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# Analysis of the Effect of Word of Mouth On Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Brand Image In The Moona Monroe Handicraft Business, Medan City

Khairina Nur Fitri<sup>1</sup>, Arlina Nurbaity Lubis<sup>2</sup>, Beby Karina Fawzee Sembiring<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master of Management Study Program, (Postgraduate School, Universitas Sumatra Utara, Medan)

<sup>2,3</sup> Department of Management, (Faculty of Economic Business, Universitas Sumatra Utara, Medan)

khairinafitrii@gmail.com, arlina@usu.ac.id, beby@usu.ac.id

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini meneliti pengaruh Word of Mouth (WOM) terhadap Minat Pembelian, dengan Citra Merek sebagai variabel mediasi. dalam konteks usaha kerajinan tangan Moona Monroe di Kota Medan. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penekanan terhadap usaha mikro, kecil, dan menengah (UMKM) kreatif, sebuah sektor di mana bukti empiris mengenai peran mediasi *Brand Image* dalam hubungan *WOM–Purchase Intention* masih terbatas, khususnya pada industri kerajinan tangan. Konteks ini penting karena Moona Monroe mengalami penurunan penjualan, dengan temuan awal yang menunjukkan lemahnya WOM dan citra merek yang kurang berkembang sehingga berkontribusi pada keraguan konsumen untuk melakukan pembelian. Dengan menggunakan desain kuantitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan respons survei dari 120 pengikut media sosial Moona Monroe. Dataset dianalisis melalui Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) menggunakan teknik Partial Least Squares (PLS) dengan SmartPLS 4.0. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Word of Mouth (WOM) secara positif dan signifikan memengaruhi Citra Merek serta Niat Beli. Selain itu, Citra Merek secara signifikan memengaruhi Niat Beli dan berfungsi sebagai konstruk mediasi yang menghubungkan WOM dengan Niat Beli. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada literatur dengan memperluas pemahaman mengenai perilaku konsumen pada UMKM kreatif serta menawarkan implikasi praktis, yang menekankan pentingnya bagi usaha kecil untuk memperkuat strategi WOM dan mengembangkan citra merek yang kredibel serta menarik guna meningkatkan niat beli konsumen.

**Kata Kunci:** WOM (*Word of Mouth*); Citra Merek; Niat Pembelian; Variabel Intervensi; Kerajinan Tangan.

## Abstract

*This study investigates the impact of Word of Mouth (WOM) on Purchase Intention, with Brand Image acting as an intervening variable, focusing on the Moona Monroe handicraft enterprise in Medan City. The uniqueness of this research lies in its focus on creative micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), a sector where empirical studies exploring the mediating influence of Brand Image on the WOM–Purchase Intention linkage remain scarce, particularly within the handicraft industry. This context is crucial as Moona Monroe has experienced declining sales, with preliminary findings indicating weak WOM and an underdeveloped brand image that contribute to consumers' hesitation to purchase. Employing a quantitative research design, data were gathered through surveys involving 120 respondents who follow Moona Monroe on social media platforms. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method via SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results reveal that Word of Mouth (WOM) exerts a positive and significant effect on both Brand Image and Purchase Intention. Moreover, Brand Image significantly influences Purchase Intention and mediates the relationship between WOM and Purchase Intention. This research enriches existing literature by deepening the understanding of consumer behavior dynamics and the mediating function of Brand Image within the creative MSME context, emphasizing the importance for small businesses to strengthen WOM strategies and develop a credible, attractive brand image to enhance consumer purchase intention.*

**Keywords:** WOM; Brand Image; Purchase Intention; Intervening Variable; Handicrafts.

## 1. Introduction

The creative industry has played a strategic role in driving economic growth in Indonesia, particularly within the micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) sector. One of the fastest-growing subsectors is the handicraft industry, which not only provides aesthetic and economic value but also reflects local culture and community creativity. In 2024, data from the Office of

Cooperatives and MSMEs show that Medan City has more than 14,000 active MSMEs, of which around 1,200 operate in the handicraft sector, particularly in accessories and bead-based products. These figures underscore the importance of the handicraft subsector, not only as part of the creative economy but also as a driver of community empowerment, particularly for women and younger generations.

The creative industry, particularly the handicrafts subsector, serves as a key driver in advancing the expansion of MSMEs across Indonesia. In Medan, beadwork businesses like Moona Monroe have thrived by leveraging social media and e-commerce for marketing. However, despite experiencing a sales increase in 2023, Moona Monroe is expected to face a 25% decline in 2024–2025. This situation is largely attributed to limited WOM, an underdeveloped brand image, and reduced consumer buying intention.

Pre-survey results indicate that many consumers remain hesitant to make a purchase and are not actively recommending the product. Nevertheless, favorable WOM combined with a strong brand image has been shown to substantially enhance purchase intention. In today's digital era, consumers tend to place greater trust in peer recommendations and online reviews than in formal advertising, highlighting WOM and brand image as essential determinants in consumer purchase decisions.

Various prior studies suggest that WOM has a significant impact on Purchase Intention, either directly or indirectly, with Brand Image functioning as a mediating factor. However, previous research suggests that the influence of brand image on purchase intention is not consistently significant across different contexts. Demante, A., & Dwiyanto, B. (2019). Furthermore, most previous studies were conducted in the food industry, services, or large corporations, rather than in the context of creative MSMEs like Moona Monroe. Indicates a critical research gap that requires further investigation.

## 2. Literature review

Purchase intention is a vital element of consumer behavior, representing one's inclination or willingness to acquire a product or service. In a marketing context, purchase intention is a key indicator that can predict future consumer behavior. According to Stevina (2015), as cited in Khodijah et al. (2024), Purchase intention denotes an individual's likelihood of choosing and buying a specific brand. This tendency can be evaluated through several indicators, including product preference, a strong desire to purchase, planned buying behavior, and confidence in the selected product. Blackwell et al. (2001) explain that Purchase Intention is an individual's perception or belief about the likelihood of purchasing a product in the future. Meanwhile, Andrew (2019), in Wibowo & Setyaningsih (2021), emphasizes that Purchase Intention reflects consumers' readiness to make a purchase, both in the short and long term.

WOM, or word-of-mouth communication, serves as an informal promotional tool in which consumers share their experiences with others, either in person, in writing, or through digital media. WOM has great power. After all, it is considered more credible than conventional advertising, because it comes from real and personal experiences. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), WOM is communication that occurs between individuals or groups regarding products they have used. Sernovitz (2009) emphasized that WOM can appear in the form of positive conversations where consumers tend to share information based on personal experiences. Salomon in Indra (2018) added that WOM is information about products that is passed between individuals as a form of informal communication that often occurs in everyday life.

Brand Image refers to the perception or associations developed in consumers' perceptions of a brand, shaped by personal experience, external information, or strategic brand communication. A solid brand image fosters distinctiveness and customer loyalty, making it a critical factor in purchase decision-making. Kotler and Keller (2019) define brand image as the way consumers perceive a brand, rooted in diverse associations stored in their memory. Grace & O'Cass (2005) emphasize that a strong brand image creates trust, stability, and differentiation. Rangkuti (2022) states that brand image is formed from the accumulation of perceptions that are firmly embedded in consumers' minds until they become top of mind when considering a product.

To provide a clearer understanding of how previous studies are connected to the present research, a conceptual framework is developed. The proposed framework demonstrates the direct and indirect associations among WOM, Brand Image, and Purchase Intention, highlighting the mediating function of Brand Image within the handicraft MSME context.

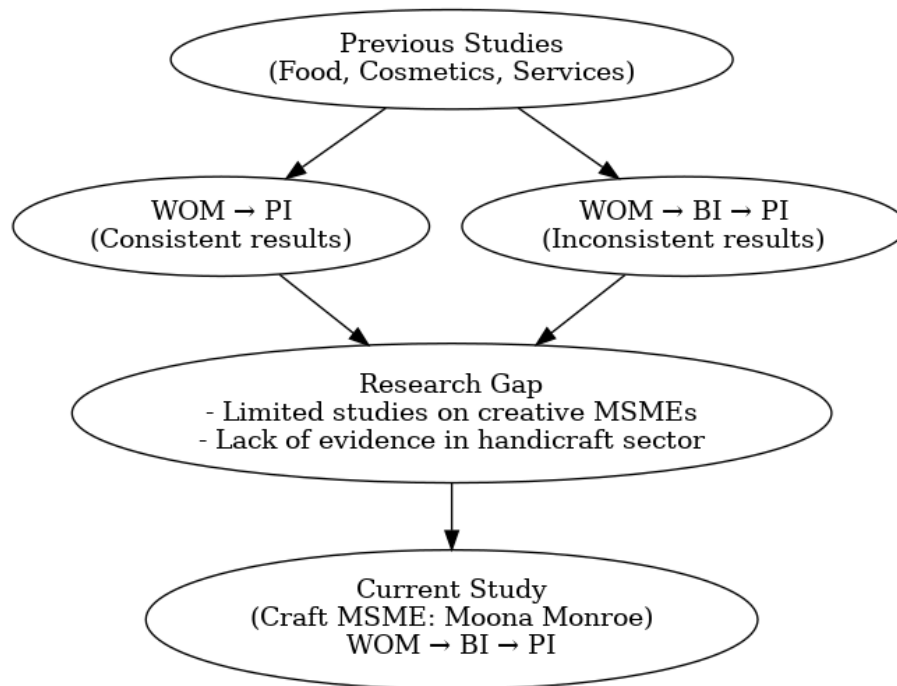


Figure 1. Research Framework Scheme

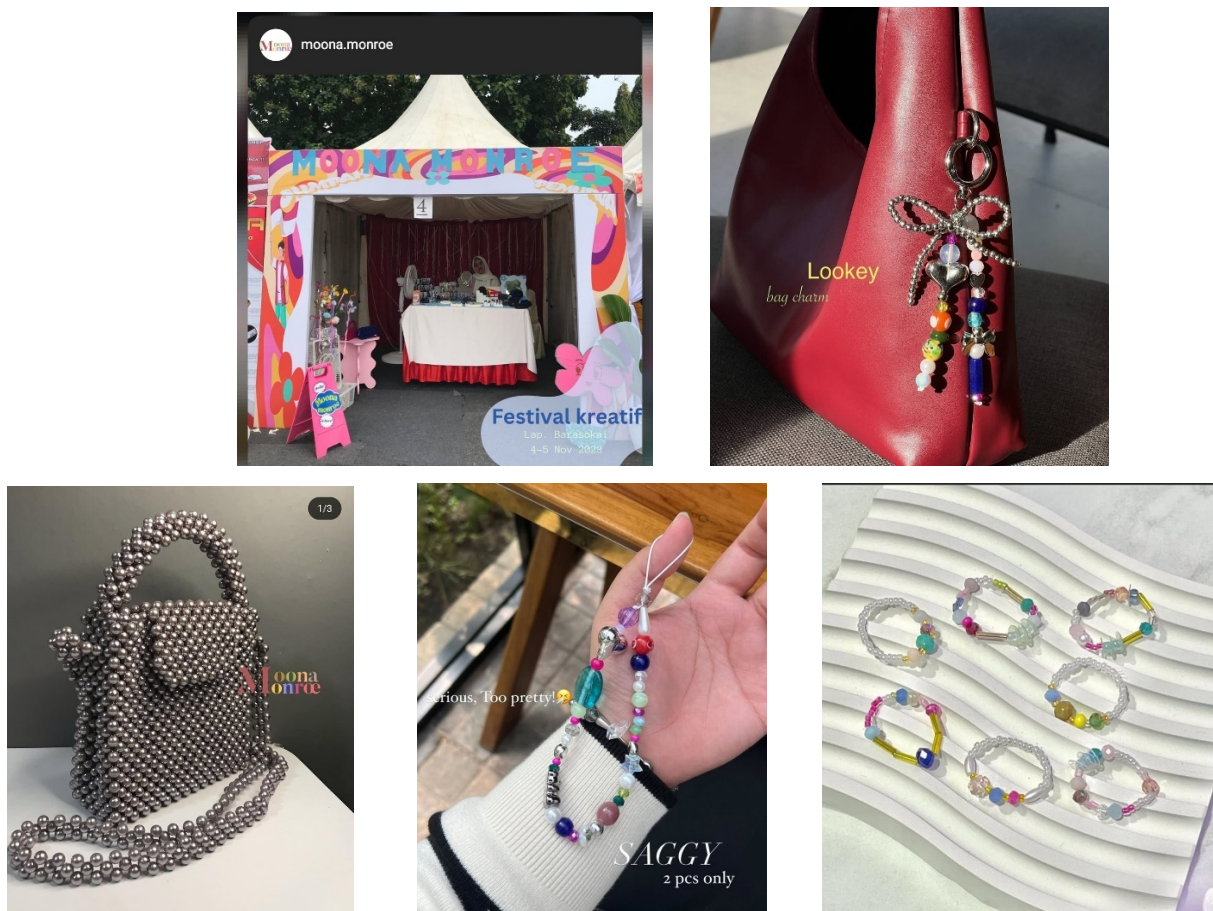
**3. Research methods**

Moona Monroe is a micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) operating in the handicraft sector, with a primary focus on handmade bead-based accessories. The business is located in Glugur Kota, Medan Barat District, Medan City, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Established in 2020 by Elvy Syahdani during the COVID-19 pandemic, Moona Monroe initially began as a small-scale home-based initiative that produced beaded mask connectors in response to market needs at that time.

As consumer trends evolved, the business expanded its product range by introducing various creative and aesthetically driven accessories, including bracelets, rings, necklaces, bag charms, and phone charms. These products are designed with a youthful and playful concept, emphasizing originality and handcrafted quality. Moona Monroe offers its products at affordable prices, ranging from IDR 5,000 to IDR 120,000, targeting young consumers who appreciate unique handmade accessories.

In addition to production and sales activities, Moona Monroe actively promotes its products through digital platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, which also serve as channels for direct interaction with customers. The enterprise frequently participates in local MSME bazaars and has conducted several handicraft workshops in collaboration with well-known cosmetic brands in Indonesia, such as Emina, Make Over, and Wardah. These activities contribute to strengthening brand exposure and fostering closer engagement with consumers.

Moona Monroe offers a diverse range of handmade accessories crafted from bead-based materials. Its product portfolio includes colorful bracelets and rings designed with a playful and youthful aesthetic, as well as necklaces and beaded mask straps that gained popularity during the pandemic period. In addition, the business produces small bags and other complementary accessories that reflect contemporary youth-oriented design trends. Moona Monroe also features bag charms and phone charms, which are creatively assembled using various combinations of beads to enhance visual appeal and uniqueness.



Sumber: <https://www.instagram.com/moona.monroe>

Figure 2. Moona Monroe Products

The research was conducted using a quantitative methodology. Following the framework of causal research, this study sought to identify and analyze the causal relationships between independent and dependent constructs (Sugiyono, 2022). The study site was Moona Monroe, a home-based craft enterprise located in Glugur Kota, West Medan District, Medan City, North Sumatra. Data were collected between April and May 2025, after which the dataset was compiled and processed for further analysis. Data collection was carried out via a survey, utilizing questionnaires distributed to 120 participants who acted as the study respondents.

A five-point Likert scale was employed in this research. This scale consists of response levels ranging from 1 to 5, used to measure each questionnaire item. A score of 1 represents a "feeble" response, while a score of 5 indicates a "perfect" response. The researcher selected this scale due to its flexibility; it is not only effective for measuring attitudes but also for capturing respondents' perceptions toward the observed phenomena.

The indicators used in this study are:

a. Word of Mouth (WOM)

According to Sernovitz (2009) in Saputra (2023), WOM can be explained through the "Five Ts":

- 1) Talkers – individuals or influencers who spread information about a brand (e.g., friends, family, colleagues).
- 2) Topics – the subjects of discussion, such as promotions, discounts, product uniqueness, or positive experiences.
- 3) Tools – media or platforms used to deliver information, including social media, blogs, or direct conversations.
- 4) Taking Part – the extent to which companies engage in conversations, such as responding to reviews or interacting with consumers online.
- 5) Tracking – monitoring consumer responses, both positive and negative, to evaluate and improve brand performance.

b. Brand Image

Kotler and Keller (2016) in Fitrah et al. (2023) suggest that brand image is measured through three dimensions:

- 1) Strength – the degree of brand recognition and how strongly it is embedded in consumers' minds.

- 2) Favorability – the extent of positive perception and satisfaction with the brand, influenced by product reliability, customer reviews, and communication strategies.
  - 3) Uniqueness – the brand’s distinctiveness compared to competitors, often reflected in design, innovation, and identity.
- c. Purchase Intention

Andrew (2019) in Wibowo and Setyaningsih (2021) identifies four dimensions of consumer purchase intention:

- 1) Transactional Intention – reflects consumers’ readiness to buy or utilize a product.
- 2) Referential Intention – the inclination to endorse or convey favorable experiences regarding a product.
- 3) Preferential Intention – the strong preference to consistently choose a product over alternatives.
- 4) Explorative Intention – the active search for further information, reviews, or recommendations before making a purchase.

The population of this study consisted of active followers of Moona Monroe’s Instagram and TikTok accounts. Active followers were chosen because they represent genuine accounts that engage directly through likes and comments, making them more relevant as respondents. Referring to the approach of Hair et al. (2019), the determination of the sample size was carried out by multiplying the number of measurement indicators by a constant ranging from 5 to 10. The computation formula used in this research is illustrated below:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \text{number of indicators} \times 5 \\ n &= 24 \times 5 \\ n &= 120 \end{aligned}$$

The sampling criteria established by the researcher targeted respondents aged 18 years or older. This is based on the assumption that individuals in this age range are considered mature enough, have critical thinking skills, are able to understand the contents of the questionnaire, and can represent various levels of society.

This research utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. In the inferential analysis, the researcher used a data collection technique using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) test tool. Wold (1985) and Ghozali (2022) explain that Partial Least Squares (PLS) is considered a robust analytical technique, commonly termed soft modeling, as it avoids the restrictive assumptions of traditional OLS regression, which means the data must be multivariate and normally distributed. There are no multicollinearity problems between exogenous variables (independent variables).

This study was carried out through several systematic stages, beginning with data collection and continuing to the interpretation of the findings. Structured questionnaires were administered to respondents familiar with Moona Monroe’s handicraft products in Medan. This research applied a five-point Likert measurement scale, anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree), to evaluate the constructs of WOM, Brand Image, and Purchase Intention. The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling to ensure that respondents met the criteria relevant to the research objectives.

Upon completion of data collection, the outer or measurement model was assessed to determine the association between observed indicators and their latent variables. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) utilized a Multi-Trait Multi-Method (MTMM) approach, concentrating on two major dimensions: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was demonstrated when factor loadings were above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values surpassed 0.50, whereas discriminant validity was verified by contrasting the square root of AVE with correlations across constructs.

Internal reliability was subsequently examined by applying Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) tests to validate measurement consistency. These measures provided an evaluation of internal consistency, with both indicators required to surpass the threshold value of 0.70, in accordance with Ghozali (2020). Following the confirmation of validity and reliability, the structural or inner model was subsequently analyzed to test the proposed relationships between WOM, Brand Image, and Purchase Intention.

Brand Image was examined as a mediating variable to assess its influence in linking the exogenous variable (WOM) with the endogenous variable (Purchase Intention). Mediation testing was conducted through the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples using SmartPLS 4.0 software. Mediation was deemed significant when the T-statistic exceeded the threshold of 1.96 at a 5% significance level and the p-value fell below 0.05. Finally, the results were interpreted by analyzing the magnitude and statistical significance of both direct and indirect effects. The findings were then discussed in relation to theoretical frameworks and previous empirical studies to highlight the study’s contributions to academic literature and to provide practical implications for business actors, particularly in the field of handcrafted products. Drawing upon the proposed research framework, the following hypotheses were developed and empirically examined:

- H1: Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image in the Moona Monroe handicraft business in Medan.
- H2: Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention in the Moona Monroe handicraft business in Medan.
- H3: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention in the Moona Monroe handicraft business in Medan.

H4: Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention mediated by Brand Image in the Moona Monroe handicraft business in Medan.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Data analysis was performed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) structural modeling technique, implemented via SmartPLS 4.0 software. The PLS method serves as an alternative to Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), offering suitability for examining intricate relationships among variables. Unlike covariance-based SEM, PLS relies on non-parametric assumptions, meaning the data are not required to follow a specific distribution. Based on the validity test of the factor loadings presented in the table below, all loading values exceed 0.7, indicating that the validity requirements have been met.

Tabel 1.1 Loading Factor (*Outer Loading*)

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>Indikator</b>	<b>Outer Loading</b>
<b><i>Word Of Mouth</i></b>	X1.1	0.725
	X1.2	0.734
	X1.3	0.775
	X1.4	0.831
	X1.5	0.815
	X1.6	0.825
	X1.7	0.792
	X1.8	0.766
	X1.9	0.718
	X1.10	0.746
<b><i>Brand Image</i></b>	Z1.1	0.808
	Z1.2	0.814
	Z1.3	0.825
	Z1.4	0.814
	Z1.5	0.785
	Z1.6	0.823
<b><i>Purchase Intention</i></b>	Y1.1	0.860
	Y1.2	0.804
	Y1.3	0.792
	Y1.4	0.753
	Y1.5	0.785
	Y1.6	0.727

Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

Based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion results in the table below, each construct shows a higher correlation value with its indicators compared to the indicators of other constructs. These results indicate that each construct or latent variable shows strong discriminant validity, with its indicators loading more heavily on their corresponding construct than on any other.

Table 1.2 Discriminant Validity Testing based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>Fornell-Larcker Criterion</b>
<b><i>Word Of Mouth</i></b>	0,774
<b><i>Purchase Intention</i></b>	0,817
<b><i>Brand Image</i></b>	0,771

Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

Evaluation of the outer model encompassed tests of convergent and discriminant validity, alongside reliability analysis of constructs or latent variables using Composite Reliability indicators. Constructs are regarded as reliable when their Composite Reliability (CR) values exceed the threshold of 0.70. The CR estimates obtained from SmartPLS validate the robustness of the measurement model are presented in the Table 1.3 below:

Table 1.3 Composite Reliability Values

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>
<b><i>Word Of Mouth</i></b>	0.897
<b><i>Purchase Intention</i></b>	0.941
<b><i>Brand Image</i></b>	0.937

Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

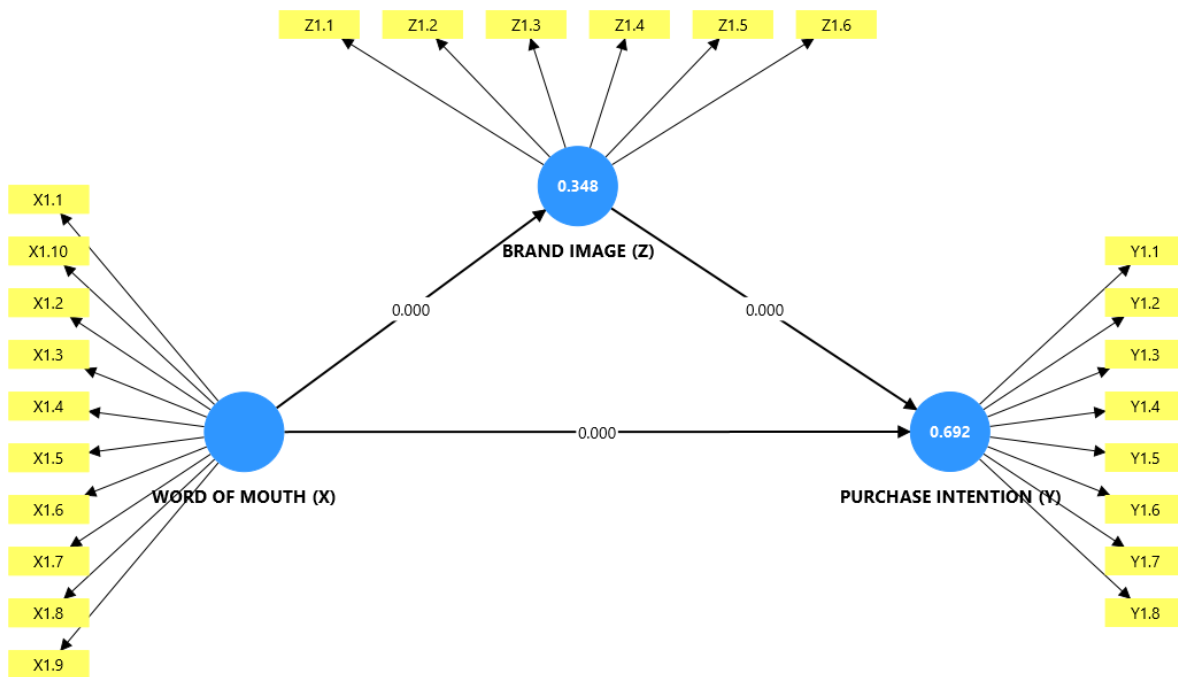
According to the R-squared results in the table, Word of Mouth explains 34.3% of the variation in Brand Image, with the remaining 65.7% attributed to variables like product quality, emotional connection to the brand, and social media promotion strategies. In relation to For Purchase Intention, the joint effect of WOM and Brand Image accounts for 68.7% of the variance, indicating a substantial effect on consumer purchasing behavior. The remaining 31.3% is attributable to other factors, including price perception, customer satisfaction, and brand trust.

Table 1.4 R-Square Values

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>R-Square</b>
<b><i>Purchase Intention</i></b>	0,687
<b><i>Brand Image</i></b>	0.343

Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

The testing of hypotheses was performed using the outcomes of the Inner Model (structural model) assessment, where the p-value served as the main criterion for determining acceptance or rejection. The hypothesis analysis was carried out with SmartPLS 3.0 software utilizing the bootstrapping technique to generate the corresponding statistical values. The findings derived from the hypothesis testing are visually summarized in Figure 1.2 :



Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

Figure 3. Path Coefficients Test Results

As indicated by the path coefficient test in Figure 1.2, the results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 1.5 below.

Table 1.5 Direct Effect Test Results

No	Hipotesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
1	Word Of Mouth (X) - > Brand Image (Z)	0.352	0.358	0.091	3.867	0.000
2	Word Of Mouth (X) - > Purchase Intention (Y)	0.590	0.596	0.079	7.437	0.000
3	Brand Image (Z) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.574	0.569	0.089	6.457	0.000

Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

As shown in the table, Word of Mouth (WOM) significantly and positively affects Brand Image ( $t = 3.867 > 1.655$ ;  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). WOM likewise exerts a positive and significant influence on Purchase Intention ( $t = 7.437 > 1.655$ ;  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Similarly, Brand Image has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention ( $t = 6.457 > 1.655$ ;  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ).

A mediation analysis was performed to evaluate the strength of the indirect relationships among variables. This analysis employed the bootstrapping procedure through SmartPLS 4.0 software. The findings derived from the hypothesis testing of indirect relationships are illustrated in Table 1.6 :

Tabel 1.6 Specific Indirect Effects

No	Hipotesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
1	Word Of Mouth (X) -> Brand Image (Z) -> Purchase Intention (Y)	0.207	0.217	0.073	2.847	0.004

Source: Processed Data Results for 2025

The mediation test results reveal that Word of Mouth (WOM) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention through the mediating role of Brand Image, as evidenced by a t-value of 2.847 exceeding the critical value of 1.655 and a p-value of 0.004, which is below the 0.05 significance level. The analysis confirms that WOM indirectly and positively influences Purchase Intention via Brand Image as a mediating construct. With the t-value (2.847) surpassing the threshold of 1.655 and the p-value (0.004) falling below 0.05, the mediation relationship is statistically validated. These results indicate that the indirect link between WOM and Purchase Intention through Brand Image is both significant and meaningful. Practically, this suggests that when consumers receive favorable word-of-mouth or recommendations regarding Moona Monroe's products, their perception of the brand improves, thereby strengthening their intention to purchase. Thus, Brand Image serves as a crucial mechanism that amplifies the effect of WOM on consumers' behavioral intentions.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study empirically confirm that Word of Mouth (WOM) serves as a key determinant in forming consumer perceptions and motivating purchasing behavior in the context of Moona Monroe's handicraft business in Medan. WOM is shown to have a positive and significant influence on Brand Image, which, in turn, elevates consumers' intention to purchase. Moreover, WOM directly influences Purchase Intention, and this relationship becomes even stronger when Brand Image acts as a mediating factor. These outcomes emphasize the strategic importance of Brand Image as a bridge that converts positive WOM into consumers' intention to make a purchase.

From a managerial standpoint, the results suggest that both Moona Monroe and similar small-scale creative enterprises should prioritize developing and sustaining effective WOM strategies—such as enhancing customer satisfaction, encouraging testimonials, and leveraging engagement through social media platforms. By cultivating a strong and favorable Brand Image, these businesses can optimize the impact of WOM in stimulating consumer interest and purchase decisions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the existing body of knowledge on consumer behavior by confirming the mediating function of Brand Image within the WOM–Purchase Intention relationship. Future research is encouraged to broaden this model by incorporating additional variables such as trust, perceived quality, or customer loyalty, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of consumer decision-making in creative and handicraft industries.

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