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The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Brand Image, and Brand Loyalty on iPhone Purchase Decisions in Samarinda City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine and analyze the influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), Brand Image, and Brand Loyalty on the purchase decisions of iPhone users in Samarinda City. The study population consists of all iPhone users in Samarinda City who are potential repeat purchasers. A purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria was employed, resulting in a sample of 130 respondents. Primary data were collected by distributing structured questionnaires via Google Forms. Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) method with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results indicate that the structural model has an R^2 value of 0.600, meaning that 60% of the variation in purchase decisions can be explained by the three independent variables. Hypothesis testing confirms that Electronic Word-of-Mouth (t=2.883; p=0.004), Brand Image (t=3.343; p=0.001), and Brand Loyalty (t=3.901; p=0.000) have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Brand Loyalty emerged as the most dominant predictor influencing iPhone purchase decisions in Samarinda City.

Keywords: Brand Image, Brand Loyalty, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Purchase Decision, iPhone.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has created a major transformation in human life systems, particularly in altering patterns of communication, commerce, and lifestyle (Hawarini et al., 2025). Smartphone devices have permeated daily activities not only as functional tools but also as a means to fulfill the emotional needs of society (Li et al., 2022; T. Wang et al., 2025). In Indonesia, smartphones have become a commodity with rapid sales growth (Ela & Rana, 2024), where the country ranks sixth globally with 73 million users and a penetration rate projected to reach 89% of the total population (GoodStats, 2023; Statista, 2025). This significant increase demonstrates that smartphones have become an integral part of public activities, directly impacting the dynamics of consumer behavior in purchasing decisions.

In the competitive landscape of the smartphone industry, Apple Inc. occupies a unique position with its iPhone product as a highly competitive premium brand. Despite facing intense competition from Asian manufacturers such as Samsung, Oppo, and Vivo, Apple has managed to maintain customer loyalty at a consistent rate above 89% (Kompas, 2025). This phenomenon is driven by a brand image differentiation strategy that emphasizes quality, exclusivity, and social prestige (J. Wang, 2025; Ningsih & Siregar, 2025). In developing regions such as Samarinda City, the rapid growth of the digital economy has heightened the reliance of millennials and Gen Z on online reviews or Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). Given that the iPhone is relatively high-priced, consumers tend to rely on the opinions and experiences of other users on social media to minimize purchasing decision risks.

Although the interplay among these variables is compelling to investigate, previous empirical studies reveal literature gaps due to contradictory findings. Studies by Ahmad (2024), Kolinug et al. (2022), and Putra & Lestari (2023) show that eWOM, brand image, and brand loyalty have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Conversely, studies by Dewi et al. (2023) and Sinulingga et al. (2025) reveal that eWOM and brand image do not significantly influence purchase decisions. The existence of these inconsistent results (research gap) indicates that the influence of external and internal factors on premium product purchase decisions remains highly dynamic and warrants further investigation.

Prior research has generally focused on the dynamics of smartphone purchase decisions in major metropolitan areas across Java Island, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Tangerang. However, research comprehensively integrating eWOM, brand image, and brand loyalty remains limited—particularly within the context of growing urban communities outside Java Island, such as Samarinda City, which possesses distinct socio-demographic characteristics. Therefore, the objective of this study is to empirically examine and analyze the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), brand image, and brand loyalty on the purchase decisions of iPhone smartphone consumers in Samarinda City.

This study provides theoretical contributions by enriching the marketing management literature related to premium smartphone consumer behavior in non-central metropolitan regions, as well as practical implications for manufacturers and marketers in formulating brand differentiation and eWOM-based digital marketing strategies. The systematic structure of this article is organized as

follows: The second section presents the Literature Review and hypothesis development. The third section outlines the Research Methods, covering the population, sample, operationalization of variables, and data analysis techniques. The fourth section details the Results and Discussion based on the statistical findings obtained, followed by the fifth section, which provides the Conclusion, managerial implications, and directions for future research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the stage in the consumer decision process where they actually choose a product or service from various available alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This process involves rational considerations (such as quality, price, and convenience) as well as emotional considerations. For premium goods, purchase decisions are more dominantly influenced by emotional factors such as self-identity, social status, and self-reward (Ridzki, 2025). On digital/e-commerce platforms, this decision is influenced by a complex interaction among product quality, ratings, and consumer reviews as social proof to minimize risk (Hasbullah et al., 2025; Solomon, 2018).

Purchase Decision Indicators

According to Shareef (2008), there are five indicators in a purchase decision:

a. Overall Satisfaction: The level of consumer satisfaction after purchasing a product that meets expectations.
b. Recommendation: The consumer's tendency to suggest the product to others.
c. Purchase Frequency: How often consumers make repeat purchases.
d. Purchase Intention: The consumer's commitment to continue using the product in the future.
e. Experience: The consumer's evaluation of the experience during the purchasing process.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is the transformation of conventional word-of-mouth communication to digital media such as social networks, forums, blogs, and review sites (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2017). eWOM encompasses both positive and negative reviews from consumer experiences published online through reviews, comments, or hashtags (Alnoor et al., 2022; Setiyaningsih et al., 2023). The quality, credibility, and relevance of eWOM information significantly influence perceived information usefulness and consumer purchase intention (Leong et al., 2022).

Dimensions of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

According to Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold (2011), there are three dimensions to measure eWOM:

a. General persuasiveness: The strength of online reviews in influencing consumer views and decisions.
b. General credibility: The extent to which reviews are considered honest, objective, and trustworthy.
c. Susceptibility to online product reviews: How easily an individual is influenced by online reviews.

Brand Image

Brand Image is a set of perceptions, beliefs, and associations held in consumer memory regarding a brand (Aaker, 1997; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Ruiz & García, 2021). Brand image is formed

through digital interactions, social media, usage experiences, and marketing communications (Şaan et al., 2025; Yahya et al., 2024). In addition to encompassing reputation and value, brand image reflects product uniqueness, exclusivity, and prestige, which directly influence trust and purchase decisions (Dati Putra Nur Akhmad & Mirzam Arqy Ahmadi, 2024; Dirwan & Firman, 2023).

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a psychological and emotional commitment of consumers to continuously purchase a specific brand over the long term (Oliver, 1999; Keller, 2013; Serra et al., 2022). Loyalty consists of two main components, namely attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty (N. P. Sari et al., 2023; Adim Rofiud Darojat, 2021). The level of brand loyalty is directly proportional to high consumer satisfaction and a positive brand image perception (Wahyuni & Ramadani, 2021; Estevão et al., 2020).

Relationships Between Variables

Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision

Positive and credible online reviews help reduce uncertainty and consumer risk perception (Qiu & Zhang, 2024; Ngo et al., 2024). eWOM serves as a persuasion mechanism and a primary driver in building trust and evaluating alternatives prior to purchasing (Sudaryanto et al., 2025; Verma & Yadav, 2021; Manullang & Susanti, 2022).

H1: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on the Purchase Decision of iPhone Smartphones in Samarinda City.

Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

A strong and positive brand image increases perceived value, reputation, and consumer trust, which directly drives actual purchase decisions (Zhong, 2023; Reynaldi, 2024; Valerian, 2024; Savitri et al., 2021; Suharni Rahayu, 2022; Sumartono, 2023).

H2: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on the Purchase Decision of iPhone Smartphones in Samarinda City.

Effect of Brand Loyalty on Consumer Purchase Decision

Loyal consumers have an emotional attachment to make repeat purchases and act as brand advocates for the product (Catic & Poturak, 2022; Alfian et al., 2024; Riset et al., 2024).

H3: Brand Loyalty has a positive and significant effect on the Purchase Decision of iPhone Smartphones in Samarinda City.

Theoretical Framework

A research conceptual framework is a synthesis of the relationships between variables, constructed based on theory, findings, and the researcher's understanding. Its function is to provide an overview of the research's line of reasoning and the direction of the hypotheses to be tested.

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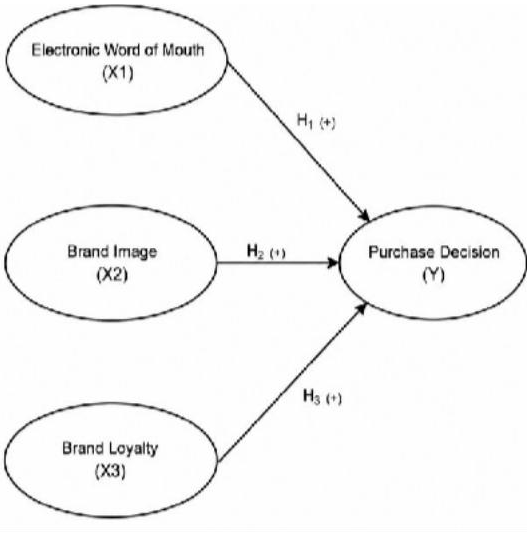


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

The population for this study consists of all iPhone users in Samarinda City who currently use the device and are potential repeat purchasers. As the exact population size is unknown (an infinite population), a purposive sampling technique was employed based on specific criteria: respondents must reside in Samarinda City, be at least 17 years old, and have used an iPhone for a minimum of two years.

The sample size was determined based on the theory of Hair et al. (2019), which recommends a minimum sample size of 5 to 10 times the number of indicators. With a total of 18 research indicators and a multiplier of 7, the calculation yielded 126 (18 × 7); this figure was rounded up to 130 respondents to account for the risk of incomplete questionnaires. The primary data source consisted of information obtained directly from respondents via a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms to ensure an effective and efficient data collection process. Subsequently, the collected data from the respondents' answers were processed and quantitatively analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. Partial Least Square

This study uses the Partial Least Square (PLS) method as a data analysis technique with the assistance of SmartPLS software version 3.0. PLS is a statistical method that combines factor analysis and regression analysis to test complex relationships between variables simultaneously. According to Imam Ghozali (2021), PLS operates using an iterative algorithm based on Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation, thereby reducing identification problems in both recursive and non-recursive models. The latent variables analyzed in this study include Electronic Word of Mouth, Brand Image, Brand Loyalty, and Purchase Decision among iPhone smartphone users in Samarinda City.

b. Outer Model

In evaluating the validity and reliability of the measurement model, several tests were conducted, namely convergent validity, discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), composite reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. Convergent validity and AVE testing aim to assess construct validity, whereas composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are used to measure the level of reliability of each construct.

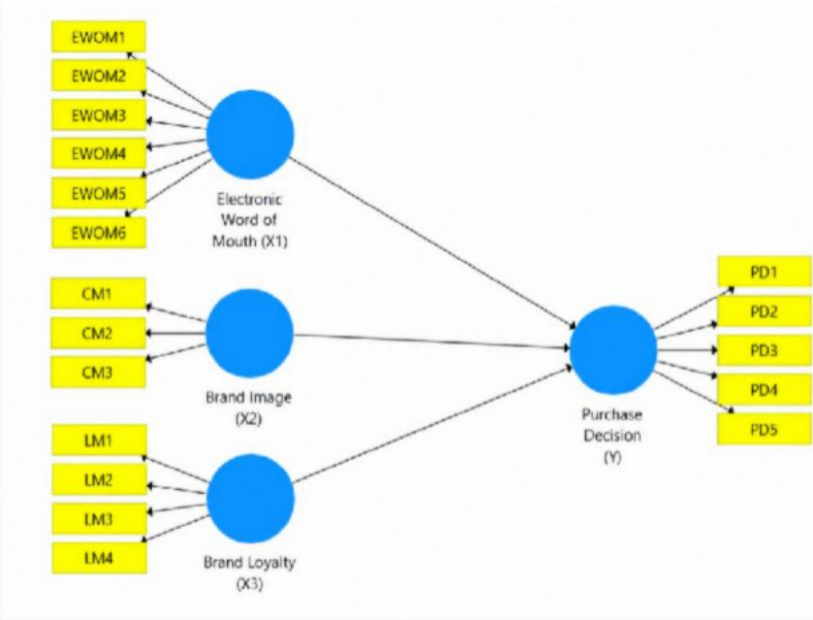


Figure 2. Basic Model Framework
Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

1) Convergent Validity

Convergent validity in this study was tested using SmartPLS 3.0 software by examining the factor loading values for each indicator.

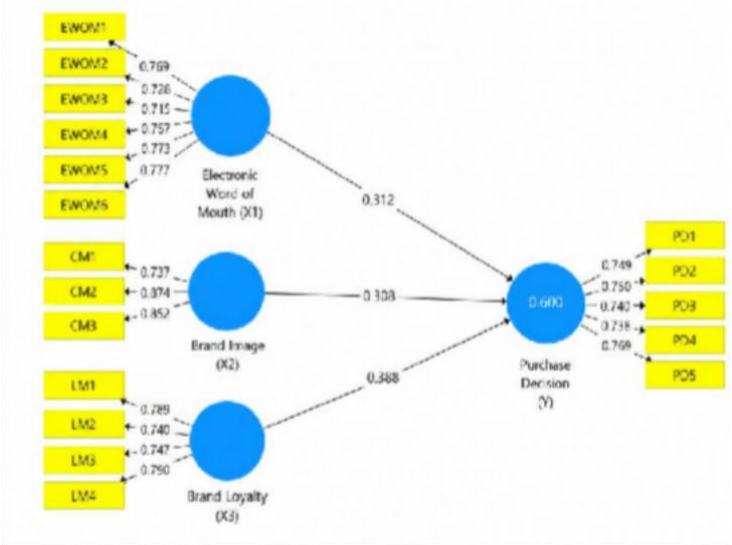


Figure 3. Basic Factor Loading Model
Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

Based on Figure 3, all factor loading values exceed 0.70; thus, it can be concluded that the indicators for each variable are valid according to the convergent validity test. Once the indicators met the criteria, they were further evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. A minimum AVE value of 0.50 is required to demonstrate that a construct possesses good convergent validity. If the AVE value falls below 0.50, it indicates that the indicators do not adequately represent the construct, necessitating a review of the factor loading values.

Table 1. AVE Result (Average Variance Extracted)

Variable	AVE
Electronic Word of Mouth (X1)	0.568
Brand Image (X2)	0.678
Brand Loyalty (X3)	0.588
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.562

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

2) Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assessment using cross-loading values is considered satisfactory if each indicator exhibits a higher loading value on the construct it measures compared to other constructs. In other words, the indicator must demonstrate a stronger relationship with the variable it measures than with other variables. The cross-loading values for each indicator are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Cross-loadings

Variable	Electronic Word of Mouth (X1)	Brand Image (X2)	Brand Loyalty (X3)	Purchase Decision (Y)
EWOM1	0.769	0.224	0.371	0.474
EWOM2	0.728	0.268	0.247	0.393
EWOM3	0.715	0.272	0.349	0.357
EWOM4	0.757	0.227	0.384	0.477
EWOM5	0.773	0.360	0.346	0.512
EWOM6	0.777	0.276	0.335	0.460
CM1	0.265	0.737	0.181	0.379
CM2	0.359	0.874	0.317	0.491
CM3	0.263	0.852	0.301	0.476
LM1	0.380	0.218	0.789	0.534
LM2	0.336	0.249	0.740	0.445
LM3	0.350	0.256	0.747	0.449
LM4	0.317	0.294	0.790	0.493
KP1	0.460	0.310	0.390	0.749
KP2	0.523	0.403	0.481	0.750
KP3	0.442	0.456	0.498	0.740
KP4	0.395	0.482	0.438	0.738
KP5	0.418	0.389	0.540	0.769

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

In addition to convergent validity, construct validity was also assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An AVE value exceeding 0.50 indicates that the construct accounts for more than half of the variance in its indicators. The results show that all constructs yielded AVE values greater than 0.50; thus, the indicators are considered valid for measuring their respective latent variables. Furthermore, cross-loading values demonstrate that each indicator exhibits its highest loading on the intended construct compared to other constructs. This confirms that the measurement model possesses good construct validity.

3) Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Composite reliability indicates the level of internal consistency among indicators within a construct, where a value above 0.70 signifies good construct reliability.

Table 3. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
X1	0.848	0.887
X2	0.761	0.863
X3	0.767	0.851
Y	0.805	0.865

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

Based on Table 3, all constructs exhibit composite reliability values above 0.70, indicating a good level of internal consistency. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables Electronic Word of Mouth (X1), Brand Image (X2), Brand Loyalty (X3), and Purchase Decision (Y) also exceed 0.70. These results demonstrate that all constructs in this study meet the criteria for good reliability.

c. Inner Model

1) R Square

In the evaluation of the PLS model, the initial step involves examining the R-square value for each dependent latent variable. Table 4 presents the R-square estimation results obtained using SmartPLS. In this study, the structural model is evaluated using R-square (R^2) values and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Table 4. R-Square

Dependent Variable	R- Square
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.600

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

Based on Table 4, the R-square value of 0.600 indicates that the model's ability to explain the variation in the dependent variable purchase decision is 60.0% (0.600 × 100%). This means that the variables of electronic word-of-mouth, brand image, and brand loyalty account for 60% of the influence on purchase decisions, while the remaining 40% is influenced by variables outside the scope of this study. Thus, the R-square value of 0.600 falls into the moderate category.

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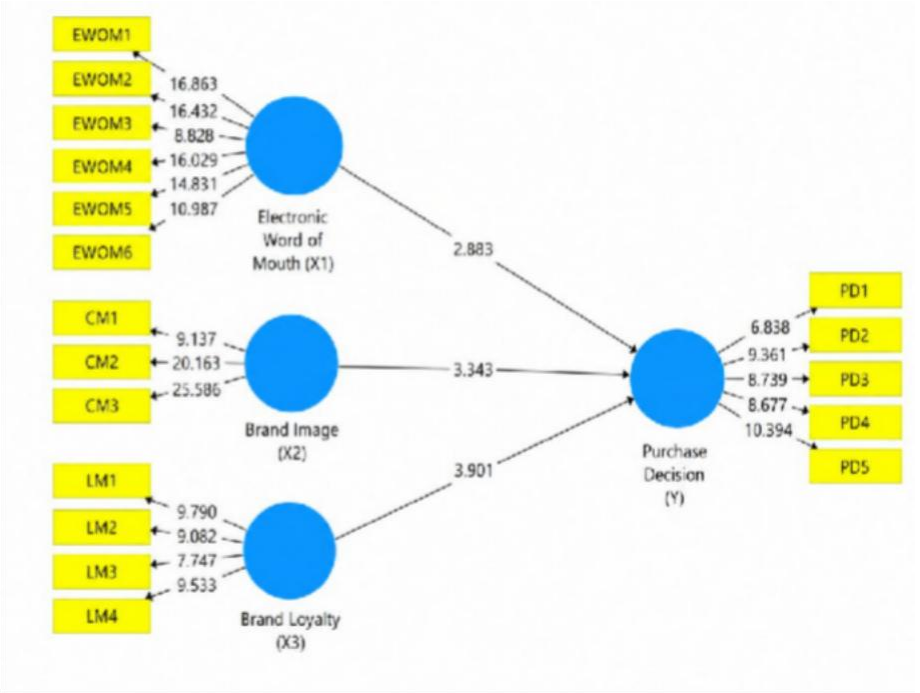


Figure 4. PLS Bootstrapping Results Display
Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

Based on the bootstrapping results for the model shown in Figure 4, all relationships between the independent and dependent variables yielded t-statistic values greater than 1.96. This indicates that each independent variable in the model has a significant effect on variable Y at a 5% significance level. Consequently, the hypothesis positing an effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable is accepted. These results also confirm the significance of the relationships between variables within the research model; thus, all variables are deemed to have a significant influence on variable Y.

2) Path Coefficient

To determine the significance of the predictive model during structural model testing, one can examine the t-statistic values between exogenous and endogenous variables in the path coefficient table presented in the following SmartPLS results:

Table 5. Path Coefficients

Variable	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T statistics	P Values
Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.312	0.310	0.108	2.883	0.004
Brand Image (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.308	0.307	0.092	3.343	0.001
Brand Loyalty (X3) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.388	0.377	0.099	3.901	0.000

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS3, 2026

Based on Table 5, all path coefficient values in this research model are positive. This indicates that the higher the path coefficient value between the independent and dependent variables, the stronger the relationship or influence exerted. Thus, the variables Electronic Word of Mouth (X1), Brand Image (X2), and Brand Loyalty (X3) exhibit a positive relationship with the Purchase Decision (Y) for iPhone smartphones in Samarinda City.

d. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted based on t-statistic values and p-values. At a significance level of 5% (equivalent to a 95% confidence level), the t-statistic threshold used was 1.96. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted if the t-statistic value exceeds 1.96 and rejected if it is less than 1.96. Furthermore, based on probability values, the hypothesis is accepted if the p-value is less than 0.05. This indicates that the relationship between variables is considered significant if the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 or the p-value is less than 0.05 (Rahadi, 2023).

All hypotheses proposed in this study are accepted, as each relationship yielded a p-value of less than 0.05. These results indicate that the independent variables Electronic Word of Mouth (X1), Brand Image (X2), and Brand Loyalty (X3) have a significant effect on the dependent variable, Purchase Decision (Y).

Discussion

The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decision

The results of the data analysis show that the relationship between electronic word of mouth and purchase decision has a path coefficient value of 0.312, a t-statistic value of 2.883, and a p-value of 0.004. Therefore, the first hypothesis stating that Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision is accepted. These results indicate that reviews, recommendations, and user experiences shared through online media are capable of influencing consumers in making decisions to purchase iPhone smartphones in Samarinda City.

This finding can be explained by Hennig-Thurau & Walsh (2003), who state that Electronic Word of Mouth encompasses information, reviews, and consumer experiences shared via the internet that can influence the behavior and purchase decisions of other consumers. This theory explains that consumers tend to read online reviews to obtain information, reduce purchasing risks, and assist in selecting the right product. Consequently, the more positive the reviews and recommendations consumers receive regarding the iPhone, the greater the likelihood of consumers making a purchase decision.

Among iPhone smartphone users in Samarinda, electronic word of mouth plays an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. Information, reviews, and user experiences shared through social media, online forums, and other digital platforms can affect the level of consumer trust in iPhone products. Consumers who receive positive reviews and convincing recommendations regarding the quality, performance, and features of the iPhone tend to have higher confidence in making a purchase. This finding is aligned with research conducted by Nadir et al. (2022) and Purba & Paramita (2021), which demonstrates that electronic word of mouth significantly influences purchase decisions.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

The results of the data analysis show that the relationship between brand image and purchase decision has a path coefficient value of 0.308, a t-statistic value of 3.343, and a p-value of 0.001. Therefore, the second hypothesis stating that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision is accepted. These results indicate that a good brand image can enhance consumer trust and confidence in the quality of iPhone smartphones, thereby driving consumer purchase decisions in Samarinda City.

A strong brand image fosters positive consumer perceptions toward the product in terms of quality, reputation, and the prestige associated with the iPhone. Consumers tend to choose products with a good brand image because they are perceived as more trustworthy, superior in quality, and capable of providing satisfaction that meets user expectations. Furthermore, the brand image of the iPhone, known as a premium smartphone with advanced technology, serves as a key factor influencing consumer interest in determining purchase decisions. Thus, the better the brand image of the iPhone, the higher the consumer tendency to purchase the product. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Hakim et al. (2024), Hermina (2023), and Wardani et al. (2022), which shows that brand image significantly influences purchase decisions.

The Effect of Brand Loyalty on Purchase Decision

The results of the data analysis show that the relationship between brand loyalty and purchase decision has a path coefficient value of 0.388, a t-statistic value of 3.901, and a p-value of 0.000. Therefore, the third hypothesis stating that brand loyalty has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision is accepted. These results indicate that high brand loyalty drives consumers to continue choosing and repurchasing iPhone smartphones due to trust, satisfaction, and emotional attachment to the brand.

Brand loyalty reflects a consumer's commitment to continue using products from the same brand despite the presence of numerous alternative products in the market. Consumers with high loyalty toward the iPhone tend to feel satisfied with the product quality, performance, design, and user experience provided. In addition, brand loyalty is fostered because consumers feel comfortable and confident in the iPhone's reputation as a premium smartphone offering consistent quality and innovation.

Loyal consumers typically do not only make repeat purchases, but also tend to recommend the product to others and demonstrate greater resilience against the influence of competing brands. Therefore, the higher the brand loyalty consumers hold toward the iPhone, the greater the probability of making a purchase decision for the product in Samarinda City. This finding is in line with research conducted by Shukla (2012), Supiyandi et al. (2022), and Liyamilati Hanifah (2024), which demonstrates that brand loyalty significantly influences purchase decisions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis using Partial Least Square (PLS 3.0), this study concludes that all independent variables have a positive and significant effect on the Purchase Decision of iPhone smartphone users in Samarinda City:

1. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM): The more positive the online reviews, recommendations, and information received by consumers, the higher their trust and inclination to choose the iPhone.
2. Brand Image: A favorable brand perception and reputation significantly enhance consumer confidence in product quality, making the iPhone superior to competing brands.
3. Brand Loyalty: High consumer satisfaction and emotional attachment lead to consistent preferences and repeat purchases of iPhone products.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions outlined above, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Company management and iPhone marketers are advised to continuously enhance Electronic Word of Mouth strategies across social media, online review platforms, and digital communities to ensure consumers receive positive information and recommendations regarding iPhone products. Favorable reviews and authentic user experiences can strengthen consumer trust during the purchase decision-making process.
2. The company should maintain and elevate the iPhone's brand image as a premium smartphone associated with quality, innovation, and a solid reputation. This can be achieved by preserving product excellence, introducing technological innovations aligned with consumer needs, and building positive marketing communications.
3. To build brand loyalty, the company needs to deliver a satisfying user experience through reliable product quality, robust after-sales services, and attentive customer care. Strong consumer loyalty drives repeat purchases and reinforces the decision to buy iPhone products.
4. Future researchers are encouraged to expand upon this study by incorporating additional variables, broadening the sample size and geographic scope, or employing alternative research methodologies. This will yield more comprehensive, in-depth insights and provide a broader picture of the factors influencing smartphone purchase decisions.

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