Strategy for Increasing E-WOM-Based Purchasing Decisions on Wardah Products in Indonesia

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Abstract:

Skincare products continue to evolve amidst intense competition in the cosmetics industry, including in Indonesia. Wardah, as one of the leading halal cosmetic brands, is trying to increase its decision in the foundation subcategory through *Electronic Word of Mouth* (e-WOM) based strategies. The purpose of the research to be carried out is to analyze the influence of halal product perceptions, halal brand awareness, and e-WOM on purchasing decisions for Wardah products. This research utilizes quantitative methods by distributing questionnaires to Wardah consumers in Indonesia. The number of respondents in this study reached 100 people. Data analysis was carried out with the help of smart PLS version 4. From the test findings, it can be seen that the perception of halal products has a positive and significant influence on e-WOM, while halal brand awareness has a significant impact on purchasing decisions. In contrast, e-WOM has no significant effect on purchasing decisions. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help Wardah create a successful marketing plan and serve as a guide for future research in the halal cosmetics industry.

Keywords: *Perception of halal products, Halal Brand Awareness, Purchase Decision, E-WOM, Wardah*

1. Introduction

Business competition in the skincare world is currently very rapid, this is evidenced by the number of skincare brands on the market. This makes the dynamics of the skincare business tighter because there are more and more competitors (Kaesti et al., 2024). The emergence of a booming skincare brand has a good and bad impact on consumers and this is an interesting thing for consumers because there are more brand choices that can be chosen according to the budget and needs of consumers, but the emergence of several skincare brands also has unfavorable consequences for consumers because it creates its own confusion. One of the products that is currently a mecca for consumers and has the highest sales figures in Indonesia is products under the Wardah brand (Nasution & Rafiki, 2021).

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Wardah is one of the cosmetic brands that has successfully created a reputation as a halal product in Indonesia. Wardah was founded by Dra. Hj Nurhayati Subakat in 1995 under PT Paragon Technology & Innovation. The first product produced was hair care (Puspitasari, 2023). From the beginning of its establishment until now this local brand has consistently been seen as an inspiring beauty and is widely favored by the public. Currently, Wardah has four product categories, namely body skin care, hair and makeup. (Shahbaz et al., 2020) . Sales of Wardah products increased by 20% and reached more than 10 million units. Sales continue to increase by 50% every year. Currently, Wardah generates sales of at least IDR 200 billion every month, according to data from tempo.co (Yang et al., 2020).

Even so, in the make-up product category, especially the foundation subcategory, based on data from the Top Brand Award (2023), Wardah has not managed to occupy the top position, only in sixth place. This phenomenon shows that there is a great opportunity for Wardah to further optimize its e-WOM (*Electronic Word of Mouth*) based marketing strategy, especially through the use of halal product perception variables and halal brand awareness as important elements that influence purchasing decisions.

Wardah is widely known as a cosmetic product that offers halal assurance, but in the foundation segment, they are still losing out to some competitors such as Revlon, which has continued to dominate the market for the past few years. Revlon even experienced a significant increase from 2022 to 2024, based on the chart data shown, while Wardah seems to still experience fluctuations in the foundation market. To be able to compete and improve its position in the foundation market, Wardah needs to consider several strategies that can strengthen its position in the competition through e-WOM.

Based on the "Subcategory: Foundation" chart from the Top Brand Award, it can be seen that Wardah is still unable to make it into the top five foundation brands in Indonesia. Although the brand is famous for its halal products and high brand awareness among Indonesian consumers, for the foundation category, Wardah is only in the sixth position. Revlon and L'Oreal still dominate the market with a much higher index than Wardah. This situation is both a challenge and an opportunity for Wardah to increase market penetration in the foundation subcategory (Top Brand Award, 2023). Increasing the Decision is not young, new breakthroughs are needed. Today, various additional interconnected elements influence the purchase of cosmetic products in addition to product quality.

Research on purchasing decisions has previously been carried out by Bakti et al, (2023) who found that the perception of halal products has no influence on purchasing decisions even though the halal label is important, the price factor and the quality of goods are more influential in purchasing decisions. Elkasysyaf et al, (2021) found that students' purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by their knowledge of halal products and how attractive the halal label is. This supports the statement that perceptions of halal products drive consumer purchasing decisions.

Research conducted Ibrahim & Yusof (2021) found that halal awareness does not necessarily influence non-Muslim consumers, who are more focused on price and quality aspects. However, Wulandari et al, (2023) found that awareness of halal brands has a positive impact on purchasing decisions for MSME products in Cirebon.

Based on the existing problems (research gaps and business phenomena), this study tries to provide a solution by adding the e-WOM variable as an intervening variable which hopes to bridge the relationship between the variables of halal product perception and halal brand awareness on purchasing decisions. e-WOM as one of the intervening variables, plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers are increasingly looking for reviews and reviews from others through digital platforms before deciding to buy a product (Zulfikar & Arifin, 2022).. In the context of halal cosmetic products, such as Wardah, the perception of halal products and halal brand awareness are two important factors that shape e-WOM and ultimately influence purchasing decisions (Adinugraha et al., 2017).

Wardah, with its brand image advantage as a halal product, has great potential to strengthen its position in the foundation market if it is able to capitalize on the growing trend of e-WOM. Indonesian Muslim consumers tend to prefer products that meet halal standards, but high brand awareness and positive halal perception alone are not enough. Wardah should be able to harness the power of e-WOM to attract the attention of more consumers, especially in the highly competitive foundation category (Nasution & Rafiki, 2021).

The perception of halal products is how Muslim consumers perceive Wardah products in terms of their compliance with Islamic principles. In the context of cosmetics, this does not only concern the ingredients used, but also includes the production process and halal certification (Ghazali & Saad, 2020). Based on several studies, a positive halal perception can increase consumers' trust in the product, which in turn encourages them to recommend it to others through e-WOM (Rahmah, 2022).

Halal brand awareness, on the other hand, is the level of consumer knowledge and recognition of Wardah as a halal cosmetics brand. The higher this brand awareness, the greater the opportunity for Wardah to gain strong consumer loyalty. Consumers with high brand awareness tend to talk more about the product on social media and other digital platforms, which directly increases the volume and quality of e-WOM (Muslichah, Abdullah, & Razak, 2021).

However, from the available charts, it can be seen that Wardah is still lagging behind in the foundation market. One of the reasons may be the lack of focus on marketing strategies that prioritize the e-WOM factor. In the midst of the growing digital era, consumers not only seek information through traditional advertisements, but also through other users' reviews (Muslichah, Abdullah, & Razak, 2021). Therefore, Wardah needs to develop a marketing strategy that focuses more on increasing consumer interaction online through various social platforms and beauty communities.

One important reason why e-WOM is so effective in influencing purchasing decisions is that it is more authentic and less commercially oriented. Customers are more likely to trust a user's judgment or advice than an advertisement from a business (Monoarfa et al., 2021). When a consumer gets positive information about Wardah through e-WOM, whether from reviews on e-commerce sites, beauty blogs, or social media, they are more likely to make a purchase (Monoarfa et al., 2021).

However, although Wardah has the advantage of being a halal brand, this is not enough to win over consumers in the foundation market. Products such as Revlon and L'Oreal that have higher indices in the chart show that they are more successful in capitalizing on modern marketing trends, including e-WOM (Top Brand Award, 2023). For this reason, Wardah needs to devise a more comprehensive strategy to encourage more positive reviews of their foundation products online.

In the face of intense competition in the cosmetics market, Wardah needs to continue to innovate and adapt its marketing strategies to the fast-changing market dynamics. Increased e-WOM activities that are targeted and based on consumers' positive perceptions of halal products will be the key to Wardah's success in expanding market share and winning the competition in the foundation subcategory.

The research titled "E-WOM-Based Purchasing Decision Improvement Strategy on Wardah Products in Indonesia" offers a number of novelties compared to previous research. The main focus of this research is a local cosmetic product, namely Wardah, which has a special image as a halal product in Indonesia. Most previous studies on E-WOM have emphasized on global products or different categories, so this study introduces novelty by examining specific market dynamics related to halal cosmetics. Moreover, although E-WOM has been frequently discussed, this study offers a specific approach on how E-WOM can be integrated with Wardah's local marketing strategy, including the influence of Indonesian culture and consumer preferences as well as the role of digital platforms popular in the country, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

This research also highlights a local aspect that has not been widely explored in previous studies, namely how E-WOM impacts purchasing decisions in the unique context of Indonesia. By providing strategic solutions to improve E-WOM-based purchasing decisions, this study also differs from studies that only discuss E-WOM factors without offering concrete recommendations. Finally, this study can also touch on the influence of E-WOM on purchasing decisions in the halal cosmetics sector, something that has not been widely researched in the context of halal products, especially those that consider aspects of consumer religiosity in decision making.

This research also has several problem formulations, namely, how the influence of halal product perceptions and halal brand awareness on product purchasing decisions, to what extent E-WOM plays a role as an intervening variable in the relationship, and how Wardah can use the findings of this study to design more effective marketing strategies to increase its sales. This research is expected to yield significant benefits,

both in the academic and practical realms, enriching the understanding of consumer behavior in the Indonesian market.

2. Theoretical Background

Perception of Halal Products: The perception of halal products is the way consumers perceive products that comply with the rules of Islamic law. In this context, perception serves as a determinant of how Muslim consumers evaluate products that claim to be halal based on certification, raw materials, and production processes (Adinugraha, Huda, & Al-Ummah, 2017). Study by Ghazali & Saad (2020) concluded that buyers who have a positive perception of halal products are more likely to provide positive reviews online. There are several dimensions in the perception of halal products that can be identified, namely quality, safety, and ethics. (Fadhil & Yusof, 2021)..

Halal Brand Awareness: In the context of marketing, brand awareness is the degree to which consumers are able to recognize or recall a brand as providing halal products. (Gündüz, 2023).. According to (Zulfikar & Arifin, 2022)(Zulfikar & Arifin, 2022), halal brand awareness is very significant in influencing purchasing decisions, especially for Muslim consumers who prioritize compliance with sharia. According to research by Wulandari et al., (2023)(2023), halal brand awareness contributes to increased E-WOM activity, as consumers feel more confident to share their positive experiences. Research by Monoarfa et al., (2021) also highlighted that awareness of halal brands affects consumers' intention to recommend halal products through digital platforms. The indicators of halal awareness are "aware of halal, aware that halal is a religious obligation, product hygiene and safety, the importance of the packaging process, the halal product packaging process" (Ibrahim & Yusof, 2021).

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM): Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is an informal communication that occurs in cyberspace, where consumers share experiences, reviews, and ideas related to goods or services by utilizing online platforms such as social media, forums, and review sites (Bakti, Fitri, & Ramdhan, 2023). E-WOM has several dimensions that can influence its influence on purchasing decisions, namely message quality, message quantity, and message source (Adisty, 2023). Study by Nazir & Hassan (2021) shows that positive reviews from consumers regarding halal products can increase purchasing decisions. Research by Zulfikar & Arifin (2022) also supports this view, where E-WOM was shown to be effective in influencing consumer purchasing decisions on digital platforms.

Purchase Decision: The process by which a customer selects and purchases goods or services after going through many steps, including identifying needs, gathering information, considering options, making a purchase, and following up on a purchase is known as a purchase decision (Sari & Rahmawati, 2022). Indicators of purchasing decisions according to Cahyani & Sutrasmawati (2016) namely decisions about product types, decisions about product forms, decisions about brands, decisions about sellers, decisions about product quantities, decisions about purchase times and decisions about payment methods. Research by Miftahuddin et al., (2020) shows that

Muslim consumers pay more attention to product halalness than other factors, especially in the food and beverage category.

3. Methodology

This research utilizes quantitative methods with a causal approach. The study aims to determine the relationship between halal product perceptions, halal brand awareness, e-WOM (intervening variable), and purchasing decisions. The population is all consumers who have used Wardah products whose numbers are unknown. This research sample uses how many indicators multiplied by 5-10 vulnerabilities. The number of questionnaire question items is 95, so $19 \times 5 = 95$, with a maximum estimate of $19 \times 10 = 190$. Primary data is the type of data utilized in this study, and is collected directly from respondents by distributing questionnaires. The survey process was utilized to collect data. This questionnaire contains statements related to the perception of halal products, halal brand awareness, e-WOM, and purchasing decisions. *Path analysis* is used to analyze the effect of perceived halal products and halal brand awareness (X2) on purchasing decisions with e-WOM as an intervening variable. Path analysis is carried out using the SmartPLS application to simplify the analysis process and visualize the relationship between variables. Before conducting path analysis, a series of tests were carried out to ensure data eligibility, including: Validity Test, Reliability Test, Hypothesis Test (*inner modal*) and R-Square Test.

4. Empirical Findings/Results

The initial step carried out was to distribute questionnaires to collect demographic and consumer behavior data. In this study, the respondents consisted of 85 women or 85% and 15 men or 15%, with a total of 100 respondents providing a clear gender picture in the context of using Wardah products. Demographic data based on age obtained the age level of respondents who use Wardah products in Indonesia is 18 to more than 40 years old with details of ages 18-28 years 90 people or 90%, ages 29-39 years of 6 people or 6% and ages> 40 years of 4 people or 4%. The respondent's income can be known with details of consumer income <3,000,000 totaling 92 people or 92%, between 3,000,000 and 6,000,000 totaling 7 people or 7% and greater than 6,000,000 totaling 1 person or 1%. It is known that respondents who filled out this questionnaire had bought and used Wardah products more than 3 times. The following is an evaluation of the measurement model or outer model from the results of the analysis conducted.
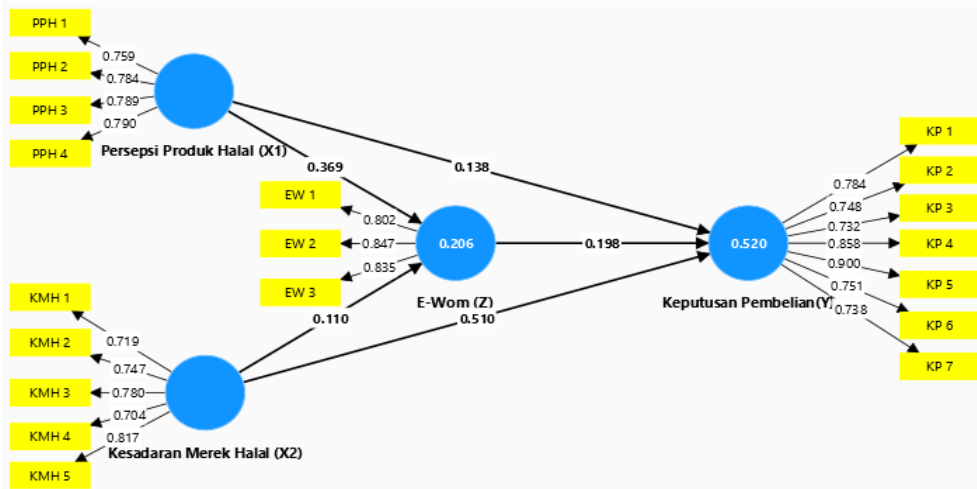
Figure 1. Smart PLS Model
Source: Author's Data (2024)

According to Hair et al., (2019)(2019), states that measurement items are valid if the loading factor ≥ 0.70 and AVE ≥ 0.50. From the test results, it can be seen that each indicator of halal product perception, halal brand awareness, e-wom and purchasing decisions obtained an *outer loading* value above 0.70 and an ave value above 0.50 so that it can be concluded that the item is valid.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variables	Measurement Item	Outer Loading	Cronbachs Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Information
Perception of Halal Products (X1)	PPH 1	0.759	0.789	0.862	0.610	Valid
	PPH 2	0.784				Valid
	PPH 3	0.789				Valid
	PPH 4	0.790				Valid
Halal Brand Awareness (X2)	KMH 1	0.719	0.811	0.868	0.569	Valid
	KMH 2	0.747				Valid
	KMH 3	0.780				Valid
	KMH 4	0.704				Valid
	KMH 5	0.817				Valid
E-Wom (Z)	EW 1	0.802	0.772	0.868	0.686	Valid
	EW 2	0.847				Valid
	EW 3	0.835				Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	KP 1	0.784	0.898	0.920	0.624	Valid
	KP 2	0.748				Valid
	KP 3	0.732				Valid
	KP 4	0.858				Valid
	KP 5	0.900				Valid
	KP 6	0.751				Valid
	KP 7	0.738				Valid

Source: Author's Data (2024)

The reliability test was carried out by utilizing 2 tests, namely the Cronbach's alpha test and the composite reliability test. The questionnaire is reliable if the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). In the reliability test table, it can be concluded that the variable indicators of halal product perception, halal brand awareness, e-wom, and purchasing decisions get a value above 0.70 so that it can be said to be reliable.

Table 2. Fornel and Lacker

	E-Wom (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)	Halal Brand Awareness (X2)	Perception of Halal Products (X1)
E-Wom (Z)	**0.828**			
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.451	**0.790**		
Halal Brand Awareness (X2)	0.376	0.684	**0.754**	
Perception of Halal Products (X1)	0.448	0.594	0.721	**0.781**

Source: Author's Data (2024)

Based on the indicator testing above, it can be seen that all variables meet the Fornell and Lacker criteria. This is because the root AVE value is greater than the correlation between variables. Therefore, this test is declared to have good discriminant validity.

Table 3. HTMT Table

	E-Wom (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)	Halal Brand Awareness (X2)
E-Wom (Z)			
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.536		
Halal Brand Awareness (X2)	0.466	0.775	
Perception of Halal Products (X1)	0.546	0.688	0.893

Source: Author's Data (2024)

Hair et al., (2019) suggested HTMT as a measure of discriminant validity because it is considered more accurate or sensitive in identifying discriminant validity. The recommended threshold value is less than 0.90. Discriminant validity is achieved if the test results get the HTMT value for a pair of variables smaller than 0.90.

Table 4. Cross Loading Table

	E-Wom (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)	Halal Brand Awareness (X2)	Perception of Halal Products (X1)
EW 1	**0.802**	0.334	0.293	0.304
EW 2	**0.847**	0.391	0.308	0.431
EW 3	**0.835**	0.390	0.331	0.367
KMH 1	0.216	0.646	**0.719**	0.656
KMH 2	0.139	0.526	**0.747**	0.620
KMH 3	0.240	0.425	**0.780**	0.534
KMH 4	0.367	0.375	**0.704**	0.419

KMH 5	0.430	0.551	**0.817**	0.478
KP 1	0.418	**0.784**	0.603	0.550
KP 2	0.291	**0.748**	0.593	0.397
KP 3	0.257	**0.732**	0.579	0.548
KP 4	0.443	**0.858**	0.518	0.502
KP 5	0.383	**0.900**	0.571	0.495
KP 6	0.276	**0.751**	0.413	0.369
KP 7	0.405	**0.738**	0.454	0.378
PPH 1	0.206	0.469	0.567	**0.759**
PPH 2	0.474	0.529	0.591	**0.784**
PPH 3	0.328	0.425	0.582	**0.789**
PPH 4	0.342	0.413	0.504	**0.790**

Source: Author's Data (2024)

Ghozali (2021) states that cross loading is used to evaluate discriminant validity, specifically to determine whether the construct has appropriate discriminant because the loading value on the desired construct needs to be higher than other constructs. The *cross loading* value for each variable must be above 0.70. From the tests that have been carried out which are summarized in the table, it shows that each indicator has a high relationship to each variable with a value above 0.70.

Inner VIF Table 5.

	E-Wom (Z)	Purchase Decision (Y)
E-WOM (Z)		1.260
Purchase Decision (Y)		
Halal Brand Awareness (X2)	2.084	2.099
Perception of Halal Products (X1)	2.084	2.255

Source: Author's Data (2024)

Before conducting a structural hypothesis test, it should be noted that the multicollinearity inner VIF is less than 5, which means that the multicollinearity between variables is low. A structure for hypothesis testing, it should be noted that the multicollinearity inner VIF is less than 5 which means that multicollinearity between variables is low. The results show that the parameter estimates in the PLS SEM are robust.

5. Discussion

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	p-value	T statistics (O/STDEV)
H1. Perception of Halal Products ─> E-Wom	0.369	0.006	2.774
H2. Halal Brand Awareness ─> E-Wom	0.110	0.451	0.754
H3. Perception of Halal Products ─> Purchase Decision	0.138	0.315	1.005
H4. Halal Brand Awareness ─> Purchase Decision	0.510	0.000	4.553
H5. E-Wom ─>Purchase Decision	0.198	0.051	1.952

Source: Author's Data (2024)

H1: "Perception of halal products has a positive and significant influence on E-WOM on Wardah products in Indonesia"

Looking at the results of the hypothesis analysis, H1 is accepted, namely that there is a positive and significant effect of halal product perceptions on E-Wom with Path Coefficient (0.369), t_{count} 2.774 and P_{value} (0.006 <0.05). Strong halal perceptions can increase E-WOM on products, as consumers tend to share positive experiences about halal products. Thus, the perception of halal products is proven to have a positive and significant effect on the spread of E-WOM, which can improve product reputation and strengthen consumer decisions to choose these products. The findings of this research are consistent with the findings of Haque et al., (2019) and Fadhil & Yusof (2021) which shows that strong perceptions of halal products can strengthen customer trust in product quality and integrity. High trust can encourage customers to share their positive experiences through E-WOM, especially for products that they consider to be in accordance with religious values and principles.

H2: "Halal brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on E-WOM on Wardah products in Indonesia"

Looking at the results of the hypothesis analysis, H2 is rejected, namely that there is no positive and significant effect of halal brand awareness on E-Wom with Path Coefficient (0.110), t_{count} 0.754 and p-value (0.451> 0.05). Halal brand awareness, although important, is not always the main driver for consumers in deciding to share information online. There are other factors such as product experience and consumer trust (Setiawan et al., 2020). (Setiawan, Santoso, & Kurniawan, 2020). The findings of this research are in accordance with the results of Nasution & Rafiki (2021) which shows that a good product experience and a high level of trust play a greater role in

encouraging consumers to share information online. Consumers are more likely to share positive reviews if they feel satisfied and have trust in the product.

H3: "Perception of halal products has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions on Wardah products in Indonesia"

Looking at the results of the hypothesis analysis, H3 is rejected, namely that there is no positive and significant effect of halal product perceptions on purchasing decisions with Path Coefficient (0.138), T statistic 1.005 and p-value (0.315> 0.05). Although the perception of halal products is important for consumers, especially for Muslims, other factors are often more decisive in the final purchase decision. Other factors such as quality, price, or previous experiences (Suhartanto & Brien, 2021). The findings of this research are consistent with the findings of Ghazali & Saad (2020) and Suhartanto & Brien (2021)who say that in certain cases, the perception of halal products is not always the main factor. Consumers tend to consider more aspects of product quality and practical value in determining purchases.

H4: "Halal brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions on Wardah products in Indonesia"

Looking at the results of the hypothesis analysis, (H4) is accepted, namely that there is a positive and significant effect of halal brand awareness on purchasing decisions with Path Coefficient (0.510), t_{count} 4.553 and P_{value} (0.000 <0.05). Halal brand awareness has a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions, especially among Muslim consumers. The findings of this research are in accordance with the research findings Ibrahim & Yusof (2021) and Sari & Rahmawati (2022) who say that halal brand awareness plays an important role in increasing consumer loyalty and trust in products.

H5: "E-Wom has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions on Wardah products in Indonesia"

Looking at the results of hypothesis analysis, the third hypothesis (H3) is rejected, namely that there is no positive and significant effect of E-Wom on purchasing decisions with Path Coefficient (0.198), T statistic 1.952 and p-value (0.051> 0.05). Although E-Wom can be an effective tool in disseminating information and building product images, this result shows that in the context of Wardah products E-Wom does not have a strong enough influence on purchasing decisions. Other factors such as product price, product innovation and compatibility with trends (Shahbaz, Mubarak, & Khan, 2020). The results of this study are in accordance with the results of research Ismagilova et al., (2020) and Saleem, Zahra, & Yaseen (2022) who say that in certain products, other factors such as price and product innovation influence consumers' final decisions more than E-WOM.

Table 7. R square

Variables	R-square
E-Wom (Z)	0.206
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.520

Source: Author's Data (2024)

According to Chin (1998) R square has a qualitative interpretation value of 0.19 (low impact), 0.33 (medium impact), and 0.66 (large impact). From the indicator test above, it can be stated that the E-Wom variable has a value of 20.6% (low influence). This test can be explained by 20.6% of the change or variation in the dependent variable is influenced by the E-WOM variable, while the rest (79.4%) is explained by other variables. Purchasing decisions have a value of 52.0% (moderate influence). This test can explain 52.0% of the change or variation in the dependent variable is influenced by the purchasing decision variable.

6. Conclusions

Based on the conclusions of the research on strategies to increase e-WOM-based purchasing decisions on Wardah products in Indonesia, it was found that the perception of halal products is an idea that significantly increases e-WOM. e-WOM is not significantly influenced by halal brand awareness, which indicates that other elements such as customer experience and trust are more important. Furthermore, halal brand awareness significantly influences the decision to purchase, whereas perception of halal products has no noticeable impact. In addition, e-WOM has no noticeable impact on the decision to purchase.

To optimize marketing strategies and improve purchasing decisions, Wardah needs to harness the power of e-WOM and focus on strong halal perception and awareness among consumers. Future research is expected to combine with other more complex variables to provide deeper insights into the influence of e-WOM on purchasing decisions.

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