



## **Digital Marketing in Forming Preferences and Decisions to Purchase Local Skincare among Generation Z Women in Bandung City**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines how digital marketing elements, namely visual content, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and narrative advertising, influence brand preference and purchase decisions among Generation Z women in Bandung. A quantitative explanatory survey was employed, collecting data via online questionnaire from 204 respondents selected through purposive sampling, and the data was analyzed using a method called Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through measurement and structural model evaluation. The findings reveal that visual content exerts a positive and significant effect on brand preference, whereas eWOM shows a negative and significant effect, suggesting excessive exposure to unverified reviews paradoxically diminishes consumer preference, and narrative advertising shows no statistically significant effect. Furthermore, brand preference positively and significantly influences purchase decisions, confirming its role as a critical mediating variable. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing elements depends on how stimuli are cognitively and affectively processed, making visual content quality and proactive eWOM management key priorities for marketers targeting Generation Z local skincare consumers. This study contributes to the S-O-R literature by integrating multiple digital marketing stimuli into a single explanatory model within the context of Indonesia's local skincare industry.

**Keywords:** Brand Preference; Digital Marketing; Generation Z; Local Skincare; Purchase Decision



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## INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry in Indonesia has grown rapidly in the past decade, with local skincare brands becoming increasingly dominant in the market. This shift is driven by evolving consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z, who are highly active on social media and deeply embedded in digital technology (Wijaya et al., 2020). Purchase decisions within this demographic are shaped not only by product quality but also by how brands position and present themselves across digital platforms. Bandung, as an urban center with high digital penetration and a substantial Generation Z population, provides a particularly relevant setting for examining these dynamics.

In the digital marketing landscape, visual content, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and narrative advertising have emerged as prominent stimuli influencing consumer cognition and behavior. Prior studies have demonstrated that visual media and digital messaging enhance purchase intention (Martinez et al., 2020; Suparno, 2020), while eWOM contributes to the formation of brand trust (Boateng, 2021). Narrative advertising strategies have similarly been found to strengthen emotional engagement between consumers and brands (Hong et al., 2021).

However, the existing literature reveals three critical gaps that this study seeks to address. At the empirical level, prior studies have predominantly examined visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising in isolation, and few have integrated all three stimuli within a single structural model to assess their simultaneous effects on brand preference and purchase decisions (Chaniago & Efawati, 2022). At the contextual level, most research has been conducted in Western or East Asian markets and within industries such as culinary or aesthetic services (Saville et al., 2020; Sukhyun & Hwang, 2020), leaving the Indonesian local skincare industry a rapidly growing and culturally distinct market largely underexplored. At the theoretical level, while findings on the relative influence of digital marketing elements remain inconsistent with (Tabassum et al., 2020) arguing that narrative advertising exerts greater influence on purchase intention than eWOM, while others emphasize eWOM's dominant role the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework has rarely been extended to account for multiple digital marketing stimuli acting concurrently, limiting its explanatory power in complex consumer decision-making contexts.

To address these gaps, this study integrates visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising into a single analytical model, with brand preference positioned as a mediating variable linking digital marketing stimuli to purchase decisions among Generation Z women in Bandung. By doing so, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing elements collectively shape consumer behavior within the Indonesian local skincare industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to the use of electronic devices and internet-based platforms to promote products and services in ways that are interactive, personalized, and measurable. For Generation Z, a cohort that has grown up immersed in digital technology, digital marketing transcends mere communication; it constitutes an ecosystem that actively shapes daily habits and consumer preferences (Schapis et al., 2025).

Unlike traditional marketing, digital marketing enables two-way dialogue, allowing consumers to engage directly with brands rather than passively receiving messages (Fajarwati & Haliza, 2024). Lopes & Casais (2022) further emphasize that

digital content marketing creates value by delivering relevant, consistent content that attracts and retains a clearly defined audience (Mediana et al., 2026). Within Indonesia's e-commerce landscape, Briliana & Prasastyo (2025) found that social media engagement significantly drives impulse buying behavior among Generation Z women, while Wiqar et al. (2025) confirm that visually appealing and engaging digital content increases the likelihood of purchase.

Collectively, these studies suggest that digital marketing operates through multiple stimuli simultaneously, including visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising, each of which may influence consumer cognition and brand evaluation in distinct ways.

### **Visual Content**

Visual content refers to image and video based digital material used by brands to communicate identity, value, and aesthetic appeal across online platforms. It functions as a primary stimulus in the digital environment, capturing consumer attention and shaping perceptual responses before any deliberate information processing occurs (Lou & Xie, 2021).

Visually compelling content has been shown to enhance consumer engagement and strengthen emotional connections with brands, which in turn elevates brand preference (Wiqar et al., 2025). Martinez et al. (2020) demonstrated that the visual design of web advertising significantly influences purchase intention among younger consumers, including Generation Z, by creating favorable cognitive and affective associations. (Li et al., 2023) further found that user-generated visual content enhances perceived helpfulness and credibility, which reinforces brand evaluations.

From a brand communication perspective, Gómez-Rico et al. (2023) established that novel visual instruments of brand communication contribute directly to building brand preference and behavioral intention among consumers. Lopes & Casais (2022) similarly argue that high-quality digital content, particularly visual formats, is central to effective content marketing strategies that sustain consumer interest and loyalty. Together, these findings suggest that when visual content is well-crafted and strategically deployed, it serves as a powerful stimulus that positively shapes how consumers perceive and prefer a brand. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Visual content has a positive effect on the brand preference of local skincare brands among Generation Z women in Bandung.

### **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)**

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product or brand, made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet (Sulthana & Vasantha, 2019). As a socially driven stimulus, eWOM influences consumer decision-making by providing peer-based evaluations that are perceived as more credible and authentic than brand-generated content.

Boateng (2021) found that eWOM exerts a significant influence on brand image and brand integrity among Generation Z females, ultimately shaping their purchase intentions toward cosmetic products. Seo et al. (2020) demonstrated that social media usage characteristics, including frequency and depth of eWOM exposure, positively affect brand equity, suggesting that consistent online conversations about a brand reinforce its perceived value. (Yoon et al., 2019) established that eWOM characteristics

such as volume, valence, and variance significantly influence consumer ratings, thereby affecting brand evaluations. Ngo et al. (2024) further confirmed that eWOM information shared via social media has a direct and positive impact on online purchase intention among Generation Z, mediated through trust formation. Wang et al. (2015) additionally showed that message characteristics of eWOM, including argument quality and source credibility, determine its perceived effectiveness in shaping consumer attitudes.

Collectively, these studies indicate that eWOM functions as a social organism-level stimulus that shapes brand preference through trust, credibility, and shared consumer experience. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a positive effect on the brand preference of local skincare brands among Generation Z women in Bandung.

### **Narrative Ads**

Narrative advertising refers to a form of brand communication that conveys brand messages through story-based formats, engaging consumers emotionally by situating products within relatable human experiences (Chen & Yao, 2022). Unlike informational advertising, narrative advertising operates by transporting consumers into a story world, thereby reducing psychological resistance to persuasive intent and fostering deeper emotional engagement with the brand (Feng et al., 2021).

Hong et al. (2021) found that consumer brand storytelling influences brand attitude through both emotional and cognitive pathways, demonstrating that narratives are effective in building positive brand associations. (Yıldız & Sever, 2022) confirmed in a real-life experimental setting that narrative advertising positively affects consumer attitudes and brand evaluations, with effects sustained over time. Johnson et al. (2023) further argue through conviction narrative theory that narratives reduce uncertainty in decision-making by providing emotionally coherent frameworks that guide consumer judgment. Chen & Yao (2022) showed that immersive narrative messages in virtual marketing enhance transportation and telepresence, leading to stronger brand connections. Boerman & Müller (2022) additionally found that the way branded content is framed, including narrative cues, affects how consumers identify and respond to marketing messages on social media.

Together, these findings suggest that narrative advertising functions as a stimulus that engages consumers affectively and cognitively, building favorable brand associations that translate into stronger brand preference. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Narrative advertising has a positive effect on the brand preference of local skincare brands among Generation Z women in Bandung.

### **Brand Preferences**

Brand preference is defined as the degree to which consumers favor one brand over competing alternatives based on prior experience, perceived value, and emotional attachment (Kurnia & Hasyim, 2023; Ali et al., 2026)). In the context of consumer behavior, brand preference serves as a critical mediating organism between marketing stimuli and behavioral outcomes, particularly purchase decisions.

Abualbasal and Hasan (2024) demonstrated that brand quality perceptions significantly drive purchase intention toward local brands, with preference functioning as the evaluative bridge between stimulus exposure and behavioral response. (Gómez-Rico

et al., 2023) similarly found that brand preference directly predicts behavioral intention, confirming its role as a proximal antecedent of consumer action. Ho & Chow (2024) established that brand preference mediates the relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase behavior in competitive markets, suggesting that preference consolidates prior evaluations into a purchase-ready disposition. Kurnia & Hasyim (2023) further found that consumer perceptions of product attributes directly shape brand preference, which in turn drives purchase behavior in the outdoor sports industry. Fitriasaki et al. (2025) confirmed in the Indonesian skincare context specifically that favorable brand evaluations among Generation Z translate into concrete purchase decisions.

These findings collectively support the view that brand preference is not merely an attitudinal outcome but an active driver of purchase behavior, particularly in categories where emotional and social factors are salient. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand preference has a positive effect on local skincare purchase decisions among Generation Z women in Bandung.

### Research Hypothesis

Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, this study positions visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising as external stimuli that are cognitively and affectively processed by consumers, manifesting as brand preference, which subsequently drives purchase decisions. Visual content functions as an aesthetic and informational cue that shapes perceptual evaluations (Lopes & Casais 2022; Martinez et al., 2020), while eWOM operates as a social proof mechanism that grounds brand preference in peer-validated experience (Sulthana & Vasantha, 2019); Ngo et al., 2024). Narrative advertising, through the mechanism of narrative transportation, builds emotional attachment that reinforces favorable brand associations (Feng et al., 2021).

The brand preference formed through these stimuli then serves as an information-filtering mechanism that reduces consumer uncertainty and translates evaluative judgment into concrete purchase behavior (Ho & Chow, 2024).

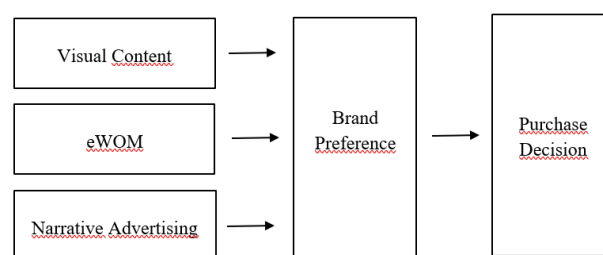


Figure 1. Model of the Research Framework  
Source: Own Compilation (2026)

Based on this description, the hypothesis of this study is as follows.

H1: Visual content has a positive effect on the preferences of local skincare brands in Generation Z women in the city of Bandung.

H2: Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) positively affects the preferences of Generation Z women in Bandung for local skincare brands.

H3: Narrative advertising positively affects the preferences of Generation Z women in Bandung toward local skincare brands.

H4: Brand preferences positively affect local skincare purchase decisions among Generation Z women in Bandung.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study uses a quantitative, explanatory survey design to analyze the relationships among digital marketing elements, brand preferences, and purchasing decisions. Data were collected through an online questionnaire on Google Forms, aimed at Generation Z women in Bandung who are active on social media and have experience buying local skincare products.

### **Population and Sample**

The study's demographic consists of Bandung-based Generation Z women who have bought local skincare goods and accessed digital marketing information. Non probability purposive sampling is the method employed. Respondent criteria include women who were born between 1997 and 2012, domiciled in the city of Bandung, actively use social media (Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube), and have purchased local skincare products in the last six months.

The number of research indicators determines the number of samples; each indicator must have at least five samples (Chaniago et al., 2023). This study satisfies the minimum sample size requirement of 200 respondents with a total of 20 indicators.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The major data used in this investigation came from questionnaires. Indicators for each variable including visual content, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), narrative advertising, brand preferences, and purchase decisions were used to create the research instruments. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), was used to measure each factor.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, aiming to ensure ease of access and optimize the data collection process, as the respondents are digitally active individuals accustomed to using online platforms.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis was employed to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of responses to each research variable. The inferential analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is appropriate for predictive models with latent variables and does not require multivariate normality assumptions.

The measurement model (outer model) was assessed through convergent validity, evaluated using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity. Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha were used to evaluate construct reliability. The structural model (inner model) was evaluated using R-square values to assess the predictive power of the model. Hypothesis testing was performed through a bootstrapping procedure, with significance determined at t-statistic > 1.96 or p-value < 0.05.



## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Respondent Characteristics

An outline of the participant profiles is given by the characteristics of the study's respondents. Gender, age group according to year of birth, level of social media use, and experience buying local skincare products during the previous six months were among the data reviewed.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

| Characteristics          | Categories     | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Gender                   | Female         | 204       | 100%        |
| Age (Birth Year)         | 1997–2000      | 59        | 28,92%      |
|                          | 2001-2005      | 95        | 46,57%      |
|                          | 2006-2012      | 50        | 24,51%      |
| Social Media Usage       | Every Day      | 152       | 74,51%      |
|                          | 3-5 times/week | 42        | 20,59%      |
|                          | < 3 times/week | 10        | 4,90%       |
| Purchase (Last 6 Months) | Yes            | 202       | 99,02%      |
|                          | No             | 2         | 0,98%       |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

According to Table 1's data analysis results, 100% of the study's respondents were female. The majority of respondents (46.57%) were born between 2001 and 2005, followed by those born between 1997 and 2000 (28.92%) and those born between 2006 and 2012 (24.51%). This indicates that Generation Z makes up the majority of the study's respondents.

The majority of respondents (74.51%) used social media every day, compared to 20.59% who used it three to five times a week and 4.90% who used it fewer than three times. Furthermore, a high adoption rate is indicated by the fact that nearly all respondents (99.02%) had bought local skincare products in the last six months.

### Evaluation of Measurement Models (Outer Model)

The measurement model was utilized to evaluate the validity and reliability of the research constructs within the PLS-SEM framework. The assessment was performed by examining convergent validity and discriminant validity.

### Validitas Convergent

Convergent validity is assessed based on outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha. Indicators are deemed valid if the outer loading value is above 0.60 and the AVE exceeds 0.50.

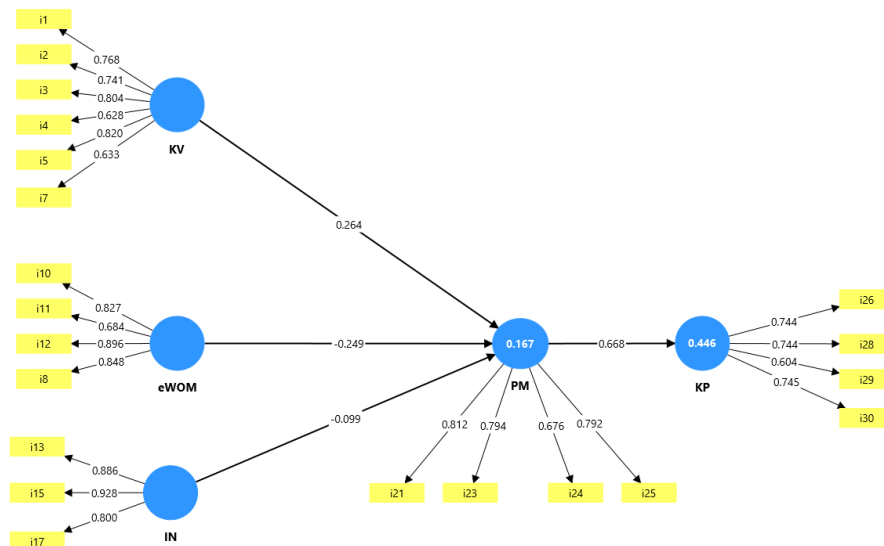


Figure 2. Research Model  
 Source: Own Compilation (2026)

According to the test results, every indicator for every study variable has an outer loading value greater than 0.60, meaning that every indication is reliable and capable of representing the measured construct. Outside loading values for the visual content variable ranged from 0.628 to 0.820, eWOM from 0.684 to 0.896, narrative advertising from 0.800 to 0.928, brand preference from 0.676 to 0.812, and purchase decision from 0.604 to 0.745. Along with outer loading, all variables showed sufficient construct reliability with Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 and convergent validity with AVE values over 0.50.

Table 2. Results of Construct Validity and Reliability Tests

| Variable               | Outer Loading Range | AVE   | Composite Reliability | Cronbach's Alpha | Remarks            |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Visual Content (KV)    | 0.628 - 0.820       | 0.542 | 0.875                 | 0.671            | Valid and Reliable |
| eWOM                   | 0.684 - 0.896       | 0.669 | 0.889                 | 0.847            | Valid and Reliable |
| Narrative Ads (IN)     | 0.800 - 0.928       | 0.762 | 0.906                 | 0.846            | Valid and Reliable |
| Brand Preference (PM)  | 0.676 - 0.812       | 0.594 | 0.853                 | 0.770            | Valid and Reliable |
| Purchase Decision (KP) | 0.604-0.745         | 0.507 | 0.803                 | 0.671            | Valid and Reliable |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

### Discriminant Validity

Each construct demonstrates discriminant validity when its indicators load more strongly onto their own construct than onto any other, confirming that all variables in this study are empirically distinct from one another.



Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

|      | IN     | KP     | KV     | PM     | eWom  |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| IN   | 0.873  |        |        |        |       |
| KP   | -0.048 | 0.712  |        |        |       |
| KV   | -0.063 | 0.492  | 0.736  |        |       |
| PM   | -0.097 | 0.668  | 0.320  | 0.770  |       |
| eWOM | -0.076 | -0.460 | -0.202 | -0.294 | 0.818 |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

As presented in Table 3, the square root of AVE for each construct (diagonal values) exceeds the inter-construct correlations in the corresponding rows and columns, confirming that discriminant validity is established for all constructs.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

|      | IN    | KP    | KV    | PM    | eWom |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| IN   |       |       |       |       |      |
| KP   | 0.086 |       |       |       |      |
| KV   | 0.097 | 0.648 |       |       |      |
| PM   | 0.114 | 0.926 | 0.383 |       |      |
| eWOM | 0.103 | 0.581 | 0.231 | 0.322 |      |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

Table 4 presents the HTMT ratios between constructs. All values fall below the threshold of 0.90, with the exception of the PM–KP relationship (0.926), which remains below 1.0 and is considered acceptable given the theoretical relatedness between brand preference and purchase decision.

### Evaluation of Structural Models (Inner Model)

#### R-Square Value

The R-square value was employed to assess how well visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising account for variations in brand preference, as well as the extent to which brand preference explains variations in local skincare purchase decisions among Generation Z women in Bandung.

Table 5. R-Square Value

|                        | R-Square | R-Square Adjusted |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Purchase Decision (KP) | 0.446    | 0.443             |
| Brand Preference (PM)  | 0.167    | 0.155             |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

An R-square value of 0.167 for brand preference suggests that only 16.7% of its variation is accounted for by visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising, with the remaining 83.3% attributable to factors beyond the scope of the model. For purchase decision, an R-square value of 0.446 indicates that 44.6% of its variation is explained by brand preference, while the other 55.4% is driven by external variables not captured in the model. Overall, these values reflect that the research model possesses a moderate level of predictive power in explaining both brand preference and local skincare purchase decisions among Generation Z women in Bandung.

## Model Quality Criteria

Collinearity assessment was conducted to ensure that the predictor constructs in the structural model are not highly correlated with one another. All VIF values are below the threshold of 5.0, with the lowest value recorded for IN → PM (1.012) and the highest for eWOM → PM (1.051).

Table 6. Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

|            | VIF   |
|------------|-------|
| eWOM -> PM | 1.051 |
| IN -> PM   | 1.012 |
| KV -> PM   | 1.049 |
| PM -> KP   | 1.000 |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern in this study, confirming that each construct contributes independently to the model and that the structural estimates are reliable.

Table 7. Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

|            | f-square |
|------------|----------|
| eWOM -> PM | 0.071    |
| IN -> PM   | 0.012    |
| KV -> PM   | 0.080    |
| PM -> KP   | 0.805    |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

The relationship between PM and KP demonstrates a large effect size ( $f^2 = 0.805$ ), indicating that brand preference has a substantial influence on purchase decision. The remaining paths, eWOM → PM ( $f^2 = 0.071$ ), KV → PM ( $f^2 = 0.080$ ), and IN → PM ( $f^2 = 0.012$ ), show small effect sizes, suggesting a modest contribution of each variable to brand preference.

## Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was carried out by evaluating the path coefficient values, t-statistics, and p-values generated through the bootstrapping procedure. A hypothesis is considered supported when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 or the p-value falls below 0.05.

Table 8. Hypothesis Test

|            | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics ( O/STDEV ) | P Values |
|------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| eWOM -> PM | -0.249              | -0.265          | 0.063                      | 3.934                    | 0.000    |
| IN -> PM   | -0.099              | -0.108          | 0.064                      | 1.553                    | 0.120    |
| KV -> PM   | 0.264               | 0.275           | 0.094                      | 2.814                    | 0.005    |
| PM -> KP   | 0.668               | 0.681           | 0.074                      | 8.985                    | 0.000    |

Source: Own Compilation (2026)

The hypothesis testing results revealed that visual content exerted a positive and significant influence on brand preference ( $t=2.814$ ;  $p=0.005$ ), thus providing support for

H1. eWOM demonstrated a significant negative effect on brand preference ( $t=3.934$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), meaning H2 was supported, though in the opposite direction from what was originally hypothesized. Narrative advertising, on the other hand, showed no significant effect on brand preference ( $t=1.553$ ;  $p=0.120$ ), leading to the rejection of H3. Additionally, brand preference exhibited a strong positive and highly significant effect on purchase decisions ( $t=8.985$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), confirming H4.

## DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Visual Content on Brand Preferences

The results indicate that H1 is accepted, meaning that visual content positively and significantly influences brand preference among Generation Z women in Bandung. This finding may be explained by the tendency of Generation Z to rely heavily on visual information from platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Attractive product images, videos, and demonstrations can help consumers understand product benefits more easily and create positive perceptions toward local skincare brands. This finding supports the S-O-R theory, which suggests that visual stimuli can influence consumers' internal evaluations and preferences. It is also consistent with (Lopes & Casais, 2022), who found that visual content increases consumer engagement, and Johnson et al. (2023), who argued that visual stimuli create mental imagery that strengthens brand evaluations. Therefore, local skincare brands should prioritize high-quality visual content to strengthen brand preference.

### The Influence of eWOM on Brand Preferences

The results indicate that the relationship between eWOM and brand preference is statistically significant; however, the effect is negative, contrary to the positive direction proposed in H2. Therefore, H2 is not supported in its original form. One possible explanation is that Generation Z consumers experience information overload due to the large volume of online reviews available on digital platforms. In addition, concerns about fake reviews may increase consumer skepticism and reduce trust in eWOM. Continuous exposure to promotional content may also lead to digital fatigue, making consumers less responsive to online recommendations. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of eWOM may decrease when consumers perceive online information as excessive or less credible. This finding extends previous eWOM literature by showing that online reviews do not always generate positive consumer responses. In the context of Generation Z, excessive and less credible eWOM may trigger skepticism rather than trust, resulting in lower brand preference. Therefore, local skincare brands should focus on maintaining authentic and trustworthy consumer reviews.

### The Influence of Narrative Ads on Brand Preferences

The results indicate that H3 is rejected, showing that narrative advertising does not significantly influence brand preference. This may occur because consumers of skincare products tend to prioritize functional information, such as product ingredients, safety, and effectiveness, rather than storytelling elements. Although narrative advertising can attract

attention, it may not be sufficient to influence brand preference when consumers seek objective information before making evaluations. This result suggests that Narrative Transportation Theory may have limited applicability in skincare purchasing contexts, where consumers rely more on factual and performance-related information than emotional engagement. Therefore, local skincare brands should combine storytelling with informative content to increase marketing effectiveness.

### **The Influence of Brand Preferences on Purchase Decisions**

The results indicate that H4 is accepted, meaning that brand preference positively and significantly influences purchase decisions. Consumers who have a strong preference for a particular skincare brand are more likely to choose and purchase that brand because it reduces uncertainty and simplifies the decision-making process. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that brand preference acts as a key determinant of consumer behavior. This finding also supports the S-O-R framework by confirming that brand preference functions as the organism component that translates marketing stimuli into behavioral responses. Therefore, local skincare brands should focus on building strong brand preference through consistent product quality and effective digital marketing strategies.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This study examined the influence of visual content, eWOM, and narrative advertising on brand preference and purchase decisions among Generation Z women purchasing local skincare products in Bandung. The findings show that visual content positively influences brand preference, while eWOM has a significant negative effect on brand preference, contrary to the proposed hypothesis. Narrative advertising does not significantly affect brand preference, whereas brand preference positively influences purchase decisions.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the S-O-R framework by demonstrating that digital marketing stimuli may generate different consumer responses. In particular, the negative effect of eWOM suggests that information overload, consumer skepticism, and digital fatigue may influence how Generation Z evaluates online information. Practically, local skincare brands should focus on creating engaging visual content, maintaining credible online reviews, and combining storytelling with informative product content.

This study is limited to Generation Z women in Bandung and only examines a limited number of variables. Future research is encouraged to investigate additional factors such as brand trust, influencer credibility, and perceived product quality, as well as broader consumer segments and geographical areas.

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