



The Influence of Lee Min Ho as Brand Ambassador, Brand Image, and Price on Azarine Purchase Decisions with E-WOM Moderation

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines the influence of brand ambassador (Lee Min Ho), brand image, and price on purchase decisions for Azarine Cosmetic products, with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as a moderating variable. It addresses the limited evidence on the combined effects of these variables in the context of local cosmetic brands using global celebrity endorsements.

Methodology – A quantitative approach was employed using purposive sampling with 200 Azarine users familiar with Lee Min Ho's endorsement. Data were collected through online questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. Reliability and validity were confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, AVE, and discriminant validity.

Findings – Brand ambassador significantly influenced e-WOM but had no direct effect on purchase decisions. In contrast, brand image and price significantly affected both e-WOM and purchase decisions. e-WOM also had a significant positive effect on purchase decisions. Furthermore, e-WOM strengthened the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase decisions but did not significantly moderate the effects of brand image and price.

Originality – This study proposes an integrated model demonstrating how celebrity endorsement, brand image, price, and e-WOM jointly influence consumer purchase decisions, extending marketing and consumer behavior literature in the context of Indonesian local cosmetic brands.

1. Introduction

The engagement of South Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors in marketing strategies has become a global phenomenon that attracts both local and international brands. The wave of Korean popular culture (*Hallyu*), encompassing music, drama and lifestyle, has profoundly shaped consumer preferences, particularly among younger generations. A notable example is the Indonesian skincare brand Azarine Cosmetic, which capitalizes on this trend by appointing South Korean actor Lee Min Ho as its brand ambassador. This strategy constitutes an innovating approach to strengthening brand image and engaging millennial and Gen Z consumers, who exhibit strong emotional attachment to K-pop and K-drama figures (Halim & Kiatkawsin, 2021). The

engagement of international celebrities, -such as Lee Min Ho functions not only as a promotional tool, but also as a symbol of aesthetic value and consumer confidence in product quality. According to the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, brand ambassadors act as stimuli that influence consumer perceptions (organism) and ultimately drive purchasing responses (Naghash et al., 2022). This perspective is further supported by Social Influence Theory, which explains that individuals' attitudes and behaviours can be shaped through compliance, identification, and internalization processes. In digital marketing contexts, influential public figures play an important role in shaping consumer responses. (Hazari et al., 2024) found that user engagement and purchase likelihood significantly enhance the impact of brand influencers, indicating that consumers are more likely to respond positively when they actively interact with influencer-generated content. Similarly, (Davlembayeva et al., 2025) demonstrated that characteristics such as credibility, competence, empathy, and interactivity strengthen the persuasive power of influencers and contribute to higher purchase intentions. These findings suggest that influential public figures can affect consumer decision-making not only through their visibility and popularity but also through their ability to establish meaningful social influence and engagement with consumers. Featuring a Korean celebrity as the face of a local brand enhances Indonesian consumers loyalty and pride, while perceptions of the product's country of origin further reinforce the positive outcomes of this strategy (Nilasari & Handayani, 2021; Widayat et al., 2023). Moreover, the characteristics of a brand ambassador, such as credibility, attractiveness and brand fit are crucial in to foster brand trust, which subsequently affects purchase decisions (Nurhasanah et al., 2021; Utami et al., 2020).

Previous research also indicates that brand ambassadors significantly influence brand image and purchase behavior, thereby strengthening the connection between marketing communication and consumer decision making (Sari et al. 2021). In addition, a strong brand image fosters consumer trust and in digital contexts, brand awareness has been shown to positively correlate with purchase decisions on e-commerce platforms (Khairunnisa et al., 2020). Brand image plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' perception and influencing their purchasing behavior. It reflects consumers overall impressions, associations and emotional responses toward a brand formed through communication, positioning and product experience. In the highly competitive cosmetic industry where identity and trust are essential, a strong and consistent brand image differentiates products and enhances consumer loyalty. Prior studies have demonstrated that brand image significantly influences purchasing behavior, particularly in digital environments where consumers rely heavily on brand reputation and visual cues (Khairunnisa et al., 2020; Liyono, 2022). However, while brand image is often examined independently, few studies have explored its interaction with other variables, such as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) or celebrity endorsement in shaping consumers' decision making.

Price also serves as an important determinant of purchase decisions. It is frequently perceived as an indicator of product quality, particularly for fast moving consumer goods, such as cosmetics products. Price remains one of the primary considerations for consumers, alongside innovations and promotions (Rahmawati et al. 2022). Prior research emphasizes that product appeal and price have a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, which in turn enhances purchase decisions. This finding underscores the importance of effective visual strategies and appropriate pricing in improving the overall consumer experience (Ferdiana et al. 2022; Nugroho and Muslikh 2023).

In the context of modern consumption dynamics, psychological motivations such as lifestyle, desires and the pursuit of self-confidence often take precedence over purely functional needs. Consumption has increasingly become a means of expressing personal identity and social status

(Ayunda et al. 2018). This trend is reflected in digital consumer behavior, which is strongly influenced by social interactions and online communication. Among the influences, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has emerged as a critical determinant of consumers' perception and purchase behavior. Such behavior can be explained through the Social Influence Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), both of which emphasize the roles of social interaction and individual perceptions in shaping attitudes and behavioral intentions. Built upon these theoretical foundations, recent studies have highlighted how social norms and digital interaction jointly influence consumers' decision-making. (Jia et al., 2023) demonstrate that social influence operates through both motivational and cognitive pathways, where individuals internalize collective values and conform to socially accepted consumption behaviors. In digital environments, these mechanisms become even more pronounced, as online platforms amplify social validation and peer influence. Social norms not only shape consumers' perceptions of what is appropriate or desirable but also guide their emotional attachment and moral justification for specific brands or products. It aligns with the premise of the Social Influence Theory, which emphasizes that behavior is often a reflection of perceived social approval and conformity within one's reference group. Complementarily, research based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) underscores the role of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in shaping consumers' behavioral intentions toward digital platforms and online information (Liao et al., 2022). Within this framework, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) serves as a key technological and social conduit through which consumers evaluate product credibility and make purchase decisions. The perceived reliability and accessibility of online reviews enhance consumers' trust, facilitating the acceptance of marketing messages and increasing purchase intentions. When combined, Social Influence Theory and TAM provide a holistic explanation for digital consumer behavior, suggesting that consumer decisions are driven not only by rational evaluations of brand image and price, but also by social validation through e-WOM interactions and influencer's credibility. Thus, these frameworks collectively explain how digital social contexts and technological acceptance converge to shape purchasing decisions in contemporary markets such as Indonesia's cosmetic industry.

Electronic word of mouth represents a concrete integration of these theories. It encompasses informal communication among consumers through digital platforms to share experiences, opinions and recommendations. Social media and online communities amplify this influence, especially in the cosmetics industry, where credibility and peer validation play essential roles (Febrianti & Ahmadi, 2024; Slamet et al., 2019). Empirical studies indicate that e-WOM shapes perceptions of product quality and brand credibility, directly influencing purchase behavior. From the Social Influence perspective, positive peer reviews reinforce social norms that encourage purchasing behavior, while based on the TAM perspective, the accessibility and perceived usefulness of digital information strengthen consumers' trust. Therefore, e-WOM function not only as an information source, but also as a social and psychological mechanism that reinforces relationship among key marketing variables, i.e., brand ambassador, brand image, price and purchase decisions. Accordingly, this study posits e-WOM as a moderating variable that potentially amplifies the effects of these marketing factors on consumers' purchase decisions for Azarine products.

Although numerous studies have examined the influence of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior, most of them are focused on global brands or treated electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) as an outcome rather than a moderating mechanism. For example, Hoang and Tung (2023) demonstrated that e-WOM quantity and credibility significantly influence online purchase intention through the mediating role of brand image. However, their study primarily focused on

the internal relationship between e-WOM and brand perceptions without considering external marketing stimuli such as celebrity endorsement or pricing factors. Furthermore, while Davlembayeva et al. (2025) explored how influencers determine influence acceptance through Social Influence Theory (compliance, identification, and internalization), their research focused specifically on virtual influencers and did not investigate how digital peer communication (e-WOM) acts as a moderating mechanism that modifies the influence of human celebrity endorsers. Theoretically, the relationship between brand ambassadors and purchase decisions in local brand contexts remains underexplored, particularly when a global celebrity is employed to promote a domestic product. Previous research has primarily analyzed the direct effects of celebrity credibility or attractiveness on purchase intention, overlooking how digital peer communication can modify this influence. Moreover, the moderating function of e-WOM has received limited empirical attention despite its growing relevance in shaping consumers' trust and reducing perceived risk in online environments. This gap is particularly salient in emerging markets, such as Indonesia, where the involvement of Korean celebrities' as endorsers for local brands intersects with highly active digital communities. Therefore, examining how e-WOM moderates the impact of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions provides both theoretical and contextual novelty by integrating social influence and digital trust within the framework of celebrity endorsement.

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it extends the theoretical understanding of celebrity endorsement by integrating Social Influence Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explain how digital trust and peer communication influence consumers' decision-making. Unlike (Davlembayeva et al., 2025), who focused on the internal psychological processes of virtual influencer acceptance, this study conceptualizes how these social influences are moderated by external digital interactions in a human-led endorsement context. Second, unlike previous research such as (Hoang & Tung, 2023) that treats e-WOM merely as a precursor or mediator, this study conceptualizes e-WOM as a moderating variable that amplifies or attenuates the relationships among brand ambassador, brand image, product price, and purchase decisions. Third, it offers contextual novelty by investigating the phenomenon of a global celebrity endorsing a local brand, a topic that remains underexplored in the context of emerging markets like Indonesia. Finally, this study provides practical implications for marketers by highlighting how digital engagement and cross-cultural endorsements can enhance consumers' trust and brand competitiveness in the beauty industry. Through this integrated model, the research contributes new insights into the intersection of global influence, local identity, and digital consumer behavior.

1.1. Brand Ambassador and Electronic Word of Mouth

Previous research has shown that brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). This is demonstrated by the results of statistical tests conducted by (Anandyara & Samiono, 2022), which show that popular, credible, and visually attractive brand ambassadors are able to encourage consumers to voluntarily provide reviews and ratings on digital platforms. Therefore, selecting the right brand ambassador can strengthen the spread of positive e-WOM for the products or services they represent.

H₁: Brand ambassadors are positively and significantly associated with electronic word of mouth

1.2. Brand Image and Electronic Word of Mouth

Brand image is an important factor in shaping electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) by influencing how consumers view and communicate about a brand (Adriana & Widodo, 2019). A

strong and positive brand image encourages consumers to voluntarily share their experiences and recommendations on social media, thereby increasing brand visibility and credibility. In the context of digital marketing where consumer engagement and peer influence are critical, a positive brand image acts as a catalyst for meaningful and persuasive e-WOM interactions. This relationship is particularly relevant as businesses seek to leverage consumer-generated content to build trust and expand their market reach. Empirical evidence consistently supports the view that brand image contributes to the formation of valuable e-WOM as a strategic asset in a competitive digital environment.

H₂: Brand image is positively and significantly associated with electronic word of mouth

1.3. Price and Electronic Word of Mouth

Price is considered one of the primary factors influencing consumers' behavior, not only in purchasing decisions but also in the tendency to share experiences through digital platforms. A study conducted by (Aprianti & Avianti, 2023) found that prices perceived as competitive and reasonable by consumers had a positive effect on purchase decisions. In practice, a positive perception of price often encourages consumers to voluntarily share their reviews, recommendations or testimonials on digital platforms. It indicates a potential relationship between price perception and consumers tendency to engage in electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

H₃: Price is positively and significantly associated with electronic word of mouth

1.4. Electronic Word of Mouth and Purchase Decision

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) holds a significant influence on purchase decisions by amplifying consumers' opinions and experiences through digital platforms. (Nurhasanah et al. 2021; Ramadhan et al. 2023) found that positive reviews and consumers' recommendations played a crucial role in driving purchasing behavior. Similarly, (Nursavira & Nurainun, 2022; Slamet & Albab, 2023) emphasized that aspects of e-WOM, such as content quality and opinion valence, contributed meaningfully to increasing consumers intention to purchase although not all dimensions had shown significant effects. In contrast, (Siagian et al. 2024) reported that the influence of e-WOM on purchase decisions was not statistically significant, suggesting that its impact might vary depending on contextual factors. These findings underline the role of e-WOM as a persuasive mechanism that can shape consumers attitudes and influence purchasing behavior across various platforms.

H₄: Electronic word of mouth is positively and significantly associated with purchase decision

1.5. Brand Ambassador and Purchase Decision

Brand ambassador holds a significant influence on purchase decisions by enhancing brand appeal and consumer trust through credible representation. (Rahmawati et al., 2022) found that the strategic selection of celebrities as brand ambassadors by e-commerce platforms such as Shopee can significantly strengthened promotional effectiveness, ultimately leading to increased consumers' purchase decisions. Similarly, (Nurhasanah et al. 2021; Yusuf et al. 2022) highlighted that the credibility and popularity of a brand ambassador, such as the K-pop group NCT Dream in Lemonilo's marketing campaign amplified consumers' attraction, particularly amidst the widespread influence of the Korean Wave in Indonesia. These findings indicate that a well-chosen brand ambassador can serve as a powerful marketing asset in shaping consumer behavior and purchase intent.

H₅: Brand ambassadors are positively and significantly associated with purchase decision

1.6. Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Brand image holds a significant influence on purchase decisions by shaping consumers perception and trust in a product. (Darmansah & Yosepha, 2020) found that brand image played a vital role in encouraging consumers' purchase decisions in the context of Shopee food services. Similarly, (Siagian et al., 2024) emphasized that consumers tended to trust and select products with a well-established brand image. Supporting this perspective, (Liyono, 2022) demonstrated that a strong and positive brand image significantly enhanced purchase decisions, particularly for Crystalline gallon water products. These findings collectively highlight how brand image contributes to building consumer confidence and shaping favorable purchasing behavior.

H6: Brand image is positively and significantly associated with purchase decision

1.7. Price and Purchase Decision

Price exhibits a significant influence on consumer purchase decisions, as consistently demonstrated in previous research. (Nugroho & Muslikh, 2023; Yuvira et al., 2021) identified price as a key determinant that impacted both consumer satisfaction and purchase decision-making. Similarly, findings from (Ramadhan et al., 2023; Siagian et al., 2024) suggested that price, alongside other influencing variables, played a motivating role in encouraging consumers to make purchasing decisions. Although (Alyani, 2025) reported that price did not exert a significant partial effect in the context of fashion products on TikTokShop, (Natasha & Subakti, 2021) emphasize that when price aligned with consumers purchasing power, it could significantly enhance purchase decisions. These findings collectively underscore the critical role of perceived price fairness in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in competitive and price-sensitive markets.

H7: Price is positively and significantly associated with purchase decision

1.8. Moderating Role of Electronic Word of Mouth

The influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions may be strengthened by consumer-to-consumer communication factors, particularly electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Previous studies have shown that e-WOM plays a supporting role in the relationship between celebrity endorsers and consumer purchase intention, especially when there is positive shared information (Indriana et al., 2022; Utami et al., 2020). Supporting this view, (Marliya & Tafiprios, 2023) found that both brand ambassadors and e-WOM had a positive impact on purchase decisions, although the moderating effect of e-WOM was not explicitly tested. These findings suggest a potential interaction, where e-WOM may enhance or undermine the influence of brand ambassadors on purchase decisions, depending on the nature and intensity of consumer-generated communication.

H8: Electronic word of mouth moderates the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase decision, so that the effect is stronger under higher levels of electronic word of mouth.

1.9. Moderating Role of Electronic Word of Mouth

Brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase decisions, as positive brand perceptions tend to encourage consumers to engage in buying behavior (Darmansah & Yosepha, 2020). In digital environments where interactions between consumers and brands increasingly occur through online platforms, brand image has been found to enhance the impact of digital engagement on purchase intention (Masakazu et al., 2025). Despite this finding the study did not specifically address the moderating role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). In the context of

digital marketing, e-WOM serves as an essential component of online communication that shapes consumers' perception, strengthens brand image, and drives purchasing behavior (Ngo et al., 2024). The quality, credibility, and quantity of e-WOM information significantly determine how consumers adopt and use such information, influencing their purchase intentions particularly among generation Z consumers who are highly active on social media. The stronger the credibility and persuasiveness of online reviews, the greater their impact on consumer trust and brand evaluation (Ngo et al., 2024). Likewise, studies in Indonesia indicate that e-WOM is a key determinant in shaping consumer decision-making, with brand image and perceived quality serving as mediators between e-WOM and purchase intention (Hidayat et al., 2025; Natalia & Aprillia, 2025). Their findings reveal that the quantity, quality, and valence of e-WOM significantly enhance brand image, which subsequently increases the likelihood of purchase. Thus, e-WOM functions as a moderating mechanism that strengthens the influence of brand image on purchase decisions, especially when online reviews reflect positive consumer experiences.

H₉: Electronic word of mouth moderates the relationship between brand image and purchase decision, so that the effect is stronger under higher levels of electronic word of mouth.

Price and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase decisions. (Dwiputra, 2023) highlighted that both price and e-WOM had a significant influence on purchasing behavior, demonstrating that consumer evaluation of product value often depended not only on the actual price but also on peer communication in digital spaces. In the same vein, (Aprianti & Avianti, 2023) emphasized that price and e-WOM jointly shaped purchase decisions, particularly on digital platforms where consumer opinions and product assessments were transparent and easily accessed. Moreover, (Maulida et al. 2022) demonstrated that when consumers perceived a price as fair and reasonable, the presence of positive e-WOM further strengthened purchase intention. It suggests that e-WOM can function as a moderating factor that amplifies the effect of perceived price on purchasing behavior. Positive e-WOM enhances consumers' perception of price fairness and value, making them more willing to pay and less sensitive to price differences. Conversely, negative e-WOM can undermine the effect of an acceptable price by creating doubts about product quality or brand credibility. Taken together, these findings indicate that e-WOM and price are interrelated variables that not only influence purchase decisions individually but also interact dynamically within digital consumers' digital environments. The credibility and sentiment of online reviews can determine whether price perception leads to stronger or weaker purchase intentions, revealing the moderating role of e-WOM in the price–purchase decision relationship.

H₁₀ : Electronic word of mouth moderates the relationship between price and purchase decision so that the effect is stronger under higher levels of electronic word of mouth.

2. Research Methods

This study adopted a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire distributed to consumers in the Greater Jakarta area, which includes Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The area was selected because it represents Indonesia's largest and most digitally active urban market. Consumers in this region are early adopters of beauty and skincare products, highly engaged with social media, and exposed to both local and international marketing campaigns. These characteristics make the sample ideal for examining the moderating role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) in digital purchasing behavior. Moreover, as a hub for Indonesia's beauty industry and online consumer activities, Greater Jakarta is considered representative of the broader urban consumer segment in the country. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares

Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is particularly suitable for complex models involving multiple constructs and moderating relationships. PLS-SEM allows the simultaneous estimation of both measurement and structural models, making it effective for theory development and predictive analysis. In addition, PLS-SEM is robust with relatively small to medium sample sizes and does not assume multivariate normality, making it appropriate for behavioral and marketing studies (Hair et al., 2021). Given that this research examined both direct and moderating effects among brand ambassador, brand image, price, e-WOM, and purchase decisions, PLS-SEM provides a powerful analytical framework for comprehensive assessment of these relationships.

Since the data in this study were collected from a single questionnaire, potential bias arising from single-source responses was carefully considered. Several procedural measures were implemented to minimize such bias, including ensuring respondent anonymity, randomizing question items, and arranging the questionnaire so that items from different constructs were not presented consecutively. To statistically verify that collinearity did not threaten the validity of the model, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all latent constructs were examined. According to (Hair et al., 2021), VIF values below the threshold of 5 indicate the absence of serious multicollinearity issues. The results in this study confirmed that all constructs met this criterion, demonstrating that the model is free from collinearity problems and that the data were suitable for further analysis.

3. Results and Discussions

To provide an in-depth examination of the relationships among the study variables, this section presents the empirical findings on how brand ambassador, brand image and price affect Azarine purchase decisions with e-WOM as a moderating variable. The analysis begins with a presentation of respondent demographics, followed by an assessment of the measurement model to evaluate construct validity and reliability and continues with hypothesis testing through structural model analysis.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Respondent (n=200)	Percentage
Gender	Male	56	28%
	Female	144	72%
Educational background	Elementary to Senior High School	70	35%
	Diploma Level	36	18%
	Bachelor's Degree	34	37%
	Postgraduate Degree	20	10%
Salary (IDR)	< 2.000.000	46	23%
	2.000.000 - < 5.000.000	55	28%
	5.000.000 – 10.000.000	76	38%
	>10.000.000	23	11%
Occupation	Student	46	23%
	Government Employee	23	12%
	Private Sector Employee	77	39%
	Entrepreneur	25	13%
	Housewife	19	10%
	Others	10	5%
Age	18-24	56	28%
	25-34	102	51%
	35-44	36	18%
	45-54	6	3%

Source: processed data

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 200 respondents who participated in this study. The sample composition indicates that the majority of respondents were female, reflecting the typical demographic structure of skincare consumers in Indonesia. This distribution strengthens the sample representativeness since women are generally more involved in purchasing and evaluating cosmetic products. In terms of education, most of the respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher, suggesting that the participants possessed sufficient understanding and awareness to evaluate product quality and brand-related attributes. This aligns with the nature of skincare purchasing decisions, which often require consideration of brand image, ingredients, and perceived safety. The income distribution reveals that the majority of respondents earned between IDR 5 million and 10 million per month, which corresponds to middle-income consumers a group known for its active participation in digital purchasing platforms and engagement with online product reviews. This demographic characteristic is relevant to the study, as it implies that respondents were both capable and accustomed to engaging in electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) communication. The respondents's occupations were dominated by private-sector employees indicating a group with regular income and exposure to online marketing, while the significant proportion of students suggested that younger consumers also played a crucial role in shaping cosmetic purchasing trends. The age distribution showed that more than half of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years old, representing the millennial demographic segment that is highly responsive to digital marketing and celebrity endorsements, particularly from Korean figures. This finding supports the relevance of analyzing the moderating role of e-WOM and the influence of Lee Min Ho as a brand ambassador within the context of Azarine's target audience.

Table 2. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Construct	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
BA => e-WOM	1.233
BI => e-WOM	1.167
P => e-WOM	1.246
e-WOM => PD	3.304
BA => PD	1.292
BI => PD	2.276
P => PD	1.67
e-WOM x BA => PD	1.114
e-WOM x BI => PD	1.387
e-WOM x P => PD	1.115

Source: processed data

Table 2 presents the results of the collinearity diagnostics using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The VIF values for all constructs in the model ranged from 1.11 to 3.30, which are well below the recommended threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2021). These results indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity problem among the predictor constructs in either the direct or moderating relationships. The low VIF values for the paths between the independent variables (brand ambassador, brand image, and price) and the mediator (e-WOM), as well as for the moderating interactions (e-WOM × brand ambassador, e-WOM × brand image, and e-WOM × price), confirm that each construct measures a distinct conceptual domain. It suggests that the constructs are statistically independent and do not overlap in explaining the variance in the dependent variable (purchase decision). The results further demonstrate that the model is free from collinearity issues that might distort the estimation of path coefficients. Consequently, the model satisfies the

preliminary diagnostic criteria required for assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement model in subsequent analysis.

Table 3. Factor Loadings, Reliability and Validity Test

Construct	Item	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE				
Brand ambassador	BA1	0.717	0.903	0.917	0.613				
	BA2	0.786							
	BA3	0.823							
	BA5	0.783							
	BA6	0.903							
	BA8	0.737							
	BA9	0.715							
	Brand image	BI2				0.788	0.811	0.876	0.639
		BI3				0.727			
BI5		0.834							
BI6		0.843							
Price	P1	0.720	0.907	0.931	0.731				
	P2	0.809							
	P3	0.761							
	P4	0.865							
	P5	0.907							
	P6	0.788							
	P7	0.914							
	P8	0.866							
Electronic word of mouth	EWOM1	0.868	0.936	0.947	0.692				
	EWOM2	0.703							
	EWOM3	0.904							
	EWOM4	0.924							
	EWOM5	0.859							
Purchase decision	PD1	0.734	0.921	0.938	0.687				
	PD4	0.715							
	PD6	0.887							
	PD7	0.955							
	PD8	0.705							
	PD9	0.926							
	PD10	0.841							

Source: processed data

In this study, the reliability and validity of the constructs were confirmed through factor loading analysis, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). To ensure measurement accuracy, several items were excluded due to insufficient loading values. Specifically, items BA5, BA7 and BA10 from the brand ambassador construct were removed. Likewise, BI1 and BI4 from the brand image construct, as well as KP2, KP3 and KP5 from the purchase decision construct, were eliminated. The removal of these items enhanced the internal consistency and clarity of the construct.

Following these adjustments, the factor loadings for all retained indicators exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each item accurately represented its respective construct. For example, the factor loadings for the brand ambassador construct ranged from 0.715

to 0.903, brand image from 0.727 to 0.843, price from 0.720 to 0.914, electronic word of mouth from 0.703 to 0.924, and purchase decision from 0.705 to 0.955.

Additionally, Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs were above 0.70, indicating high internal consistency. The composite reliability values also exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, and AVE values surpassed 0.50, confirming satisfactory convergent validity. These findings demonstrated that the measurement model was both valid and reliable, with each construct being well represented by its corresponding indicators.

Table 1. Discriminant Validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
Brand ambassador	0.783				
Brand image	0.308	0.799			
Electronic word of mouth	0.389	0.730	0.855		
Price	0.390	0.323	0.497	0.832	
Purchase decisions	0.346	0.657	0.795	0.615	0.829

Source: processed data

Discriminant validity testing using the Fornell-Larcker criteria showed that the AVE values of each construct BA=0.783, BI=0.799, P=0.832, EWOM=0.855 and PD=0.892 were higher than the correlations between other constructs. This indicates that each construct had good discriminant validity and was able to distinguish itself from other constructs in the model. Therefore, all variables in this research had met the discriminant validity requirements.

After establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the analysis advanced to the structural model to assess the hypothesized relationships among the core constructs. Table 3 outlines the direct path analysis results, presenting the path coefficients, corresponding t-statistic and significance values for each hypothesized linkage. The central aim of this analysis was to explore how the presence of a Korean celebrity brand ambassador, brand image and pricing strategies influenced consumer purchase decisions. Additionally, the moderating role of electronic word of mouth was assessed to determine how online consumer communication might strengthen or weaken this direct relationship. This evidence contributes to a clearer understanding of the strength and patterns of the hypothesized construct, thereby offering a solid basis for evaluating the research hypotheses within the context of cosmetic marketing strategies.

3.1. Hypothesis Analysis

After confirming that the measurement model met reliability and validity criteria, the study proceeded to examine the structural relationship among Lee Min Ho as the brand ambassador, brand image, price on purchase decisions with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) serving as a moderating variable. Table 4 reports the results of the direct analysis, including path coefficients, t-values and significance levels for each hypothesized relationship. The analysis centered on assessing how Lee Min Ho, brand image, and price individually influence purchase decision and how e-WOM moderated those effects. These findings provide critical insight into the direction and strength of the proposed relationship, forming the empirical basis for testing the research hypotheses regarding both main and moderating effects.

The analysis results indicate that the first hypothesis (H_1), which examines the relationship between the brand ambassador and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), is supported. The t-statistic value of 2.475 exceeded the critical threshold of 1.96 and the p-value of $0.013 < 0.05$ confirm statistical significance. The original sample value of 0.098 indicated a positive

relationship. This suggests that the presence of credible and appealing brand ambassadors such as Korean actor Lee Min Ho, positively influenced consumer willingness to participate in electronic word of mouth. These findings indicate that brand ambassadors play a crucial role in driving consumer advocacy and digital brand engagement through trusted personal recommendations. The second hypothesis (H_2), which predicts that brand image has a significant effect on electronic word of mouth. The t-statistic of 14.733 is substantially above the threshold and the p-value of 0.000 indicates high statistical significance. The original sample value of 0.616 reflects a strong positive relationship. This result implies that a favorable brand image greatly enhances consumers likelihood to spread positive e-WOM. A consistent and appealing brand image fosters trust and emotional connection, leading consumers to become voluntary brand advocates in digital environments.

Table 5. Direct Effect Analysis

Path	Original sample (O)	T statistics ($ O/STDEV $)	P values
BA => e-WOM	0.098	2.475	0.013
BA => PD	-0.021	0.408	0.683
BI => e-WOM	0.616	14.733	0.000
BI => PD	0.214	4.231	0.000
e-WOM => PD	0.492	7.516	0.000
P => e-WOM	0.260	6.636	0.000
P => PD	0.306	5.204	0.000

Source: processed data

The analysis supports the third hypothesis (H_3), which proposes that price influences electronic word of mouth. The t-statistic value of 6.636 exceeds the critical threshold and the p-value of 0.000 signifies strong statistical significance. The original sample value of 0.260 indicates a positive and transparent pricing that contributes to positive online discussion. Consumers are more likely to share their favorable feedback when they perceive a product's value is worth its price. The results strongly support the fourth hypothesis (H_4), which posits a significant effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase decision. A t-statistic of 7.516 and p-values of 0.000 confirm statistical significance, while this original sample value of 0.492 denotes a strong positive effect. This suggests that electronic word of mouth plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the decision-making process. Online reviews, testimonials and peer recommendations exert substantial influence, enhancing brand trust and driving conversion.

The fifth hypothesis (H_5), which proposes a direct effect of brand ambassador on purchase decision, is not supported. The t-statistic value of 0.408 is far below the critical threshold and the p-value of $0.683 > 0.05$ confirm the absence of statistical significance. The original sample value of -0.021 indicates a negligible and negative relationship. This finding implies that although brand ambassadors may influence perceptions, their presence alone does not directly lead to consumers' purchasing decisions without the influence of other factors, such as e-WOM or brand image. The insignificant direct effect of Lee Min Ho as a brand ambassador on purchase decisions ($p = 0.683$) can be explained through the perspective of Social Influence Theory. (Davlembayeva et al., 2025) argue that consumer responses to influential figures occur through three influence acceptance processes: compliance, identification, and internalization. In the context of this study, Lee Min Ho may successfully create consumer identification due to his global popularity, aesthetic appeal, and positive public image. However, identification alone which is primarily based on the attractiveness and salience of the source is insufficient to directly generate purchase decisions; instead, research

suggests that a combination of all three processes is often required to trigger such behavior. This finding indicates that while consumers may admire and recognize the celebrity endorser, their purchasing decisions are ultimately driven by stronger cognitive and informational considerations related to the product itself. Therefore, the presence of a well-known brand ambassador may increase awareness and positive perceptions, but it does not automatically translate into purchasing behavior without additional supporting factors, such as Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), which plays a crucial role in providing the necessary social validation and strengthening consumer confidence.

The sixth hypothesis (H₆), which examines the effect of brand image on purchase decision is supported. Based on t-statistic value of 4.231 and p-value of 0.000 the results confirm statistical significance. This finding indicates that consumers who perceive a brand as reputable, trustworthy, and visually appealing are more inclined to proceed with a purchase decision, demonstrating the direct influence of brand perception on buying behavior. This result is highly consistent with recent research by (Wibowo & Santoso, 2024), which demonstrated that a strong and positive brand image serves as a vital reference for Indonesian consumers before making a purchase decision (T-statistic = 4.88). Their study, which focused on young consumers, emphasized that a reputable brand image differentiates products in a competitive market and builds the necessary trust to drive buying behavior. This alignment suggests that across different product categories whether skincare or packaged drinking water consumers prioritize brands that project reliability and a positive reputation, reinforcing the importance of brand image as a direct determinant of purchasing responses in emerging markets. The seventh hypothesis (H₇), regarding the effect of price on purchase decision, is also supported. A t-statistic of 5.204 and a p-value of 0.000 validate the significance of this relationship. The original sample value of 0.306 indicates a moderately positive effect. This indicates that price is a critical determinant in consumers' decision-making process, reinforcing the importance of affordability and value perception in a competitive market. This finding is further enriched by the latest perspective from (Reiner et al., 2025), who argue that the informational role of price extends beyond a mere indicator of monetary sacrifice or product quality. According to (Reiner et al., 2025), price-related cues function as a risk signal that shapes consumers' uncertainty regarding a product's performance or 'functional' risk. In the context of Azarine, the significant impact of price suggests that consumers use pricing information as a primary informational cue to evaluate potential outcomes and minimize perceived risks. When consumers perceive the price as fair and aligned with the product's benefits, it reduces cognitive uncertainty, thereby facilitating a more confident and favorable purchase decision. Thus, these results emphasize that a strategic pricing approach is essential not only for market competitiveness but also for establishing trust through effective informational signaling in the digital beauty industry.

Table 6. Moderating Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth

Path	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
E-Wom x BI => PD	-0.017	0.429	0.668
E-Wom x P => PD	-0.073	1.882	0.060
E-Wom x BA => PD	0.096	2.108	0.035

Source: processed data

Based on the moderation analysis, the findings reveal varied roles of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) in influencing consumers' purchase decisions through different predictor variables. Specifically, e-WOM significantly moderates the relationship between Brand

ambassador and purchase decision (H_8) ($\beta = 0.096$; $t = 2.108$; $p = 0.035$),. Meanwhile, it does not significantly moderate the relationships between brand image (H_9) ($\beta = -0.017$; $t = 0.429$; $p = 0.668$) and price (H_{10}) ($\beta = -0.073$; $t = 1.882$; $p = 0.060$) with purchase decision.

The results of the moderating analysis reveal that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) significantly moderates the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase decision (H_8 : $\beta=0.096$, $p=0.035$), but does not moderate the relationships between brand image (H_9) or price (H_{10}) and purchase decision. This finding provides deeper theoretical insight into how social interaction and information acceptance shape consumers' behavior in digital contexts. Referring to Social Influence Theory, e-WOM amplifies the persuasive effect of brand ambassadors because it acts as a bridge between different levels of influence acceptance. While a credible brand ambassador like Lee Min Ho primarily facilitates identification where consumers adopt a behavior due to the attractiveness and salience of the source this process alone is often insufficient to trigger a purchase (Davlembayeva et al., 2025). The significant moderating role of e-WOM suggests that consumer-generated communication provides the social validation necessary to transform this identification into internalization (congruence with personal values) and compliance (social approval). When positive e-WOM aligns with Lee Min Ho's image, it enhances the perceived authenticity and usefulness of the message, reducing the perceived risk often associated with celebrity-led promotions. Consumers perceive the shared experiences of other users as more trustworthy than corporate messaging, thereby reaching the configuration of social influence identification, internalization, and compliance which is a core predictor of purchase intention (Davlembayeva et al., 2025). In contrast, the absence of significant moderating effects on brand image and price can be explained by the cognitive nature of these constructs. According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), perceptions of brand reputation and price fairness are rooted in consumers' prior experiences and perceived value, which are more stable, rational, and less dependent on external social validation. These cognitive evaluations are less susceptible to short-term fluctuations in online discussions compared to the affective influence of a celebrity figure. Overall, these results extend the understanding of e-WOM as a conditional social influence factor that specifically enhances behavioral constructs linked to credibility and trust, rather than stable cognitive constructs.

4. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that brand ambassador, brand image, and price exert different influences on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and purchase decisions. The findings indicate that Lee Min Ho as a brand ambassador significantly influences e-WOM but does not directly affect purchase decisions, suggesting that celebrity popularity alone is insufficient to trigger purchasing behavior. In contrast, brand image and price are proven to be significant determinants of purchase decisions, indicating that consumers rely more heavily on brand reputation and perceived price fairness when evaluating skincare products. Furthermore, e-WOM significantly strengthens the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase decisions, confirming its role as a social validation mechanism in digital environments, while e-WOM does not moderate the effects of brand image and price on purchase decisions, suggesting that these factors are relatively stable cognitive evaluations that are less dependent on online social interactions. This study contributes to the literature by integrating Social Influence Theory, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. The findings extend Social Influence Theory by demonstrating that celebrity endorsement alone is insufficient to influence purchase decisions directly and requires support from e-WOM to strengthen consumers' behavioral responses. Unlike previous studies that positioned e-WOM as a mediating variable, this

study confirms its role as a moderator that reinforces the influence of socially driven factors, particularly brand ambassadors, on purchase decisions. The findings suggest that cosmetic brands should not rely solely on celebrity endorsements to drive sales but should actively encourage positive e-WOM through customer reviews, testimonials, and social media engagement to strengthen the effectiveness of brand ambassadors. In addition, maintaining a strong brand image and implementing fair pricing strategies remain essential because these factors directly influence consumer purchase decisions and serve as stable decision-making anchors in digital markets. This study is limited to skincare products and respondents from the Greater Jakarta area, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to investigate other product categories, regions, and moderating variables such as perceived risk, perceived value, or consumer trust, while comparative studies involving human celebrities and virtual influencers may provide deeper insights into evolving social influence mechanisms in digital marketing.

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