

# EWOW'S Strength on Brand Image and Brand Trust and its' Impact on Interest to Buy iPhone Smartphone Products

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At the present time, electronic word of mouth, brand image, and brand trust are variables that are prioritized in the smartphone business competition. Increasing new smartphone vendors and creating smartphone products with advantages over other brands will cause consumers to recognize products according to their needs. This study aims to analyze the power of eWOM on brand image and brand trust and its impact on iPhone smartphone buying interest among students. This research uses descriptive method and PLS path analysis. The population in this research was Widyatama University students with sample collection using an iteration formula. The study samples were 116 respondents. The results of this study explain that eWOM affects the brand image and brand trust by 16.9% and 11.4% respectively and the remaining influence is due to other variables not examined in this study. EWOM affected purchase interest by 32.4% and brand image and brand trust cannot be used as mediating variables because indirectly these variable do not affect buying interest.

**Key words:** *EWOM, Brand Image, Brand Trust, Buying Interest.*

## Introduction

The internet as a medium of sales and promotion is recognized as having a considerable contribution in this era of instant gratification. Many products are offered on the internet, which cater to a range of needs from primary needs to tertiary needs. Sales and promotions include not only goods but also sales of services carried out in this virtual world. Most companies show an increasing tendency to use social media as an effective communication with their consumers. This tool can provide interactive communication between customers and companies without restrictions on time and place. Customers can tell and share experiences with the products they use as if they were partners in the company, thus establishing long-term relationships with customers more than ever before. Information technology has brought great changes to the world including Indonesia based on CIMB data in [www.bareksa.com](http://www.bareksa.com), 2016.

Recorded smartphone users in Indonesia have reached 38.6%, an increase in 2014 which recorded only 28.2% usage. Some smartphone brands that fill the market in Indonesia include Samsung, Apple, Asus, Lenovo, Huawei, Evercoss, Advan, Xiaomi and Oppo. In 2015 the Indonesian market leading vendor was Samsung. According to data released by the Gartner institution on global smartphone sales in the first quarter of 2015, Samsung was the market leader with a 20.7% market share followed by Apple 17.7%, Huawei 8.3.6%, Oppo 3.2%, and others. In 2016 Apple became the leader at 17.9% with only a 1% difference to Samsung at 17.8%. The range of brands that have emerged allow consumers much choices and necessitate inspiring consumer buying interest in product selection for purchase. Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) define buying interest as a person's attitude towards suitable for purchase measured by the profile of certain categories of products, services, or brands.

The presence of new smartphone vendors that emerge and create smartphone products with advantages over other brands will cause consumers to recognize products according to their needs. At present, electronic word of mouth, brand image, and brand trust are variables that are prioritized in the smartphone business competition. These variables can be used as material for consideration when purchasing smartphone products (Arumsari and Ariyanti, 2017; Gunawan et al., 2016). Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of electronic word of mouth, brand image, and brand trust and its impact on buying interest. In the current business environment, competition is escalating and this research will contribute to company comprehension of the effects of eWOM activities on buying interest, and to guide them more effectively in conducting marketing strategies. This procedure was adapted from the Al-Halbusi and Teheseen (2018) models. Models that have been developed by other researchers require further testing in different cultures or product/service categories to establish theoretical validity and reliability. Thus, it is acceptable that the model is more generalized than before.

### ***Specific objective***

The specific objective in this research is the assessment of eWOM on brand image and brand trust and its impact on Iphone smartphone products buying interest in BEC (Bandung Elektronik Center) consumers.

### ***Research Hypothesis***

- Ha1: eWOM has a positive effect on Brand Image of iPhone smartphone products
- Ha2: eWOM has a positive effect on Brand Trust iPhone smartphone products
- Ha3: eWOM has a positive effect on Interest in buying iPhone smartphone products
- Ha4: Brand Trust has a positive effect on Interest in buying iPhone smartphone products
- Ha5: Brand Image has a positive effect on interest in buying iPhone smartphone products
- Ha6: eWOM has a positive effect on Interest in buying iPhone smartphone products that are mediated by Brand Image
- Ha7: eWOM has a positive effect on Interest in buying iPhone smartphone products mediated by Brand Trust

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The more sophisticated information technology accessibility, the more dependant a community becomes on the use of smartphones that have many features as a means of information thus causing competition among smartphone companies. Marked by the emergence of new smartphone company brands, purchase choice has become more selective. The brands that lead in smartphone sales today are Samsung and Iphone. This study replicates research from Arumsari and Ariyanti, (2017) and Gunawan et al. (2016), which found that eWOM had a positive effect on Brand Image, Brand Trust, and Interest in Purchasing smartphone products. In addition, there is also a positive influence between Brand Image, Brand Trust, and Interest in Buying smartphone products, as well as a positive influence between Brand Trust and Interest in Buying smartphone products. Further, in previous studies it was also found that Brand Image and Brand Trust were not the perfect mediation between eWOM and Buying Interest. However, the position of these two mediations can increase the total influence of eWOM on Buying Interests.

### ***Theory Review***

In the world of marketing, interpersonal communication between consumers can be in the form of delivering Word of Mouth (WOM) messages. Tariq et al. (2017) define WOM as personal informal communication to individuals between communicators (who are judged not to be part of commercial marketers/sources) and recipients regarding products, brands, services and companies. WOM communication occurs when consumers provide suggestions or opinions

and share experiences with other consumers about a product, service, or brand (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007).

WOM information is included in the category of informal communication with characteristics conveyed by informal sources or not conveying messages on behalf of the organization/company. The form of WOM communication itself can be in the form of providing information or advice about products from parents or friends. Since the conveyor of the message is judged not to receive benefit related to the decision of the recipient of the message, then the informal communication of Word of Mouth is considered more persuasive (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Cynthiadewi and Hatammimi, 2014; Hasan & Ejaz, 2018).

Although the world of marketing communications continues to develop with a variety of new technologies and methods, it was found that the study of WOM has not been abandoned. The importance of the study of WOM communication in the marketing world is indicated by the increasing number of studies on WOM published in various major business journals. In his research, Jansen et al. (2009) found that the first article on the topic of Word of Mouth was published in a major business journal in 1997 and the number of subsequent studies has continued to increase since. Kala and Chaubey (2018) conducted a study that discussed the motivation of consumers to carry out eWOM communication. According to them, eWOM is a positive or negative statement made by potential consumers, real consumers, or former consumers about a product or company that can be accessed by many people or institutions through the internet. In this study, traditional WOM motifs with the characteristics found in eWOM were integrated. EWOM indicators according to Petek and Ruzzier (2013) are: 1) Platform assistance 2) Venting negative feelings 3) Concern for other consumers 4) Extraversion/positive self-improvement. 5) Helping the company 6) Advice seeking.

Brand trust is defined as the security that the product user has, in his interactions with a brand based on the perception that the brand can be trusted and takes into account the interests and welfare of consumers (Pratiwi et al., 2015). Brand trust is a consumer's willingness to generally depend on the brand's ability to describe the function of its product (Lin et al., 2013). Brand trust implies brand reliability as perceived by the consumer (Gensler et al., 2013). Willingness is not as influential if a consumer wants to depend on the brand (Bougie and Sekaran, 2013).

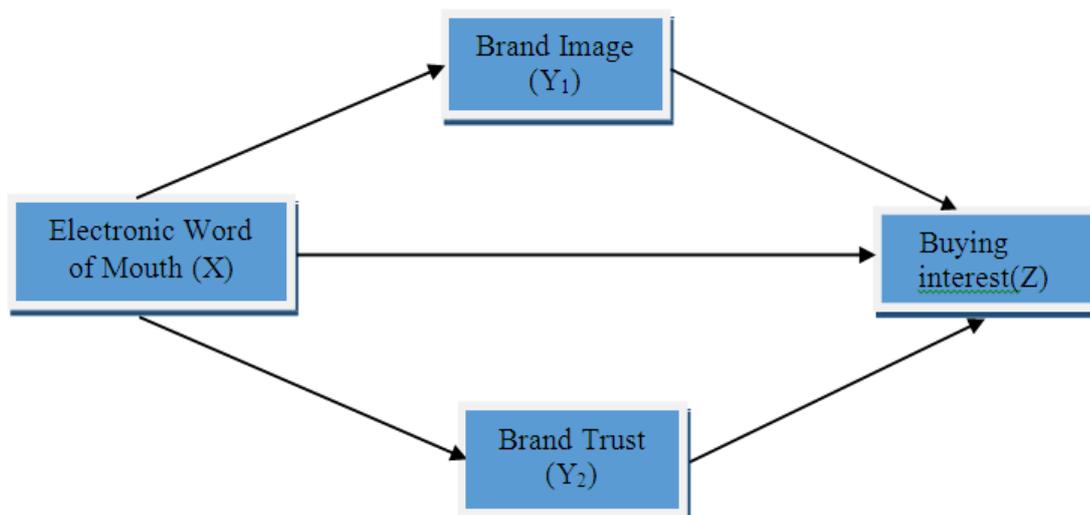
Company brand image can influence long-term profits, encourage consumers to buy products at premium prices, increase stock selling prices, competitive advantage and marketing success (Luong et al., 2017). WOM can have a very strong influence on consumer perceptions of a product (Khan and Ali, 2017). Trust in the brand is the willingness of consumers to trust the brand with all the risks because of the expectations promised by the brand in providing positive results (Pratiwi et al., 2015).

Buying interest is a psychological force that exists within an individual, which has an effect on their purchase action (Schiffman&Kanuk 2007). A product is said to have been consumed if the consumer has decided to buy it. The decision to buy is influenced by the value of the product being evaluated. If the benefits felt are greater than the sacrifice to get it, then the drive to buy is higher. Conversely, if the benefits are smaller than the sacrifice, usually the buyer will refuse to buy and generally will switch to evaluating other similar products (Anastasiu and Doospinescu, 2019).

### ***Conceptual Framework***

Electronic Word of Mouth is measured by six indicators, Brand Image is measured by six indicators, and Brand Trust is measured by eleven indicators, while buying interest is measured by three indicators. By displaying research variables which are latent variables, the indicators used to measure these variables are not shown in the Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** Research Model



### **Research Design**

Luong et al.'s (2017), descriptive study has several advantages and helps in both understanding the characteristics of a group in certain situations and in systematic thinking about aspects in those situations. It also offers ideas for further investigation and research and helps in making certain simple decisions. Bougie and Sekaran (2013) state that descriptive research outlines the characteristics of an object, person, group, organization, or environment. In other words, descriptive research tries to "draw pictures" of certain situations by answering who, what, when, where and how. The quantitative analysis used in this study is path analysis and SmartPLS software version 3.0. PLS (Partial Least Square) is a variant-based structural

equation (SEM) analysis that can simultaneously test measurement models while testing structural models. The measurement model is used to test validity and reliability, while the structural model is used to test causality (testing hypotheses with prediction models).

### ***Target Population***

Population is a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics set by researchers to be studied and from which conclusions are then drawn (Sugiyono, 2010). In this study the population is the consumer, because the number of population to be studied is not identified (unidentified) so in conducting this study the authors took samples. Understanding the sample is part of investigating the number and characteristics possessed by the population (Sugiyono, 2010).

### ***Sampling Frame***

The samples in this study were Widyatama University students who used an Iphone Smartphone. Samples in this study used nonprobability sampling techniques, namely sampling techniques that did not provide equal opportunities/chances for each element or member of the population to be selected as samples. As the population is unknown, the sample was taken by incidental sampling method using the technique of determining the sample based on chance, that is, anyone who accidentally/incidentally met with the researcher could be used as a sample, if the person was found to be suitable as a data source. The sample as the source of data in this research are BEC (Bandung Electronic Center) consumers who use Iphone smartphones. Due to the unknown population size, the determination of the number of samples is made using the iteration formula outlined by Sitepu which can be taken through several calculation stages which determine: 1) the price estimate of the smallest coefficient of correlation ( $r$ ) between independent variables and dependent variables; 2) the real level ( $\alpha$ ) and test power ( $1-\beta$ ) and 3) the sample size iteratively. If the minimum iterative sample size is first and second is the value until the unit number is the same, the iteration stops. If not the same, the third iteration needs to be done by using a formula such as the second iteration. In this study determined  $\alpha = 0.05$  or 5%,  $1-\beta = 0.95$  or 95%,  $r = 0.30$  from the normal distribution table obtained  $\kappa_{1-\alpha} = 1.645$  and  $\kappa_{1-\beta} = 1.645$ .

In the first iteration the below formula was used:

$$\eta_1 = \frac{\kappa_{1-\alpha} + \kappa_{1-\beta}}{(v_r)^2} + 3, \quad (1)$$

with

$$v_{r1} = \frac{1}{2} \text{Ln} \left( \frac{1+r}{1-r} \right). \quad (2)$$

Where  $\kappa_{1-\alpha}$  and  $\kappa_{1-\beta}$  is a constant obtained from a normal distribution. In the second iteration the following formula was used:

$$\eta_2 = \frac{(\kappa_{1-\alpha} + \kappa_{1-\beta})^2}{(v_r)^2} + 3, \quad (3)$$

with

$$v_{r2} = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( \frac{1+r}{1-r} \right) + \left( \frac{r}{2(\eta-1)} \right). \quad (4)$$

To calculate samples using equation (2) a value  $v_{r1}=0.309519604$  was obtained, and by using equation (1) a value  $\eta_1=115.9836173$  was obtained and rounded up to become  $\eta_1=116$ .

To calculate  $v_{r2}$ , using equation (2) a value  $v_{r2}=0.310823573$  was obtained. Furthermore, using equation (3) obtained a value  $\eta_2=115.6185624$ , and rounded up to become  $\eta_2=116$ .

Since  $\eta_1$  and  $\eta_2$  reached the same value of 116, the minimum sample size is 116 BEC consumers and the study sample was set to 116 respondents.

### Data Processing and Analysis

The 3 characteristics of respondents who were sampled in this study are presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Characteristics of Respondents

| No | Characteristics of Respondents |                   | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1  | Gender                         | Male              | 55        | 47%        |
|    |                                | Female            | 61        | 53%        |
| 2  | Age                            | < 17 years old    | 13        | 11%        |
|    |                                | 18 – 25 years old | 30        | 26%        |
|    |                                | 26 – 30 years old | 35        | 30%        |
|    |                                | >30 years old     | 38        | 33%        |
| 3  | Occupation                     | Private           | 45        | 39%        |
|    |                                | College student   | 61        | 52%        |
|    |                                | Others            | 10        | 9%         |

### *Validity Test and Data Reliability*

Convergent validity of the measurement model can be seen from the correlation between the indicator score and the variable score. The indicator is considered valid if it has an AVE value above 0.5 or shows all variable outer loading dimensions have a loading value of  $> 0.5$ . Presented in Table 2 below are the results of validating the data using smartPLS 3.0 software.

**Table 2:** Outer Loadings

|      | Brand Image | Brand Trust | Buying Interest | eWOM   | Brand Image | Brand Trust | Buying Interest | eWOM  |
|------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-------|
| B11  | 0.651       |             |                 | MB4    |             |             | 0.843           |       |
| B110 | 0.704       |             |                 | MB5    |             |             | 0.835           |       |
| B12  | 0.744       |             |                 | MB6    |             |             | 0.595           |       |
| B13  | 0.773       |             |                 | MB7    |             |             | 0.697           |       |
| B14  | 0.636       |             |                 | MB8    |             |             | 0.590           |       |
| B15  | 0.803       |             |                 | eWOM1  |             |             |                 | 0.623 |
| B16  | 0.797       |             |                 | eWOM10 |             |             |                 | 0.786 |
| B17  | 0.810       |             |                 | eWOM11 |             |             |                 | 0.749 |
| B18  | 0.849       |             |                 | eWOM12 |             |             |                 | 0.708 |
| B19  | 0.711       |             |                 | eWOM13 |             |             |                 | 0.512 |
| BT1  |             | 0.892       |                 | eWOM2  |             |             |                 | 0.528 |
| BT2  |             | 0.760       |                 | eWOM3  |             |             |                 | 0.603 |
| BT3  |             | 0.847       |                 | eWOM4  |             |             |                 | 0.691 |
| BT4  |             | 0.830       |                 | eWOM5  |             |             |                 | 0.761 |
| BT5  |             | 0.883       |                 | eWOM6  |             |             |                 | 0.661 |
| MB1  |             |             | 0.748           | eWOM7  |             |             |                 | 0.759 |
| MB2  |             |             | 0.771           | eWOM8  |             |             |                 | 0.778 |
| MB3  |             |             | 0.797           | eWOM9  |             |             |                 | 0.845 |

Reliability testing was used to test the accuracy of the results of questionnaire measurements closely related to trust problems. A test level is said to have a level of trust if the test gives the right results, a variable is said to be sufficiently reliable if the variable has the value of construct reliability and Cronbach Alpha is greater than 0.6. Table 3 below presents the results of the reliability test in the study:

**Table 3:** Construct Reliability

| Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A |       | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Brand Image      | 0.915 | 0.930 | 0.927                 | 0.563                            |
| Brand Trust      | 0.899 | 0.919 | 0.925                 | 0.712                            |
| Buying Interest  | 0.881 | 0.893 | 0.905                 | 0.548                            |
| eWOM             | 0.911 | 0.917 | 0.925                 | 0.512                            |

In this study the value of Composite Reliability and Cronbach Alpha is greater than 0.6, so it can be concluded that all variables in this study have met the reliability requirements.

### *Measurement Model (Inner Model)*

In assessing the model with PLS, initially the R-square for each dependent latent variable was determined and Table 4 below presents the R square value of the dependent latent variables:

**Table 4:** R Square Variable Dependents

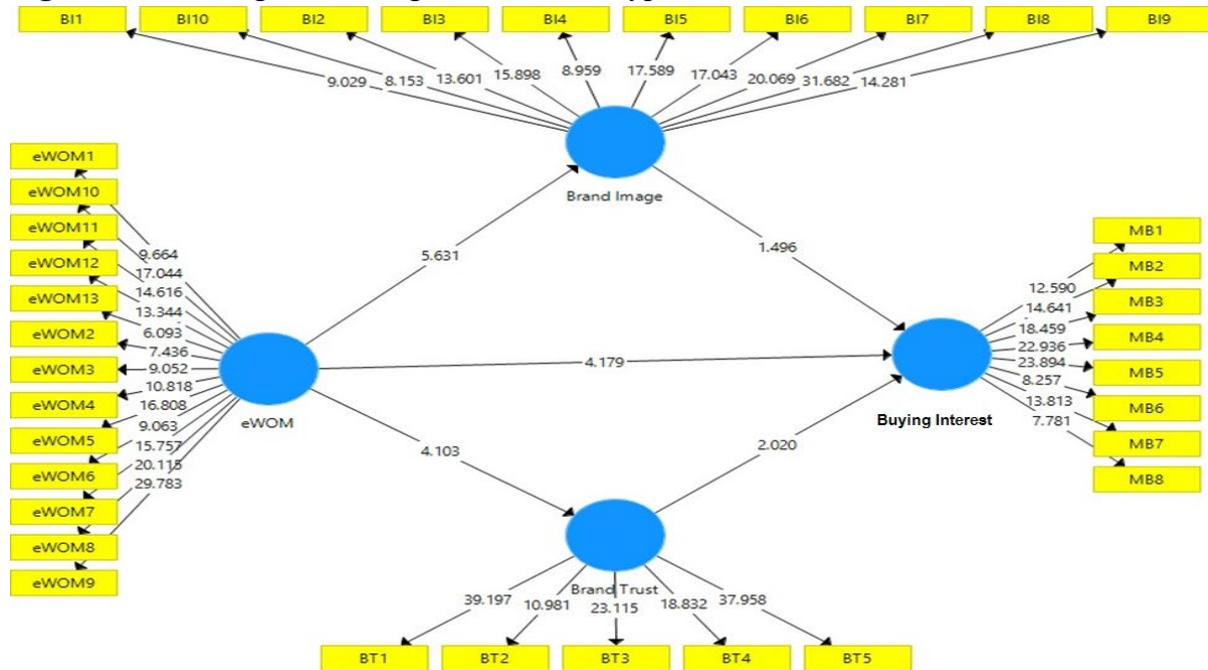
|                 | R Square | RSquare Adjusted |
|-----------------|----------|------------------|
| Brand Image     | 0.169    | 0.162            |
| Brand Trust     | 0.114    | 0.106            |
| Buying Interest | 0.324    | 0.306            |

Based on Table 4 above it can be seen that the R Square value of eWOM's research variable on Brand Image (BI) is 0.169, this proves that BI can be explained by eWOM variables by 16.9%, while the remainder are influenced by other variables not examined in this study. Whereas eWOM for Brand Trust and Purchase Interest is influenced by 11.4% and 32.4% respectively, the rest is influenced by other variables not examined in the research model.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Testing the hypothesis in this study is based on the values found in the structural model analysis; the significance level is obtained from the comparison of t count values with the t table value which is equal to 1,980. Figure 2 below presents the results of hypothesis testing output using smartPLS 3.0:

**Figure 2.** Path Diagram Testing the Research Hypothesis



**Table 5:** Path Coefficient

|   | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics ( O/STDEV) | P Values |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| <b>eWOM -&gt; Brand Image</b>           | 0.419               | 0.435           | 0.074                      | 5.631                   | 0.000    |
| <b>eWOM -&gt; Brand Trust</b>           | 0.336               | 0.349           | 0.082                      | 4.103                   | 0.000    |
| <b>eWOM -&gt;MinatBeli</b>              | 0.493               | 0.505           | 0.064                      | 7.651                   | 0.000    |
| <b>Brand Image -&gt;Buying interest</b> | 0.168               | 0.166           | 0.112                      | 1.496                   | 0.135    |
| <b>Brand Trust -&gt;Buying interest</b> | 0.205               | 0.217           | 0.102                      | 2.020                   | 0.044    |

**Table 6:** Specific Indirect Effect

|   | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics ( O/STDEV) | P Values |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| <b>eWOM -&gt; Brand Image &gt;Buying interest</b> | -0.070              | 0.072           | 0.052                      | 1.360                   | 0.174    |
| <b>eWOM -&gt; Brand Trust &gt;Buying interest</b> | -0.069              | 0.077           | 0.044                      | 1.556                   | 0.120    |

### ***Testing the First Hypothesis***

Based on the path diagram image displayed in Table 5 above, it can be seen that the eWOM variable t value of the Brand Image is 5.631 greater than the t table value with a P value of 0.000 below 0.05, this proves that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image and Hypothesis 1 is accepted. According to Tariq et al. (2017), "this kind of message can effectively reduce risk and uncertainty is recognized by consumers when purchasing products or services, so that purchase intention and decision-making can be further influenced". This type of message (e-WOM) can effectively reduce the risks and uncertainties that consumers have when buying products or services, so that their purchase intentions and decision making is more significantly influenced. Likewise Pratiwi et al. (2015), stated that eWOM functioned as a marketing method that ensure consumers immediately understand and are clear about a brand of smartphone products. For this reason, a variety of useful information and various opinions from other people that are positively related to a brand, eWOM, can encourage the emergence of Brand Image. Accordingly eWOM has a positive strength and is the choice of many companies in marketing their products using internet media.

### ***Testing of the Second Hypothesis***

Based on path diagram images presented in Table 6 above, it can be seen that the eWOM variable t value for Brand Trust is 4.103 greater than the t table value with a P value of 0.000 below 0.05, this proves that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on the Brand Trust (Hypothesis 2 is accepted). This illustrates that iPhone smartphones have good trust in consumer hearts and that with eWOM they can more easily see and review iPhone smartphones positive and negative impressions as product information. This is consistent with the research of Pratiwi et al. (2015) who proved that eWOM has an effect on Brand Trust. When service meets expectations, trust in the brand is built. For this reason, the brand image obtained by consumers has an impact on trust because a brand must be able to create trust in the services expected by consumers.

### ***Testing of the Third Hypothesis***

Based on path diagram images and Table 6 above, it can be seen that the eWOM variable t value for Purchase Interest is 7.651 greater than the t table value with a P value of 0.000 below 0.05, this proves that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on buying interest and Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Based on previous testing, it was found that when consumers already have a picture or information about the brand and have good trust in the iPhone smartphone then they will directly have an interest in buying. WOM communication occurs when consumers provide suggestions or opinions and share experiences with other consumers about a product, service, or brand (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). Pratiwi et al., (2015) state that

iPhone consumers hopes to get a guarantee of satisfaction when using the product, even though there is a possibility of risk. With the existence of good product brand trust there will be increased consumer buying interest. A product with a trusted brand will encourage consumers repeat purchase of that brand.

### ***Testing of the Fourth Hypothesis***

Based on path diagram images and Table 6 above, it can be seen that the t value of the Brand Image variable on Purchasing Interest is 1.496 smaller than the value of t table with a P value of 0.135 above 0.05, this proves that Brand Image does not have a positive and significant effect against buying interest (Hypothesis 4 rejected) and this is contrary to the research of Pratiwi et al. (2015). Brand Image proved to have a significant effect on Buying Interest, meaning that an item with a well-recognized brand was more likely to inspired repeat consumer purchase compared with other brands. For this reason, high and low brand image has an impact on buying interest. The results of the analysis show that good smartphone product Brand Image has an effect on consumer buying interest. This is because students, even though the brand image is good, do not necessarily have the intention to buy because there are a number of conditions that they cannot meet such as the price of a well-recognized brand Iphone smartphone and because some features may be considered not specific to their needs. This is the finding that indicates that there is no influence between brand image and buying interest.

### ***Testing the Fifth Hypothesis***

Based on path diagram images and Table 6 above, it can be seen that the calculated t value of the Brand Trust variable on Purchase Interest is 2.020 greater than the value of the t table with a P value of 0.044 below 0.05, this proves that the Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on Buying Interest and Hypothesis 5 is accepted. The results of this study are consistent with the previous research of Pratiwi et al. (2015), which found that consumers tend to repeat purchase items with trusted brands when compared to other brands. For this reason, high and low brand trust has an impact on buying interest. The results of the analysis show that good Brand Trust in smartphone products has an effect on consumer buying interest. This is because consumer belief in a brand encourages further purchase of that brand. Trust in the brand, if not expressed by the brand owner creates difficulty for consumer further purchase of brand product.

### ***Testing of the Sixth Hypothesis***

Based on path diagram images and Table 7, it can be seen that the eWOM variable t value of Purchase Interest mediated by the brand image is 1.360 smaller than the t table value with a P



value of 0.174 above 0.05, the results of this study explain that it turns out brand image variable cannot mediate eWOM's influence on indirect buying interest.

### ***Testing of the Seventh Hypothesis***

Based on the path diagram image and Table 6, it can be seen that the t count value of eWOM variable on the Purchase Interest mediated by the Trust brand is 1.556 smaller than the value of the t table with a P value of 0.120 above 0.05 The results of this study explain that the diversity in Trust brands cannot mediate eWOM's influence on indirect buying interest.

### **Conclusion**

The role of eWOM can be used as a force in marketing at the present time, as evidenced by testing the hypothesis that eWOM affects Brand Image and Brand Trust and consequently directly affects Buying Interest. However, Brand Image and Brand Trust cannot be used as mediating variables because they do not indirectly affect Buying Interest.



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