

The Role of Brand Image as a Mediator of Digital Promotion and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

Background: Employing brand image as an intermediary variable, this research seeks to assess the influence exerted by digital promotion and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on purchase decisions at ZAP Clinic Semarang.

Objectives: The present research analyzes both the unmediated impacts of digital promotion and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on brand image and purchase decisions at ZAP Clinic Semarang, as well as the extent to which brand image serves as an intermediary in the linkage between those marketing tactics and subsequent consumer purchasing behavior.

Methodology: The research employed a quantitative framework based on a survey technique. Purposive sampling yielded 100 respondents meeting the following inclusion criteria: previous use of ZAP Clinic Semarang's services, receipt of digital promotional stimuli, interaction with online consumer reviews, age of at least 17 years, and domicile within Semarang City. Analytical procedures were carried out using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as executed in SmartPLS 4.0.

Findings: Although digital promotion exhibits no statistically significant direct effect on purchase decisions, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) demonstrates a positive and statistically significant impact on both brand image and consumer purchasing behavior. Furthermore, the findings confirm that brand image serves as a significant mediating mechanism in the relationship between digital marketing strategies, particularly e-WOM, and purchase decisions.

Conclusions: Purchase decisions for aesthetic clinic services are more driven by consumer experience and online recommendations through e-WOM, as well as positive perceptions of brand image, compared to digital promotion alone. Digital promotion may be ineffective unless it first enhances brand image.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Competition in Indonesia's beauty sector has increased recently, indicating that rivalry is increasingly fierce with the presence of various beauty clinics, both local and international brands, striving to attract consumer attention through service innovation, quality improvement, and creative appeal. This industry's competition is becoming more intense, with several brands competing to offer products with diverse benefits such as brightening skin, treating acne, and reducing signs of aging. The purpose of skincare is not only to beautify the skin but also to maintain health, protect from damage, and repair problematic skin conditions. Factors such as sun exposure, pollution, the aging process, and a fast-paced lifestyle can cause skin damage such as premature aging, hyperpigmentation, and acne. Therefore, maintaining skin health and preventing and repairing all types of damage requires regular skincare.

However, amidst the increasing competition in the beauty industry, not all brands are able to maintain their position in the market. One interesting phenomenon to study is the decline in brand performance experienced by ZAP Clinic. Based on Top Brand Index (TBI) data from 2022 to 2025, ZAP Clinic shows a significant downward trend, indicating problems in attracting and maintaining consumer purchase decisions.

Table 1. Top Brand Index for the Skincare Category 2022-2025

Nama Brand	2022	2023	2024	2025
Erha Clinic	33.40	31.70	32.20	31.80
Natasha Skin Care	24.00	20.40	13.80	13.80
Zap Clinic	9.40	7.00	5.00	4.20
MS Glow	3.20	4.60	13.20	13.20

Source: Top Brand Award, 2025

Based on Table 1, ZAP Clinic indicates a decline in brand performance over the past four years, with the Top Brand Index value dropping from 9.40 (2022) to 7.00 (2023), 5.00 (2024), and 4.20 (2025). This trend indicates that ZAP Clinic's brand position has not been able to compete optimally with main competitors such as Erha Clinic and MS Glow, which have actually experienced increasing popularity. The decline in ZAP Clinic's Top Brand Index value indicates a decrease in brand reputation among consumers in recent years, which not only reflects the level of popularity but also the strength of brand image in the consumer's mind. The Top Brand Index is compiled based on three main dimensions, namely top of mind awareness, last usage, and future intention, all of which are closely related to brand image. Therefore, ZAP Clinic's declining score can be interpreted as an indication that ZAP Clinic's brand image has not been optimally formed compared to competitors, thus implying a decrease in consumer preference and purchase decisions. In addition to Top Brand Index data, competitive dynamics can also be analyzed through digital trends.

Several periods show fluctuations in search interest and consistently demonstrate that ZAP Clinic tends to fall below several of its competitors. This indicates that the level of search interest or online search interest in ZAP Clinic is relatively weaker compared to competing aesthetic clinics. Heightened levels of consumer interaction and promotional exposure on platforms like Instagram and TikTok significantly affect consumer sentiment and subsequent purchase decisions. In the current digital environment, brand image formation depends heavily on content quality, observable engagement metrics including likes, comments, and shares, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). This construct refers to digital interpersonal communication arising from consumers' firsthand experiences shared across online platforms. This condition indicates that ZAP Clinic's challenges are not limited to service quality alone, but also encompass the effectiveness of digital promotion strategies and e-WOM management in shaping a positive brand image. Purchase decision becomes an important variable because it reflects the actual behavior of consumers in choosing aesthetic clinic services amid increasingly intense competition. In the context of ZAP Clinic Semarang, consumers are not only exposed to digital promotions, but also faced with many alternative clinics offering similar services. Therefore, what becomes crucial is not merely interest or perception, but the consumer's final decision to use ZAP Clinic's services.

Within this study, purchase decision is defined as the concluding step in the consumer's decision making journey. At this stage, consumers evaluate three key elements, namely digital promotional stimuli, e-WOM generated information, and the brand image previously cultivated. If consumers have positive experiences or receive convincing recommendations, then purchase decisions are more likely to occur. Conversely, even with intensive digital promotions, without consumer trust and a strong brand image, purchase decisions tend to be delayed or redirected to other clinics. Therefore, purchase decision is chosen as the dependent variable because it is most appropriate for describing ZAP Clinic's success in creating actual consumer behavior. This condition affirms the need for research that explores the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between digital promotion and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on consumer purchase decisions, with ZAP Clinic Semarang as the empirical object. As a laser technology-based beauty clinic established in 2009 with more than 50 branches across Indonesia, ZAP Clinic needs to optimize its digital marketing strategies to enhance competitiveness. The use of digital platforms offers

advantages in terms of cost efficiency, broad reach, and the ability to build direct interaction with consumers, making it a strategic factor in winning competition in today's beauty industry.

Based on this context, it is necessary to examine literature that explains how digital interactions influence consumer behavior, particularly through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). e-WOM is a marketing communication approach that occurs through user interactions on digital platforms, including social media and online reviews, which is considered highly credible because it originates from real consumer experiences (Albayrak & Ceylan, 2021). In the context of ZAP Clinic Semarang, e-WOM appears in the form of testimonials on social media and Google Reviews that help prospective consumers evaluate the quality of services and the clinic's professionalism. Several previous studies highlight the importance of e-WOM. Made et al. (2024) show that e-WOM has a positive effect on interest and purchase decisions in the service sector, while Fadhila & Saputra (2021) found that positive e-WOM strengthens consumer trust and encourages purchase decisions. In addition to e-WOM, digital promotion also plays an important role. ZAP Clinic Semarang actively uses social media such as Instagram (@zapcoid), TikTok (@zapcoid), and YouTube (ZAP Clinic) to showcase treatment results, testimonials, beauty education, and promotional campaigns aimed at forming positive consumer perceptions.

Research by Utomo et al. (2023) indicates that promotional activities drive purchase decisions by altering consumer attitudes and interests. Similarly, Ali et al. (2025) find that digital marketing executed through social media platforms enhances brand image, thereby influencing purchase decisions. These findings are consistent with Mehta (2025), who reports that digital promotion and e-WOM reinforce brand image and indirectly shape purchase decisions for beauty services via elevated consumer trust. Brand image refers to the aggregate consumer perception of a given brand. This study prioritizes brand image because of ZAP Clinic's performance decline on the Top Brand Index (TBI), a metric that evaluates brand performance through consumer awareness, product usage, and brand loyalty. In the context of aesthetic services such as ZAP Clinic Semarang, brand image reflects how prospective consumers assess the clinic's credibility, the professionalism of its medical staff, and the quality of treatment results. A positive brand image tends to encourage loyalty and purchase decisions because consumers are more confident in choosing services from a brand they consider trustworthy (Hoang & Tung, 2022). According to contemporary research, brand image exerts a significant influence on both brand equity formation and purchase intention, especially in service based and e-commerce environments (Munir & Watts, 2026).

Studies conducted by Utomo et al. (2023), Ali et al. (2025), and Made et al. (2024) demonstrate that digital promotion affects purchase decisions both directly and indirectly through mediating constructs. For ZAP Clinic Semarang, purchase decision is operationalized as the consumer's choice to utilize the clinic's services. This decision is shaped by quality assessment, brand reputation, that is brand image, and digital recommendations arising from promotional activities and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), as noted by Kumar et al. (2025). Since it represents the final outcome of the consumer evaluation process in choosing beauty clinic services amid increasingly intense competition, purchase decision becomes an important variable in this study. Based on Top Brand Index (TBI) data from 2022-2025, ZAP Clinic shows a declining trend in brand performance, indicating a reduction in consumer appeal compared to competitors. This suggests that consumer decisions are no longer driven solely by digital promotion, but also by direct experience and recommendations from other consumers through e-WOM. Given that the beauty service industry entails considerable risk and is fundamentally trust dependent, consumer perceptions play a critical role in determining purchase decisions (Nabila et al., 2024). This study designates brand image as a mediating variable based on its capacity to act as a psychological mechanism that transmits the effects of digital marketing strategies to consumer purchase decisions (Hanadi et al., 2025). In the context of beauty services such as ZAP Clinic, consumers tend not to make purchase decisions immediately based solely on promotions, but first form perceptions regarding the professionalism, credibility, and quality of the clinic's services. Therefore, digital promotion and e-WOM are expected to influence purchase decisions indirectly through the formation of a positive brand image.

Digital promotion is chosen as an independent variable because it is the primary strategy used by ZAP Clinic through social media to reach consumers broadly at relatively efficient costs, while simultaneously building brand awareness and perception. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on the credibility and clarity of the messages conveyed. Meanwhile, e-WOM is also

chosen as an independent variable because information originating from real consumer experiences is considered more credible and persuasive, especially in the aesthetic service industry, which carries a high level of risk (Salsabila et al., 2024). Reviews, recommendations, and interactions on digital platforms allow prospective consumers to obtain a more objective picture of service quality, which then shapes brand image and ultimately influences purchase decisions.

Although various previous studies have shown that digital promotion and e-WOM influence purchasing decisions either directly or through brand image, most of these studies were conducted in general contexts such as e-commerce or services in a broad sense. Research specifically examining the beauty clinic industry, which has a high level of risk and dependence on trust, remains limited. Furthermore, there are not many studies that simultaneously analyze the role of digital promotion and e-WOM with brand image as a mediating variable in explaining the decline in brand performance, particularly at ZAP Clinic Semarang. In fact, even though ZAP Clinic has actively conducted digital promotions, Top Brand Index data shows a significant decline. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the influence of digital promotion and e-WOM on purchasing decisions through brand image as a mediating variable in the context of ZAP Clinic Semarang.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory from Jayanti & Tasrim (2022) describes that consumer behavior is the result of psychology driven by external stimuli. In this theory, stimulus (S) is the stimulation received by individuals from the environment, organism (O) represents the consumer's internal process in the form of perception, assessment, and attitude, while response (R) is the final reaction in the form of behavior or decisions made by consumers.

Digital promotion and e-WOM are conceptualized as stimuli in this research. This classification stems from the fact that both represent marketing inputs transmitted to customers through digital avenues, including social media, online review systems, and internet mediated platforms. These stimuli are then processed by consumers cognitively and affectively at the organism stage, which in this research is represented by brand image, namely consumers' perceptions of the credibility, excellence, professionalism, and service quality of ZAP Clinic. Subsequently, the results of this internal process are reflected in the response, namely the consumer's purchase decision to use ZAP Clinic's services.

According to S-O-R principles, consumers often build perceptions before reacting directly to marketing stimuli. As a result, brand image is positioned as a mediating factor that bridges the effect of e-WOM and digital promotions on consumer choices. In the beauty service industry which has a high level of involvement and risk, consumers tend to rely more on positive brand perceptions before making purchase decisions. Therefore, S-O-R theory is relevant to apply to describe how building brand image is an indirect way that creates purchase decisions through digital promotions and e-WOM.

2.2. Purchase Decision

Consumer experience after making a purchase also plays a large role in determining subsequent behavior. Jayanti et al. (2024) describe that positive experiences can optimize satisfaction and drive repeat purchases, while negative experiences potentially generate bad reviews that can harm the company's image. Thus, purchase decisions are not just momentary actions, but are a continuous process formed through consumer interactions with products and the information obtained. According to Lakapu et al. (2023), purchase decisions occur when individuals choose to buy goods and services based on preferences, needs, and information obtained. Usually consumers have already had plans or considerations before making a purchase, which are formed by their perceptions, interests, and ability to evaluate various alternatives (Yang, 2022). In this research, purchase decision becomes the output of the effects of digital promotions, e-WOM, and brand image that create consumer confidence in the services offered.

2.3. Brand image

Brand image is customer opinion of a brand formed through experience, information, and interaction with products. According to Griffin (2014), brand image is built through three dimensions: product image, user image, and corporate image. Pradana et al. (2018) reveal that customer opinion of a brand is a collection of associations reinforced by direct experience and relevant information. Multiple empirical studies substantiate that brand image not only contributes positively and significantly to purchase decisions but also mediates the impact of promotions and influencer credibility, with this pattern being especially pronounced among younger consumers (C. Angeline et al., 2023; Rahmawaty & Purnama, 2025). In the e-commerce context, brand image also optimizes trust thus driving purchase decisions (Setiarini, 2025). As a result, in this research brand image is positioned as a mediator variable between digital promotions and e-WOM on purchase decisions at Zap Clinic Semarang.

2.4. Digital Promotion

In the development of the digital era, promotions have undergone transformation through the use of various internet-based media. Digital promotion is understood as a persuasive communication tool designed to drive consumers to make purchases through platforms that are more easily accessible to modern society. With the presence of advertisements on social media, websites, online marketplaces, and other applications, businesses can communicate faster and more broadly (Haris, 2023). Additionally, according to Wahyuni & Lestari (2024) the effectiveness of digital promotions increases when content is personalized based on consumer behavior data, so they feel more attended to and have a higher tendency to transact. Overall, empirical studies indicate that digital promotions are a highly effective instrument in driving purchase decisions. This effectiveness arises from increased brand awareness, consumer engagement, and the provision of incentives or promotional messages that are precisely targeted (Ali et al., 2025). With a directed strategy, digital promotions are not only able to expand the reach of company communications, but can also influence interests and purchase decisions significantly.

2.5. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Defined as consumer-generated endorsements or criticisms transmitted via online channels, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) represents a digital marketing communication format whose perceived credibility exceeds that of traditional advertising, with contributions stemming from past, present, or prospective users of a product or service (Himmah & Prihatini, 2021; Setiyadi et al., 2022). Conceptually, WOM evolved into traditional e-WOM, namely personal communication in the form of product or service recommendations, which in digital form allows information to spread faster and more broadly (Yulindasari & Fikriyah, 2022). Cheung & Thadani (2012) and Mingxian et al. (2025) describe that e-WOM emerges through sharing experiences, opinions, and consumer recommendations on social media, blogs, forums, and review sites, both positive and negative in nature. With wide reach and high credibility, e-WOM becomes a marketing force that is able to reduce consumer uncertainty and risk in deciding on purchases, especially in digital transactions.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

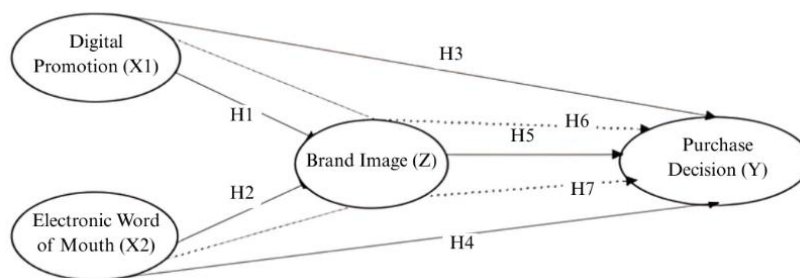


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

As illustrated in Figure 1, the study's conceptual model positions digital promotion (X1) and e-WOM (X2) as exogenous variables that trigger purchase decisions (Y). These effects are transmitted both directly and indirectly through brand image (Z), which functions as an intermediary variable. The model specifies that digital promotion exerts an impact on brand image (H1) and on purchase decisions (H3). Likewise, e-WOM affects brand image (H2) and purchase decisions (H4). Brand image additionally has a direct influence on purchase decisions (H5). The research also investigates brand image as a mediator for the pathways linking digital promotion to purchase decisions (H6) and e-WOM to purchase decisions (H7). The arrows within the figure represent the presumed causal directions among the constructs.

2.7. Hypothesis Development

2.7.1. Effect of Digital Promotion on Brand Image

Digital promotion plays an important role in creating brand image because it enables direct interaction between the company and customers through online platforms (Wei, 2025). Mulyani & Hermina (2023) reveal that consistency and clarity of direction in digital marketing strategy play a role in optimizing brand awareness and strengthening brand image. Raihany and Sawitri (2024) find that successful digital promotions, particularly those using social media and interactive content, greatly assist in forming a positive brand image. Purwanto (2022) further argues that within SMEs, digital marketing can reinforce brand perception and trigger purchase choices. Hanifah (2024) echoes this by stating that social media and online advertising based promotions enhance the brand image of locally made fashion products. This is consistent with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory which describes that digital promotions as stimulus (S) will be processed at the organism (O) stage through the formation of consumer perceptions, thus producing brand image as an internal response to marketing stimuli (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H1: Digital Promotion has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image

2.7.2. Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Image

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) exerts a major influence on consumer brand evaluations through its capacity to enable peer to peer communication on digital platforms. According to Hidayat (2021) e-WOM produces a significant positive impact on the brand image of cosmetic goods sold via e-commerce, given that positive information and user generated reviews foster brand trust. Prahasti et al. (2023) provide corroborating evidence, showing that e-WOM strongly enhances brand image and purchase intention in the Astro e-grocery platform. Within this app, consumers judge the brand according to the experiences and recommendations of other users. Zharfan & Kusuma (2023) also affirm that e-WOM positively contributes to brand image, and a good brand image subsequently strengthens consumer repurchase intention. In addition, research by Jihan & Albari (2023) affirms that e-WOM significantly influences brand image to strengthen these conclusions specifically the brand image of Somethinc products on e-commerce platforms, especially through customer reviews and digital interactions that create positive perceptions of the brand. The empirical findings from these four studies suggest that e-WOM plays a positive and significant role in shaping brand image. Applying the S-O-R framework, e-WOM serves as a stimulus (S) in the form of online information and user recommendations. These inputs are subsequently processed at the cognitive and affective levels within the organism stage (O), with brand image emerging as a result of the consumer's psychological response (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image

2.7.3. Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

Derived from experiential learning and recurring product engagement, brand image represents the consumer's cognitive and evaluative stance toward a brand. According to Nuvriasari (2025), a robust brand image optimizes consumer trust in product value and serves as a catalyst for purchase decisions. Furthermore, Kurniawan (2024) reports that brand image yields a positive and significant effect on purchase choices, a relationship that is especially pronounced among adolescent cosmetic buyers attuned to brand prestige. Meanwhile, Gatri & Waeno (2025) describe that a positive brand image can optimize consumer perceptions of product quality and price, thereby strengthening

purchase decisions. In line with this, Mulya (2023) reveals that a good brand image, together with effective advertising claims, can strengthen consumer confidence and optimize the likelihood of purchase. Furthermore, Nisa & Puspitadewi (2022) contend that brand image exerts a significant influence on consumer preferences and purchase decisions, attributable to the psychological and emotional value it confers upon buyers. Consequently, favorable brand perceptions increase the likelihood of purchase completion. Within the theoretical architecture of the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework, brand image corresponds to the organism (O) stage, the internal psychological state that emerges following exposure to marketing stimuli and subsequently elicits a response (R) manifested as a purchase decision (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H3: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

2.7.4. Effect of Digital Promotion on Purchase Decision

Digital promotion is a process whereby a business uses digital platforms such as social networks, paid advertising, and e-commerce to drive consumer purchase decisions. According to Nuryani (2025), directed digital promotion strategies, including the use of paid advertising and interactive content, are able to significantly optimize consumer interest and purchase decisions. Similar results were revealed by Aditi et al. (2023) that because digital promotions make product information easily accessible and attract consumer attention, it has a favorable and significant impact on purchase decisions. In the context of skincare products on social commerce platforms, Ahza et al. (2025) reveal that attractive and reliable digital promotions can create positive consumer opinions about products and create their decisions to buy. Furthermore, research by Nissa & Susila (2025) indicates that online promotions, especially in e-ticketing applications, significantly contribute to influencing purchase decisions through increased trust and perception of product value. The collective findings of the studies reviewed suggest that digital promotions generate a favorable effect on purchasing choices. According to the S-O-R theoretical paradigm, digital promotions serve as an external stimulus (S) that triggers cognitive and affective operations within the organism (O) stage, ultimately yielding a behavioral response (R) expressed as the consumer's purchase decision (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H4: Digital Promotion has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

2.7.5. Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision

e-WOM as a form of digital communication that influences consumer purchase decisions through online reviews, comments, and recommendations. This research is reinforced by Angel & Natadirja (2021) who reveal that positive information from e-WOM strengthens consumer confidence in making purchase decisions. Subsequently, Widyastuti et al. (2022) reveal that e-WOM can create a good brand image that impacts the increase in purchase decisions. Makur et al. (2022) strengthen the finding that e-WOM significantly plays a role in purchase decisions through increasing consumer trust in authentic reviews. Meanwhile, Astuti & Rahmawati (2023) confirm that e-WOM together with quality perceptions has a very important role in driving consumer decisions to buy in online markets. Therefore, people are more likely to buy a product if they receive favorable e-WOM promotions. Based on S-O-R Theory, e-WOM acts as a stimulus (S) that creates evaluation and confidence at the organism (O) stage, thus producing a response (R) in the form of a purchase decision (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H5: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision

2.7.6. Effect of Digital Promotion on Purchase Decision through Brand Image as a Mediator Variable

Brand image describes customer opinion formed through their experience and interaction with products and digital promotions, which ultimately plays a significant role in purchase decisions. Irmasari & Umam (2025) suggest that confirming the critical role of brand image in enhancing marketing strategies, this variable functions as an intermediary between price, promotion, and subsequent purchase decisions. Research from Muti & Frimansyah (2025) also indicates that digital marketing can drive increases in purchase decisions through the significant mediating role of Brand Image. Furthermore, Alana & Istikhoroh (2025) highlight that Brand Image becomes a crucial

connecting element in the purchase process, especially in Muslim clothing stores, affirming the relevance of this concept across various industry sectors.

In line with that, Fietroh & Rizqi (2025) affirm that through the dual mechanisms of fostering customer loyalty and reinforcing trust, brand image attains its mediating function in transmitting the effects of digital promotions to purchase decisions. Thus, brand image significantly mediates the relationship between digital promotion and purchase decisions, suggesting that the effectiveness of digital promotional campaigns depends on the strength of brand image in consumers' minds. This pattern conforms precisely to the S-O-R theoretical sequence: digital promotions operate as the stimulus (S), brand image represents the organismic state (O), and the purchase decision materializes as the resultant response (R) (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H6: Brand Image mediates the relationship of Digital Promotion on Purchase Decision

2.7.7. Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision through Brand Image as a Mediator Variable

When brand image is utilized as an intermediate variable, the pathway by which e-WOM influences purchase decisions become apparent. Exposure to stronger and more positive e-WOM content facilitates higher quality development of brand image. This elevated brand image quality then raises consumers' likelihood of reaching a final purchase decision. Brand image is defined as the collective consumer cognition regarding a brand, incorporating its characteristic attributes, associative networks, and the degree of brand loyalty present (Kartika & Pandjaitan, 2023). Therefore, in the study at Zap Clinic Semarang it is important for management to strengthen positive e-WOM mechanisms (for example customer reviews, online testimonials, experience sharing) and maintain brand image consistency in order to optimize purchase decisions. The results of this study are consistent with the work of Maulita et al. (2023) and Handayanto & Fuadiputra (2025) who find that e-WOM significantly influences brand image and that brand image acts as a mediator in the transmission of e-WOM effects to consumer choices. Therefore, a strong brand image coupled with e-WOM produces favorable outcomes for purchase decisions. Drawing on the S-O-R framework, e-WOM serves as a stimulus (S) that first establishes brand image at the organism (O) level, which then triggers a response (R) manifested as purchase decisions (Jayanti & Tasrim, 2023).

H7: Brand Image mediates the relationship of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision

3. METHOD

A quantitative methodology with a survey design is adopted for this research, wherein a questionnaire instrument is constructed based on the indicators associated with each variable. The model incorporates four distinct variables: two independent variables (Digital Promotion and Electronic Word of Mouth), a single mediator (Brand Image), and a single dependent variable, Purchase Decision. Purposive sampling is the sampling strategy applied to collect a summary of the characteristics of observation units that meet the requirements of this research. The sample criteria in this research include: (1) consumers who have undergone treatment or purchased services at Zap Clinic Semarang at least once in 6 months, (2) consumers who have seen Zap Clinic's digital promotions, either through Instagram, TikTok, or other digital platforms, (3) consumers who have read online reviews or reviews about Zap Clinic, as well as (4) respondents aged at least 17 years (5) respondents domiciled in Semarang.

The research was conducted in December 2025. The determination of the number of samples refers to the provisions of the number of indicators multiplied by five to ten (Hair et al., 2019). With 20 research indicators, a sample size of at least 100 respondents is recommended ($20 \times 5 = 100$). This sample size of 100 respondents is sufficient to minimize bias, produce reliable parameter estimates, and characterize variable correlations within the research model. The study utilized primary data collected via Google Form surveys, with analysis performed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) under the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework employing SmartPLS 4.0 software. The choice of SEM-PLS is attributable to its proficiency in describing correlations between exogenous and endogenous constructs, coupled with its independence from particular distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2019). A 1-5 Likert scale measured respondents' agreement with statements corresponding to each variable's indicators.

Drawing upon relevant earlier literature reviews, the researchers established a set of indicators to measure each variable in this study. Table 2 below provides the details concerning the variables, indicators, and bibliographic sources employed in this research.

Table 2. Variable Indicators

No	Variable	Indicator	Reference
1.	Digital Promotion	Promotional Message Promotional Media Promotional Timing Accessibility Credibility	Utomo et al. (2023), Made et al. (2024)
2.	Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)	Social Benefit Platform Assistance Concern for Other consumers Advice Seeking Economics Incentives	Yulindasari (2022)
3.	Brand image	Uniqueness Superiority Professional Impression Modern Impression Attention to Consumers	Z1-2= Purwati & Cahyanti (2022), Z3- 5= Kolinug et al. (2022)
4.	Purchase Decision	Product Choice Product Selection According to Needs Accuracy in Purchasing Information Search	Y1-4= Salsabilla & Pradana (2024), Y5= Kapriani et al. (2021)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research Results

In accordance with the established sampling criteria, data collection was conducted in December 2025 using Google Form-based questionnaires. The study achieved a final sample of 100 eligible respondents who met all research specifications. The demographic profile of these participants is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics

No	Description	Characteristics	Total	%
1.	Gender	Male	16	16%
		Female	84	84%
2.	Age	17-20 years	16	16%
		21-25 years	73	73%
		26-30 years	7	7%
		>30 years	4	4%
3.	Education	Senior High School/equivalent	66	66%
		Diploma	4	4%
		Bachelor's Degree (S1)	30	30%
4.	Occupation	Student	59	59%
		Private Employee	22	22%
		Entrepreneur/Businessman	11	11%
		Others	8	8%

According to Table 3, the majority of respondents are women (84%) aged 21-25 years (73%), reflecting the dominance of the young age group that actively accesses digital media. Most have a Senior High School/equivalent education (66%) and Bachelor's degree (30%), with occupations dominated by students/pupils (59%), followed by private employees (22%) and entrepreneurs (11%).

These characteristics are consistent with the research focus because young age groups tend to be more responsive to digital promotions and e-WOM, making them relevant to examine the role of brand image on purchase decisions at ZAP Clinic Semarang.

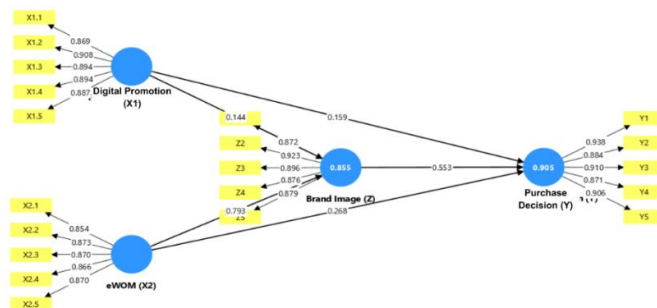


Figure 2. Full Structural Model
 Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

As illustrated in Figure 2, the structural model connects Digital Promotion (X1), e-WOM (X2), Brand Image (Z), and Purchase Decision (Y). All indicators yield loading factors greater than 0.7, confirming their validity as measurement items. e-WOM provides the largest contribution to Brand Image (0.793) and also exercises a direct effect on Purchase Decision (0.268). Conversely, the influence attributable to Digital Promotion remains lower for both Brand Image (0.144) and Purchase Decision (0.159). Brand Image exerts a notable and significant effect on Purchase Decision (0.553). The model’s R-square statistics show that 90.5% of Purchase Decision variance and 85.5% of Brand Image variance are explained by the model, placing its explanatory power within the very strong category.

4.1.1. Convergent Validity Test

Convergent validity testing evaluates how well the indicators within the research model can accurately reflect the constructs under investigation. Table 4 below presents the validity assessment results obtained in this study.

Table 4. Validity Evaluation Results

	Digital Promotion (X1)	e-WOM (X2)	Purchase Decision (Y)	Brand image (Z)
X1.1	0.869			
X1.2	0.908			
X1.3	0.894			
X1.4	0.894			
X1.5	0.887			
X2.1		0.854		
X2.2		0.873		
X2.3		0.870		
X2.4		0.866		
X2.5		0.870		
Y1			0.938	
Y2			0.884	
Y3			0.910	
Y4			0.871	
Y5			0.906	
Z1				0.872
Z2				0.923
Z3				0.896
Z4				0.876
Z5				0.879

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

When the loading factor reaches at least 0.70, the indicators are considered adequate in representing the unobserved construct. All indicators measuring Digital Promotion (X1), e-WOM (X2), Brand Image (Z), and Purchase Decision (Y) have values above 0.70. Consequently, these indicators are valid and satisfy convergent validity with no elimination required. Additionally, Brand Image is confirmed as a reliable and robust mediator for the influence of both Digital Promotion and e-WOM on the Purchase Decisions of ZAP Clinic Semarang customers.

4.1.2. R² Test

Below are the R Square values showing the dependent variables obtained from SmartPLS 4.0 output.

Table 5. R² Test Results

Description	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand image (Z)	0.855	0.852
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.905	0.902

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

According to the coefficient of determination (R²) from the empirical analysis (Table 5), Digital Promotion, e-WOM, and Brand Image collectively explain 90.5% of the total variance in Purchase Decision. The other 9.5% comes from unmeasured variables. Looking at Brand Image, its R square value is 0.855, indicating that 85.5% of its variance is explained by e-WOM and Digital Promotion. Beyond confirming the model's very high explanatory power, these outcomes also underscore how indispensable Brand Image is for understanding purchase decisions at ZAP Clinic Semarang.

4.1.3. Discriminant Validity Test

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Test Results

	Brand image (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)	Digital Promotion (X1)	e-WOM (X2)
Brand image (Z)	0.889			
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.937	0.902		
Digital Promotion (X1)	0.860	0.877	0.891	
e-WOM (X2)	0.922	0.922	0.904	0.867

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

The Fornell Larcker criterion dictates that a construct's square root of AVE must surpass its inter construct correlations to confirm discriminant validity. Based on Table 6, the obtained square root AVE values are as follows. Purchase Decision yields a value of 0.902. Brand Image follows with 0.889. Digital Promotion achieves 0.891. Finally, e-WOM records 0.867. Because each of these values surpasses the corresponding inter construct correlations, discriminant validity is confirmed. Therefore, all latent constructs are valid, allowing the model to move forward to structural analysis.

Table 7. AVE Values

Description	Average Variance Extracted
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.814
Digital Promotion (X1)	0.793
Brand image (Z)	0.791
e-WOM (X2)	0.751

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

Based on table 7, all constructs satisfy the requirements for convergent validity, given that their AVE values are greater than 0.50. The specific AVE scores are 0.791 for Brand Image, 0.751 for e-WOM, 0.793 for Digital Promotion, and 0.814 for Purchase Decision. With such high AVE

values, every indicator can effectively account for construct variance. Therefore, the constructs are appropriate for proceeding to structural analysis.

4.1.4. Reliability Test

Table 8. Reliability Test Results

Description	Composite Reliability (rho_a)
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.944
Digital Promotion (X1)	0.937
Brand image (Z)	0.935
e-WOM (X2)	0.919

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

All variables in this study meet the established reliability threshold, as their Composite Reliability (rho_A) values exceed 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The highest value is in Purchase Decision (0.944), followed by Digital Promotion (0.937), Brand Image (0.935), and e-WOM (0.919) (See Table 8). These values reflect good internal consistency, so all constructs are declared reliable and suitable for further research, and can be reinforced with Cronbach’s Alpha test, specifically:

Table 9. Cronbach’s Alpha Values

Description	Cronbach’s alpha
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.943
Digital Promotion (X1)	0.935
Brand image (Z)	0.934
e-WOM (X2)	0.917

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

The results in Table 9 show that all variables have alpha values greater than 0.70, thus meeting the reliability criteria.

4.1.5. Hypothesis Testing

A. T-Statistic Test

The results of the significance test of the relationships between variables are presented in Table 10, which shows the T-statistic values for each relationship in the research model. The test criteria are based on a significance level of 5% (0.05) with a T-table value of 1.98397, so a relationship is declared significant if the T-statistic value is greater than that value.

Table 10. Direct Effect Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Digital Promotion (X1) → Brand Image (Z)	0.144	0.145	0.133	1.083	0.279
e-WOM (X2) → Brand Image (Z)	0.793	0.788	0.123	6.452	0.000
Brand Image (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.553	0.543	0.108	5.132	0.000
Digital Promotion (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.159	0.175	0.111	1.436	0.151
e-WOM (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.268	0.261	0.117	2.284	0.022

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

Direct effect testing reveals that Brand Image (Z) positively and significantly affects Purchase Decision (Y) (T = 5.132; p = 0.000). Additionally, e-WOM (X2) is significant in its relationship with Brand Image (T = 6.452; p = 0.000) as well as with Purchase Decision (T = 2.284; p = 0.022). By

contrast, Digital Promotion (X1) does not yield significant effects on either Brand Image or Purchase Decision. This pattern affirms that e-WOM and Brand Image are the principal drivers, while Digital Promotion remains without a significant role.

Table 11. Indirect Effect Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Digital Promotion (X1) → Brand Image (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.079	0.073	0.068	1.162	0.245
e-WOM (X2) → Brand Image (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.438	0.434	0.127	3.453	0.001

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2026

The indirect effect estimates, as presented in Table 11, reveal that the pathway linking Digital Promotion (X1) to Purchase Decision (Y) through Brand Image (Z) fails to achieve statistical significance ($p = 0.245$, which exceeds 0.05). This outcome suggests that no mediation is present. Conversely, the indirect effect of e-WOM (X2) via Brand Image is statistically significant ($p = 0.001$, which falls below 0.05). These findings establish that Brand Image mediates only the relationship between e-WOM and Purchase Decision.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Effect of Digital Promotion on Brand Image

The analytical results demonstrate that Digital Promotion (X1) does not significantly influence Brand Image (Z). Theoretically, under the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) framework, digital promotion serves as a stimulus anticipated to activate internal consumer responses, including perceptual judgments or brand image development. This lack of significance indicates that ZAP Clinic's digital promotion content likely does not yet have a sufficient level of credibility and tangible evidence, such as clear treatment results, before-after documentation, and expert-based explanations, which are highly needed in shaping consumer perceptions of aesthetic services. This finding can also be explained through the perspective of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which states that the effectiveness of marketing messages is highly dependent on the level of consumer involvement and perceived credibility toward the messages received. In conditions where promotional messages are considered less credible or irrelevant, consumers tend to process information through the peripheral route, consequently failing to produce strong attitude formation or a significant brand image. The low credibility indicator shows that consumers tend to view ZAP Clinic's promotional content as too persuasive and not yet transparent enough, especially regarding treatment results and safety aspects. In practical terms, ZAP Clinic needs to shift its promotion strategy from merely persuasive to credibility-based, for example through educational content by doctors, documentation of real customer experiences, and transparent provision of information regarding treatment procedures and risks. In the international literature, the effectiveness of digital promotion in the service sector is highly dependent on the level of trust and tangible evidence of service, rather than merely the intensity of communication (Jikun & Xiaoxi, 2024). Furthermore, Suryani et al. (2021) as well as Karen and Zai (2022) also affirm that low message credibility can limit the ability of promotion to shape brand image.

Consistent with multiple prior studies, this finding indicates that digital promotion does not always significantly shape brand image. The effect is weaker in high-risk service environments, where consumers prioritize direct experience and user generated information over company-controlled messaging. In addition, the characteristics of the respondents in this study, which are dominated by the 21-25 age group (73%) and students (59%), also potentially influence the research results. This group tends to be more critical toward digital promotional messages and relies more on personal experience as well as user-based information (e-WOM), consequently reducing the effectiveness of digital promotion in shaping brand image. This condition indicates the possibility of

a moderating effect from the demographic characteristics of the respondents that has not yet been tested in this study.

4.2.2. Effect of e-WOM on Brand Image

Conversely, e-WOM exhibits a significant positive influence on Brand Image (Z). The statistical evidence includes a T statistic of 6.452, greater than the 1.98397 benchmark, alongside a p value of 0.000, lower than the 0.05 criterion. The significance of this effect is mainly supported by the platform assistance indicator as the highest indicator, indicating that the ease of access to digital platforms in providing and displaying consumer reviews plays a large role in creating Zap Clinic's brand image. Social media and review platforms allow consumers to easily read the experiences of other users in detail, from the treatment process to the results obtained. The information available openly and easily accessible optimizes perceptions of transparency, professionalism, and trust in Zap Clinic. Thus, e-WOM becomes a more trustworthy source of information compared to company promotions, especially when the reviews provided contain detailed experiences, visual evidence of treatment results, and are disseminated through easily accessible platforms such as Google Review, Instagram, and TikTok. Therefore, ZAP Clinic needs to actively encourage satisfied customers to provide detailed reviews and utilize user-generated content to strengthen brand image formation.

This is in line with Prahasti et al. (2023) serta Zharfan & Kusuma (2023) who affirm that digital platform support, such as ease of access, review features, and interaction between users, plays an important role in facilitating the spread of e-WOM. Adequate platforms allow consumers to convey experiences more specifically and credibly, so the information generated is more trusted by prospective consumers. This condition ultimately strengthens the role of e-WOM in creating a positive brand image in the consumer's mind.

4.2.3. Effect of Digital Promotion on Purchase Decision

As shown by a p value of 0.151 above the 0.05 criterion and a T value of 1.436 below the 1.98397 benchmark, Digital Promotion (X1) exerts no significant influence on Purchase Decision (Y). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a theoretical explanation for this finding. Purchase decisions are triggered by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, factors that depend to a greater extent on direct experience and social references than on promotional messages exclusively. Furthermore, based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) perspective, digital promotion that lacks a high level of credibility and relevance tends to be processed superficially by consumers, consequently failing to form strong purchase intentions or purchase decisions. This illustrates why, even when promotion is carried out intensively, not all messages can be converted into purchasing actions. The low promotional message indicator shows that the content delivered by ZAP Clinic has not been able to address consumer concerns regarding safety aspects, effectiveness, and treatment results, which are important factors in decision making for aesthetic services. This indicates that promotional content not only needs to be attractive, but also must be informative, evidence-based, and able to reduce consumers' perception of risk.

In the context of high-risk aesthetic services, consumers tend to conduct more in-depth evaluations by considering aspects of safety, reputation, and tangible evidence of results, consequently meaning that digital promotion is not directly translated into purchasing actions. This finding is consistent with Mahyuzar and Kholifah (2023) coupled with Kurniawati and Ayuanti (2024), who found that in high-risk services, purchase decisions are more driven by trust and perceived risk compared to marketing communication alone. Another finding is the predominance of young respondents and students in the sample. This group exhibits consumer behavior that favors advice and experience-based evaluations from other users rather than promotional messages. Such a tendency accordingly reduces the direct impact of digital promotion on purchase decisions.

4.2.4. Effect of e-WOM on Purchase Decision

Conversely, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM or X2) demonstrates a significant positive impact on Purchase Decision (Y). The statistical evidence reveals a T statistic of 2.284, which surpasses the critical threshold of 1.98397, alongside a p value of 0.022, which falls below the 0.05 significance level. These findings imply that reviews, testimonials, and authentic consumer

experiences pertaining to ZAP Clinic play a crucial role in fostering confidence among prospective customers. The indicator with the lowest contribution is economic incentives, indicating that purchase decisions are not driven by economic incentives such as promotions or discounts, but rather by the quality of experience, treatment results, and the sense of safety felt by consumers. Thus, e-WOM plays a more dominant role as a credible source of information based on real consumer experience compared to as a promotional tool driven by economic incentives. Consumers tend to trust more objective and informative reviews than recommendations laden with personal gain. This research is supported by Angel & Natadirja (2021), Widyastuti et al. (2022) and Makur et al. (2022).

4.2.5. Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

According to the empirical findings, Brand Image (Z) positively and significantly affects Purchase Decision (Y). The evidence consists of a T value of 5.132, greater than 1.98397, and a p value of 0.000, less than 0.05. The highest loading factor is attributed to the superiority indicator. This outcome implies that consumers' evaluations of service quality, practitioner expertise, treatment efficacy, and safety protocols at ZAP Clinic directly stimulate their purchasing behavior. The stronger ZAP Clinic's brand image is in terms of safety, professionalism of medical staff, and consistency of treatment results, the greater the likelihood that consumers will make a purchasing decision. This research is consistent with Mulya (2023) and Nisa & Puspitadewi (2022) who reveal that a positive brand image can optimize customer trust and minimize risk perceptions, thus directly playing a role in purchase decisions. In the context of services, brand image becomes the primary reference for consumers in assessing the quality and feasibility of services before making a purchase.

Overall, the research results on Purchase Decision describe that Zap Clinic is more driven by e-WOM and Brand Image compared to Digital Promotion. Digital promotions have not yet provided a significant direct impact, while e-WOM plays an important role in building trust and strengthening brand image through real consumer experience. A strong brand image, especially in the aspect of service superiority, becomes the key factor that ultimately compels customers to decide what to purchase.

4.2.6. Effect of Digital Promotion on Purchase Decision through Brand Image

The hypothesis tests reveal that Digital Promotion (X1) lacks a meaningful impact on Brand Image (Z). This conclusion is supported by a T statistic of 1.083, lower than 1.98397, and a p value of 0.279, higher than 0.05. Therefore, the mediating pathway through which digital promotion influences purchase decisions via brand image is likewise not statistically significant. This finding indicates that the digital promotional activities carried out by ZAP Clinic have not yet been able to construct a strong and consistent brand image in consumers' perceptions. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offers a theoretical explanation for this finding. According to the ELM, the formation of attitudes and brand image is shaped by the degree of cognitive elaboration that consumers engage in, which can take place through either the central route or the peripheral route. In the context of low involvement or low information credibility, consumers tend to use the peripheral route so that promotional messages are not processed in depth and fail to form strong brand associations. Thus, the effectiveness of digital promotion is not solely determined by the intensity of exposure, but also by the quality of arguments, credibility, and relevance of the information conveyed to consumers.

Although the direction of the relationship shows a positive coefficient, digital promotion has not yet demonstrated sufficient predictive power statistically in forming a brand image that impacts purchase decisions. The promotional message indicator has the lowest value, which indicates that ZAP Clinic's promotional content is still lacking in depth, is not yet consistent, and is not yet supported by tangible evidence regarding service effectiveness, so it has not been able to form a strong brand image. This finding is consistent with Jikun and Xiaoxi (2024) who affirm that the effectiveness of digital promotion in building brand image in the service sector is highly dependent on message quality and the level of consumer trust, rather than merely the intensity of promotion. Furthermore, Triadinda (2023) also shows that digital promotion does not always have a significant effect on brand image or purchase decisions in the service industry, because consumers rely more on experiential evidence and recommendations from others. Thus, these results indicate that the limitations in promotional information quality and the low level of consumers' cognitive elaboration cause digital promotion to be ineffective in forming brand image or mediating purchase decisions.

4.2.7. Effect of e-WOM on Purchase Decision through Brand Image

A positive and statistically significant relationship is found between e-WOM (X2) and Brand Image (Z), with a T statistic of 6.452 (above the 1.98397 threshold) and a p value of 0.000 (below 0.05). Likewise, Brand Image (Z) positively and significantly affects Purchase Decision (Y), demonstrated by a T value of 5.132, exceeding 1.98397, and a p value of 0.000, lower than 0.05. These combined empirical findings affirm that Brand Image has the capacity to mediate the effect of e-WOM on Purchase Decision. Honest and detailed consumer reviews, especially those explaining the treatment process, the results obtained, and safety aspects, play an important role in strengthening brand image and influencing purchasing decisions. These positive perceptions then strengthen brand image and optimize customer confidence in making purchase decisions.

This research is consistent with Sri & Parasari (2025) and Aqilah et al. (2025) who reveal that e-WOM strongly contributes to creating brand image through honest, detailed consumer reviews based on real experience. Information conveyed with the aim of helping other consumers (concern for other consumers) optimizes perceptions of credibility, professionalism, and service quality. The positively formed brand image then becomes the basis of consumer trust in making purchase decisions. Thus, e-WOM not only has a direct impact on purchase decisions but also effectively strengthens brand image as a mediating variable.

Overall, according to the research, e-WOM significantly drives purchase decisions indirectly through brand image, while digital promotions only have a weak and insignificant indirect role. This research indicates that in the context of aesthetic services, purchase decisions are more driven by information based on the real experiences of other consumers that have the potential to create a positive brand image, compared to digital promotions that have not yet been optimal in strengthening Zap Clinic's brand image.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that in the context of aesthetic services with high levels of risk and involvement, consumer purchasing decisions are more influenced by electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) than by digital promotion. The results prove that e-WOM has a significant direct and indirect effect on purchasing decisions through brand image, while digital promotion shows no significant effect. This finding indicates that consumers rely more on real experiences and information from fellow users when making decisions. The main contribution of this study lies in confirming that experience-based communication is more dominant than company-controlled promotion in influencing purchasing decisions in the aesthetic services industry.

In practical terms, the results of this study indicate that aesthetic service companies need to prioritize e-WOM management by improving service quality and encouraging consumers to provide positive reviews. The use of digital platforms should be focused as a medium for disseminating authentic consumer experiences. Meanwhile, digital promotion remains important, but needs to be improved in terms of credibility, evidence of treatment results, and clarity of message in order to be more capable of influencing consumers.

This study has several limitations, including respondent characteristics dominated by the age group of 21 to 25 years and student status, which may influence preferences for information sources and strengthen the tendency toward e-WOM. Additionally, the relatively limited sample size and focus on respondents who had already used the services mean that the results cannot be generalized broadly. Future research is advised to add other variables such as service quality, price, and trust to obtain more comprehensive results. Furthermore, the sample size needs to be expanded with more diverse respondent characteristics to improve the generalizability of the research results. Future research may also consider using moderating variables such as demographic characteristics or consumer involvement levels to understand consumer behavior more deeply.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Author Contributions

F.F.A.: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft.

H.D.: Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision.

H.I.: Resources, Validation, Supervision.

S.W.S.: Data Curation, Software, Visualization, Supervision.

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This study involving human participants was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [F.F.A.] upon reasonable request.

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