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### The Role of Brand Image Mediate the Influence of E-WOM and Celebrity Endorsers on Purchase Intention of Lemonilo Instant Noodle Products

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine and analyze the effect of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and celebrity endorsement on the purchase intention of Lemonilo instant noodles, with brand image as a mediating variable. The sample of this study was all teenagers and adults in Bandung who had never consumed Lemonilo instant noodles. The number of samples is 185 respondents. The data processing results are carried out using SEM analysis and smart PLS processing. From the results of hypothesis testing, it was found that there was no positive effect of E-WOM on purchase intention, there was a positive influence of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention, there was a positive effect of E-WOM on brand image, there was no positive influence of celebrity endorsers on brand image, there was a positive influence brand image on purchase intention. For mediating variables, brand image can mediate the impact of E-WOM on purchase intention, and brand image cannot mediate the impact of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention. Thus, the Lemonilo company needs to be able to improve E-WOM by standardizing the existence of reviews of Lemonilo noodles and being able to select easily recognizable celebrities for the advertisements used.

#### INTRODUCTION

Instant noodles are one of the foods that are not good enough for the body because they contain preservatives, especially when consumed in excess. Instant noodles are foods that the people of Indonesia generally favour. There are 5 of Indonesia's best instant noodle products, namely, Indomie, Mie Sedap, Sarimi, Gaga 100, and Supermi (Angelia, 2022). There are instant noodles that are being talked about among the public, namely Lemonilo instant noodles, with

claims to be healthy because their production uses natural ingredients and contains good ingredients for the body. However, the taste of Lemonilo instant noodles is no less delicious than other instant noodles. Reviews of Lemonilo instant noodles can be found on the Home Tester Club website. The information shared is the consumer's experience after consuming Lemonilo instant noodle products.

Consumers can obtain information on E-WOM (Wardhana et al., 2021). E-WOM is a way of exchanging information and is an essential means for consumers to obtain information about the quality of products and services from a company (Akbar et al., 2019). Electronic word of mouth is communication between informal and non-commercial individuals via the Internet related to information about products or services (Tariq et al., 2017). Marketing through E-WOM has now become a style of communication that takes place in e-marketing, where consumers can provide comments and product reviews about things they like to friends and other people in online media due to new technological developments that have enlarged the scale of interaction. (Husnain, Qureshi, Fatima, & Akhtar, 2016).

One of the types of E-WOM often used is through individuals who are well-known endorsers (Teguh, 2022). Using well-known individuals or celebrity endorsements for targeted market share is a growing phenomenon for promoting a product or service (Rahmani et al., 2022). The primary mover in lifting a product's brand is still using celebrities; therefore, to market their products, many brands use celebrities (Romdhoni et al., 2022). The selection of the right celebrity to become a celebrity endorser has the critical task of conveying product messages to consumers; if the message is delivered correctly, consumers will show purchase intent (Megayani & Marlina, 2019).

Purchase intention is the level of evaluation that consumers do of the information they receive, or it can be said that purchase intention is something consumers think about when making a purchase (Saputra & K, 2020). Consumers will look for information and consider the product to be purchased if there is an intention to buy. This can be used to increase product sales by marketing and introducing products to consumers because if a purchase intention arises, consumers will seek information from anywhere. A purchase intention is a stage at which consumers build choices on several brands combined into a choice (Asif et al., 2018 in Tatel, Soegoto, & Poluan, 2022). Consumer attention and the intention to make purchases can increase if companies can compete carefully in promoting their products. Various kinds of strategies can be carried out by companies, such as increasing brand image.

Consumers use it as a guide to make purchases. Brand image is a consumer's understanding of a brand that comes from their memories of the product and how they feel about it (Firmansyah, 2019). Consumers will feel confident in the quality of a product if the brand image of the product is vital, so consumers who feel satisfied with the quality of their product purchases will spread the news to relatives and friends or post reviews on the Internet and social media (Candra & Suparna, 2019). Brand image can be built using celebrity endorsements as a general marketing communication strategy (Adam et al., 2022). This knowledge forms a brand image among consumers.

According to research (Wiwaha, 2022), the Lemonilo brand, which claims to be a healthy instant noodle product, has succeeded in taking fourth place on the list of top brands as the best instant noodle with a sales volume of 6.3%. This shows that consumers' purchase intentions for Lemonilo instant noodles are high because of the many fried instant noodles. Lemonilo instant noodles occupied fourth place, but the pre-survey results showed otherwise. Pre-survey results regarding consumer purchase intentions for Lemonilo instant noodle products still need to be higher.

According to the results of previous research (Dewi & Giantari, 2020), brand image plays a role in mediating the influence of E-WOM and celebrity endorsers on purchase intentions. E-WOM, endorsers, and brand image positively and significantly affect purchase intentions. Contradictory

results were found in research (Ardiansyah & Aquinia, 2022), which stated that celebrity endorsements and brand image positively and significantly affected purchase intention. In contrast, electronic word of mouth did not significantly affect purchase intention. Other contradictory results were also found in research (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019), which stated that the brand image could not mediate the effect of E-WOM on PI in the context of smartphone brands in North Cyprus. Inconsistent previous research results indicate a research gap.

Based on the phenomenon, brand image plays a role in mediating the influence of E-WOM and celebrity endorsers on purchase intentions. E-WOM, endorsers, and brand image positively and significantly affect purchase intentions. Other researchers have different views, so this assumption still needs to be tested empirically.

Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is online information about a product, either positive or negative, from previous consumers (Halim & Keni, 2022). Consumers share personal experiences about brands, products, or services that they have experienced themselves using social media (Sabrina et al., 2022). E-WOM can be accessed quickly and presented to every individual on the Internet through comments related to products or services (Rahaman et al., 2022). With the rapid growth of social networks, consumers have recently tended to seek information and suggestions from other consumers (Liao et al., 2022). E-WOM makes the marketing process easier now because time is shorter and there are no distance constraints (Kuo & Nakhata, 2019). E-WOM focuses on a broader and more subjective product experience because it can include something other than a product-focused online community (Daowd et al., 2020). This study uses the measurement of the E-WOM variable (Lin et al., 2013 in Wardhana, et al. 2021), which consists of: 1) E-WOM quality (E-WOM quality), 2) E-WOM quantity (E-WOM quantity), and 3) sender's expertise.

A celebrity endorser is a communication channel celebrities use to promote and express their opinions about a product based on their fame and individuality (Andini & R, 2022). Having celebrities in advertisements provides several benefits, namely helping to identify brands, changing negative attitudes towards brands, repositioning brands, positioning products in global markets quickly, and helping to influence consumer purchase intentions (Jolly & L, 2013). Companies and marketers have used celebrities in recent decades to promote products, services, and brands; nowadays, celebrity endorsements are an essential medium for communicating with consumers with the Internet and social media that are increasingly developing (Porral et al., 2021). Celebrity support used by marketers is an efficient strategy and answers consumer needs from a psychological perspective (Saldanha, 2022). This study uses celebrity endorsement variable measurements consisting of (Frimpong & Frimpong, 2019): 1) attractiveness, 2) trustworthiness, and 3) familiarity.

Brand image is a combination of beliefs, ideas, things that have been felt, and the understanding of a person, group, or community about a brand (Huda, 2020). A brand image arises in consumers' minds when a brand is displayed in front of their eyes (Lahap, Ramli, Said, Radzi, & Zain, 2016). Brand image is a picture of the overall opinion about the brand formed from news and experiences with the brand in the past (Hertina et al., 2022). Brand image is an assumption of integrity from a brand position in competition with brands known by consumers as strong brands or not (Sabrina et al., 2022). The brand image is people's thoughts about brands they have yet to see but already know have good or bad quality (Lamasi & Santoso, 2022). Consumers use a brand image to infer general perceptions of a particular product (Maymand & Razmi, 2017). This study uses the measurement of brand image variables, namely (Keller & Swaminathan in Gunawan & Kunto, 2022): 1) Strength of Brand Associations, 2) Favorability of Brand Associations, 3) Uniqueness of brand associations

Purchase intention is when a consumer illustrates an alternative between brands as a level of consideration in a choice that might lead to an intention to purchase the brand of interest (Hendro & Keni, 2020). Purchase intention is defined as the desire of consumers regarding specific products and services to make purchases (Lee et al., 2022). Purchase intention is used to estimate

the future value of a brand; consumers' willingness to commit is related to future consumption. (Lu, 2021). Consumer purchase intention will arise when consumers get something convincing about the information about the product or service offered and then evaluate, assess, and carry out the purchasing process (Amelia & Hidayatullah, 2020). Indicators of purchase intention consist of (Lu et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2021 in Mikhael & Susan, 2022): 1) Considerations for choosing a brand, 2) Likelihood of choosing a brand, 3) Likelihood to buy in the future 4) The ability to purchase when needed.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive approach. This study's primary data source was obtained by distributing questionnaires with a Likert scale. The population of this study was all adolescents and adults in the city of Bandung. At the same time, the sample used was all adolescents and adults in the city of Bandung who had never consumed Lemonilo instant noodles. The population used in this study is unlimited due to the broad scope of the research. Calculate the minimum number of samples using the formula Hair et al. (2006). Because the population size is uncertain, the minimum sample size is 5–10 observations for each parameter estimated (Trihudiyatmanto, 2022). Data processing results will then be processed using SEM analysis and Smart PLS.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### Description of Respondents

- Based on the gender of the respondents, it was found that the responses from the respondents were balanced between male and female respondents, namely 50%.
- For the respondents, the respondents aged 17-25 were 53.0%, 26-30 were 25.0%, aged 31-35 were 7.5%, and >35 were 14.5%. Thus, there are more respondents aged 17–25 years.
- For the respondents' work, there were 40.5% private employees, 20.5% others, 20.0% students, and 19.0% self-employed.
- All (100%) respondents have not consumed Lemonilo instant noodles.

### **Outer Model Evaluation**

In evaluating the outer model, there are several tests to test the validity and reliability of a study, including convergent validity, which requires an outer loading value  $> 0.50$ , average variance extracted (AVE)  $> 0.50$ , composite reliability  $> 0.70$ , and Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.70$ , which indicates this research is included in the "good" category.

Based on Table 2 regarding the results of the evaluation of the outer model, the results show that the variables brand image, celebrity endorsement, E-WOM, and purchase intention have convergent validity values  $> 0.50$ , AVE  $> 0.50$ , composite reliability  $> 0.70$ , and Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.70$ . These results are included in the "good" category when referring to the interval criteria, so it can be concluded that all variables have excellent levels of validity and reliability.

**Table 1. Outer Model Evaluation**

Construct/Item		Loadings		Alpha Cronbach	CR	AVE
<b>Brand Image</b>						
BRIMAGE_01	BRIMAGE_05	0.857	0.507	0.865	0.904	0.591
BRIMAGE_02	BRIMAGE_06	0.873	0.528			
BRIMAGE_03	BRIMAGE_07	0.874	0.855			
BRIMAGE_04		0.876				
<b>CELEBRITY ENDORSER</b>						
END_01	END_07	0.859	0.833	0.878	0.909	0.536
END_02	END_08	0.869	0.864			
END_03	END_09	0.876	0.513			
END_04	END_10	0.830	0.509			
END_05	END_11	0.861	0.509			
END_06		0.857				
<b>E-WOM</b>						
EWOM_01	EWOM_08	0.800	0.848	0.960	0.964	0.657
EWOM_02	EWOM_09	0.820	0.821			
EWOM_03	EWOM_10	0.822	0.757			
EWOM_04	EWOM_11	0.811	0.803			
EWOM_05	EWOM_12	0.855	0.843			
EWOM_06	EWOM_13	0.857	0.778			
EWOM_07	EWOM_14	0.806	0.718			
<b>PURCHASE INTENTION</b>						
PINTENTION_01	PINTENTION_04	0.836	0.857	0.914	0.936	0.744
PINTENTION_02	PINTENTION_05	0.872	0.864			
PINTENTION_03		0.884				

Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

**Inner model Evaluation**

According to Ghozali and Latan (2015), a structural model is a model that connects each latent variable. Measurements using the PLS-SEM are carried out by testing the R-squared (R2) and testing the significance through the estimation of the path coefficient.

**Table 2. R Square Test**

	R Square Adjusted
Brand Image	0.849
Purchase intentions	0.334

Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

Based on the R-square test, the r-square value tested has an adjusted R-square value, which means: The dependent variables have an influence of 0.849 on brand image. The dependent variables have an influence of 0.334 on purchase intention.

**Table 3. Uji Hipotesis Langsung**

	T Statistics	P Values
<b>Direct Influence</b>		
E-WOM -> Purchase intentions	0.731	0.465
Celebrity endorser -> Purchase intentions	2.592	0.010
E-WOM -> Brand Image	8.404	0.000
Celebrity endorser -> Brand Image	1.466	0.143
Brand Image -> Purchase intentions	2.221	0.027
<b>Indirect Influence</b>		
E-WOM -> Brand Image -> Purchase intentions	2.141	0.033
Celebrity endorser -> Brand Image -> Purchase intentions	1.217	0.224

Source: Data Processing Results, 2022

### **The influence of E-WOM on purchase intention**

For Hypothesis 1, if the obtained t value is 0.731 ( $t_{count} < t_{table}$ ) and a significance of 0.465 > 0.05, then H0 is accepted, and Ha is rejected, meaning that E-WOM has no positive effect on purchase intention. In general, the existence of good reviews and various incentives to use Lemonilo noodles will not necessarily determine the purchase intention displayed by consumers.

The results of this study illustrate that the existence of ratings and reviews and the existence of positive testimonials as a form of E-WOM do not necessarily shape consumer purchase intentions because the taste and delicacy of food and beverage products will have a more significant impact on individuals when individuals try these food and beverage products. Yourself, and not just get a review from a third party.

### **The influence of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention**

For Hypothesis 2, the t-count is 2,592 ( $t_{count} < t_{table}$ ) and a significance of 0.010 < 0.05, so H0 is rejected, and Ha is accepted, meaning that celebrity endorsers have a positive influence on purchase intention. In general, the existence of artists who can improve the image of Lemonilo noodles can determine the purchase intention displayed by consumers.

In the results of this study, the existence of well-known artists and social figures who provide positive recommendations for purchasing decisions can encourage purchase intentions for Lemonilo products. The public will identify themselves with well-known artist figures, and artists with good and positive characteristics can attract consumers and generate good purchase intentions for Lemonilo products. Selection of the appropriate artist, depiction of family, and other features are highlighted in the advertisement with the artist used.

### **The Influence of E-WOM on Brand Image**

For Hypothesis 3, the t-count is 8,404 ( $t_{count} < t_{table}$ ) and a significance of 0,000 < 0.05, then H0 is rejected, and Ha is accepted, meaning that E-WOM positively affects brand image. In general, the existence of good reviews and various encouragements to use Lemonilo noodles can determine the brand image consumers display.

From these results, a good image in the corporate environment can be formed from E-WOM, where displays are in the form of good reviews, and there are various encouragements to use Lemonilo noodles from the social media environment. These are characteristics that can drive the brand. The better image later on.

### **The influence of celebrity endorsers on brand image**

For Hypothesis 4, the t value obtained is 1.466 ( $t_{\text{count}} < t_{\text{table}}$ ) and a significance of 0.143 > 0.05, so H0 is accepted, and Ha is rejected, meaning that celebrity endorsers have no positive influence on brand image. Generally, the presence of famous or well-known artists does not necessarily improve the brand image consumers display.

In this study, the presence of excellent and well-known artists may only sometimes form a brand image. This can happen because many artists and celebrities are used as endorsers, so the company's efforts to form a positive image become diffused or unclear with the addition of the artists used in these advertisements.

### **Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Intention**

For Hypothesis 5, if the t-value is 2,221 ( $t_{\text{count}} < t_{\text{table}}$ ) and the significance is 0.027 < 0.05, then H0 is rejected, and Ha is accepted, meaning that brand image has a positive influence on purchase intention. In general, brand image can increase the purchase intention displayed by consumers.

Based on these results, the existence of a brand image as a basis for forming brand equity is one of the prerequisites for consumers to choose a brand. When consumers feel a brand is positive, it encourages them to purchase it.

### **Brand image mediates the impact of E-WOM on purchase intention**

For Hypothesis 6, if the t-count is 2.141 ( $t_{\text{count}} < t_{\text{table}}$ ) and the significance is 0.0330 < 0.05, then H0 is rejected, and Ha is accepted, meaning that brand image can mediate the impact of E-WOM on purchase intention. Thus, having a good brand image supported by good reviews is the basis for consumers' future purchase intentions.

Therefore, it can be illustrated that when consumers get favourable reviews in the form of E-WOM that are also favourable for the brand, this forms a positive brand image from individuals towards the brand, which allows consumers to be more likely to choose Lemonilo products in the future. Therefore, a positive brand image is a condition for consumers to choose products with good E-WOM. As a result, a positive brand image supports future consumer purchases.

### **Brand image mediates the impact of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention**

For Hypothesis 7, if the t value is 1.217 ( $t_{\text{count}} < t_{\text{table}}$ ) and the significance is 0.224 > 0.05, then H0 is accepted, and Ha is rejected, meaning that brand image cannot mediate the impact of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention. In general, the existence of a well-known artist and a positive image of the Lemonilo brand will not necessarily determine the purchase intention displayed by consumers.

## **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Following the discussion, the researcher found the relevance of the respondents' answers in the form of indicators that best represent each variable, namely the value with the highest cross-loadings. From the description of this indicator, the research implications that can be taken are:

Meanwhile, the components that the company must repair are:

1. For the E-WOM variable, based on the answer with the highest average score, the company is expected to increase the number of Lemonilo instant noodle reviews on social media and displayed advertisements, which can convince consumers as part of the E-WOM of the Lemonilo brand alone. Meanwhile, responding to the lowest answer, Lemonilo is expected to have a script that can be mentioned to standardize the review of Lemonilo noodles and avoid mentioning things that were not considered before.

2. For the celebrity endorser variable, based on the highest average score, the company is expected to maintain the celebrity endorser because consumers feel that the celebrity endorser as a figure

displayed by Lemonilo instant noodles is reliable. On the other hand, as a response to the lowest answer, Lemonilo will likely choose a celebrity that is more easily recognized for the advertisements used for the new ones.

3. For the brand image variable, based on the highest average score given by consumers, Lemonilo can maintain the image that its instant noodle products are practical in terms of presentation, which is one of the things that makes up the brand image variable. On the other hand, we see things still needing improvement from items with the lowest average, where Lemonilo is expected to encourage a positive image as the top choice.

4. For the purchase intention variable, from the statement with the highest average score, Lemonilo needs to maintain the respondent's tendency to buy because, at this time, the respondents already tend to buy Lemonilo instant noodles in the future, which illustrates a robust relative purchase intention. On the other hand, items with the lowest average score Therefore, Lemonilo must work with online buying and selling sites to provide promotions.

### **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

This research has the following limitations:

1. Performed on only one instant noodle brand, namely Lemonilo
2. Measure four variables, namely the dependent variable E-WOM, celebrity endorsers, brand image, and one dependent variable, purchase intention.
3. This research was conducted on a limited number of respondents, namely 185.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study can be explained by the lack of a beneficial impact of E-WOM on consumers' intentions to buy Lemonilo products, indicating that consumers' intentions to buy products are only sometimes affected by the presence of E-WOM. Additionally, celebrity endorsements have a beneficial impact on consumers' buying intentions. Therefore, a rise in celebrity endorsements may encourage more people to purchase. Additionally, it was discovered that E-WOM had a favourable impact on brand perception, indicating that growing E-WOM can help build brand perception.

The use of existing artists did not encourage changes in brand image at Lemonilo, where it was also discovered that celebrity endorsers had no positive effect on brand image. However, brand image positively impacted purchase intention, and brand image could mediate the effect of E-WOM on purchase intention. This mediation hypothesis can be accepted since the brand image is a mediator variable of E-WOM on purchase intention. Finally, the brand image does not support a rise in the influence of celebrity endorsers on purchase intention to avoid a mediating effect since the brand image cannot mediate the impact of celebrity endorsers on buy intention.

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