

## **The Effect of Brand Image and Electronic Word of Mouth on Xiaomi Smartphone Purchasing Decisions**

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### **Abstract**

Brand image and electronic word of mouth still have limitations, so an analysis of brand trust was carried out to mediate the influence of brand image and E-WoM on purchasing decisions. Brand trust can mediate the relationship between brand image and E-WoM on purchasing decisions. This research aimed to determine the influence of brand image and electronic word of mouth on purchasing decisions through brand trust as a mediating variable. This type of research is quantitative research. This research's data type is quantitative, and the data source used primary data. The population in this study were all Pattimura University students and the number of samples was 104. The sampling method used was non-probability sampling using the purposive sampling technique. The data analysis method uses Partial Least Square (PLS), and the data was processed using SmartPLS software version 3.3.3. This research shows that Brand Image influences Purchasing Decisions through Brand Trust with a path coefficient value of 0.185, T-statistics of 3.178 and P-values of 0.002. It means that the Brand Image variable has an indirect positive and significant influence on the Purchase Decision variable through the Brand Trust variable because it has path coefficient values in the range of 0 to 1 and has T-statistic values > 1.96 and P-values < 0.05. Electronic word of mouth influences purchasing decisions through brand trust with a path coefficient value of 0.240, T-statistics of 2.368 and P-values of 0.018. It means that the electronic word-of-mouth variable has a positive and significant indirect influence on the Purchasing Decision variable through the Brand Trust variable because it has a path coefficient value in the range of 0 to 1 and a T-statistic value > 1.96 and also P-values < 0, 05.

Keywords: Brand Trust, Brand Image, Electronic Word of Mouth, Purchase Decisions

### **Abstrak**

Citra merek dan electronic word of mouth masih memiliki keterbatasan sehingga dilakukan analisis kepercayaan merek dalam memediasi pengaruh citra merek dan E-WoM terhadap Keputusan Pembelian. Kepercayaan merek dapat memediasi hubungan antara citra merek dan E-WoM terhadap keputusan pembelian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh citra merek dan electronic word of mouth terhadap keputusan pembelian melalui kepercayaan merek sebagai variabel mediasi. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif. Jenis data dalam penelitian ini adalah data kuantitatif dan sumber data menggunakan data primer. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah seluruh mahasiswa Universitas Pattimura dan jumlah sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 104 sampel. Metode pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah non probability sampling dengan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Metode analisis data menggunakan Partial Least Square (PLS) dan data diolah menggunakan bantuan software SmartPLS versi 3.3.3. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Citra Merek berpengaruh terhadap Keputusan Pembelian melalui Kepercayaan Merek dengan nilai path coefficients sebesar 0.185, T-statistik sebesar 3,178 dan P-values sebesar 0,002. Artinya variabel Citra Merek memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan secara tidak langsung terhadap variabel Keputusan Pembelian melalui variabel Kepercayaan Merek karena memiliki nilai path coefficients di rentang 0 sampai 1 serta memiliki nilai T-statistik > 1,96 dan juga P-values < 0,05. Electronic word of mouth berpengaruh terhadap Keputusan Pembelian melalui Kepercayaan Merek dengan nilai path coefficients sebesar 0,240, T-statistik sebesar 2,368 dan P-values sebesar 0,018. Artinya variabel electronic word of mouth memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan secara tidak langsung terhadap variabel Keputusan Pembelian melalui variabel Kepercayaan Merek karena memiliki nilai path coefficients di rentang 0 sampai 1 serta memiliki nilai T-statistik > 1,96 dan juga P-values < 0,05.

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Kata Kunci: Kepercayaan Merek, Citra Merek, Electronic Word of Mouth, Keputusan Pembelian

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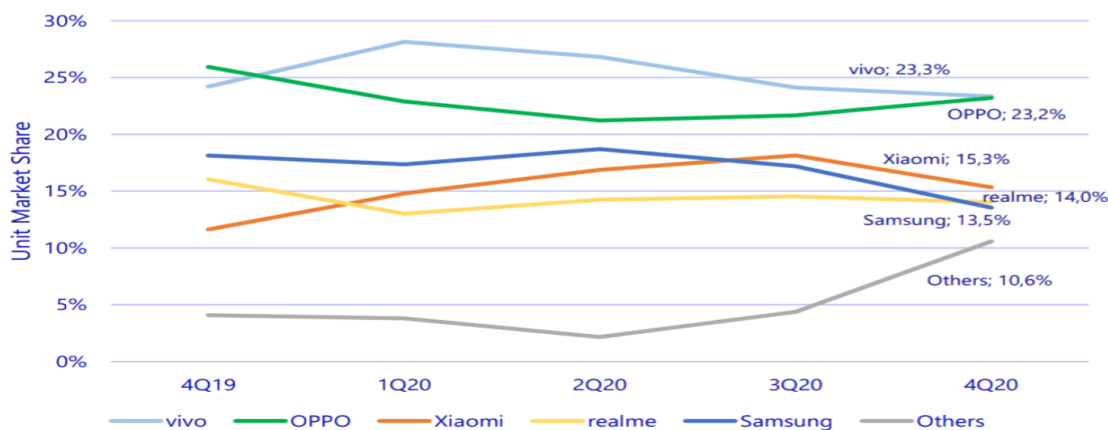
## INTRODUCTION

The development of telecommunications technology today is progressing rapidly, as shown by the increasing number of smartphone users. Consumer choices for smartphone brands are increasingly diverse (Sari et al., 2023). Nowadays, smartphones are no longer considered a luxury item but have become a basic necessity for almost everyone (Frydenlund et al., 2023). Smartphones are currently very useful for everyday life, where people, including students, use them to communicate and find what is needed effectively and efficiently (Talal et al., 2019). Smartphones can also be used as business facilities and businesses to store hundreds to thousands of important documents (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Smartphones are an effective solution for people to support their daily lives both in doing business and in lectures (Radtke et al., 2022). Smartphones function as personal phones and portable computers that provide various types of services to their users, including web browsing, social networking, email, short message service (SMS), maps, global positioning systems (GPS) and mobile payment applications (S. Wu et al., 2016).

There is no doubt about it in the past few decades. It has become an essential and ubiquitous part of modern daily life. According to Pew Research Center, the number of people who report owning a smartphone in the United States has more than doubled since 2011, with 92% of 18 to 29-year-olds reporting owning a device in 2017 (Yamamoto et al., 2018). Similar adoption patterns are also found in America, with research showing that 93% of smartphones belong to 18-24 year olds. *Smartphone* addiction is relatively high, with a percentage of 14.2% in South Korea (Kwon & Paek, 2016) and 37.9% in China (Lopez-Fernandez, 2017). In Europe, these prevalence rates are much higher (12.5%-21.5%) (Lopez-Fernandez, 2017). According to reports made in 2020, the number of *mobile phones* has reached up to 3.5 billion. As a large Southeast Asian country with 210 million users, Indonesia ranks number one in smartphone users. (Hanafi et al., 2019). In addition, about 21% of smartphone users are between 12 and 19 years old or school age (Mokhtarinia et al., 2022). However, the constant availability of *Smartphones* coupled with addiction to popular apps can become a problem when people use them unproductive or even harmful ways (van Velthoven et al., 2018). Moreover, high school students are particularly vulnerable to *mobile phone* use as they spend a lot of time on their phones (Cha & Seo, 2018; Fischer-Grote et al., 2021). Another study of high school students in Indonesia found that around 60% of the respondents experienced moderate to severe addiction to their smartphones (Fryman & Romine, 2021). According to recent research, problematic smartphone use has negative impacts and serious psychological consequences (Busch & McCarthy, 2021). More research needs to be done to investigate smartphone ban policies and their direct link to problematic smartphone use. By seeing such a huge opportunity, many companies are competing to present their best products in Indonesia so that their products are in demand by the public so that people want to own and buy their products.

In Indonesia, the public knows all *smartphone* brands. One of them is the Xiaomi brand. Xiaomi is an electronics company headquartered in Beijing, founded in 2010. Xiaomi's founder and CEO is Lei Jun. Xiaomi is one of the companies that released its first *smartphone* in August 2011. The Chinese people have recognized the Xiaomi brand since 2011 and entered Indonesia in 2014 (Robustelli et al., 2019). Xiaomi is the fourth company globally after Apple, Samsung, and Huawei. Although Xiaomi is not a long-established brand, it has become a big player in the market. In the third quarter of 2020, Xiaomi shipped 46.6 million smartphones globally, with a market share of 13.5%. On March 30, 2021, Xiaomi Group announced its entry into automobile manufacturing, which made Xiaomi the subject of much discussion (Zhou et al.,

2022). Based on the *Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker International Data Corporation (IDC)*, on the *smartphone* sales report in Indonesia for the fourth quarter of 2020. The results can be shown in Figure 1.



Source: IDC, 2021

**Figure 1. Top Smartphone Companies in Indonesia, Market Share 4Q2020**

Source: International Data Corporation (IDC, 2021)

Figure 1 above shows that *smartphone* vendor Vivo is number one, with a market share of 23.3%. The second position is filled by Oppo, which is slightly different at 23.2%. In third place, Xiaomi earned a market share of 15.3%, followed by Realme in fourth position, gaining a market share of 14%. Meanwhile, Samsung ended up in fifth position, gaining a market share of 13.5%. Although Xiaomi captured a market share of 15.3% and won a third position as the best-selling *smartphone* in Indonesia in 2020, Xiaomi *smartphone* users in Ambon, especially at Pattimura University, are still relatively few compared to other brands. Serial entrepreneur Lei Jun in Beijing became the leading smartphone brand in China's first and India's second-largest markets. Later, it expanded its business to other countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and South Africa (Tabassum & Ahmed, 2020). This data is inversely proportional to the level of public trust in Xiaomi *smartphones*. This is evidenced by the use of Xiaomi (Sm-Xi) *smartphones* for the people of Ambon City, which is still very small because it has a culture rooted in the value of their trust that has years, especially good quality *smartphones*. People believe more in brands made in Europe, America and even Japan. For example, they believe that Samsung and iPhone *smartphones* are better quality and more durable for the next few years. It also aligns with using Telkomsel, XL, Indosat, Tri and Smartfren as internet providers. Although there are other providers, Moluccans are happier and more trusting when using Telkomsel. It is with a level of brand trust that provides good quality. The economic level of Ambon City is quite good, but students always keep their *smartphones* durable because they are used for lectures and other social media activities. They believe that if the *smartphone* is damaged, they should buy a new one, but it will take a long time, so they keep it well (Pelupessy et al., 2022).

Brand image is a consumer's opinion and understanding of a brand that can be described by brand associations that exist in the memory or mind of consumers when they hear the brand name (Kaur & Kaur, 2019). A good or positive brand image can have an impact on consumer value. If a brand has a bad image, it indirectly impacts consumers, and most likely, consumers are not interested in making purchases (Mao et al., 2020). In this case, the company must carry out a good and correct strategy to attract consumers' attention and not lose competition with other business people.

Technology allows modern consumers to obtain information about product novelties before they are launched. For example, before Apple launched its new product, the iPhone 7, the internet provided much information about the attributes and appearance through social media such as YouTube. As a result, consumers have already formed their first perceptions through various Electronic word of mouth (E-WoM) information, which may greatly impact the consumer decision process. However, information about new products may need to be completed or even false, so opinions can easily form a negative first impression. Therefore, companies should establish an effective communication strategy to create a positive public opinion before introducing new products (Zhang & Choi, 2017). The E-WoM Platform method has been successful and has had a great impact. Some countries, such as Canada, Hong Kong, India, Morocco, Thailand, and the United States, have successfully implemented the method (Chan & Yang, 2021).

Electronic word of mouth (E-WoM) is an influential factor in product marketing. We are in an era of rapidly developing technology (Tham et al., 2013). E-WoM is the most powerful medium for communicating products or services to two or more people because humans are more interested in products purchased or used by someone. After all, it is more trustworthy and can see their experience using the product in the form of positive or negative statements because it can influence the purchasing decisions of other consumers who will buy the product or not (Rialti et al., 2017).

Ismagilova et al. (2020) said that positive E-WoM references are an effort to build trust in the brand. E-WoM can determine consumer trust in a brand. Brand trust has a huge influence on the sustainability of the brand. If a brand is no longer trusted in the eyes of consumers, then products with that brand will be difficult to develop in the market. On the other hand, if consumers trust the brand, then products with that brand will continue to grow in the market (Bozbay & Karakuş Başlar, 2022). Trust in the brand plays an important role in consumer decisions towards a particular brand. When a consumer has placed trust in a brand, it increases the likelihood that they will make a purchase decision for that brand (Huo et al., 2022). A purchase decision results from several available options or alternatives (Miklošik, 2015; Song et al., 2021). Brand relationships with customers are based on trust and loyalty. Several studies highlight the importance of trust, perceived value, and loyalty in the viability of long-term relationships between customers and companies (Oliveira et al., 2021). Therefore, customer retention depends on a company's ability to deliver on its promises (a factor related to trust), which arises when one party trusts the other (Cai & Chi, 2018).

After studying and examining various studies and marketing management literature, especially research related to the influence of brand image and electronic word of mouth on purchasing decisions, there are several studies that previous researchers have conducted to see the effect of brand image on purchasing decisions and the effect of E-WoM on purchasing decisions, it turns out that it has not shown clear results on the findings presented, so that there are differences in research on these findings, and raises research gaps. The results of previous research were conducted on members of the Mi Fans Community in Yogyakarta on the Telegram social media application, which has 1,300 members. The results showed that electronic word of mouth has a significant effect directly on purchase intention. However, indirect electronic word of mouth through brand image and trust does not affect purchase intention. It shows that electronic word of mouth on purchase intention has a direct effect without the direct influence of the role of mediating variables (Haikal et al., 2018). The results of other studies also state that product quality and brand image positively affect purchasing decisions. (Yollanda Ayu Saputri & Supriyono, 2023). In addition, research conducted by L. Wu & Liu (2022) found that the variable brand image significantly affects purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, research conducted by Fiorentina & Santoso (2023) concluded that the brand image variable significantly affected purchasing decisions. However, in contrast to the results of the research above, research conducted by Cardoso et al. (2022) shows that partially, the brand image variable does not affect purchasing decisions, similar to the results of research conducted by Tan et al. (2022) which revealed that the brand image variable also had no positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. The research of Byun et al. (2023) shows that the E-WoM variable affects purchasing decisions. Next, research by Nguyen & Phan (2022) concluded that the E-WoM variable positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions. However, in contrast to the research results above, Tien et al. (2019) research showed that the electronic word-of-mouth variable has little effect on purchasing decisions. Indrawati et al. (2023) also found the same thing, arguing that the E-WoM variable partially has no effect and is insignificant in purchasing decisions. The difference in research results shows that brand image and E-WoM still have limitations, so brand trust analysis is carried out to mediate the influence of brand image and E-WoM on purchasing decisions. Brand trust was chosen because it can mediate the relationship between brand image and E-WoM variables in purchasing decisions.

Based on the description above, this research develops marketing management by examining an integration model and concept measurement that can provide a new understanding of the role of brand trust as a mediating variable, the influence of brand image and e-wom on purchasing decisions. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the effect of brand image and *electronic word of mouth* on purchasing decisions through brand trust as a mediating variable.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research is quantitative research. Quantitative research tests previously established hypotheses (Indrawati et al., 2023). This study will test and analyze the effect of brand image and E-WoM on purchasing decisions through brand trust as a mediating variable. The type of data the author used was quantitative data. The quantitative data in this study were the results of respondents' opinions obtained from distributing research questionnaires, which are research instruments.

The population in this study were all Pattimura University students who used Xiaomi brand smartphones. Suppose the population to be taken by the researcher is a large population, and the researcher is likely to study only some things in the population. In that case, the author can use a sample from that population. However, the sample taken from the population must be able to represent the population.

Based on this explanation, the sampling in this study used a non-random or non-probability sampling method using subjective purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique with consideration and has certain criteria (Campbell et al., 2020). The reason researchers use purposive sampling techniques is so that researchers get the information needed from the right respondents. The sample criteria in this study were: 1) Respondents were active students registered as Pattimura University students. 2) Respondents were students who had bought and used Xiaomi smartphones. 3) Respondents were at least 17 years old when completing the questionnaire.

Sampling was based on the consideration that the respondent has bought and used Xioami *smartphone* products. Xiaomi *smartphone* product was selected because the research was conducted at Pattimura University, and only a few students use this type of product compared to other *smartphone* brands. The sample chosen by the researcher as the data source needed for this research was students in the Pattimura University academic community. Determination of the minimum and maximum representative sample size can depend on the number of indicators multiplied by 5 to 10. The sample size

was taken based on the complexity of the model, which is a minimum of 150 samples if the model has seven parameters or less. A good sample size is in the range of 100 - 200 samples (Memon et al., 2020). In this study, 20 indicator items are used to measure 4 variables, so the number of respondents used is 20 indicator items x 5 = 100 + 4 (variables) = 104 respondents. The data analysis method used *Partial Least Square* (PLS), and the data was processed using SmartPLS software version 3.3.3.

Primary data in this study was obtained by distributing questionnaires to respondents as answers to questions about research variables. According to research topics, secondary data was obtained from literature, books, journals, and the internet. The analysis technique used in this research is Partial Least Squares (PLS). PLS is a method used to build models that can predict when too many factors exist. The steps in analyzing data include validity testing, reliability testing, structural model testing, and hypothesis testing (Yollanda Ayu Saputri & Supriyono, 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Validity Test

An indicator is declared valid if the Outer Loading value is 0.7 and the AVE value is 0.5.

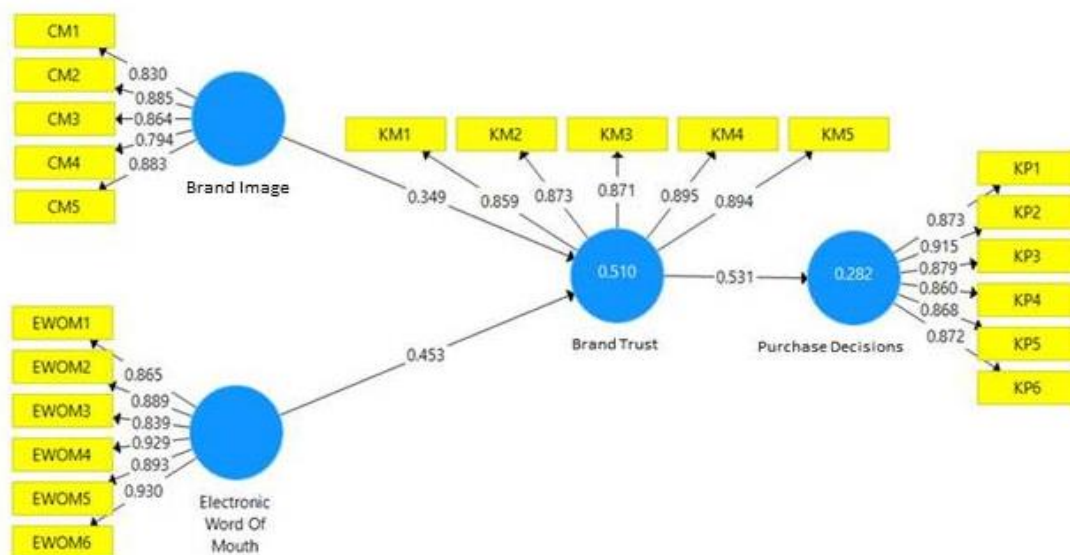


Figure 2. Outer Loading Value

**Table 1. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value**

Variables	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Image	0,726
Electronic Word of Mouth	0,794
Brand Trust	0,772
Purchase Decision	0,771

From Table 1 and figure 2 above, it can be concluded that all indicators have been declared valid because they have met the requirements, namely exceeding the minimum value determined with Outer Loading worth 0.7 and AVE worth at least 0.5.

### Reliability Test

A reliability test can be done by looking at the *Composite Reliability* and *Cronbach's Alpha* value with a minimum value of 0.7. It can be described as follows:

**Table 2. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values**

Variables	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Brand Image	0,930	0,905
Electronic Word of Mouth	0,959	0,948
Brand Trust	0,944	0,926
Purchase Decision	0,953	0,941

From Table 2 above, it can be concluded that all variables have been declared reliable because the *Composite Reliability* and *Cronbach's Alpha* values have met the predetermined requirements of 0.7.

### Structural Model Analysis (*Inner Model*)

#### *R Square (R)<sup>2</sup>*

**Table 3. R Square**

Variables	R Square
Brand Trust	0,51
Purchase Decision	0,28

Table 3 show the measurement standard in testing the coefficient of determination is 0.67, which means that the model is good, 0.33 means that the model is declared moderate, and 0.19 means that the model is weak. The *R Square* value for the Brand Trust variable is 0.51, which means moderate because the value is still below 0.67. The *R Square* value for the Purchase Decision variable is 0.28, which is moderate because the value is still above 0.19.

The *R Square* value means the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In this case, the influence of the Brand Image and *Electronic word-of-mouth* variables is 51% on the Brand Trust variable, and 49% is the influence of other variables. It means the chance of other variables affecting the Brand Trust variable is 49%. Likewise, the influence of the Brand Image and *Electronic word-of-mouth* variables is 28% on the Purchasing Decision variable, and 72% is the influence of other variables. It means that the opportunity for other variables that can influence the Purchasing Decision variable is 72%.

#### *Path Coefficients*

Path coefficients indicate the direction of the variable relationship, whether the relationship is positive (+) or negative (-). It has a positive effect if the path coefficient value is in the range of 0 to 1 and a negative effect if the value is in the range of 0 to -1. It can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4. Path Coefficients**

	Brand Image	<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i>	Brand Trust	Purchase Decision
Brand Image			0,349	
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i>			0,453	
Brand Trust				0,531
Purchase Decision				

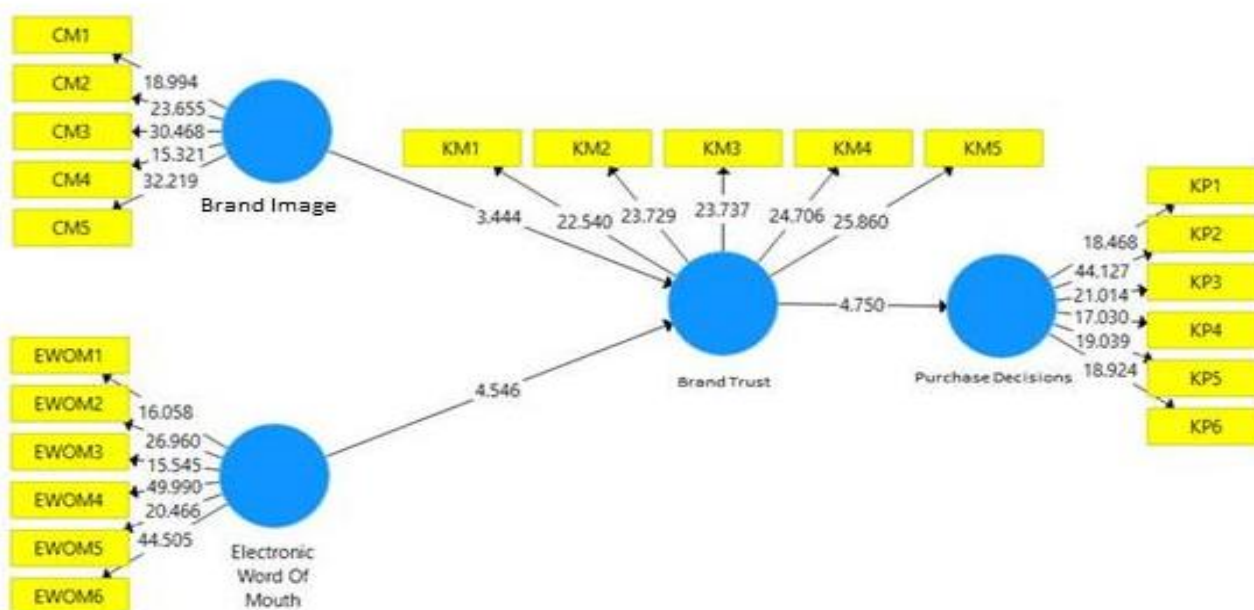


Based on the table 4 above, it can be explained.

1. Brand Image shows a positive relationship direction to Brand Trust because it has a *path coefficient* value of 0.349.
2. *Electronic Word of Mouth* shows a positive direction of relationship to Brand Trust because it has a *path coefficient* value of 0.453.
3. Brand Trust shows a positive direction of relationship to Purchasing Decisions because it has a *path coefficient* value of 0.531.

**Hypothesis Test (*Bootstrapping*)**

Hypothesis testing is said to have a significant effect when the T-statistic value > 1.96 and the P-value < 0.05. Meanwhile, it is said to have no significant effect when the T-statistic value < 1.96 and P-values > 0.05. It can be seen in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Estimation Results of *Bootstrapping* Calculation**

**Table 5. Hypothesis Test**

	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Brand Image → Brand Trust	3,444	0,001
Electronic Word of Mouth → Brand Trust	4,546	0,000
Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	4,750	0,000

Based on the table 5, it can be explained as follows:

1. The relationship between Brand Image and Brand Trust has a T-statistic value of 3.444 and a P-value of 0.001. It means that the Brand Image variable significantly influences the Brand Trust variable because it has a T-statistic value > 1.96 and a P-value < 0.05.



2. The relationship between *Electronic Word of Mouth* and Brand Trust has a T-statistic value of 4.546 and a *P-value* of 0.000. The *Electronic word-of-mouth* variable significantly influences the Brand Trust variable because it has a T-statistic value > 1.96 and a *P-value* < 0.05.
3. The relationship between Brand Trust and Purchasing Decisions has a T-statistic value of 4.750 and a *P-value* of 0.000. It means that the Brand Trust variable significantly influences the Purchasing Decision variable because it has a T-statistic value > 1.96 and a *P-value* < 0.05.

**Table 6. Mediation Hypothesis Test**

	<i>Path Coefficients</i>	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	<i>P Values</i>
Brand Image → Brand Trust → Purchasing Decision	0,185	3,178	0,002
<i>Electronic Word of Mouth</i> → Brand Trust → Purchase Decision	0,240	2,368	0,018

Mediation hypothesis testing was carried out to see the indirect relationship between Brand Image and *Electronic word-of-mouth* variables on Purchasing Decisions through the Brand Trust variable as a mediating variable.

1. The indirect relationship between Brand Image and Purchasing Decisions through Brand Trust has a *path coefficient* value of 0.185, a T-statistic of 3.178 and a *P-value* of 0.002. It means that the Brand Image variable has a positive and significant indirect influence on the Purchasing Decision variable through the Brand Trust variable because it has a *path coefficient* value in the range of 0 to 1 and has a T-statistic value > 1.96 and also *P-values* < 0.05.
2. The indirect relationship between *Electronic Word of Mouth* and Purchasing Decisions through Brand Trust has a *path coefficient* value of 0.240, a T-statistic of 2.368 and a *P-value* of 0.018. It means that the *Electronic word-of-mouth* variable has a positive and significant indirect effect on the Purchasing Decision variable through the Brand Trust variable because it has a *path coefficient* value of 0 to 1 and a T-statistic value > 1.96 and *P-values* < 0.05.

## Discussion

### The Effect of Brand Image on Brand Trust

The findings obtained concluded that brand image has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. It explains that the brand image consumers perceive affects the emergence of trust in the Xiaomi *smartphone* brand. The brand image perceived by consumers, such as the view of quality, service, and good companies, is able to make consumers believe (R. B. Kim & Chao, 2019). Brand loyalty is important to a company's business strategy and success. Companies/producers look for various ways to inform consumers about their products and brands. Brand image is identified as a key determinant in influencing brand loyalty. Therefore, extending the brand loyalty model to include brand image is necessary not only to improve the predictive power of the framework but also to develop the customer's perception of a brand. The company's goal is to create a strong brand image in the minds of consumers. Marketing programs can produce positive results on a brand image by building a strong relationship between the brand and its image in consumers' memories (Mabkhot et al., 2017). The brand image consumers perceive affects the generation of trust in the Sm-Xi brand. The brand image perceived by consumers, such as the view of quality, service, and good companies, can make consumers trust (Cindy 2014). A brand is a company's identity tool and a means in the marketplace. The brand and its image make the company's

services real and help differentiate the company through quality and resources in the competition. The brand is an additional part of an organization, which forms its promise about the performance and value of its products or services. The brand attracts customers towards the organization and, at the same time, is a stimulus for building consumer associations. Strong brands are characterized by consumer familiarity and understanding, perceived quality, loyalty, and visibility in the market (Rak, 2015). Building a strong brand in the market is one of the important goals of the organization because it can provide many benefits for the company, including less vulnerability to the competitive environment, higher profit margins, more participation cooperation, and support and development of brand opportunities (Deheshti et al., 2016). The more recognizable and attractive Sm-Xi is, including Sm-Xi's reputation among the public, the more trust in Sm-Xi products will increase. A good reputation will also make consumers think that (Sm-Xi) is reliable and can meet the needs and safety of Sm-Xi, which has been guaranteed. The results of this study are also in line with previous research conducted by (Citra & Santoso, 2016) in a study entitled "Analysis of the Effect of Product Quality and Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions for Continuous Form Molds through Brand Trust", which found that brand image affects brand trust.

### **The Effect of E-WoM on Brand Trust**

The findings can conclude that E-WoM positively and significantly affects Brand Trust. It shows that positive E-WoM references are one way to build trust in the Xiaomi brand. Therefore, various information obtained from various online/social media must provide truthful information so that other consumers can see and determine for themselves which brands they should trust. With the help of digital platforms will make it easier for consumers to get online information from various sources they trust (Smith et al., 2016). The key to the success of E-WoM brand communication depends largely on understanding the factors that predict consumers' actions to influence the attitudes and behaviour of others, as well as the search for information for opinion seekers. Consumers who interact with brands and observe consumer-brand conversations on social media are known as "brand followers." Brand followers are more likely to actively engage in eWOM, especially when highly loyal and satisfied with the brand. Therefore, we investigate consumer engagement in brand eWOM activities on social media in terms of consumers' relationship with the brand (E. Kim et al., 2014).

This allows them to get information about Sm-Xi. The current social media will also make information circulate very quickly. It can also allow information about Sm-Xi to be seen by many people quickly. In addition, consumers' desire to share their positive experiences with other consumers can help them find information about their positive experiences with Sm-Xi that is reliable and can meet their needs, which will influence other consumers to have more confidence in Sm-Xi products. Someone who cares about other consumers will recommend Sm-Xi because they believe the product is reliable and can meet their needs. Consumers seeking advice about Sm-Xi products want to ensure that the *smartphone* is reliable and can meet their needs so that consumers can have more confidence in Xiaomi *smartphone* products (CHONG, 2023).

### **The Effect of Brand Trust on Purchasing Decisions**

Based on the results, brand trust positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions. It shows that the high brand trust of consumers in the Xiaomi brand will further increase purchasing decisions on Sm-Xi products. Internal or external marketing factors can influence consumer purchases and decisions. Internal factors include beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, personality, perceptions, lifestyle, role, and status. On the other hand, external factors include culture, group membership, and social class. As today's consumers

are exposed to a wide range of product or service offerings and various alternative service providers, it takes a lot of work to attract and maintain successful relationships with key customers to ensure continued growth and market presence (Salem & Salem, 2018). Marketing practitioners have also noticed that consumers are becoming more comfortable in using internet channels and social media sites to connect.

For this reason, most service providers are creating their pages on social networks to connect with customers online and develop a positive image of their brand (Hutter et al., 2013). When consumers' awareness of a brand and its offerings increases, they usually search for more information about the brand online and then assess the benefits of choosing it over competitors before making a purchase decision (Hanaysha, 2022).

Social media sites have recently become one of the most powerful media approaches to communicating and interacting with customers virtually at a low cost. By utilizing social media networks, companies can increase consumer engagement, easily share important marketing messages, and quickly reach the target market (Huang, 2019). Through their experience, customers will also get the opportunity to influence others and share their opinions through online reviews, comments and word-of-mouth. (Liu et al., 2021). Sm-Xi products that are reliable in carrying out various activities will make consumers choose Sm-Xi and seek information about the *smartphone* before buying so that they can see whether Sm-Xi matches their wishes so that it can increase their confidence in Sm-Xi before deciding to buy. Consumer needs for *smartphones* will be fulfilled when using Sm-Xi, which can make consumers confident in purchasing Sm-Xi. (Marpaung et al., 2023).

### **The Effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions Through Brand Trust**

The findings conclude that Brand Image positively and significantly affects Purchasing Decisions through the mediation of Brand Trust. It shows that brand trust also indirectly affects consumers when they want to make purchasing decisions on Xiaomi *smartphones*. When a brand has a good image, it will affect consumer perceptions of the brand. A good image for consumers will form trust in the brand, which can also indirectly influence buying the product. Based on the results of data analysis, the brand trust variable successfully mediates the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions. It means that the existence of the brand trust variable as an indirect link between brand image and purchasing decisions can strengthen the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions, or it can be said that the brand trust variable has successfully mediated the perfect relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions. Therefore, brand image positively and significantly influences purchasing decisions mediated by brand trust. (Aeni & Ekhsan, 2020).

### **The Effect of E-WoM on Purchasing Decisions Through Brand Trust**

The findings concluded that E-WoM positively and significantly affects Purchasing Decisions through Brand Trust. Suppose consumers often make positive *electronic word-of-mouth* references in various online/social media. In that case, it will indirectly generate Xiaomi brand trust in other consumers, making them more confident in their purchasing decisions.

Based on the results of data analysis, the brand trust variable successfully mediates the relationship between E-WoM and purchasing decisions. Therefore, E-WoM affects purchasing decisions. It means that the existence of the brand trust variable as an indirect link between *electronic word of mouth* and purchasing decisions can strengthen the relationship between E-WoM and purchasing decisions or it can be said that the brand trust variable successfully mediates the

perfect relationship between E-WoM and purchasing decisions. Therefore, brand trust mediates the effect of *electronic word of mouth* on purchasing decisions. (Dewi & Sudiksa, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the testing and analysis carried out in this study, the researcher can conclude that: 1) The results showed that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. In this case, the brand image, as measured by 4 indicators, can increase trust in the Sm-Xi brand at Pattimura University. 2) The results showed that E-WoM positively and significantly affects Brand Trust. In this case, it can be concluded that E-WoM, as measured by 6 indicators, can increase trust in the Sm-Xi brand at Pattimura University. 3) The results showed that Brand Trust positively and significantly affects Purchasing Decisions. In this case, brand trust, as measured by 4 indicators, can increase Sm-Xi purchasing decisions at Pattimura University. 4) The results showed that Brand Image positively and significantly affects Purchasing Decisions through the mediation of Brand Trust. In this case, it can be concluded that brand image can improve purchasing decisions if mediated by brand trust, which means that the Sm-Xi purchasing decision among students at Pattimura University depends on the level of Xiaomi's brand image and also the level of trust in the Xiaomi brand. 5) The results showed that E-WoM positively and significantly affects Purchasing Decisions through the mediation of Brand Trust. In this case, it can be concluded that brand image can improve purchasing decisions if mediated by E-WoM, which means that the decision to purchase a Xiaomi smartphone among students at Pattimura University depends on the level of positive E-WoM references and also the level of trust in the Xiaomi brand.

Based on the discussion results and conclusions, several suggestions can be put forward: 1) Expanding the scope of respondents by taking a wider population and sample area than Pattimura University. Subsequent research is recommended to cover the Ambon city area, Maluku Province or even Indonesia. 3) Future research should be carried out by examining other independent variables and mediating variables to explain better the role of the variables that mediate the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

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