

# THE ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE IN MEDIATING THE INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH ON PURCHASE INTENTION

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**Abstract:** The increasingly tight competition demands marketers to always be active in assessing the opportunities to introduce and distribute their product. To win the competition, marketers must always pay attention to the factors that can influence the purchase intention of people, where purchase intention is influenced by eWOM communication and brand image. This research aims to determine the influence of eWOM and brand image on the intention to purchase Toyota Avanza cars, to determine the influence of eWOM on the brand image of Toyota Avanza cars, to determine the influence of eWOM and brand image on the intention to purchase Toyota Avanza cars, and to determine the role of brand image in mediating the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. The population in this research are all the people who are domiciled in Denpasar City that have the intention to purchase a Toyota Avanza car. There are 100 respondents from Denpasar City as the sample of this research. This sample size fulfills the maximum sample size criteria recommended for PLS, which ranges from 30 to 100. The data is analyzed using the PLS (Partial Least Square) method. The research results show that eWOM and brand image has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention, and eWOM has a positive and significant influence on brand image. The results also show that brand image is able to mediate the influence of eWOM on purchase intention.

**Keywords:** eWOM, brand image, purchase intention.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly tight competition demands marketers to always be active in assessing various opportunities to introduce and distribute their product. To win the competition, marketers must consider factors that can influence people's purchase intention. Purchase intention is the stage in which consumers make a decision among several brands, and afterwards purchase a product among the alternatives that they like. In other words, it is a process undergone by consumers in purchasing goods or services based on several considerations (Sukmawati and Suyono in Annafik and Raharjo, 2012). The purchase action that will be performed by the consumer is based on their purchase intention, therefore, purchase intention is a very important matter to consider in the marketing process.

The intention of consumers to purchase a product or service does not occur spontaneously. It is influenced by various factors, among others, is by word of mouth communication. Before making purchase decisions, consumers usually search for information from previous customers, instead of relying on advertisements of the product itself (Noraini et al, 2016). Tommi (2014) stated that in marketing dynamics, consumers always search for references and trust the opinions of the community regarding a product. This phenomena in marketing terminology is known as Word of Mouth (WOM). WOM is a basic communication form which is generally used in people's daily interaction which can be done face to face with an oral media or direct conversations. According to EunHa et al. (2011), WOM is an informal communication between customers regarding a certain product or service which is viewed as the most important information related to a purchase

because word of mouth has a strong influence on the behavior of customers. WOM communication has a more personal characteristic and tends to be performed by those who are closely acquainted (family, friends, neighbors), with users or those who have used the products or services. It is due to this personal relationship which makes the communicant trust what the communicator says. People who prefer recommendations based on the word of mouth communication tend to believe that the recommender is speaking honestly and tend to not sense any ulterior motive (Christy, 2010).

The rapid advancement in internet communication technology has changed the paradigm of WOM communication, where the communication form no longer has a personal characteristic. WOM communication now has a broader characteristic which is known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Jalilvand, 2012). EWOM is now a venue or place that is very important for consumers in sharing their opinion and is deemed as more effective than the traditional WOM because the level of accessibility and reach is greater than the traditional WOM through offline media (Tommi, 2014). eWOM can occur between people who do not know each other or people who are not in an intensive relationship (for example foreign people or other consumers) which creates an anonymous impression. Anonymity allows people to be more comfortable in sharing their opinion without revealing their identity (Goldsmith and Horowitz in Lee, 2015).

The advancement of internet and the development of the world wide web (www) provide consumers with a new world in which they can communicate and influence one another (Goldsmith in Putranti, 2015). The spread of information using eWOM is done through online media or internet such as through email, blog, chat room, Facebook, twitter and other types of social medias which stimulate interaction between one consumers with other consumers. With the availability of online social communication, this will automatically help consumers in sharing their experience regarding a product or service that they attain through a purchase process (Kamtarin, 2012). Modern consumers tend to have many information sources and have changed into consumers that do not pay attention to the traditional advertisements (Swenney, 2012). Malita (2012) describe social media as an online technology and the habit of its users to share opinions, insights, experience and perception.

Consumers that have unique experiences regarding a product will naturally tend to include the product (quality, brand and value) into their conversation agenda, where they intentionally or unintentionally share to others verbally in various opportunities (Ali, 2010). eWOM has an intensive characteristic which is expected to have a positive impact on the brand image of a product. The research conducted by Kazmi (2016) states that there is a significant positive relationship between eWOM and brand image. This means that the quality of eWOM has a positive influence on brand image.

Brand image is the representation of the overall perception regarding a brand and is formed by the information and past experience regarding the brand. The image of a brand is related to the trust and preference towards a certain brand. Consumers that have a positive view regarding the image of a brand are more likely to make a purchase (Setiadi, 2003:180). In other words, the better the brand image of a product, the greater the intention of consumers to purchase the product. This is consistent with Omer et al. (2014) findings which state that brand image has a positive influence on purchase intention.

Brand image does not only influence the purchase intention of consumers, but it is also able to mediate the influence of eWOM on the purchase intention of consumers. This means companies that have created positive eWOM and a good brand image will be able to increase the intention of consumers to purchase their products. This is in line with the findings by Ghadafi (2015) which state that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention and is mediated by the brand image of the product. Other studies which were conducted by Gozali (2012) and Rizky (2015) also found that eWOM has a significant influence on purchase intention with brand image as the intervening variable. This means that the eWOM variable has a significant indirect influence on the purchase intention variable through the product's brand image.

This research is conducted on the automotive industry, because it is among the rapidly growing industries today, in which the development is supported by increasingly decent infrastructures. Motored vehicles have become a need for the people in supporting their daily mobile activities. Among the motored vehicles used are cars. There are several brands and variances of cars available in the market offering competitive qualities and technologies. One of the car types in which are highly demanded by the people is the low MPV (Multi Purpose Vehicle) because of its decent accommodation capacity and affordable price. Moreover, government has given incentives for this car type in which its taxes are lower than other car types. One of the competitive products in this segment is Toyota Avanza. The hypothesis formulated in this research is as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub>: eWOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention.**

The research conducted by Kazmi (2016) stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between eWOM and brand image. Syafaruddin et al. (2016) stated in their research that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on brand image. Another study which was conducted by Samuel (2014) attained results in which the quality of eWOM has a positive influence on brand image, thus the next hypothesis in this research is as follows:

**H<sub>2</sub>: eWOM has a positive and significant influence on brand image.**

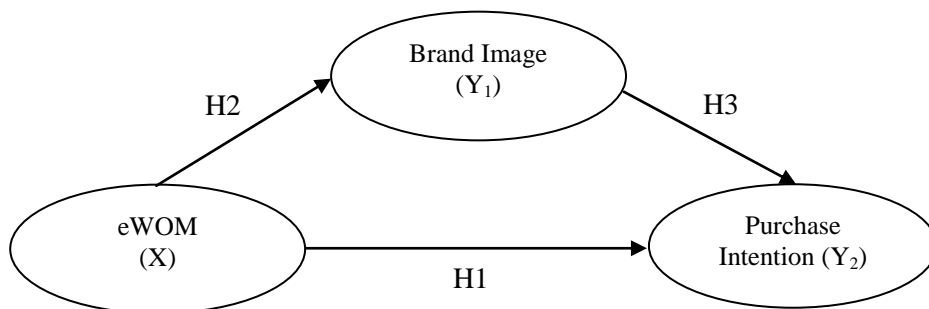
The research conducted by Omer et al. (2014) revealed that there is a positive relationship between brand image and purchase intention. Gozali (2012) in his research explained that brand image has a significant influence on purchase intention. Another study which was conducted by Ruslim (2012) showed that brand image has a significant influence on purchase intention. Thus, the hypothesis formulated is as follows:

**H<sub>3</sub>: Brand image has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention.**

Ghadafi (2015) in his research stated that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention mediated by brand image. The research conducted by Gozali (2012) revealed that there is a significant relationship between eWOM and purchase intention with brand image as the intervening variable. Rizky (2015) in his research stated that the eWOM variable has a significant indirect influence on the purchase intention variable through the brand image of the product. Thus, the next research hypothesis is as follows:

**H<sub>4</sub>: Brand image has a positive and significant influence in mediating the influence of eWOM on purchase intention.**

Based on the definitions in the literature review and the results of previous studies, the conceptual framework is designed as follows:



**Picture 1: Conceptual Framework Model**

*Source: Reviews of Previous Studies, 2016*

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the level of explanation, this research is categorized as an associative study because it examines the role of brand image in mediating the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. The research is conducted in Denpasar City. This location is selected because Denpasar City fulfills the category of an effective and efficient place to conduct a relevant research, as Denpasar is also one of the cities with a higher minimum wage level compared to other regions (BPS. Denpasar City. 2014). The subjects in this research are the respondents that are domiciled in Denpasar City. The object in this research is the role of brand image in mediating the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. In this research, there are three variables being reviewed. The variables are summarized in Table 2 as follows:

**Table 2: Summary of the Operational Definition of Research Variables**

Variable	Indicator	Reference
Electronic word of mouth	1. I frequently read reviews about Toyota Avanza from other customers through online medias to find out people's impression regarding that product.	Sachse et al. (2010)
	2. I often read online comments from other customers to ensure that I will buy the right car.	
	3. I frequently consult with other consumers through online media about Toyota cars to help me choose the right product or brand.	

	4. I frequently collect information from consumer comments regarding Toyota Avanza cars through online media before I make a purchase.	
	5. If I don't read the online comments from other consumers when I want to buy a car, I'm worried that I will make the wrong decision.	
	6. When I want to buy a car, the online comments from consumers make me more confident in deciding to purchase Toyota Avanza.	
Brand image	1. Toyota brand cars have a higher quality compared with other car brands. 2. Toyota car brand has a good reputation. 3. Toyota car brand has a reliable performance.	Davis et al. (2009)
Purchase intention	1. I'm interested in buying a Toyota Avanza car instead of other car brands. 2. I want to test drive the Toyota Avanza before purchasing it. 3. I intend to buy a Toyota Avanza car in the future.	Shukla (2010), Kotler and Keller (2012:116)

Source: Reviews on Previous Studies, 2016

The population in this research is all the people who are domiciled in Denpasar City that have the intention to purchase Toyota Avanza, therefore the total population cannot be determined with certainty (infinite). The total sample in this research is 100 respondents from all over Denpasar City. The sample size has fulfilled the maximum size criterion recommended for PLS which ranges from 30 to 100 (Ghozali, 2011:5).

The sampling method utilized in this research is purposive sampling, in which the sample is determined to be at a certain amount and must fulfill certain criteria. The criteria used in this research are respondents that are domiciled in Denpasar City, and has never bought a Toyota Avanza car before, and has the intention to buy a Toyota Avanza car.

In this research, the data analysis technique is the SEM (Structural equation modeling) analysis technique based on component or variance, namely PLS (Partial Least Square). According to Ghozali (2011:18), PLS is a factor indeterminacy analysis method which is strong because it does not assume that the data must be measured using certain scales, the sample size can be small, it can be used to confirm theories, and assist in attaining latent variables for prediction purposes.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Toyota-Astra Motor Limited Company was established in Jakarta in 1971 by James Suliman from Gaya Motor Limited Company, William Surjadjaja from Astra international Inc. Limited Company, and Zenichi Koyama from Toyota Motor Co. & Toyota Motor Sales of Japan, as the importer and distributor of Toyota vehicles. Toyota Avanza is a car produced in Indonesia by Daihatsu's factory, and was marketed in two brands, namely Toyota Avanza and Daihatsu Xenia.

The characteristics of the respondents in the research regarding the role of brand image in mediating the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention (a Study of Toyota Avanza Brand Cars) can be observed in terms of several criteria, namely: gender, age, last education and the occupation of the respondents. Displayed below is the characteristics of respondents based on various criteria.

Table 3: Characteristics of Respondents

Description	Total (people)	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	63	63,0
- Female	37	37,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Age		
- 18-23 Years old	14	14,0
- 24-29 Years old	26	26,0
- 30-35 Years old	33	33,0
- 36-41 Years old	21	21,0
- ≥ 42 Years old	6	6,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Last Education		
- High School or equivalent	14	14,0
- Associate Degree	27	27,0
- Undergraduate Education	38	38,0

-	Masters Degree	16	16,0
-	Doctorate Degree/ PHD	5	5,0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Occupation			
-	Civil Servant	18	18,0
-	Army/ Police of Indonesia	14	14,0
-	Private employee	20	20,0
-	Entrepreneur	41	41,0
-	Others	7	7,0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2018

Table 3 shows the criteria of respondents based on their gender, age, last education and occupation. The criteria of respondents based on their gender, is dominated by male respondents with a total of 63 people (63 percent). Afterwards, the criteria of respondents based on age, is dominated by respondents at an age range between 30-35 years old. For the criteria of respondents based on last education, it is dominated by respondents with a Bachelor or equivalent degree. People who have finished their undergraduate studies are assumed to have a better understanding and enough ability to use social media in searching for information related to the automotive product that they want to buy, such as the Toyota Avanza car. The last criteria of respondents, which is based on their occupation, is dominated by respondents who work as entrepreneurs. This shows that a majority of respondents who have the intention to buy Toyota Avanza car are respondents who are entrepreneurs, in which the job as an entrepreneur demands high mobility and strong capital to make transactions, specifically in buying the Toyota Avanza Car.

The validity test results in this research is summarized in Table 4. The results show that all the research instruments used to measure the variables of eWOM, brand image and purchase intention have a correlation coefficient value of greater than 0,30 and a significance of less than 0,05. This shows that all the question items are valid and are acceptable research instruments.

**Table 4: Recapitulation of the Research Instrument Validity Test Results**

Variable	Indicator	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Electronic word of mouth ( $X_1$ )	$X_1$	0,784	0,000	Valid
	$X_2$	0,725	0,000	Valid
	$X_3$	0,699	0,000	Valid
	$X_4$	0,639	0,000	Valid
	$X_5$	0,791	0,000	Valid
	$X_6$	0,601	0,000	Valid
Brand image ( $Y_1$ )	$Y_{1.1}$	0,834	0,000	Valid
	$Y_{1.2}$	0,770	0,000	Valid
	$Y_{1.3}$	0,883	0,000	Valid
Purchase intention ( $Y_2$ )	$Y_{2.1}$	0,676	0,000	Valid
	$Y_{2.2}$	0,739	0,000	Valid
	$Y_{2.3}$	0,763	0,000	Valid

Source : Data Computation Results, 2018

The results of the reliability test in this research is displayed in Table 5. The results show that all the research instruments have a Cronbach's Alpha of greater than 0,60. Thus, it can be stated that all the variables have fulfilled the reliability requirement and can be used in conducting the research.

**Table 5: Recapitulation of the Research Instrument Reliability Test Results**

No.	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
1	Electronic word of mouth ( $X_1$ )	0,777	Reliable
2	Brand image ( $Y_1$ )	0,837	Reliable
3	Purchase intention ( $Y_2$ )	0,787	Reliable

Source : Data Computation Results, 2018

All of the research instruments have fulfilled the validity requirements and afterwards the reliability is described using the mean value. The descriptive analysis is conducted to determine the characteristic and response of the respondents toward each question. The eWOM variable in this research is the independent variable which is measured using 6 questions related to eWOM regarding Toyota Avanza cars. In detail, the research results regarding respondent's perception of the eWOM variable is displayed in Table 6.

**Table 6: Description of Respondent's Answers Regarding the Electronic Word of Mouth Variable**

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondent's Answers					Mean	Criteria
		STS	TS	N	S	SS		
1	I frequently read online reviews about Toyota Avanza from other customers to find out people's impression regarding that product..	-	6	15	48	31	4,04	Strong
2	I often read online comments from other customers to ensure that I will buy the right car.	-	5	8	54	33	4,15	Strong
3	I frequently consult other consumers through online media about Toyota cars to help me choose the right product or brand.	-	6	13	61	20	3,95	Strong
4	I frequently collect information from consumer comments regarding the Toyota Avanza car through online media before I make a purchase.	1	5	10	51	33	4,10	Strong

Source : Data Computation Results, 2018

**Table 6: Description of Respondent's Answers Regarding the Electronic Word of Mouth Variable (Continuation)**

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondent's Answers					Mean	Criteria
		STS	TS	N	S	SS		
5	If I don't read the online comments from consumers when I want to buy a car, I'm worried that I will make the wrong decision.	-	5	19	48	28	3,99	Strong
6	When I want to buy a car, the online comments from consumers make me more confident in deciding to purchase Toyota Avanza.	-	3	17	49	31	4,08	Strong
<b>Overall average of the Electronic word of mouth variable</b>							4,05	Strong

Tinggi

Source : Data computation results, 2018

The descriptive analysis results displayed in Table 6 reveals that the average score of the eWOM variable is 4,05. This means that the eWOM regarding the Toyota Avanza car strongly influences consumers that will purchase a Toyota Avanza car. The average value is attained from indicators that have greater and lower values than the eWOM variable average. The data shows that from the six indicators used to measure the eWOM variable, there are three indicators with an average above the eWOM variable's mean value (4,05).

eWOM regarding Toyota Avanza car is strongly formed among consumers. This is because respondents frequently read online comments from other consumers to ascertain that they purchase the right car. Additionally, respondents frequently collect information regarding Toyota Avanza from online comments, before making a purchase, and when the respondent is about to purchase the car, online comments from other consumers make the respondent more confident in deciding to purchase the Toyota Avanza car.

The lowest average value of the eWOM variable is attained from the statement "I frequently consult other consumers regarding Toyota cars through online media to help me in choosing the right product or brand". This shows that not all respondents that have the intention to purchase Toyota Avanza will consult other consumers to help them in making the right decision. Thus, in the attempt to strengthen eWOM, the marketing team of Toyota Avanza cars should make a consultation program regarding Toyota cars by using attractive and user-friendly features. This will create customer value which will eventually strengthen the brand's eWOM.

The brand image variable in this research is a mediator variable which is measured using three questions related to the brand image of Toyota Avanza cars. In detail, the research results regarding respondent's perception of the brand image variable is displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7. Description of Respondent's Answers Regarding the Brand Image Variable**

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondent's Answers					Mean	Criteria
		STS	TS	N	S	SS		
1	The Toyota car brand has a higher quality compared with other car brands.	-	8	15	59	18	3,87	Good
2	Toyota car brand has a good track record.	-	6	22	49	23	3,89	Good
3	Consumers can easily predict a reliable performance from the Toyota car brand.	-	7	7	52	34	4,13	Good
<b>Overall average of the brand image variable</b>							3,96	Good

Tinggi

Source : Data computation results, 2018

The descriptive analysis results displayed in Table 7 shows that the average score of the brand image variable is 3,96. This means that the brand image of Toyota Avanza cars are firmly attached to the mind of the consumers. The average score is followed by some indicators that are higher and lower than the average brand image variable. The data show that among the three indicators used to measure the brand image variable, there is 1 indicator which has a value above the average value (3,96) of the brand image variable.

The brand image of Toyota Avanza cars are firmly attached to the minds of the consumers. According to the respondents, this is because the cars produced by Toyota have a good brand image, and the information attained from other consumers through online media makes consumers able to easily predict the reliable performance of the Toyota car products. Based on the interview results of several respondents, the statements attained were that Toyota Avanza cars have a strong and reliable machine performance, the price is also affordable for middle class people.

The lowest mean value in the brand image variable is from the statement, "Toyota car brand has a higher quality compared with other car brands". This shows that respondents still think that there are other car brands with a higher quality compared with Toyota Avanza. Thus, in the attempt to improve the perception of consumers regarding the brand image, the marketing team of Toyota Avanza cars must be able to maintain the well-formed brand image, and improve it by conducting promotional activities or making advertisements that will always be remembered by consumers when they want to purchase a car, and increase the car quality so that it is in line with the needs of consumers.

The purchase intention variable in this research is a dependent variable which is measured using 3 questions that are related to the purchase intention of Toyota Avanza cars. In detail, the research results regarding respondent's perception of the purchase intention variable is displayed in Table 8. The descriptive analysis results displayed in Table 8 shows that the average score of the purchase intention variable is 3,87, which means that overall, respondents in this research have a high intention to purchase a Toyota Avanza car. The average value is followed by indicators that have higher and lower mean value compared with the average of the purchase intention variable. The data shows that among the 3 indicators used to measure the purchase intention variable, there is 1 indicator with a value above the average of the purchase intention variable (3,87).

**Table 8: Description of Respondent's Answers Regarding the Purchase Intention Variable**

No	Statement	Proportion of Respondent's Answers					Mean	Criteria
		STS	TS	N	S	SS		
1	I'm interested in buying a Toyota Avanza car instead of other car brands.	-	6	17	62	15	3,86	High
2	I want to test drive the Toyota Avanza car before purchasing it.	-	7	22	58	13	3,77	High
3	I intend to buy a Toyota Avanza car in the future.	-	8	12	55	25	3,97	High
<b>Overall average of the purchase intention variable</b>							3,87	High

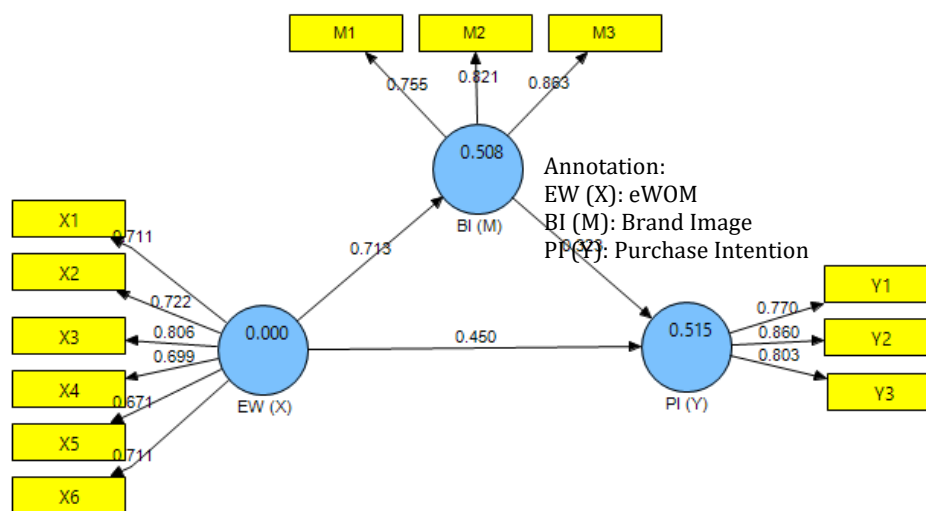
Tinggi

Source : Data computation results, 2018

Consumers in this research have a high intention to purchase a Toyota Avanza car. This is because the respondents intend to purchase a Toyota Avanza car in the future. Based on the interview results of several respondents, the high intention of consumers to buy a Toyota Avanza car is due to the readily-available Toyota spare part and the prices are quite affordable, which make many people like Toyota Brand cars, may it be as their travel companion or as a family car that is comfortable, strong, and fuel-efficient.

The lowest average score of the purchase intention variable is from the statement of, “I want to test drive the Toyota Avanza car before I purchase it”. This shows that not all of the respondents in this research want to conduct a test drive on the Toyota Avanza car, before making a purchase. Based on the interview results of several respondents, the reason they do not want to perform a test drive is because they are afraid that there will be an additional fee for it and respondents do not want to make a purchase immediately. Thus, in the process of increasing purchase intention, it is advisable for the marketing or sales team of Toyota Avanza cars to provide a free test drive opportunity to consumers that intend to buy it, may it in the form of a test drive performed at the customer’s home area or a test drive at the car sale location, in order to increase the purchase intention of consumers.

This research utilize the partial least square (PLS) analysis approach to examine and analyze the research hypotheses. The analysis results of the empirical model utilizing the partial least square (PLS) analysis tool in this research can be seen in Picture 2.



**Picture 2: Empirical Model of the Research**

In Table 9, it is shown that eWOM has a direct influence on purchase intention with a coefficient of 0,450, eWOM has a direct influence on brand image with a coefficient of 0,713, and brand image has a direct influence on purchase intention with a coefficient of 0,323.

**Table 9: Path Coefficients**

Path Coefficient Between Variables	Path Coefficient	t Statistics	Description
eWOM (X)→Purchase Intention (Y)	0,450	3,958	Significant
eWOM (X)→Brand Image (M)	0,713	11,528	Significant
Brand Image(M)→ Purchase Intention (Y)	0,323	2,808	Significant

Source: Data Computation Results, 2018

Table 9 shows that the hypothesis test regarding the influence of eWOM on purchase intention produces a path coefficient value of 0,450. The t Statistics value is 3,958 ( $> t$  critical 1,96), thus the influence of eWOM on purchase intention is significant. Based on this results, the hypothesis test ( $H_1$ ) which states that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention is accepted.

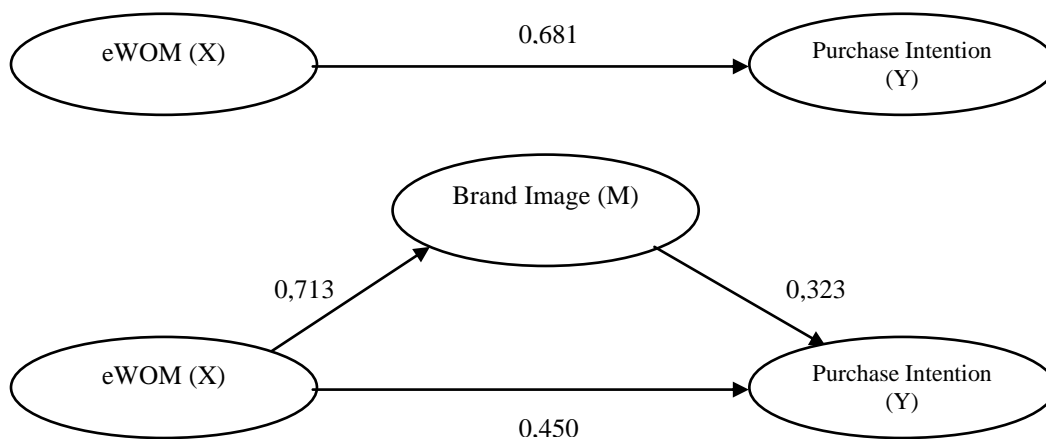
The hypothesis test regarding the influence of eWOM on brand image produces a path coefficient value of 0,713. The t Statistics value is 11,528 (> t critical 1,96), thus the influence of eWOM on brand image is significant. Based on this result, hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>) which states that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on brand image is accepted.

The test results regarding the influence of brand image on purchase intention produces a path coefficient value of 0,323. The t Statistics value is 2,808 (> t critical 1,96), thus the influence of brand image on purchase intention is significant. Based on this results, hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>) which states that brand image has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention is accepted.

The mediation test result using the VAF method has fulfilled several requirements as follows. First, the direct influence (a) of the eWOM variable (x) on purchase intention (Y), without involving brand image as the mediating variable (M), is found to be significant. Second, after including the brand image variable (M) in to the model, the indirect influence (b x c) is found to be significant. Path b and c are also significant. Third, the Variance Accounted For (VAF) is calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{VAF} &= (0,713 \times 0,323) / (0,681 + 0,713 \times 0,323) \\ &= 0,230 / 0,911 \\ &= 0,252 \text{ or } 25,2 \text{ percent} \end{aligned}$$

Since the VAF value (33,1 percent) is within the range between 20 percent and 80 percent, it can be categorized as a partial mediation. More details can be seen in Picture 3.



Picture 3: The Test Model of the Mediation of Brand Image in the Influence of eWOM on Purchase Intention

#### The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention:

eWOM is a positive or negative statement made by potential customers, actual customers, and previous customers regarding a product or company through the internet (Thurau et al., 2004). Based on the hypothesis test results, eWOM was found to have a positive influence on purchase intention. This means that H<sub>1</sub> is accepted. This research result is supported by Ghadafi's (2015) research which revealed that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. The research explains that word of mouth communication through electronic media is able to increase the purchase intention of consumers. Similar research results were attained by Wibowo (2015), Rizqia (2015), and Putri (2015) who found that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention variable, may it be simultaneously or even partially. This research result explains that the increase in eWOM culture among consumers is capable of increasing their intention to purchase certain products. Likewise, the decrease in eWOM will reduce the intention of consumers to purchase certain products.

#### The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Image:

eWOM is a venue or place that is very important for consumers in sharing their opinion and is deemed as more effective compared with the traditional WOM because of its broader level of accessibility and reach compared with the traditional WOM using offline media (Tommi, 2014). The test results reveal a positive influence from the electronic word of mouth variable on brand image. This means that H<sub>2</sub> is accepted. The test result is in line with the research conducted by Kazmi

(2016) which revealed that electronic word of mouth has a positive and significant influence on brand image. The research explains that the electronic word of mouth behavior of consumers is able to increase the brand image of a product. Similar results were attained by Syafaruddin et al. (2016) and Semuel (2014) in which eWOM was found to have a significant influence on brand image. This means that the quality of eWOM has a positive influence on brand image.

Based on the results, the implications are that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on the brand image of the Toyota Avanza car. eWOM, which is comprised of the indicators “consumers frequently read reviews about Toyota Avanza cars, consult regarding Toyota Avanza cars, collect information and read positive comments regarding Toyota Avanza cars from other consumers through online medias”, is able to improve the brand image of the Toyota Avanza car perceived by the consumers. The more positive the eWOM of consumers regarding the Toyota Avanza Car, the stronger Toyota Avanza cars’ brand image will be.

#### **The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intention:**

Brand image is a representation of all the perception regarding a brand and is formed by the information and experience of the brand in the past. Brand image is related to the attitude of believing and preferring a certain brand. Consumers that have a positive image regarding a brand will most likely decide to purchase the product (Setiadi, 2003:180). Based on the hypothesis test results, brand image is found to have a positive influence on purchase intention, which means that  $H_3$  is accepted. This research result is supported by Omer et al.’s (2014) research which revealed that there is a positive influence by brand image on purchase intention. Companies that are able to create a good brand image in the minds of consumers have the strength to compete with other companies because their products are still demanded by customers. With this, brand image has a positive influence on the purchase intention of consumers.

Similar studies were conducted by Gozali (2012) and Ruslim (2012) which revealed that brand image has a significant influence on purchase intention. Based on this result, the implication is that brand image has a positive and significant influence on the intention to purchase Toyota Avanza cars. The brand image is formed because Toyota cars have a higher quality compared with other car brands, have a good reputation, and the factor in which consumers are easily able to predict the reliable performance of the Toyota car product. This is proven to be able to improve the brand image of Toyota Avanza cars, which will increase the intention of consumers to purchase the product. This means that by having a good brand image, consumers will have a greater purchase intention.

#### **The Role of Brand Image in Mediating the Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention is when consumers decide to purchase a brand among several alternatives available. Purchase intention emerges after a chain of processes, namely realization of the needs, searching information, evaluating information, and eventually the emergence of the intention to purchase (Kotler and Keller, 2012:109). Based on the hypothesis test results, the eWOM variable was found to have a positive influence on purchase intention through the brand image variable, which means that  $H_4$  is accepted. This test results is supported by the research conducted by Ghadafi (2015) which revealed that eWOM has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention mediated by brand image. This research is also in line with the research conducted by Gozali (2012) and Rizky (2015) which state that the eWOM variable has a significant indirect influence on purchase intention through brand image. Thus, companies that have formed positive eWOM and a good brand image will be able to increase the intention of consumers to purchase their products. Brand image positively and significantly mediates the influence of eWOM on the intention to purchase Toyota Avanza cars. This shows that the eWOM that has already been formed among the people is able to directly and indirectly increase purchase intention through the brand image of the product.

### **4. RESEARCH IMPLICATION**

The implication of this research is regarding the relationship between the research findings and the policies implemented in the companies that are attempting to improve their product marketing, specifically car producers such as Toyota Astra Motor (TAM).

The implications of this research emphasizes on the real benefit of the research results in providing additional references to confirm the role of brand image in mediating the influence of eWOM on the purchase intention for Toyota Avanza car brand. The theoretical implication of this research is that an increased eWOM culture is proven to have a positive influence on brand image which also has an impact on the purchase intention for the Toyota Avanza car brand. This finding contributes the development of knowledge and it can also be used in future studies. The practical implication of this research is expected to be considered by car producers, specifically Toyota Astra Motor, as a marketing material in the increasingly tight competition due to competitor’s competitive products.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research analysis results and the discussion of results, some conclusions can be made, first; eWOM has a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention for Toyota Avanza cars. This shows that with a more positive eWOM from consumers, there will be a higher intention to purchase the products. Second, eWOM has a positive and significant influence on the brand image of the Toyota Avanza car. This shows that with a positive eWOM among consumers, there will be a better brand image formed in the minds of the consumers. Third, brand image has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention for Toyota Avanza cars. This shows that with a better Toyota Avanza car brand image formed in the minds of consumers, the purchase intention of consumers will also be greater. Fourth, brand image is positively and significantly able to mediate the influence of eWOM on purchase intention for Toyota Avanza cars. This shows that positive eWOM and a good brand image is able to increase the purchase intention of consumers for a certain product.

Based on the research analysis results, along with the discussions and conclusions, several recommendations can be offered as materials to be considered in determining the policies related to the purchase intention of Toyota Avanza cars in the future. First, in the attempt to strengthen the electronic word of mouth, the marketing team of Toyota Avanza cars should make an online consultation program related to Toyota cars using interesting and user-friendly features, in order to create value for the customers which will eventually strengthen the eWOM. Second, in the attempt to improve the brand image in the minds of consumers, the marketing team of the Toyota Avanza car should maintain the brand image that is already good, and improve it by conducting promotions or making advertisements which is easily remembered by consumers that want to purchase a car, and increase the quality of the car so that it is in line with the consumer's needs.

Third, in the attempt to increase purchase intention, the marketing or sales team of Toyota Avanza car should provide a free test drive opportunity to consumers who have the intention to buy it, may it be a home delivered test drive or a test drive at the car sales location. This is in order to increase the purchase intention of consumers.

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