0.787	0.731			
<i>Brand Trust</i>	0.662	0.814	0.674	0.747		
Purchase Decisions	0.629	0.739	0.747	0.832	0.790	

Source: data processed in 2024

Hypothesis Testing

The path analysis and significant testing results, shown in Table 3, revealed the following: Electronic word of mouth significantly positively impacted purchase decisions ($p=0.004 < 0.05$), leading to the acceptance of H1 and rejection of Ho. It also significantly positively influenced brand trust ($p=0.001 < 0.05$), resulting in the acceptance of H2 and rejection of Ho. Product quality significantly positively affected purchase decisions ($p=0.001 < 0.05$), leading to the acceptance of H3 and rejection of Ho. Additionally, product quality positively impacted brand trust significantly ($p=0.001 < 0.05$), accepting H4 and rejecting Ho. Brand trust also significantly influenced purchase decisions ($p=0.001 < 0.05$), leading to the acceptance of H5 and rejection of Ho.

In mediation tests, brand trust partially mediated the effects of both electronic word of mouth and product quality on purchase decisions. The direct effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions was significant ($p<0.01$; $\beta=0.76$), but decreased when brand trust was included as a mediator ($p<0.01$; $\beta=0.41$), indicating partial mediation and acceptance of H6. Similarly, the direct effect of product quality on purchase decisions was significant ($p<0.01$; $\beta=0.84$), but decreased with brand trust as a mediator ($p<0.01$; $\beta=0.55$), confirming partial mediation and acceptance of H7.

The R² value for brand trust was 0.62, suggesting a moderate to strong model, with electronic word of mouth and product quality explaining 62% of the variation. The R² value for purchase decisions was 0.78, indicating a strong model, with electronic word of mouth, product quality, and brand trust explaining 78% of the variation. The Q-Square Predictive Relevance value was 0.759, indicating that 76% of the variation in purchase decisions could be predicted by the model.

Table 3. Path Analysis and Significant Testing Results

Construct	Path Coefficient	P-value	Description
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth -> Brand Trust</i>	0.312	<0.001	Significant
Product Quality -> Brand Trust	0.530	<0.001	Significant
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth -> Purchase Decisions</i>	0.245	0.004	Significant
Product Quality -> Purchase Decisions	0.430	<0.001	Significant
<i>Brand Trust -> Purchase Decisions</i>	0.302	<0.001	Significant

Source: data processed in 2024

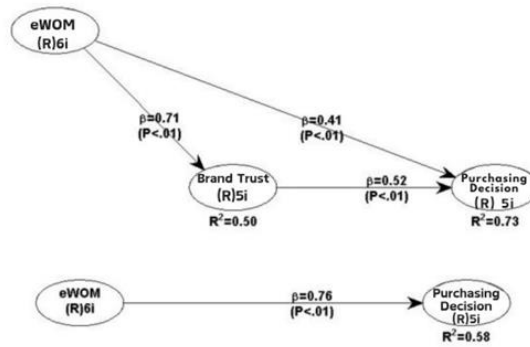


Figure 2. Test of the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between e-WOM and Purchase Decisions

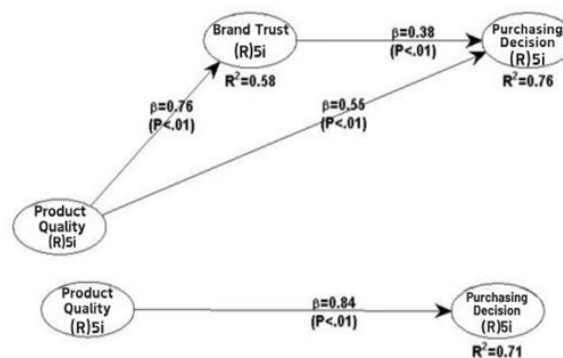


Figure 3. Test the Mediating Role of Brand Trust on the Relationship between Product Quality and Purchase Decisions

R-Square

R-Square indicated the strength or weakness of the influence exerted by the dependent variable on the independent variables. According to Lathan and Ghozali (2012:85), an R-Square value of 0.67 was considered a strong model, 0.33 a moderate model, and 0.19 a weak model. The R-Square values are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. R-Square

Construct	R Square
<i>Brand Trust</i>	0.616
Purchase Decisions	0.783
Average	0.699

Source: data processed in 2024

Q-Square Predictive Relevance

The strength or weakness of the model was assessed based on the Q-Square Predictive Relevance criterion according to Lathan and Ghozali (2012:85). The criteria are as follows: 0.35 for a strong model, 0.15 for a moderate model, and 0.02 for a weak model. The formula for Q-Square is:

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R_1^2)(1 - R_2^2).$$

Where:

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0.616^2) (1 - 0.783^2)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (0.621) (0.387) = 0.759$$

DISCUSSION

Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions

The study demonstrated that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. This finding indicates that as the quality of e-WOM improves, the likelihood of purchase decisions increases. The research revealed that positive consumer reviews and experiences with natural cosmetic products significantly influence purchasing decisions in the natural cosmetics industry. This result aligns with Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which links e-WOM with consumer behavior by affecting attitudes and subjective norms through the information provided, thus influencing perceptions and intentions. Both positive and negative e-WOM can shape individual attitudes toward a product, and numerous recommendations from others can enhance the accuracy of purchasing decisions. Consumers are likely to make purchasing decisions when they encounter favorable e-WOM. Therefore, e-WOM messages can impact consumer buying interest before a purchase decision is made (Sualang et al., 2023). This finding is consistent with studies by Nurhasanah et al. (2020), Angel et al. (2021), Yulindasari & Fikriyah (2022), and Handayani & Purnama (2023), which found a positive and significant effect of e-WOM on purchase decisions. Silaban et al. (2023) also noted that e-WOM is an effective tool in consumer decision-making within the tourism business. Similarly, Sudirman et al. (2023) confirmed the positive and significant impact of e-WOM on purchase decisions. Marketers are encouraged to create engaging content related to products, such as photos or videos demonstrating product use, features, and benefits, to enhance information quality and attract potential buyers.

Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Trust

The study found that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) had a positive and significant effect on brand trust. This implies that improved e-WOM leads to higher brand trust. The results indicated that brands in the natural cosmetics industry that receive favorable e-WOM tend to have greater consumer trust. Conversely, negative e-WOM correlates with lower brand trust. e-WOM plays a crucial role in building and reinforcing consumer trust in a brand. Subramanian (2018) supported this by noting that e-WOM publicity impacts a brand's trustworthiness. Consumer trust in a product is influenced by online statements made by other consumers about the product. Increased e-WOM enhances brand trust. This finding aligns with research by Dewi & Sudiksa (2019), Charvia & Erdiansyah (2020), Noviandini & Yasa (2021), Mirza et al. (2021), and Agustina & Mahendri (2023), which all confirmed the positive and significant effect of e-WOM on brand trust. Nilashi et al. (2022) also found that e-WOM positively impacts e-trust, with online reviews influencing tourist perceptions of risk and thus their decisions. Marketers should consider using influencers to promote products through engaging content to effectively increase consumer engagement and brand trust in the natural cosmetics industry.

Influence of Product Quality on Purchase Decisions

The study found that product quality had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, indicating that higher product quality led to higher purchase decisions. This result suggests that good quality in natural cosmetic products can drive consumers to make purchasing decisions in the natural cosmetics industry. The findings support Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that product quality influences purchase decisions through its impact on consumer attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control, ultimately affecting consumer intentions and decisions. Product quality includes various attributes that meet consumer desires, thereby providing satisfaction (Laksana, 2008). In the decision-making process, consumers face numerous product choices, so points of differentiation (such as product shape, size, color, features, and performance attributes) become crucial for consumer attraction (Tjiptono, 2020). According to Damayanti et al. (2023), product quality is a significant factor influencing purchase decisions. Good quality products enhance appeal and strengthen consumer relationships. Products with reliability, distinct characteristics, and specifications matching consumer preferences lead to higher consumer satisfaction and interest, increasing the likelihood of purchase (Rihayana et al., 2021). This result is consistent with research by Widiastiti et al. (2020), Saraswati & Giantari (2022), Saputra (2022), Marwida et al. (2023), and Sepfiani et al. (2023), which found a positive and significant effect of product quality on purchase decisions. Marketers should implement strict quality control systems at every production stage to meet established specifications and train employees to understand and follow quality standards and procedures. This approach ensures standardized, high-quality products that attract consumer purchase intentions.

Influence of Product Quality on Brand Trust

The study revealed that product quality had a positive and significant effect on brand trust, meaning that higher product quality led to greater brand trust. This indicates that good quality in natural cosmetic products can positively influence consumer perceptions of the brand, thereby shaping consumer trust and impacting purchase decisions in the natural cosmetics industry. Product quality can serve as a strategy to build brand trust. Consumer trust in a brand develops when they perceive the product quality as high (Diyanti & Giantari, 2021). Widiastiti et al. (2020) also found that good product quality fosters trust and improves consumer perceptions. Product quality affects consumer perceptions of a brand, which in turn builds brand trust. Brand trust significantly impacts a brand's sustainability; if consumers lose trust in a brand, it becomes challenging for the brand to thrive in the market (Dewi & Sudiksa, 2019). Better product quality leads to higher consumer trust in the brand. This result aligns with research by Marcheliano & Wijaksana (2019), Lailiyah (2020), Diputra & Yasa (2021), Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022), Damayanti et al. (2023), and Sofian (2023), which confirmed the positive and significant effect of product quality on brand trust. Marketers should implement effective inventory management systems to track product shelf life and prevent stockpiling of near-expiry products. Additionally, selecting appropriate packaging materials that are

durable and resistant to light, moisture, and extreme temperatures is crucial. This ensures that consumers feel confident in the product's reliability and quality.

Influence of Brand Trust on Purchase Decisions

The study found that brand trust had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. This implies that higher consumer trust in natural cosmetic brands led to higher purchase decisions. The results align with consumer behavior theory by Kotler & Gary (2008), which states that brand trust influences purchase decisions through various stages of the decision-making process, including need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Brand trust refers to consumer confidence in a product to meet their expectations and preferences, leading to satisfaction and a higher likelihood of purchase (Anjaswati & Istiyanto, 2023). Dewi & Hasanah (2023) noted that brand trust significantly affects purchase decisions. When consumers trust a brand, they tend to remember it and are likely to choose it over others. This means that if consumers believe a brand meets their expectations, they will be more willing to purchase the product. Sofian (2023) emphasized that brand trust is a crucial factor for consumers when making purchases. Strong brand trust can enhance consumer loyalty and decision-making (Nurhasanah et al., 2020). Maintaining brand trust is vital for long-term market success and consumer loyalty. This result is consistent with research by Rufaida (2021), Agesti et al. (2021), Amanda & Fitri (2022), Oktaviani et al. (2022), Pitaloka & Widiatami (2022), and Bukhari et al. (2023), which found a positive and significant impact of brand trust on purchase decisions. Marketers should conduct thorough market research to understand consumer needs, preferences, and expectations. Providing clear and accurate product descriptions, including features, benefits, and usage guidelines, is essential for ensuring consumers understand the product and are confident in their purchase decisions.

Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions through Brand Trust

The study demonstrated that brand trust partially mediated the influence of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on purchase decisions. This indicates that brand trust explains part of the reason why e-WOM affects purchase decisions. The findings highlighted that brand trust plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between e-WOM and purchase decisions in the natural cosmetics industry. Positive e-WOM tends to increase purchase decisions by enhancing brand trust. In this study, some of the effect of e-WOM on purchase decisions was explained by brand trust. Positive e-WOM can reduce consumer risk and uncertainty when purchasing a product. Reviews and recommendations from other consumers about product experiences can boost consumer confidence in the brand, making them more likely to make a purchase. Kotler & Keller (2016) supported this by stating that marketing communications contribute to brand equity and can drive sales through positive brand perceptions. Recommendations from product users reinforce purchase decisions (Handayani & Purnama, 2023). The more frequent e-WOM about a product, the higher the

brand trust, which indirectly increases purchase decisions. This aligns with Dewi & Sudiksa (2019), who found that brand trust significantly mediated the effect of e-WOM on purchase decisions. Research by Noviani & Yasa (2021), Mirza et al. (2021), Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022), and Nur & Octavia (2022) also confirmed that brand trust significantly mediates the effect of e-WOM on purchase decisions.

Influence of Product Quality on Purchase Decisions through Brand Trust

The study found that brand trust partially mediated the effect of product quality on purchase decisions. This indicates that there is not only a significant relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable, but also some direct relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Brand trust explained part of the reason why product quality affects purchase decisions. The findings suggested that higher quality in natural cosmetic products that meets consumer needs and desires leads to increased brand trust and, consequently, higher purchase decisions. Kotler & Armstrong (2021) defined product quality as the characteristics of a product or service that fulfill consumer needs, both explicit and implicit. High product quality alone is not sufficient to influence purchase decisions if consumers lack trust in the product. Good product quality can build and strengthen brand trust, which positively affects purchase decisions. Quality is a criterion consumers use to build trust in a brand and decide to purchase (Saputra et al., 2021). When consumers perceive high product quality and reliability, their likelihood of making a purchase increases. This aligns with Lailiyah (2020), who found that product quality significantly affects purchase decisions through brand trust mediation. Higher product quality accelerates purchase decisions through perceived brand trust, where purchase decisions are influenced not only by high product quality, but also by the perceived brand trust. Research by Diyanti & Giantari (2021), Gunawan & Pertiwi (2022), and Damayanti et al. (2023) also confirmed that product quality significantly influences purchase decisions through brand trust mediation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The adoption of natural ingredients in cosmetics has increased consumer interest and competition in the industry. This study examined factors influencing purchase decisions for natural cosmetics in Bali. Results showed that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and product quality both significantly impacted purchase decisions and brand trust. Brand trust also partially mediated the effects of e-WOM and product quality on purchase decisions. To boost consumer decisions, marketers should target specific market segments, ensure high product quality, and offer innovative options. Enhancing e-WOM by improving the shopping experience and providing value-added services like free shipping can further encourage positive consumer experiences and brand loyalty.

FURTHER STUDY

The limitations of this study include the focus on variables such as electronic word of mouth, product quality, brand trust, and purchase decisions. Additionally, the sample size is limited, which restricts the ability to fully

understand the respondents' actual conditions. Future research could include additional constructs that influence purchase decisions, such as price, lifestyle, social media promotion, and brand awareness. It is also recommended to expand the scope of the study to include a broader range of objects and to increase the sample size to enhance accuracy and provide a clearer representation of the findings.

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