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## Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, and Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing and brand image on consumer purchase decisions, with brand awareness acting as a mediating variable.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative research approach was employed using a survey method. Data were collected from 80 consumers through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling. Data analysis included validity and reliability tests as well as path analysis using SPSS to evaluate both direct and indirect relationships among variables.

**Findings:** The results indicate that social media marketing and brand image did not show a significant influence on purchase decisions. Furthermore, brand awareness did not significantly mediate the relationship between social media marketing, brand image, and purchase decisions. These findings suggest that, in this context, the effectiveness of social media marketing and brand image in shaping consumer purchasing behavior remains limited.

**Research implications:** The findings provide insights for retail businesses, particularly small and medium-sized cosmetic retailers, to reconsider their marketing strategies. Businesses may need to integrate alternative marketing approaches, such as experiential marketing, customer engagement strategies, and product differentiation, to enhance consumer awareness and purchasing behavior.

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## Introduction

The cosmetic industry has become one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global consumer goods market. In recent years, the global beauty and personal care industry has experienced significant growth, driven by increasing consumer awareness of personal appearance, skincare, and self-care practices. The rapid development of digital technology and online communication platforms has also transformed how cosmetic products are marketed and consumed. Social media platforms allow companies to communicate brand values, promote products, and build stronger relationships with consumers in a more interactive environment (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). As a result, social media marketing has become an important strategy

used by businesses to increase consumer engagement and influence purchasing behavior.

Social media marketing activities enable companies to reach wider audiences and build stronger brand connections through interactive content, digital campaigns, and user-generated reviews. Previous studies have shown that social media marketing plays an important role in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors, particularly in shaping brand perceptions and purchasing intentions (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Through consistent digital engagement, companies can enhance their brand visibility and strengthen their relationships with consumers, which ultimately contributes to higher levels of brand awareness and customer loyalty.

In addition to social media marketing, brand image is another critical factor that influences consumer purchasing decisions. Brand image reflects the set of perceptions, beliefs, and associations that consumers hold regarding a particular brand (Keller, 2016). A positive brand image can increase consumer trust and perceived product quality, which encourages consumers to choose certain brands over competing alternatives. In highly competitive industries such as cosmetics, companies must continuously strengthen their brand image through effective marketing communication and consistent brand positioning.

Brand awareness also plays a significant role in the consumer decision-making process. Consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands that they recognize and remember. High levels of brand awareness reduce perceived risk and increase consumer confidence when selecting products (Bilgin, 2018). Furthermore, brand awareness often acts as a mediating factor that connects marketing activities, such as social media marketing, with consumer purchase decisions. In other words, effective social media marketing strategies can increase brand awareness, which subsequently influences consumer purchasing behavior.

The rapid development of the cosmetics market is also evident in Indonesia, which has become one of the most promising markets in Southeast Asia. The large population, increasing purchasing power, and growing interest in skincare and beauty products have contributed to the expansion of cosmetic retail businesses across various regions. At the regional level, Kerinci Regency has experienced noticeable growth in the cosmetics retail sector. Several cosmetic stores have emerged in different areas, particularly in Semurup, which serves as one of the main commercial centers in the region. These stores offer a wide variety of cosmetic products ranging from local brands to internationally recognized brands, reflecting the increasing demand for beauty and skincare products among consumers, especially adolescents and adult women.

Despite the increasing number of cosmetic retailers in the region, intensifying market competition requires businesses to adopt effective marketing strategies to attract and retain customers. Social media marketing and brand image are often considered important factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions, particularly in industries where brand perception and consumer engagement play a crucial role. However, the extent to which these factors influence purchase decisions through the mediating role of brand awareness remains an important issue that requires further empirical investigation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing and brand image on purchase decisions, with brand awareness serving as a mediating variable.

## Literature Review

### Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Framework

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory is widely used to explain how external stimuli influence consumer behavior. According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), environmental stimuli affect individuals' internal evaluations, which subsequently produce behavioral responses. In the marketing context, stimuli can take the form of promotional activities, brand communication, or marketing messages delivered through various media channels. In digital marketing environments, social media marketing activities serve as external stimuli that influence consumers' perceptions and emotions toward brands. These stimuli shape internal psychological processes such as brand awareness and brand perception, which ultimately influence consumers' behavioral responses, including purchase decisions (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2003). Therefore, the S-O-R framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how social media marketing and brand image influence consumers' purchase decisions through the mediating role of brand awareness.

### Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness

Social media marketing refers to marketing activities conducted through social networking platforms to promote products, services, and brands while engaging with consumers in an interactive environment. Social media allows companies to disseminate product information, build brand relationships, and influence consumer perceptions through digital content and communication (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). Previous studies indicate that social media marketing activities significantly contribute to the development of brand awareness. Through continuous exposure to brand-related content, advertisements, and user interactions, consumers become more familiar with a brand and are more likely to recognize or recall it when making purchasing decisions (Bilgin, 2018). In addition, interactive features such as comments, reviews, and sharing mechanisms allow consumers to actively participate in brand communication, which further strengthens brand awareness.

Based on this explanation, effective social media marketing strategies can increase consumer familiarity with a brand and strengthen brand recognition among consumers.

**H1:** *Social media marketing has a positive effect on brand awareness.*

### Brand Image and Brand Awareness

Brand image refers to the set of perceptions, associations, and beliefs that consumers hold regarding a particular brand (Keller, 2016). A strong brand image can help consumers easily identify and differentiate a brand from its competitors. Research suggests that a positive brand image can strengthen brand awareness because consumers tend to remember brands that convey clear and favorable associations. When consumers consistently encounter positive brand attributes, such as quality, reliability, and trustworthiness, they are more likely to recall the brand when considering purchasing alternatives (Bilgin, 2018). Consequently, companies that successfully establish a strong brand image can enhance consumer familiarity and recognition of their brands.

Therefore, a positive brand image is expected to contribute to higher levels of brand awareness among consumers.

**H2:** *Brand image has a positive effect on brand awareness.*

### **Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decisions**

Social media marketing has become an important factor influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Through social media platforms, consumers can easily access product information, promotional content, and customer reviews before making purchasing decisions. Yadav & Rahman (2017) state that social media marketing activities significantly influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions by providing interactive communication and credible information about products and brands. Social media platforms also enable consumers to observe other users' experiences with a brand, which can influence their evaluation and decision-making process.

Therefore, effective social media marketing strategies can directly influence consumers' purchase decisions by providing relevant information and shaping positive attitudes toward products.

**H3:** *Social media marketing has a positive effect on purchase decisions.*

### **Brand Image and Purchase Decisions**

Brand image plays an important role in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Consumers tend to prefer brands with positive reputations because they perceive them as more reliable and trustworthy. According to Keller (2016), a strong brand image can reduce consumers' perceived risk when purchasing products and increase their confidence in choosing a particular brand. In highly competitive industries such as cosmetics, a positive brand image can become a key factor influencing consumers' preferences and purchase decisions. Previous studies have shown that consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands that have strong and favorable images compared to brands with weaker reputations (Bilgin, 2018). Therefore, companies that successfully develop a positive brand image are more likely to influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

**H4:** *Brand image has a positive effect on purchase decisions.*

### **Brand Awareness and Purchase Decisions**

Brand awareness represents the ability of consumers to recognize or recall a brand when considering a particular product category. High levels of brand awareness increase the likelihood that consumers will consider a brand when making purchasing decisions (Keller, 2016). Consumers tend to choose products from brands that they are familiar with because familiarity reduces uncertainty and perceived risk during the purchasing process. Bilgin (2018) found that brand awareness significantly influences consumer purchase decisions, particularly in industries where brand recognition plays an important role in shaping consumer preferences. Therefore, higher levels of brand awareness are expected to positively influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

**H5:** *Brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase decisions.*

### **The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is often considered a mediating factor that connects marketing activities and consumer purchasing behavior. Social media marketing and brand image can increase consumer familiarity with a brand, which subsequently influences consumers' purchase decisions. When consumers become aware of a brand through marketing activities or brand communication strategies, they are more likely to consider that brand when making purchasing decisions. Yadav and Rahman (2017) suggest that brand awareness plays an important role in translating marketing efforts

into actual consumer behavior. Therefore, brand awareness may mediate the relationship between social media marketing, brand image, and purchase decisions.

**H6:** *Brand awareness mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions.*

**H7:** *Brand awareness mediates the relationship between brand image and purchase decisions.*

## Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of social media marketing and brand image on purchase decisions, with brand awareness as a mediating variable. The study used a survey method to collect primary data from consumers who have purchased cosmetic products at Risa Store Semurup. The population consisted of all consumers of Risa Store Semurup. Because the exact population size was unknown, a non-probability sampling technique was applied using accidental sampling. A total of 80 respondents who had experience purchasing cosmetic products from the store participated in this study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire measured four variables: social media marketing, brand image, brand awareness, and purchase decisions. Prior to the main analysis, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement instruments. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. The analysis included descriptive statistics, validity and reliability testing, and path analysis to examine both direct and indirect relationships among variables. Hypothesis testing was conducted using t-tests with a significance level of 5% to determine whether the proposed relationships between variables were statistically significant..

## Result and Discussion

### Reliability Testing

Reliability testing was conducted to determine the consistency and stability of the measurement instruments used in this study. Reliability refers to the extent to which a set of measurement items consistently reflects the construct being measured (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 1.** Reliability Tets Result

| No | Variables                   | Cutoff Point | Cronbach Alpha | Info.    |
|----|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| 1  | Purchase Decision (Y)       | >0,60        | 0,926          | Reliable |
| 2  | Brand awarenes (Z)          | >0,60        | 0,941          | Reliable |
| 3  | Social Media Marketing (X1) | >0,60        | 0,896          | Reliable |
| 4  | Brand Image (X2)            | >0,60        | 0,854          | Reliable |

### Path Analysis Test

#### Structural Equation Analysis 1

**F<sub>test</sub>**

The first structural equation analysis was conducted to examine the influence of social media marketing and brand image on brand awareness. In this model, social

media marketing ( $X_1$ ) and brand image ( $X_2$ ) act as independent variables, while brand awareness ( $Z$ ) serves as the dependent variable.

**Table 2.** Structural Equation Analysis 1

| <b>F test</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>Info</b>            |
|---------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 0.427         | 0.654       | Not Significant Effect |

Source: Data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 (2025)

Based on Table 2, the results of the simultaneous test indicate that the structural model does not show a significant effect. This can be observed from the significance value (Sig.) of 0.654, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. In addition, the calculated F-value (Fcount = 0.427) is lower than the F-table value (Ftable = 3.115). These results indicate that social media marketing and brand image simultaneously do not have a significant influence on brand awareness. This finding suggests that the marketing activities carried out through social media and the perceived brand image of the store have not yet been able to significantly increase consumers' awareness of the brand.

### Coefficients Substruktur I

**Table 3.** Coefficients Substruktur I

| <b>Model</b>                 | <b>t test</b> | <b>t table</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>R square</b> | <b>Info.</b>               |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Social<br>Media<br>Marketing | 0.178         | 1.991          | 0.859       | 0.011           | H <sub>1</sub><br>Rejected |
| Brand<br>Image               | 0.897         |                | 0.373       |                 | H <sub>2</sub><br>Rejected |

Source: Data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 (2025)

The partial test (t-test) was conducted to examine the individual influence of social media marketing and brand image on brand awareness. The significance level used in this study was 5% (0.05) with a two-tailed test. With a total sample of 80 respondents, the degree of freedom (df) was calculated using the formula  $df = n - k$ , resulting in  $df = 80 - 3 = 77$ . Based on this calculation, the t-table value is 1.991.

The results of the partial test show that social media marketing does not have a significant effect on brand awareness. This is indicated by the t-count value of 0.178, which is lower than the t-table value of 1.991 ( $0.178 < 1.991$ ), and the significance value of 0.859, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, H<sub>1</sub> is rejected, indicating that social media marketing does not significantly influence brand awareness.

Similarly, brand image also does not have a significant effect on brand awareness. This is evidenced by the t-count value of 0.897, which is lower than the t-table value of 1.991 ( $0.897 < 1.991$ ), and the significance value of 0.373, which is greater than 0.05. Consequently, H<sub>2</sub> is rejected, indicating that brand image does not significantly influence brand awareness.

Furthermore, the R-square value of 0.011 indicates that social media marketing and brand image collectively explain only 1.1% of the variance in brand awareness, while the remaining 98.9% is influenced by other variables not included in this study.

### Error Term Coefficient (e)

The coefficient of other variables outside the model (error term) was calculated to determine the influence of variables not included in the structural model. The error term is calculated using the following formula:

$$e = \sqrt{1 - R^2}$$

Based on the coefficient of determination obtained in the first structural model ( $R^2 = 0.011$ ), the error term can be calculated as follows:

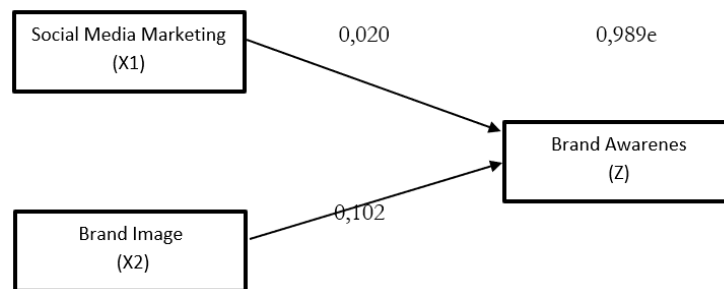
$$e = \sqrt{1 - 0.011}$$

$$e = \sqrt{0.989}$$

$$e = 0.994$$

The result indicates that the error coefficient is 0.994, meaning that 99.4% of the variance in brand awareness is influenced by other variables outside the model, while only 1.1% is explained by social media marketing and brand image included in this study.

**Figure 1.** Substructure Equation Model I



The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.011 indicates that social media marketing and brand image explain only 1.1% of the variance in brand awareness, while the remaining 98.9% is influenced by other variables outside the research model. Furthermore, the simultaneous test results show that the model is not statistically significant, as the significance value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that social media marketing and brand image do not have a significant effect on brand awareness in the context of this study.

**Structural Equation Analysis II**

$F_{test}$

**Table 4.** Structural Equation Analysis II

| F test | Sig.  | Info                   |
|--------|-------|------------------------|
| 1.389  | 0.253 | Not Significant Effect |

Source: Data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 (2025)

Based on Table 4, the results of the simultaneous test indicate that the structural model does not show a significant effect. This can be observed from the significance value (Sig. = 0.253), which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. In addition, the calculated F-value ( $F_{count} = 1.389$ ) is lower than the F-table value ( $F_{table} = 3.115$ ). These results indicate that social media marketing and brand image simultaneously do not have a significant effect on purchase decisions. This finding suggests that the marketing activities carried out through social media and the perceived brand image of the store have not yet been able to significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions.

**Coefficients Substruktur II**

**Table 5.** Coefficients Substruktur II

| Model                  | t test | t table | Sig.  | R square | Info.             |
|------------------------|--------|---------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Social Media Marketing | 0.721  | 1.991   | 0.473 | 0.052    | $H_3$<br>Rejected |

|                 |        |       |                            |
|-----------------|--------|-------|----------------------------|
| Brand Image     | 0.807  | 0.422 | H <sub>4</sub><br>Rejected |
| Brand Awareness | -1.805 | 0.075 | H <sub>5</sub><br>Rejected |

Source: Data processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 (2025)

The partial test (t-test) was conducted to examine the individual influence of social media marketing, brand image, and brand awareness on purchase decisions. The significance level used in this study was 5% (0.05) with a two-tailed test. With a total sample of 80 respondents, the degree of freedom (df) was calculated using the formula  $df = n - k$ , resulting in  $df = 80 - 3 = 77$ . Based on this calculation, the t-table value is 1.991. The results indicate that social media marketing does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions. This is evidenced by the t-count value of 0.721, which is lower than the t-table value ( $0.721 < 1.991$ ), and the significance value of 0.473, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, H3 is rejected, indicating that social media marketing does not significantly influence purchase decisions. Similarly, brand image also does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions. The t-count value is 0.807, which is lower than the t-table value ( $0.807 < 1.991$ ), and the significance value is 0.422, which is greater than 0.05. Thus, H4 is rejected, indicating that brand image does not significantly influence purchase decisions. Furthermore, brand awareness does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions. This is indicated by the t-count value of -1.805, which is lower than the t-table value ( $-1.805 < 1.991$ ), and the significance value of 0.075, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, H5 is rejected, meaning that brand awareness does not significantly influence purchase decisions.

In addition, the R-square value of 0.052 indicates that social media marketing, brand image, and brand awareness collectively explain only 5.2% of the variance in purchase decisions, while the remaining 94.8% is influenced by other variables not included in this study.

### Error Term Coefficient (e)

Based on the coefficient of determination obtained in the second structural model ( $R^2 = 0.052$ ), the error term can be calculated as follows:

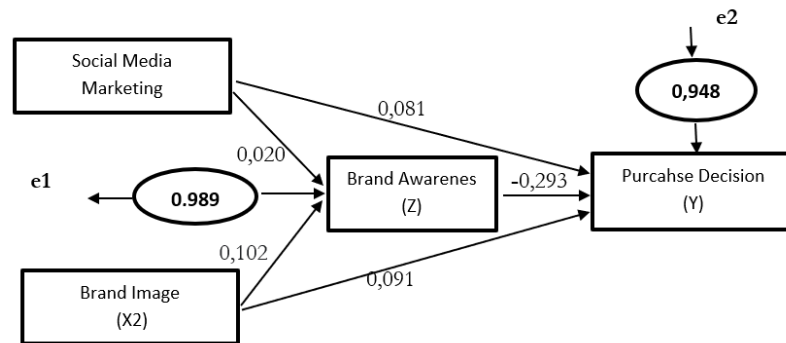
$$e = \sqrt{1 - 0.052}$$

$$e = \sqrt{0.948}$$

$$e = 0.974$$

This result indicates that 97.4% of the variance in purchase decisions is influenced by other variables outside the research model, while 5.2% is explained by social media marketing, brand image, and brand awareness included in this study.

The structural equation indicates that social media marketing and brand image have positive coefficients toward purchase decisions, meaning that an increase in social media marketing activities or brand image tends to increase purchase decisions. However, brand awareness has a negative coefficient (-0.203), indicating that an increase in brand awareness tends to reduce purchase decisions within the context of this model.

**Figure 2.** Substructure Equation Model II

Nevertheless, based on the hypothesis testing results, none of these relationships were statistically significant, indicating that social media marketing, brand image, and brand awareness do not significantly influence purchase decisions in this study.

## Discussion

### The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, social media marketing does not have a significant effect on brand awareness. This finding indicates that marketing activities carried out through social media platforms by Risa Store Semurup have not been able to effectively increase consumer awareness of the brand. From the perspective of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, social media marketing acts as a stimulus that is expected to influence consumers' internal psychological states (organism), such as perception, cognition, and brand recognition, which ultimately produce behavioral responses (response) such as awareness or purchasing behavior. According to the SOR framework, external stimuli received by consumers must first be processed internally before producing behavioral outcomes. However, the results of this study indicate that the stimulus generated through social media marketing has not been strong enough to influence consumers' internal cognitive responses, resulting in insignificant brand awareness formation. One possible explanation is that consumers are currently exposed to a large amount of digital marketing content on social media platforms, which can reduce the effectiveness of marketing messages if they are not sufficiently engaging or differentiated.

This result is inconsistent with previous studies that found a significant relationship between social media marketing and brand awareness. For example, research by Yadav and Rahman (2017) found that social media marketing activities significantly influence brand awareness and customer engagement. Similarly, Bilgin (2018) reported that social media marketing positively affects brand awareness and consumer purchase intention. The difference between these findings and the current study may be influenced by differences in research context, product category, or the intensity of digital marketing strategies implemented by the company.

### The Effect of Brand Image on Brand Awareness

The results of this study indicate that brand image does not have a significant effect on brand awareness. This finding suggests that consumers' perceptions of the brand image of Risa Store Semurup have not yet developed strongly enough to influence their level of awareness toward the brand. Within the Stimulus–Organism–

Response (SOR) framework, brand image can function as a stimulus that shapes consumer perceptions and attitudes toward a brand. These perceptions are processed internally by consumers before generating responses such as brand recognition, loyalty, or purchase behavior. When a brand image is strong and consistent, it can trigger positive cognitive and emotional responses that strengthen brand awareness. However, the insignificant effect observed in this study may indicate that consumers' perceptions of the brand image are still relatively weak or not clearly differentiated from competitors. As a result, the brand image stimulus does not effectively influence the organism stage (consumer cognition) that leads to brand awareness.

These findings contradict previous studies which found a significant relationship between brand image and brand awareness. For instance, Keller (2013) emphasized that brand image plays a crucial role in building brand awareness and brand equity. Similarly, Aaker (2014) argued that a strong brand image contributes significantly to consumers' ability to recognize and recall a brand. The difference between the present findings and previous studies may be attributed to the scale of the business, the intensity of branding strategies, or the relatively limited exposure of the brand in the market.

### **The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions**

The results of hypothesis testing show that social media marketing does not significantly influence purchase decisions. This finding indicates that the social media marketing strategies implemented by Risa Store Semurup have not been able to directly encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions. In the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model, social media marketing serves as an external stimulus that should influence consumers' internal states such as attitudes, trust, and perceived value, which subsequently lead to behavioral responses in the form of purchasing decisions. However, if the stimulus fails to generate strong psychological engagement within consumers, the expected behavioral response may not occur. One possible explanation for this finding is that consumers may use social media primarily for information search or entertainment rather than immediate purchasing decisions. Additionally, other factors such as price, product quality, consumer trust, and word-of-mouth recommendations may play a more dominant role in influencing purchasing decisions.

These findings differ from previous studies which reported a significant relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. For example, Bilgin (2018) found that social media marketing activities significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior in the digital environment. Likewise, Kim and Ko (2012) demonstrated that social media marketing has a positive impact on purchase intention in luxury fashion brands.

### **The Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decisions**

The results of this study also show that brand image does not significantly influence purchase decisions. This indicates that consumers' perceptions of the brand image of Risa Store Semurup are not strong enough to influence their purchasing behavior. According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, brand image can function as a stimulus that shapes consumer attitudes and trust toward a product. When consumers perceive a brand positively, these perceptions are processed internally and may lead to behavioral responses such as purchasing decisions. However, the insignificant result suggests that brand image alone may not be sufficient to influence purchasing decisions in this research context. Consumers may rely more

on other factors such as product price, product quality, personal recommendations, or promotional offers when deciding to purchase cosmetic products.

This finding contrasts with previous studies which reported that brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions. For instance, Kotler and Keller (2016) explained that brand image plays a crucial role in influencing consumer preferences and purchasing behavior. Similarly, Chen (2010) found that a positive brand image significantly affects consumers' purchasing decisions in various product categories.

### **The Effect of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions**

The results of this study indicate that brand awareness does not significantly influence purchase decisions. This finding suggests that although consumers may recognize the brand, this recognition does not necessarily translate into actual purchasing behavior. Within the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, brand awareness represents the cognitive stage of the organism component. Consumers who are aware of a brand are expected to develop further attitudes or preferences that eventually lead to behavioral responses such as purchasing decisions. However, brand awareness alone may not be sufficient to drive purchasing behavior without additional factors such as perceived quality, trust, or promotional incentives.

The results of this study differ from previous research which reported that brand awareness has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. For example, Hutter et al. (2013) found that brand awareness generated through social media engagement significantly influences consumer purchasing behavior. Likewise, Macdonald and Sharp (2000) argued that brand awareness plays a critical role in consumer choice and purchasing decisions.

### **The Mediating Effect of Brand Awareness on the Relationship Between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decisions**

The results of this study indicate that brand awareness does not mediate the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. This result suggests that although social media marketing activities may expose consumers to brand-related information, such exposure does not significantly increase brand awareness in a way that leads to purchase decisions. Within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, social media marketing functions as a stimulus that is expected to influence consumers' internal psychological processes (organism), such as brand awareness, which subsequently leads to behavioral responses (response) in the form of purchase decisions. However, the findings of this study indicate that the stimulus generated through social media marketing has not been able to effectively stimulate consumers' cognitive responses in terms of brand awareness. Consequently, the mediation mechanism predicted by the SOR theory does not occur in this research context. One possible explanation is that consumers may be exposed to social media marketing content but do not necessarily internalize the information sufficiently to form strong brand awareness. Additionally, consumers may rely more on other factors such as product price, product quality, peer recommendations, or personal preferences when making purchasing decisions.

This finding differs from previous studies that found a significant mediating role of brand awareness between social media marketing and purchase decisions. For example, Hutter et al. (2013) found that consumer interactions with brands on social media significantly increase brand awareness, which subsequently influences purchase intention. Similarly, Bilgin (2018) reported that social media marketing activities

contribute to brand awareness formation and indirectly influence consumer purchasing behavior. The difference between these findings and the present study may be attributed to variations in marketing strategies, market characteristics, or consumer engagement levels with social media content.

### **The Mediating Effect of Brand Awareness on the Relationship Between Brand Image and Purchase Decisions**

The results of this study also indicate that brand awareness does not mediate the relationship between brand image and purchase decisions. This finding suggests that although brand image may shape consumers' perceptions of a brand, these perceptions do not significantly translate into brand awareness that leads to purchasing decisions. According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, brand image can act as an external stimulus that influences consumers' internal cognitive and emotional states, such as brand awareness and brand attitudes. These internal processes are expected to generate behavioral responses in the form of purchase decisions. However, the findings of this study indicate that the brand image stimulus has not been sufficiently strong to generate the cognitive responses necessary for the mediation process to occur. One possible explanation is that consumers may perceive the brand image positively but still consider other factors such as product quality, price competitiveness, product availability, and peer recommendations before making purchasing decisions. As a result, brand awareness does not function as an effective mediator between brand image and purchase decisions.

This finding is inconsistent with previous research which found that brand awareness plays a significant mediating role between brand image and consumer purchasing behavior. For instance, Keller (2013) emphasized that brand awareness and brand image are key components of brand equity that jointly influence consumer responses to marketing activities. Similarly, Hutter et al. (2013) found that brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between brand-related marketing stimuli and consumer purchasing behavior.

### **Conclusion**

The findings indicate that social media marketing and brand image play important roles in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Social media marketing serves as a marketing stimulus that provides information, communication, and interaction between brands and consumers through digital platforms. When implemented effectively, these marketing activities can directly encourage consumers to make purchase decisions. Likewise, brand image also contributes to shaping consumer perceptions and trust toward a brand, which in turn influences their willingness to purchase the product. However, the results of this study show that brand awareness does not significantly mediate the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions, nor between brand image and purchase decisions. This indicates that although consumers may be exposed to marketing activities and develop certain perceptions about a brand, these factors do not necessarily strengthen brand awareness to a level that influences purchasing behavior indirectly. In other words, the stimulus provided by marketing activities may directly influence consumer responses without necessarily passing through the cognitive mediation process predicted by the SOR model. These findings suggest that in the context of this study, consumers may rely more on direct evaluations of marketing information and brand perceptions when making purchase decisions rather than on the level of brand

awareness alone. Therefore, companies should not only focus on increasing brand recognition but also ensure that their marketing communication effectively highlights product value, quality, and differentiation to encourage consumer purchasing behavior. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior by providing empirical evidence on how social media marketing and brand image influence purchase decisions within the SOR theoretical perspective. The results also highlight the complexity of consumer decision-making processes in the digital era, where exposure to marketing stimuli does not always translate into cognitive mediation through brand awareness.

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