



The Impact of Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention: A Study of SK-II Consumers in Taiwan

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Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on consumer behavior and market trends within Indonesia's cosmetics industry. This study explores how brand loyalty, brand awareness, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) shape consumer purchase intention for SK-II skincare products in Taiwan. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, this research employs purposive sampling to gather data from 203 SK-II customers through an online survey. To analyze the collected data, the study applies the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method, providing insights into the relationships between key variables and their influence on consumer decision-making. The results indicate that all three factors brand loyalty, brand awareness, and eWOM positively and significantly impact purchase intention. Notably, eWOM exhibited the strongest effect, highlighting the crucial role of online reviews and peer recommendations in shaping consumer decisions in the digital era. The findings suggest that SK-II should enhance customer loyalty programs to increase brand visibility through effective marketing strategies, and actively engage in managing online consumer discussions to leverage the power of eWOM.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the factors influencing purchase intention in the Indonesian cosmetics market. It offers practical insights for SK-II and similar brands to refine their marketing strategies, improve customer engagement, and strengthen their competitive position in a rapidly evolving market landscape.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, Electronic Word of Mouth, Purchase Intention

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global trade, leading the Indonesian government to impose import restrictions that affected international brands like SK-II. During this period, mandatory mask-wearing became prevalent, impacting skin health—especially in Indonesia's tropical climate, where skin tends to be more sensitive. Prolonged mask use led to common skin issues such as acne, redness, dryness, and peeling. Consequently, there has been a noticeable increase in both men and women paying more attention to their skincare routines, making skincare an integral part of personal confidence, particularly for women [1].

Skincare products have seen a marked rise in popularity in Indonesia, with a variety of products now being used by both genders, including lotions, face masks, serums, and scrubs. Technological advancements have broadened access to these products, and both local and international brands have diversified their offerings to meet the growing demand for skincare solutions tailored to Indonesian consumers.

Consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by a mix of domestic and international information flows, as increased health consciousness is prompted by environmental factors such as indoor pollutants. This growing awareness has positioned Indonesia as a promising market for the cosmetics industry, despite challenges from rising competition, especially within e-commerce platforms [2]. SK-II, as a premium skincare brand, has maintained a strong presence in the Indonesian market due to its reputation for quality and effectiveness. However, increased competition from emerging local brands and shifting consumer preferences have posed challenges for SK-II in retaining its market share.

Despite SK-II's established brand recognition, the challenges highlighted suggest potential issues related to brand loyalty, brand awareness, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Brand awareness, as defined by Erwin et al. [1], is the degree to which consumers can recognize and recall a brand among others. Building and maintaining high levels of brand awareness ensures that consumers keep the brand in mind, ultimately influencing their purchase intentions. Machi et al. [3] found that brand awareness has a weaker influence on purchase intention in the online shopping context, possibly because mere recognition is insufficient to drive online purchases without additional factors like trust and perceived value. Brand loyalty is crucial for organizations aiming to achieve their objectives, as it reflects the extent of customers' commitment to a particular brand, often demonstrated through repeat purchases despite competitive pressures [2]. Loyal customers are typically attracted to a brand's unique qualities, ease of use, and the confidence derived from familiarity with the brand [4]. In the context of online shopping, brand loyalty plays a more significant role than brand awareness in influencing purchase intentions, as it encompasses consumers' trust and ongoing relationship with the brand [3]. In the digital era, eWOM has become a substantial factor in consumer decision-making processes. Defined as informal online communication between consumers about products, services, or companies, eWOM significantly influences public perceptions and purchasing behaviors [5]. Studies by Lestari and Widjanarko [6] and Harisandi et al. [7] demonstrate that eWOM positively and significantly impacts purchase decisions, highlighting its role in shaping consumer

opinions and intentions through online reviews, ratings, and testimonials. Given this context, the present study investigates how brand loyalty, brand awareness and eWOM affect the purchase intention of SK-I products in Taiwan. Understanding the extent to which these factors influence consumer behavior can provide valuable insights for SK-I to refine its marketing strategies, enhance customer engagement. And strengthen its competitive position in Indonesia's vibrant cosmetics market.

2 Literature Review

Developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) expands upon the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by introducing perceived behavioral control as an additional factor influencing both intention and behavior [8]. This theory serves as a comprehensive model for predicting an individual's likelihood of engaging in a particular behavior based on three fundamental components:

1. **Attitude Toward the Behavior:** This component reflects an individual's overall assessment of engaging in a specific behavior, whether positive or negative. Such evaluations are shaped by personal beliefs regarding the potential consequences of the behavior and the significance attributed to those outcomes.
2. **Subjective Norms:** This refers to the perceived social expectations surrounding a given behavior. Influences from key social groups, including family, friends, and colleagues, shape the extent to which an individual feels pressured to either perform or avoid the behavior.
3. **Perceived Behavioral Control:** This aspect pertains to an individual's perception of how easy or difficult it would be to carry out the behavior. It is informed by past experiences, anticipated challenges, and the availability of necessary resources.

Together, these three factors determine behavioral intention, which in turn influences actual behavior. By integrating these elements, TPB offers a robust framework for analyzing the various psychological and social determinants that shape consumer decisions, particularly in the context of purchasing behavior.

2.1 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the degree of consumer commitment to repurchase or continue using a particular brand, demonstrated through repeat purchases and a positive attitude toward the brand [9]. Fenetta and Keni [9] define brand loyalty as positive feelings toward a brand that result in a commitment to repeat purchases and reflect the intensity of consumer resistance to switching to competitor brands. Patoding and Muzammil [10] describe it as the consistent repurchasing behavior of consumers toward a particular brand over time. Tanzaretha and Rodhiah [11] emphasize the emotional attachment between the brand and the customer, which motivates repeated purchasing decisions. Thus, brand loyalty reflects the depth of the emotional relationship between consumers

and the brand, influencing their decision to consistently choose the same brand despite market changes.

2.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness pertains to the degree to which consumers can identify or recall a brand across various situations [12]. According to Ghadani et al. [12], brand awareness reflects consumers' capacity to recall a brand or product, especially within the realm of e-commerce. Aslam et al. [13] highlight that brand awareness plays a major role in customer decision-making, serving as an essential element in consumer brand consideration. Steven and Ruslim [14] define it as the ability of consumers to identify various brand elements such as names, symbols, logos, packaging, and slogans. Therefore, brand awareness involves consumers' recognition of key brand elements, which drives their purchasing decisions.

2.3 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

eWOM is the informal communication among consumers about products or services, shared through internet technology [15]. Tan and Keni [15] describe eWOM as positive or negative consumer statements about a product or service conveyed via the internet. Sulthana and Vasantha [16] view eWOM as the sharing of product and service information among people interacting in the virtual world of social media. Dyego and Oktavianti [17] consider eWOM as informal communication among consumers through internet technology. eWOM serves as a powerful tool in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions, as consumer experiences and opinions can spread rapidly online.

2.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to consumers readiness and inclination to acquire a particular good or service within a defined timeframe [18]. Yohanna and Ruslim [18] define it as the consumer's willingness to purchase product from a particular brand. Sianturi et al. [19] explain that purchase intention is the willingness of a customer to buy a certain product or service at a given time. Ahmad et al. [20] add that purchase intention involves the consideration process of a consumer on whether to purchase the product or service. Thus, purchase intention reflects the consumer's inclination and decision-making process leading up to a purchase.

2.5 Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention

Research indicates a positive relationship between brand loyalty and purchase intention. Prasetya [21] found that brand loyalty positively and significantly influences purchase intention among consumers and potential consumers of cement products in

Indonesia. Using data from 200 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study concluded that higher brand loyalty leads to stronger purchase intentions.

Machi et al. [3] also demonstrated that brand loyalty positively affects purchase intention in online shopping contexts. Their study with 253 respondents in Johannesburg South Africa, showed that brand loyalty significantly influences consumers' intentions to purchase online.

In a related study, Asdar and Munir [22] discovered that among Apple smartphone users in Makassar, Taiwan, brand loyalty exerts a notable and positive influence on their intention to make a purchase. The research, which involved 100 participants, demonstrated that customers with strong brand attachment are more inclined to make repeat purchases and advocate the brand to others.

Taken together, these findings indicate that brand loyalty is a key determinant in shaping consumers' purchasing intentions. This underscores the necessity for companies to cultivate customer loyalty as a strategy to boost sales and expand their market presence.

- **H1:** Brand loyalty has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

2.6 Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention

Brand awareness significantly impacts purchase intention by influencing consumers recognition and consideration of a brand during decision-making. Macheke et al. [23] found that brand awareness has a significant effect on purchase intention among young female consumers. The study involved 203 respondents and highlighted the role of brand awareness in enhancing consumers' willingness to purchase. Ilyas et al. [24] showed that brand awareness significantly affects repurchase intention, indicating that consumers who are more aware of a brand are more inclined to buy it again. Their study with 200 respondents using online surveys emphasized the importance of brand awareness in consumer loyalty and repeated purchases. Krisnawan and Jatra [25] confirmed that awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention among smartphone consumers in Denpasar, Bali. With a sample of 100 respondents and multiple linear regression analysis, the study demonstrated that higher brand awareness leads to increased purchase intentions.

- **H2:** Brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

2.7 eWOM and Purchase Intention

eWOM plays a significant role in shaping purchase intention by influencing consumer perceptions through online reviews and recommendations. Sari and Ruslim [26] found that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention among Lazadae-commerce customers in Taiwan. Using Smart PLS-SEM with 203 respondents, the study highlighted the impact of willingness to purchase. Yonita and Budiono [27] demonstrated that eWOM significantly influences purchase intention among users of Innisfree products in Taiwan. With 100 respondents through simple

random sampling, the research emphasized the importance of online discussions and reviews in driving purchase decisions. Romadhoni et al. [28] showed that eWOM has a positive effect on purchase intention among consumers of Zoya hijab products. The study involved 70 respondents using accidental sampling and underscored the role of eWOM in enhancing consumers' intentions to buy.

- **H3:** Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

3 Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design to examine the characteristics of current phenomena related to brand loyalty, brand awareness, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and purchase intention of SK-I products in Taiwan. Descriptive research is appropriate for studies aiming to describe the attributes of a specific population or phenomenon [29]. A cross-sectional approach is adopted since data collection occurs at a single point in time for each sample. A quantitative strategy is utilized, involving the distribution of questionnaires to SK-II customers in Taiwan. The population consists of SK-II customers residing in Taiwan. Since the exact number of SK-II users in Taiwan is unknown, non-probability sampling is employed, specifically purposive sampling, where samples are selected based on specific criteria [30]. The criteria for participation are Individuals aged 17 years or older, having made at least two purchases of SK-II products, Residing in Taiwan.

Determining an adequate sample size is crucial for statistical reliability. Malhotra [31] recommends a minimum of 200 respondents in quantitative research to ensure representativeness and sufficient statistical power. Hair et al. [32] note that while Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) can handle smaller samples, very small sizes may compromise validity, especially in heterogeneous populations. Reflecting on prior studies, such as Macheka et al. [33], which utilized 203 respondents, this research targets a minimum sample size of 203 participants.

The study examines three independent variables—brand loyalty, brand awareness, and eWOM—and one dependent variable, purchase intention.

- **Brand Loyalty:** Defined as the degree of consumer commitment to repurchase or continue using a particular brand, demonstrated through repeat purchases and positive attitudes [34]–[36].
- **Brand Awareness:** Refers to consumers' ability to recall and recognize a brand, influencing their purchasing decisions [37]–[39].
- **Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM):** Involves informal online communication among consumers about products or services, impacting perceptions and purchase decisions [40]–[42].
- **Purchase Intention:** Represents a consumer's inclination and plan to acquire a product or service within a defined timeframe [43]–[45].

Data collection is carried out through an online survey disseminated via Google Forms. The measurement items corresponding to each construct are derived from

well-established scales utilized in previous studies. Participant responses are captured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 signifies "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree."

For data analysis, the PLS-SEM technique is employed using the SmartPLS 4 software. The measurement model, also known as the outer model, is examined to determine both the reliability and validity of the constructs along with their respective indicators [46].

1. **Convergent Validity:** Assessed through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicators exhibit convergent validity if factor loadings exceed 0.7 and AVE values are above 0.5 [29],[32]. Results indicate that all indicators meet these criteria.
2. **Discriminant Validity:** Evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. HTMT values below 0.85 suggest adequate discriminant validity between constructs [32]. The Fornell-Larcker criterion confirms that each construct's AVE square root exceeds its correlations with other constructs, ensuring discriminant validity [47].
3. **Reliability:** Measured using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho A. Constructs are considered reliable if Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.6, composite reliability is above 0.7, and rho A is greater than 0.7 [32]. The constructs in this study satisfy these thresholds, indicating consistent and reliable measurements.

The structural model (inner model) assesses the relationships between constructs based on theoretical foundations [48]. Several analyses are conducted:

1. **Coefficient of Determination (R^2):** Determines the variance in the dependent variable explained by independent variables. R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with values ≤ 0.25 indicating a weak effect, 0.26 to 0.74 a moderate effect, and ≥ 0.75 a strong effect [32].
2. **Effect Size (f^2):** Evaluates the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable. An f^2 value less than 0.02 suggests no effect, around 0.02 a small effect, 0.15 a medium effect, and 0.35 a large effect [32].
3. **Predictive Relevance (Q^2):** Assessed using the PLS Predict method to determine the model's ability to predict unobserved values [32]. The predictive power is evaluated by comparing the PLS-SEM model's prediction errors with those of a benchmark linear model (LM), using metrics such as Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) and Mean Absolute Error (MAE). The model demonstrates medium predictive relevance if a minority of indicators have higher prediction errors than the LM, and high predictive relevance if none do.
4. **Hypothesis Testing:** Conducted using path coefficients and significance levels obtained through bootstrapping procedures. Hypotheses are supported if t-statistics exceed 1.96 and p-values are less than 0.05, indicating significant relationships at a 5% significance level [49], [50].

Multicollinearity is examined using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). VIF values below 5 indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern, and the indicators are not

excessively correlated [48]. The analysis confirms that multicollinearity does not adversely affect the constructs, ensuring the robustness of the model.

4 Result and Discussion

The study surveyed 203 customers of SK-II in Taiwan who met the criteria of being at least 17 years old and having purchased SK-II products at least twice. The majority of respondents were female (67.5%), aged between 21 and 25 years (38.4%), holding a bachelor's degree (70.9%), and were students (39.4%). Most respondents reported monthly incomes between Rp4,000,000 and Rp6,000,000 and spent less than Rp500,000 or between Rp500,000 and Rp1,499,000 on beauty care products. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for purchase intention was 0.800, indicating that 80% of the variance in purchase intention could be explained by brand loyalty, brand awareness, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). This high R^2 value suggests a strong explanatory power of the model [51]. Effect size (f^2) analysis revealed that brand loyalty ($f^2 = 0.182$), brand awareness ($f^2 = 0.157$), and eWOM ($f^2 = 0.326$) each had a medium effect on purchase intention, with eWOM having the largest effect. Predictive relevance (Q^2) assessed via the Stone-Geisser Q^2 test indicated that the model had medium predictive relevance, suggesting moderate capability in predicting purchase intention based on the independent variables. Path coefficient analysis showed positive relationships between all independent variables and purchase intention. Specifically, eWOM had the strongest positive effect (path coefficient = 0.430), followed by brand awareness (0.288) and brand loyalty (0.273).

Table 1. Result of Hypotheses Testing

Variable	<i>Original Sample</i>	<i>t-statistics</i>	<i>p-values</i>	Description
H1: <i>Brand Loyalty -> Purchase Intention</i>	0,273	3,926	0,000	Accepted
H2: <i>Brand Awareness -> Purchase Intention</i>	0,288	3,779	0,000	Accepted
H3: <i>E-WOM -> Purchase Intention</i>	0,430	5,200	0,000	Accepted

Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping methods, and based on Table 1, all were supported:

- **H1:** Brand loyalty has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (t-statistic = 3.926, p-value = 0.000). This indicates that higher brand loyalty leads to increased purchase intention for SK-II products.
- **H2:** Brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (t-statistic = 3.779, p-value = 0.000). This suggests that greater awareness of the SK-II brand enhances consumers' intention to purchase.

- **H3:** eWOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (t-statistic = 5.200, p-value = 0.000). This demonstrates that positive online word of mouth significantly increases consumers' intention to buy SK-II products.

Discussion

The findings corroborate the hypotheses that brand loyalty, brand awareness, and eWOM positively and significantly influence purchase intention toward SK-II products in Taiwan. The significant positive effect of brand loyalty on purchase intention aligns with previous studies by Prasetya [52] and Machi et al. [53], highlighting the importance of customer loyalty in driving purchase decisions. Loyal customers are more inclined to repurchase and recommend the brand, reinforcing its market position.

The positive relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention is consistent with the findings of Macheka et al. [54] and Ilyas et al. [55], emphasizing that higher brand recognition leads to stronger purchase intentions. Brand awareness likely increases consumers' confidence and reduces perceived risks, thereby enhancing their willingness to buy. The significant impact of eWOM on purchase intention supports the results of studies by Sari and Ruslim [56] and Yonita and Budiono [57], identifying eWOM as a critical factor influencing consumer behavior in the digital era. Positive online reviews and recommendations serve as persuasive social proof, reducing uncertainty and encouraging consumers to purchase. Notably, eWOM exhibited the strongest effect on purchase intention among the variables studied. This suggests that in the context of SK-II products in Taiwan, consumers heavily rely on online information and peer reviews when making purchase decisions. The prevalence of social media and online platforms amplifies the influence of eWOM, making it a vital component of marketing strategies. The study's findings contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the roles of brand loyalty, brand awareness, and eWOM in shaping purchase intention within the Indonesian cosmetics market. They highlight the necessity for brands like SK-II to foster strong customer loyalty through quality products and services, enhance brand visibility via effective marketing, and actively engage in managing online consumer discussions to leverage the power of eWOM. These insights are particularly relevant given the competitive nature of the cosmetics industry in Indonesia, where consumer preferences are rapidly evolving, and online channels are increasingly dominant. By understanding these dynamics, SK-II can tailor its strategies to better meet consumer needs and strengthen its market position.

5 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of brand loyalty, brand awareness, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the purchase intention of SK-II consumers in Taiwan. The findings revealed that all three factors positively and significantly impact purchase intention. Specifically, a strong positive relationship was identified between brand loyalty and purchase intention, indicating that consumers who are loyal to SK-II are more inclined to continue purchasing its products. Similarly, higher brand awareness

was found to enhance consumers' willingness to buy, suggesting that familiarity with the SK-II brand increases purchase intention. Moreover, eWOM significantly affected purchase intention, underscoring the influential role of online reviews and recommendations in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions. Despite providing valuable insights, this study has certain limitations. The sample size was limited to 203 respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to the broader population of SK-II consumers. Additionally, the reliance on survey data may introduce response bias or inaccuracies due to self-reporting by participants. The geographical scope of the research was confined to Taiwan, limiting the applicability of the findings to other regions. For future research, it is recommended to increase the sample size by extending the data collection period and including more respondents to enhance the representativeness and reliability of the results. Employing qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions and behaviors toward SK-II. Exploring additional variables, like the influence of social media influencers on purchase intention, may offer broader insights into consumer decision-making processes. Broadening the geographical coverage to include different locations would improve the generalizability of the findings across various markets. Furthermore, expanding the measurement indicators for brand loyalty and brand awareness could provide a more detailed analysis of their relationship with purchase intention. Based on the conclusions drawn, several strategic recommendations can be made for SK-II. Enhancing brand loyalty through the implementation of loyalty programs or offering rewards to loyal customers can strengthen their commitment and make them feel valued. Increasing brand awareness by utilizing paid advertising features on social media and e-commerce platforms to promote signature products and new launches can improve brand visibility. Effectively managing eWOM by actively monitoring and responding to product reviews on social media and e-commerce platforms is crucial. Addressing negative feedback promptly and appropriately can mitigate potential damage to the brand image, while leveraging positive reviews can enhance purchase intention.

By focusing on these areas, SK-II can better meet consumer needs, improve customer retention, and strengthen its competitive position in Indonesia's cosmetics market. These strategies are particularly relevant given the competitive nature of the cosmetics industry in Indonesia, where consumer preferences are rapidly evolving and online channels are increasingly dominant. Understanding these dynamics will enable SK-II to tailor its strategies effectively to enhance its market position.

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