

The role of brand image in mediating the influence of digital marketing and electronic word of mouth on purchasing decisions at the Jayakarta Bali beach resort & SPA

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Abstract

The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA has a main advantage in the form of a location directly facing the beach and a spacious garden area, as well as maintaining a vintage interior atmosphere. These advantages have not been able to increase the maximum room occupancy rate. This study aims to examine the role of brand image as a mediating variable in the influence of digital marketing and electronic word of mouth on consumer purchasing decisions at The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA. The study population was all guests who had stayed at least three times at The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort And SPA during the 2019-2024 period, with a sample determination according to Hair obtained 180 respondents. Data analysis was carried out using the SEM-PLS method to test the direct and indirect relationships between variables. The results showed that brand image had a significant effect as a mediating variable between digital marketing and e-WOM on purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Brand Image; Digital Marketing; Electronic Word of Mouth; Purchase Decision

1. Introduction

As a world-renowned tourist destination, Bali boasts a diverse array of tourism infrastructure, including hotels, villas, restaurants, and other accommodations, to support its services to tourists. The growing tourism industry and the abundance of accommodation options have intensified competition among companies operating in the industry. Each company strives to demonstrate its superiority, whether through improving service quality to satisfy customers or through advertising through the widespread use of social media (1).

The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA as one of the hotels competing in the Balinese hospitality industry has the main advantage of a location directly facing the beach and a large garden area. The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA still maintains the atmosphere and vintage interior design without any changes in terms of interior or facilities; this is certainly a challenge for them in selling rooms and competing with competitors. The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA always strives to maximize the decision to stay until it reaches the predetermined goal. In fact, for the past six years the hotel occupancy rate has not been optimal, so it needs to be a concern for the management of The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA.

The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA has made several efforts to improve consumer purchasing decisions, including utilizing the rapidly growing digital media that has significantly changed the business landscape (2). However, the use of social media in digital marketing and promotions is still considered suboptimal. The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA management focuses more on providing information about the hotel and underutilizes features and content that can be used to interact with customers, such as Q&A, which involves consumers in the content created, making it less attractive to consumers.

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The use of digital and social media for marketing not only has positive impacts but also negative ones, such as the creation of electric word of mouth in the form of positive and negative reviews. On the one hand, these reviews can serve as references and input for The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA to improve its service based on negative consumer reviews. However, on the other hand, negative reviews can also spread unfavorable information about the hotel, which can be used as a reference for consumers when purchasing products and services (3). On The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA's social media, there are reviews via OTA reaching over 7.0, indicating a significant number of negative reviews on various platforms, thus underlying the lack of an increase in The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA's rating score.

The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA management has taken various steps by empowering GRO HR to record reviews every day so that if a complaint occurs, it can be handled immediately to prevent negative reviews on social media. Comments from The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA website mostly state that The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA is an old hotel, which makes the hotel's brand image less favorable in the eyes of the public. The many comments discussing this could prevent guests from making a purchase decision at The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA.

Based on the challenges faced by The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA, this study aims to analyze in more depth the impact of digital marketing and electronic word of mouth on purchasing decisions in today's digital era, with brand image as a mediating variable. The results of this study are expected to produce a testable model for determining future company policies and strategies.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a form of business that companies use to market their products and services through digital technology online in order to reach a global and specific market (4). Digital marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes electronic devices such as personal computers, smartphones, and mobile phones to engage stakeholders in the marketing process. In practice, digital marketing techniques integrate several aspects of existing marketing communications and conventional media channels, thereby expanding the marketing mix (5).

2.2. Electronic Word Of Mouth

Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) refers to negative or positive statements made by customers about a company's products or services, shared with the public via the internet (6). Information between customers is less susceptible to bias stemming from commercial motives, and is therefore considered more credible than company-based information. This communication, in the form of customer-to-customer reviews and information exchange, influences the overall perception of the value of a product, service, or brand (7). Information provides a sense of security to customers when making purchasing decisions (8).

2.3. Brand Image

Brand image is the view that exists in the customer's memory when remembering and seeing a product brand that can be conceptualized based on type, support, strength, and uniqueness, attributes consist of attributes related to the product, for example price, user, and image of use (9). Brand image is what consumers think or feel when they hear or see a brand name, or essentially what consumers have learned about the brand. Brand image is an interpretation of the accumulated information received by customers. Image information can be seen in the logo or symbol used by a company to represent its products (10).

2.4. Purchasing Decision

Purchasing decisions are a part of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is the actions directly involved in obtaining and determining products and services, including the decision-making processes that precede and follow these actions (11). At the evaluation stage, consumers form preferences between brands in the choice and may also form an intention to purchase the most preferred brand (12). Every consumer or customer must identify their needs according to what they want, then look for information about the product and consider and determine which product they will decide to buy or use (13).

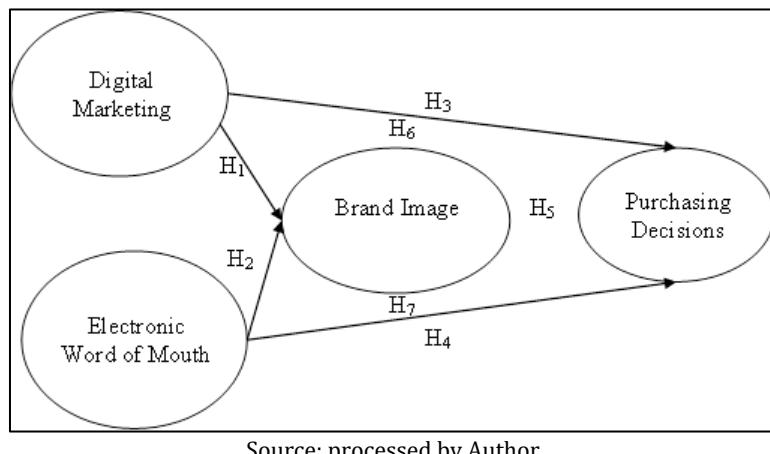
2.5. Research Gap

Many studies have been conducted by previous researchers to provide empirical evidence regarding the factors that influence purchasing decisions. However, most studies focus more on the direct impact of digital marketing and

Electronic Word Of Mouth without considering how brand image can strengthen or weaken the effect of both on Consumer Purchasing Decisions. In addition, specific studies conducted at The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA are still limited, so this study is expected to fill this gap to be able to provide input to The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA regarding policies that must be considered in company development, and for further researchers it can be used as a research view from the perspective of the tourism industry, especially hotels.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The contextual framework of the research on the Role of Brand Image in Mediating the Influence of Digital Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchasing Decisions at The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA, can be presented in the following figure 1.



Source: processed by Author

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

2.7. Hypothesis of Research

- H1: Digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand image
- H2: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant effect on brand image
- H3: Digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions
- H4: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions
- H5: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions
- H6: Digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions through brand image
- H7: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions

3. Method

This research is a quantitative study conducted at The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA located on Jalan Legian, Kuta District, Badung Regency, Bali, Indonesia by considering the phenomena related to the research variables currently faced by The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA. The research population is all guests who have stayed at least three times at The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort And SPA during the period 2019-2024, with sample determination according to (14) which states that the ideal number of samples is 5 to 10 times the number of variable indicators used, based on this, 180 respondents were used from consumers of The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA. Sampling uses a non-probability sampling technique, namely accidental sampling.

The data types are divided into primary data obtained directly from the research location using observation, interview, and questionnaire distribution techniques, which are then scored based on the Linkert Scale from a score of 1 (strongly disagree) to a score of 5 (strongly agree), as well as secondary data which is pre-existing data from the archives of The Jayakarta Bali Beach, Resort & SPA. Data testing is carried out using the Structural Equation Modeling – SEM equation model based on variance or component-based SEM, known as Partial Least Square (PLS), with the following stages:

- Examine the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in a model involving the mediating variable (effect B).
- Examine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in a model without involving the mediating variable (effect A).

- Examine the effect of the independent variable on the mediating variable (effect C).
- Examine the effect of the mediating variable on the dependent variable (effect D).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Outer Model Testing (Measurement Model)

Table 1 Loading Factor Value

Indicator	Digital Marketing (X1)	Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	Brand Image (Z)	Purchase Decisions (Y)	Explanation
X1.1	0.852				Valid
X1.2	0.774				Valid
X1.3	0.722				Valid
X1.4	0.763				Valid
X1.5	0.767				Valid
X1.6	0.827				Valid
X1.7	0.762				Valid
X1.8	0.777				Valid
X1.9	0.823				Valid
X1.10	0.840				Valid
X2.1		0.842			Valid
X2.2		0.737			Valid
X2.3		0.845			Valid
X2.4		0.838			Valid
X2.5		0.822			Valid
X2.6		0.700			Valid
X2.7		0.700			Valid
X2.8		0.794			Valid
M1			0.766		Valid
M2			0.723		Valid
M3			0.807		Valid
M4			0.753		Valid
M5			0.700		Valid
M6			0.788		Valid
M7			0.805		Valid
M8			0.730		Valid
M9			0.700		Valid
M10			0.768		Valid
M11			0.733		Valid
Y1				0.838	Valid

Y2				0.810	Valid
Y3				0.716	Valid
Y4				0.822	Valid
Y5				0.812	Valid
Y6				0.830	Valid
Y7				0.869	Valid
Y8				0.842	Valid

Source: processed field data

The outer loading calculation results for each variable's indicators showed an outer loading value > 0.70 , with a p-value < 0.05 . This proves that the indicators forming the latent variable are valid and significant.

Table 2 AVE Value and Square Root of AVE

Variable	Mean Variance Extracted (AVE)	Square Root of AVE
Digital Marketing (X1)	0.633	0.401
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	0.646	0.417
Brand Image (M)	0.572	0.327
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.669	0.447

Source: processed field data

All variables in this study have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.50, namely Brand image (M) of 0.572, Digital marketing (X1) of 0.633, Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) of 0.646, and Purchase Decision (Y) of 0.669. This indicates that each construct has met the convergent validity criteria, because more than 50% of the indicator variance can be explained by the construct it measures. Meanwhile, the square root of the AVE value for each construct is at 0.327 to 0.447. Although the value is not high, as long as the square root of the AVE is still greater than the correlation between constructs, the model is still considered to meet discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

Table 3 Composite Reliability and Cronbach Alpha Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Digital Marketing (X1)	0.916	0.919	0.932
Electronic Word of Mouth (X2)	0.907	0.909	0.927
Brand Image (M)	0.907	0.911	0.923
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.900	0.903	0.924

Source: processed field data

The test results show that all variables have a Composite Reliability value above 0.70. This value indicates that each construct has very good internal consistency, so that the indicators used can be relied on to measure the latent variables in question.

4.2. Inner Model Evaluation (Structural Model)

Table 4 R-Square (R2)

Variable	R Square
Brand Image (M)	0.692
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.651

Source: processed field data

The R-square (R^2) value for the brand image (M) variable is 0.692, which means that 69.2% is classified as a strong model and the variability of Brand image (M) can be explained by the variables Digital marketing (X1) and Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) implementation of promotional strategies through digital platforms and the existence of reviews or comments from consumers on various digital channels have a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions of the image of The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA.

The calculation of the Q-square value can be seen as follows:

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2)(1 - R^2)$$

$$\begin{aligned} Q^2 &= 1 - (1 - 0.692)(1 - 0.651) \\ &= 1 - (0.308 \times 0.349) \\ &= 1 - 0.107492 \\ &= 0.8925 \text{ or } 89.25\% \end{aligned}$$

The Q^2 value of 0.892 indicates that this research model has very strong predictive relevance, as it is well above 0.35. This means the model is able to explain and predict the dependent variables (brand image and purchasing decisions) very well, or falls within the strong criteria.

Given:

$$\text{Average AVE} = (0.572 + 0.633 + 0.646 + 0.669) / 4 = 0.63$$

$$\text{Average } R^2 = (0.692 + 0.651) / 2 = 0.6715$$

$$\text{The calculation is: } GoF = \sqrt{(0.63 \times 0.6715)} = \sqrt{0.423} = 0.650$$

A Goodness of Fit (GoF) value of 0.650 indicates excellent model fit, as it exceeds the threshold of 0.36, indicating a strong model. This means the research model has proven robust and appropriate to the collected data. Support from the high R^2 , Q^2 , and GoF results indicates that the model is ready for use in the hypothesis testing phase.

4.3. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing aims to determine the extent of influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Significance values can be obtained using bootstrapping techniques. The statistical test used for hypothesis testing is the t-test for each path of influence between variables. The results of bootstrapping hypothesis testing can be seen in Figure 3 below.

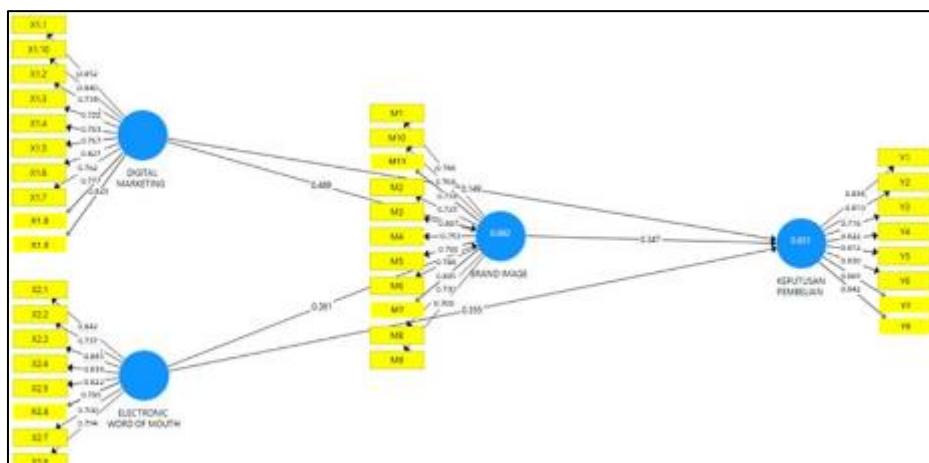


Figure 2 Bootstrapping test results

Table 5 Path Analysis

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Explanation
Brand Image (M) -> Purchase Decisions (Y)	0.347	0.344	0.092	3.770	0.000	Significant
Digital Marketing (X1) -> Brand Image (M)	0.489	0.496	0.137	3.563	0.000	Significant
Digital Marketing (X1) -> Purchase Decisions (Y)	0.149	0.178	0.167	0.894	0.372	Non-Significant
Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) -> Brand Image (M)	0.361	0.356	0.130	2.778	0.006	Significant
Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) -> Purchase Decisions (Y)	0.355	0.327	0.172	2.069	0.039	Significant
Digital Marketing (X1) -> Brand Image (M) -> Purchase Decisions (Y)	0.170	0.166	0.054	3.120	0.002	Significant
Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) -> Brand Image (M) -> Purchase Decisions (Y)	0.125	0.127	0.063	1.998	0.046	Significant

Source: processed field data

The results of the analysis show that digital marketing (X1) has a positive and significant effect on brand image (M) with a coefficient value of 0.489, a t-statistic of 3.563 (>1.96), and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). These test results prove that hypothesis 1, which states that digital marketing (X1) has a positive and significant effect on brand image (M), can be accepted.

The coefficient of influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) on Brand image (M) is 0.361 with a t-statistic of 2.778 and a p-value of 0.006. Since $t > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$, this relationship is significant. The results of this test prove that hypothesis 2 which states that Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Brand image (M) can be accepted.

Based on the test results, it shows that digital marketing (X1) does not have a direct significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) with a coefficient value of 0.149, a t-statistic of 0.894, and a p-value of 0.372 (>0.05). These test results prove that hypothesis 3, which states that digital marketing (X1) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y), cannot be accepted.

Based on the research results, Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Decisions (Y) with a coefficient of 0.355, t-statistic of 2.069 and p-value of 0.039. The results of this test prove that hypothesis 4 which states that Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) can be accepted.

Based on the research results, it shows that Brand image (M) is proven to have a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions with a coefficient value of 0.347, t-statistics of 3.770 and p-value of 0.000. The results of this test prove that hypothesis 5 which states that Brand image (M) has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions (Y) can be accepted.

Based on the research results, the coefficient value is 0.170, the t-statistic is 3.120, and the p-value is 0.002. These test results prove that hypothesis 6, which states that digital marketing (X1) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) through brand image (M), can be accepted.

Based on the research results, it shows that the coefficient value is 0.125, the t-statistic is 1.998, and the p-value is 0.046. The results of this test prove that hypothesis 7 which states that Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) through brand image (M) can be accepted.

5. Discussion

The research results show that digital marketing plays a crucial role in shaping and strengthening the brand image of The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA. Digital strategies such as the use of social media (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), content marketing through blogs and videos, and email marketing significantly contributed to increasing visibility and positive perceptions of the hotel brand. Engaging visual content and narratives of enjoyable stays helped create a strong brand association as a comfortable and exclusive beach resort. Beyond mere promotion, digital marketing also opens up two-way communication between the hotel and potential guests, strengthening emotional engagement and customer trust.

The research results show that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) plays a significant role in shaping the brand image of The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA. In today's digital era, guest reviews, comments, and recommendations are the primary source of information for travelers before deciding where to stay. When guests share their positive experiences publicly, this creates a strong and valuable brand image, shaping the perception of the resort as a comfortable, professional, and family-friendly beachfront resort. Conversely, negative reviews have the potential to damage the brand image and reduce the trust of potential guests.

The results of the study indicate that the influence of digital marketing on purchasing decisions at The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA is insignificant. Although digital marketing strategies such as promotions through social media, official websites, and collaborations do not directly influence consumer purchasing decisions significantly, this suggests that even though digital marketing is actively implemented, it does not necessarily directly influence consumer purchasing decisions because there are also factors such as the age characteristics of respondents who have different responses to digital.

The research results show that e-WOM not only creates positive perceptions of brand image but also directly increases travelers' purchase intentions and actions. Reviews highlighting room comfort and staff friendliness, for example, provide a tangible picture that influences potential guests' expectations and beliefs. The more positive reviews available, the higher the level of trust and purchase intention in the hotel. This means that the higher the quality and frequency of e-WOM received by consumers, the more likely they are to decide to stay at The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA.

The results of the study indicate that Brand Image (X1) plays a role as a psychological factor that influences the decision-making process. Consumers consider not only functional aspects such as price and facilities, but also the emotional and symbolic aspects attached to the brand. In this case, The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA has succeeded in building an image as a suitable destination for family vacations, relaxation, and authentic Balinese cultural experiences. This image is strengthened through consistent visual communication, customer testimonials, and an active presence on social media and travel review platforms.

The research results show that digital marketing indirectly has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, brand image plays a role in shaping attitudes toward behavior (15), which is a key component in influencing purchasing intentions and actions. Digital marketing shapes brand image, and brand image shapes positive attitudes toward the decision to stay. Thus, although digital marketing does not directly influence purchasing decisions, through brand image, this influence becomes significant and has a real impact.

The results of the study show that Brand image is proven to significantly mediate the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) on purchasing decisions at The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA. The results of the mediation test show that although e-WOM has a direct influence on purchasing decisions, the indirect influence through brand image is stronger and more significant. When potential guests read testimonials about the comfort of the room, the friendliness of the staff, or the beauty of the location, they begin to form a brand image of the hotel as a quality place worth visiting. The brand image formed from e-WOM then influences consumer attitudes and beliefs towards the hotel, thereby strengthening the intention and decision to make a reservation.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion that can be put forward from the results of the research that has been conducted is that Digital marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand image. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) has a positive and significant influence on brand image. Digital marketing does not have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions directly. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) has a positive influence on purchasing decisions. Brand image has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Brand image serves as a bridge between Digital marketing and purchasing decisions, although Digital marketing does not directly influence purchasing decisions, a strong brand image formed by Digital marketing can increase consumer purchasing decisions. Brand image also mediates the influence of e-WOM on purchasing decisions. Positive reviews shared by consumers online can strengthen brand image and ultimately encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions.

The results of this study can provide additional references in decision-making for the management of The Jayakarta Bali Beach Resort & SPA, especially in improving purchasing decisions and increasing guest visit rates seen from the perspective of digital marketing, electronic word of mouth, and brand image created in the minds of consumers.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of Conflict of interest

The Authors wish to declare that none has any interest to disclose.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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