Linking E-WOM to Muslimah Consumer Buying Intention through the Shopee Application: The Role of Brand Image as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WoM) on consumer buying interest in the Shopee application through brand image as a mediating variable. This study used a quantitative descriptive method with a purposive sampling technique to obtain a sample of 200 respondents who had purchased Rabbani products through the Shopee application. The data collection technique was carried out by distributing online questionnaires via Google form using a Likert scale of points 1 to 5, which were analyzed using SPSS Version 26 through the classical assumption test, path analysis, and Sobel test. The results show that E-WoM has a positive effect on brand image, brand image has a positive effect on buying interest, E-WoM has a positive effect on consumer buying interest in Rabbani products, E-WoM has a positive effect on buying interest through brand image as mediation partial, meaning that the greater the E-WoM, the brand image will increase so that the buying interest will be higher.

Introduction

Technological advances that are developing very rapidly affect people's behavior, especially in communicating and socializing. Almost all community activities are related to technology, which can affect lifestyle changes used in transactions. Companies also use this in competing and marketing their products through online shop applications to develop their business through a wide scope so that they are widely known by various groups of people.

According to Tariq et al. (2017), electronic word of mouth (E-WoM) is one of the product marketing techniques used to boost consumer purchasing power. E-WoM is a positive and negative consumer statement conveyed and believed by consumers about a product online and influences purchasing behavior. E-WoM significantly influences consumer interest or behavior in various ways, especially those related to buying and selling, and can help create a brand image for a product. Brand image can be defined as the impression and belief of consumers in a group of people towards a brand (Darma, M. B., Effendi, S., & Juari, 2018; Khasanah et al., 2022). If the company has a well-known and good-quality brand, consumers will be interested in buying the products presented by the company.

The high consumer demand for a product creates intense competition between companies in terms of meeting the needs and desires of consumers, who are always changing with the times. The many types and brands circulating cause consumers to be critical, careful, and selective in choosing a product to buy (Nurani & Adinugraha, 2022). These conditions require manufacturers to work harder to promote their products to attract consumer purchases. Consumer buying interest is an important step that must be maintained by producers in marketing their products (Ardana & Rastini, 2018). Businesses must compete in creating a brand image, especially on quality Muslim fashion brands, to create consumer interest in the products offered because the majority of

Indonesia's population is Muslim. The influence of E-WoM plays an important role in introducing brand image to consumers so that it has a positive impact and convinces consumers to decide their purchase interest.

One of the well-known Muslim fashion brands in Indonesia is the Rabbani brand. Rabbani brand products were founded in 1991 and began to grow rapidly in 2001 until now. Rabbani is a provider of Muslim fashion products that have been widely accepted by the public, especially the people of Yogyakarta. With so many consumers each year and the quality of Rabbani Muslim clothing which is very affordable by consumers, making Rabbani Muslim clothing products one of the brands to be reckoned with in the world of Muslim fashion in Indonesia. This is evidenced by the fact that Rabbani won the Top Brand Index award as Indonesia's number one Muslim dress (Identiti, 2022). Rabbani products are widely available in various online shops, especially on the Shopee application. The Shopee application is an e-commerce in Indonesia, established in 2015, and until now, almost everyone in Indonesia has used the online shop application. Shopee is an online shopping service application most widely used by Indonesian people (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo), 2022).

Figure 1. Graph of the Most Popular E-Commerce in Indonesia 2021
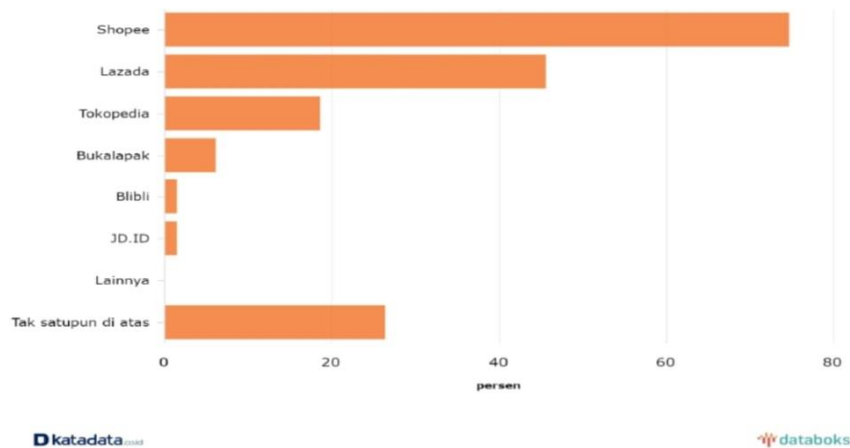
Source: Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo), Katadata Insight Center (KIC) 2022

According to Mutia Annur (2022), out of 10,000 respondents, 74.7% have installed and used the Shopee app on their mobile. This proves that the Shopee application is the most widely used e-commerce by Indonesian people. This is because Shopee carries out various promotional activities such as reducing product prices, refunding money, and offering free shipping, attracting consumers' attention to foster a sense of customer loyalty to an item or service. Customer loyalty can be realized by promoting products or services from the company to others (Muhammad Zakiy, 2019). Therefore, Shopee uses promotional techniques to increase its market share. Massive promotions and discounts are used to attract consumer buying interest.

In this case, reading information online can help customers reduce uncertainty, search costs, and the risk of buying foreign products. E-WoM is very important for consumers to learn more about the goods or services they want to buy based on online and social media reviews provided by other consumers (Pidada & Supartyani, 2022). E-WoM is one of the most important things in buying interest for online product consumers. This is because the more E-WoM activities that involve consumers and potential customers, the greater the impact on the brand image of the product in question, so it will increase consumer interest in purchasing the product.

Yunus et al. (2016) stated that the relationship between E-WoM and buying interest is strengthened by mediation through brand image. In other words, brand image functions as a link between E-WoM variables and buying interest. This study aims to determine the role of brand image in mediating the influence of E-WoM on the intention to buy Rabbani products on the Shopee application among the people of Yogyakarta, where Yogyakarta residents are residents of productive age who can become the target market (Siswanto, 2018). This is seen as an interesting topic to research, considering the intense business competition between brands to attract consumers' buying interest in a product.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

According to Ajzen et al. (2005), the Theory of Planned Behavior outlines that three factors influence the channelled intention of an individual: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived channelled control (Jadmiko, 2021). The Theory of Planned Behavior can be seen in this research in the form of consumer attitudes toward brand image when making purchases and how consumers can influence other potential consumers to make purchases. In addition, electronic word of mouth can be a kind of marketing communication for a brand that explains how positive or negative statements can be channelled from consumers or former consumers to potential customers via the internet media, causing purchases (Rooselinda & Harliwong, 2022).

Ismagilova et al. (2017) defined E-WoM as a dynamic and ongoing process of exchanging information between consumers, potential customers, or former customers regarding a product, service, brand, or company available to many people or online institutions. Nafisah & Murniningsih (2021) also stated that electronic word of mouth refers to reviews posted on social media by consumers, former consumers, or potential customers in the form of positive or negative statements about a product. From this explanation, it can be concluded that E-WoM is an effective way to form and instill a product's brand image in consumers' minds by directly involving consumers to participate in discussions about product brands and associations (Hamidun & Sanawiri, 2018).

According to Aryatilandi et al. (2020), brand image is a consumer's assessment of a brand that fosters trust and confidence that is embedded in consumer memory so that it is able to retain consumers and generate purchase interest for potential new customers. According to Pratisthita et al. (2022), brand image is defined as the perceptions and beliefs made by consumers, which are reflected in the associations that occur in consumer memory. The more embedded in consumer memory, the closer a brand will be to consumer choice. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that brand image is a consumer's assessment of a product that fosters trust and confidence embedded in consumer memory to maintain loyalty and arouse the curiosity of potential new customers.

According to Kotler (2012), consumer buying interest is a consumer behavior where consumers desire to choose or buy a product based on the experience of selecting, using, consuming, or even wanting a product. Ardana & Rastini (2018) added that consumer buying interest is an important step that must be maintained by producers in marketing their products. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that buying interest refers to the consumer's intention to buy a certain product with the desired amount in a certain time.

Based on the theoretical review and previous research, the hypothesis proposed in this study is as follows:

H1: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive effect on Brand Image

Brand image is very important in conveying a complete picture of the customer experience because using this strategy can create cognitive responses, emotional responses, and consumer behavior. Brands can participate in online discussions. This makes the conversation more intense and significantly impacts the company's image, consisting of aspects of attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral control. According to research by Azhar & Fitri (2018), electronic word of mouth positively impacts brand image. This means that the higher the E-WoM activity carried out by potential consumers and consumers, the higher the impact on the product's brand image.

H2: Brand Image has a positive effect on Buying Interest

Brand Image is defined as the perceptions and beliefs made by consumers, which are reflected in the associations that occur in consumer memory. The more embedded in consumer memory, the closer a brand will be to consumer choice (Aristana et al., 2022). Consumer buying interest is influenced by brand image because a well-managed brand image will produce a positive consumer impression, allowing consumers to evaluate a product based on their own beliefs (Renaldy & Mas'udi, 2023). According to research by Agatha et al. (2019), Brand image influences consumer buying interest positively. Brand image plays an important role in improving business performance because it is an indirect tool that changes consumer buying behavior (Malik et al. 2013).

H3: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive influence on Buying Interest

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WoM) is defined as a review written by actual, potential, or previous consumers in the form of positive or negative statements about a product written through social media (Nafisah & Murniningsih, 2021). One example of E-WoM is posting commentary reviews on the Shopee application. Consumers can reduce doubts, search costs, and the risk of buying foreign goods by reading information through E-WoM. According to Lee et al. (2006), with the use of E-WoM through social media, consumers can get the information they need about products and services not only from a small number of people they know but also by connecting a large group of diverse people around the world who have first-hand knowledge of the goods or services. In research conducted by Sharifpour et al. (2016) the majority of consumers believe that internet reviews are as reliable as brand websites. E-WoM has become one of the cornerstones of buying interest for online

consumers. The research by Kuswibowo & Murti (2021) stated that E-WoM positively affects buying interest in online shop applications.

H4: Electronic Word of Mouth has a positive effect on Buying Interest through Brand Image

Electronic Word of Mouth accompanied by a positive brand image will increase consumer interest in making purchases, and vice versa, E-WoM accompanied by a negative brand image will reduce consumer interest in making purchases. In this case, the overall impact of E-WoM on purchase intention can be mediated by brand image. If the managed brand image creates a good perception and sticks in the minds of consumers so that they get various comments from consumers, then this creates a feeling of interest in buying consumers for the desired product. The research by Iswara & Santika (2019) stated that brand image could mediate the effect of E-WoM on purchase intention, so it can be interpreted that brand image can have a greater impact on E-WoM communication contained in consumer buying interest for a product.

Figure 2. The conceptual framework for hypothesis formulation
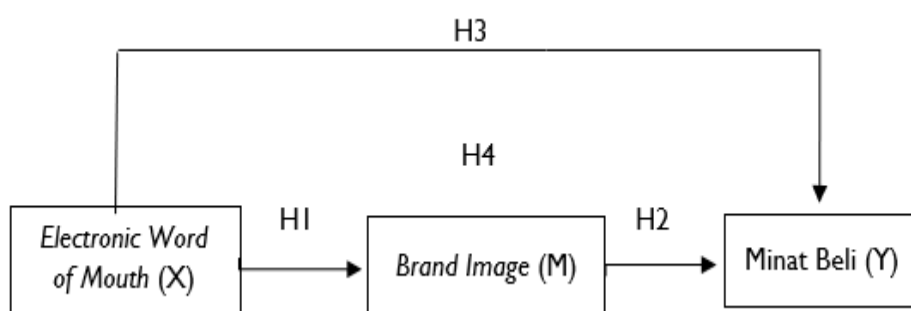
Methods

This study used a quantitative approach by distributing online questionnaires using Google Forms. The location of this research was conducted in Yogyakarta. This study's population was Yogyakarta residents who had purchased Rabbani products through the Shopee application. The sampling technique was carried out using a purposive sampling technique with a total of 200 research respondents. Then the data was processed using a computer SPSS Version 26 for windows.

In this study, to test the feasibility of the regression model used, it had to go through the classic assumption test, which includes the normality test, to determine whether a regression model's residuals are normally distributed. The ability of the regression model to identify correlations between independent variables was tested with a multicollinearity test. The heteroscedasticity test aims to determine whether there is an unequal variance between different observation residuals in the regression model (M Zakiy, 2021). The classic assumption test used in this study uses the following equation (1) the effect of the E-WoM variable on the brand image variable equation, and (2) the effect of the E-WoM and brand image variables on the purchase intention variable. Subsequently, testing the hypothesis used the path analysis techniques and the Sobel test. The Sobel test determines the effect of a mediating variable, such as the brand image. According to Ghozali (2018), a variable is said to be intervening if it affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The Sobel test evaluates the magnitude of the mediating role of brand image in mediating the indirect effect of the E-WoM variable on buying interest.

Measurement

The Likert scale was used for all questionnaire assessments in this study, which consisted of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Score 5 means Strongly Agree, 4 means Agree, 3 means Neutral, 2 means Disagree, and 1 means Strongly Disagree.

Electronic Word of Mouth is a positive or negative statement communicated and reliably regarding a product via the internet that can influence consumer buying behavior (Tariq *et al*., 2017). The study used 14 question items referring to the questionnaire Faza, (2018). There are examples of questions in the questionnaire, such as "I can

feel that the internet is an effective place to find information about a product." Cronbach's alpha coefficient on this variable is 0.779.

Buying interest is behavior that occurs as a response to an object and indicates the customer's desire to make a purchase decision. Buying interest refers to the consumer's intention to buy a certain product with the desired amount in a certain period of time (Kotler, 2012). This research uses 8 question items developed by Ferdinand (2002). There are examples of questions in the questionnaire, such as "I am interested in buying Rabbani products on the Shopee application." Cronbach's alpha coefficient on this variable is 0.851.

Brand image is a consumer's assessment of a brand that creates trust and confidence that is attached to consumer memory so that it is able to retain consumers and attract potential new customers (Aryatilandi et al., 2020). This research uses 6 question items developed by Sutisna dan Pawitra (2001). There are examples of questions in the questionnaire, such as "Brand Rabbani has good quality and classy products." Cronbach's alpha coefficient on this variable is 0.877.

Results

Respondents in this study were described in general by presenting the characteristics of several demographic variables, such as gender, age, tertiary education, occupation, and average income. Based on the data collected in this study, it was found that the number of male respondents was 55 people (27.4%), while the number of female respondents was 145 people (72.5%). The most age-based respondents were 17-22 years, as many as 155 people (77%), while at least 10 were over 28 years old (5%). Respondents based on their last education were dominated by senior high school education as many as 125 people (62.5%), while respondents with higher education levels were 75 (37.5%). Respondents by occupation were dominated by 153 students (76.5%), while at least 2 respondents (1%) were civil servants. Most respondents have an income of less than IDR 1,000,000, as many as 116 people (58%), while the least number of respondents have an income of more than IDR 4,000,000, as many as 17 people (8.5%).

The results of the instrument validity test on each question item show that all indicators used to measure the E-WoM variable, buying interest, and brand image in this study totaling 14 indicators, are stated to be valid because the value of r count is greater than the r table. Then the reliability test results on each variable have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.60. Hence the statements on the questionnaire are reliable.

The average score will be used to test the overall value of the research variables using the following criteria: Very Low = 1.00 – 1.80. Low = 1.81 – 2.60. Moderate = 2.61 – 3.40. Height = 3.41 – 4.20. Very High = 4.21 – 5.00.

Table 1. Mean, and Correlation Coefficient Between Variables

Variabel	Mean	E-WoM	Minat Beli	Brand Image
E-WoM	3,50			
Minat Beli	3,63	.607**		
Brand Image	4,09	.436**	.571**	1

Source: Results of Data Processing, 2022

variable with a total average of 3.50 means that respondents generally have a good perception of positive E-WoM related to Rabbani products on the Shopee application. The variable of buying interest with a total average of 3.63 means that respondents generally have a perception that agrees with the influence of buying interest regarding Rabbani products. The brand image variable with a total average of 4.09 means that respondents generally have a good perception of brand image's influence on Rabbani products.

Classical Assumption Test

The normality test in this study uses the Normal Probability Plot contained in SPSS Version 26, which provides that if the points follow a diagonal line, then the research data is considered normal (M Zakiy, 2021). The results of the P-Plot normality test in this study show that equation 1 (E-WoM variable on brand image) and equation 2 (E-WoM variable and brand image on buying interest) reveal that the data is spread around the diagonal line and follow the path of each respectively. This shows a normally distributed pattern. It can be concluded that the regression model does not deviate from the multicollinearity test because the results of the multicollinearity test in the study obtained the VIF value of each E-WoM variable and brand image on purchase intention of less than 10.00, and the Tolerance value is greater than 0.10. Then the Glejser heteroscedasticity test in this study obtained the results in the form of a significance value of equation 1 (E-WoM variable on brand image) and equation 2 (E-WoM variable and brand image on buying interest) of more than 0.05 or 5%, so it can be concluded that each variable does not show symptoms of heteroscedasticity.

Hypothesis Test

Table 2. Path Analysis Test Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardizer Coefficients**		
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
E-WoM – *Brand Image*	.268	.039	.436	6.816	.000
Brand Image – Minat Beli	.430	.064	.379	6.665	.000
E-WoM – Minat Beli	.309	.040	.442	7.784	.000

Source: Results of Data Processing, 2022

The SPSS output, Unstandardized Coefficients Beta E-WoM value for Brand Image, is 0.268. In the table above, the significance column (sig.) value is 0.000, where the value is less than 0.05. This shows that the E-WoM variable on the brand image variable is accepted. The SPSS output results, the Unstandardized Coefficients Beta value of brand image on buying interest is 0.430. The value in the significance column (sig.) of the table above is 0.000, which means it is smaller than 0.05. Based on these results, it can be stated that the brand image variable on buying interest is valid. Meanwhile, the Unstandardized Coefficients Beta E-WoM value for buying interest is 0.309. In the table above, the significance column (sig.) value is 0.000, where the value is less than 0.05. This shows that the E-WoM variable on buying interest is accepted.

The magnitude of the direct effect of E-WoM on buying interest (X-Y) is 0.309 (Standardized Coefficients Beta). The indirect effect of E-WoM on buying interest through brand image can be calculated using the formula a x b (0.268) x (0.430) = 0.1152; the total effect of this research is 0.30070.

These calculations indicate that brand image is a mediating variable in the relationship between E-WoM and buying interest. This is evidenced by the results of the calculation of the indirect effect, which is worth 0.11524. The total effect of E-WoM on buying interest through brand image is 0.30070. Then, it will be tested using the Sobel test to test whether it is significant. Testing the mediation hypothesis can be done with the procedure developed by Sobel (Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021). The Sobel test can be calculated using the Calculation for The Sobel Test as follows:

Source: Results of Data Processing, 2022
Figure 3. Sobel Test Output Results (*http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm*)

From the results of the Sobel test above, it can be said that brand image mediates the influence of E-WoM on purchase intention because it is known that the p-value = 0.000, which means less than 0.05 or 5%; and t count = 4, 804; greater than the value of t table = 0.1388. These results indicate that the role of brand image as a mediating variable is partial mediation because the direct effect of the E-WoM variable on purchase intention is significant. That is, the effect of E-WoM on purchase intention can be directly or through brand image. This proves that the influence of E-WoM on purchase intention through brand image as a mediating variable is accepted.

Discussion

The result of the first hypothesis test, which shows that E-WoM positively impacts brand image, is supported. This study supports previous research conducted by Iswara & Santika (2019) stated that E-WoM has a positive effect on brand image. When E-WoM communication between consumers is well established, the better the brand image is created among consumers. The research of Hamidun & Sanawiri (2018) also stated that the electronic word of mouth variable has a positive influence on the brand image variable. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the E-WoM variable, which consists of Platform Assistance, Concern for Others, Helping the Company, Expressing Positive Emotions, Venting Negative Feelings, Social Benefits, and Advice Seeking is an effective way to shape and embed the brand image of a product in the minds of consumers by involving

consumers directly to participate in online conversations related to a brand. This can be interpreted that the higher the electronic word of mouth activity carried out by potential customers and consumers, the higher the impact on the product's brand image. The results obtained in this study indicate that the more often consumers speak positively about the Rabbani brand online in reviews of the Shopee application, the more positive image of Rabbani will be created.

The second hypothesis in this study, which states that brand image positively affects purchase intention, is supported. The results of this study support previous research conducted by Faza (2018) states that there is a positive relationship between brand image and buying interest. Brand image can increase consumer interest in making purchases because if a positive brand image develops, consumer interest in making purchases will also increase. Because consumers are more likely to buy products that are well-known and have a positive brand image, this will reduce their worries about a product. The research of Zukhrufani & Zakiy (2019) also explained that brand image is what consumers think and feel when they see and hear a brand, consumers who are positive about a brand allow consumers to make purchases. These results indicate that Rabbani's products have succeeded in creating a positive brand image in front of consumers. A good brand image raises consumer interest in making purchases of Rabbani products.

The third hypothesis in this study states that electronic word of mouth positively affects supported purchase intention. The results of this study support previous research conducted by Kuswibowo & Murti (2021), which stated that E-WoM has a positive effect on purchase intention. This proves that the more interesting discussions or positive consumer evaluations of a product, the higher the consumer's buying interest. Research conducted by Kurniawan (2021) also showed that the E-WoM variable could increase buying interest significantly. The greater the consumer buying interest, the better E-WoM. This means that companies that implement E-WoM well can increase consumer buying interest. Increased buying interest positively impacts company profits so that it can prosper the company and other interested parties, so it is necessary to implement EWoM. From this study, it can be concluded that positive information regarding Rabbani products in reviews of the Shopee application creates a desire for consumers to buy and choose Rabbani products compared to other products available on the Shopee application. As a result, it may lead to product purchases in the future.

The test results also support the fourth hypothesis, which states that brand image can mediate the positive influence of electronic word of mouth on purchase intention. This study supports previous research conducted by Iswara & Santika (2019) stated that brand image could have a greater impact on E-WoM communication contained in consumer buying interest in a product because the brand image can mediate the influence of E-WoM on buying interest. The research conducted by Ardana & Rastini (2018) also states that brand image is able to mediate the effect of E-WoM on purchase intention. Electronic word of mouth significantly impacts brand perception and arouses interest in buying Rabbani products through the Shopee application. Consumers have actively shared favorable information regarding Rabbani products online through the Shopee application, indicating that they are interested in making a purchase. The results of this study can be concluded that brand image partially mediates the effect of electronic word of mouth on consumer buying interest. This means that the influence of E-WoM on purchase intention can be done directly or through brand image. The greater the influence of E-WoM, the brand image will increase so that buying interest will be higher.

Conclusion

Based on the results, there is a positive influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on brand image, meaning that the better the E-WoM, the higher the brand image that consumers feel towards a product, especially Rabbani products. There is a positive influence of brand image on purchase intention, and this means that the higher the brand image perceived by consumers on Rabbani products, the greater the consumer's interest in buying the product. There is a positive effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on purchase intention. In this case, it can be interpreted that E-WoM has a positive effect on increasing the buying interest of Yogyakarta people towards Rabbani products. There is a positive effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on consumer buying interest through brand image as a partial mediating variable, meaning that the greater the E-WoM, the brand image will increase so that the buying interest will be higher.

Based on the results of the research, there are several limitations. For example, in the data collection process, the information provided by respondents through online questionnaires sometimes does not show the actual opinions of respondents. This happens because of different thoughts, assumptions, and understandings for each respondent, as well as other factors such as dishonesty in filling out the respondents' opinions in the questionnaire. Then this study only examines the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase intention through brand image as a mediating variable. The brand image variable can be removed or replaced with other variables as mediating variables. This is because the research results show that brand image is not a full mediation but a partial mediation. Future researchers can also use other methods in researching buying interest, not only through distributing questionnaires but also through interviews so that the data information obtained is more extensive and can reduce

subjective data. Future researchers are expected to add variables outside the variables that have been studied so that the results obtained are more diverse, which can affect consumer buying interest in a product.

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