

# The Relations of Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Brand Image, Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention: On Skincare Brand

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**Abstract:-** This study analyzes the relations of electronic word-of-mouth, brand image, brand awareness, and purchase intention on skincare brand. Word-of-mouth, or customer's honest testimonial, is known to be more reliable in informing customer's attitudes and behavioral intentions as it is perceived to be of great credibility and trustworthiness. On account of the advancement of technology, social networking sites (SNS) also play a substantial role in facilitating electronic word-of-mouth activity among cosmetic customers. This study intends to look into the effect of E-WOM on brand image and brand awareness on purchase intentions in skincare products specifically in Indonesia. The results of calculations show that all variables, i.e., E-WOM, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention, have a positive effect. In the context of skincare, E-WOM is indeed one of the means to be particularly incorporated in purchasing decisions.

**Keywords:-** Brand Awareness, Brand Image, E-WOM, Purchase Intention, Skincare.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology, the economy, science, and education in this era of globalization has brought about a new level of society's living standard. It has come to a point where, to attain a real-time relevance among society, the latest social media data or information circulating in it is required. It entails a wide variety of data mining techniques to extract and subsequently analyze user-generated content. The collected data will then contribute to the marketing domain. It is worth noting that the data findings from social media generally take form as written contents, e.g., status updates, comments in reviews or social groups, or conversations with other users. Nonetheless, they also derive from likes or dislikes, shares, tags, hashtags, emoticons, video messages, personal information, and rating scores (Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019). On account of the advancement of technology, social networking sites (SNS) also play a substantial role in facilitating electronic word-of-mouth activity among cosmetic customers. There are millions of people on social networking sites. That is, Twitter has 319 million; Instagram 600 million; Line 217 million, and; WeChat 846 million monthly active users. These massive populations of SNS allow people to trade product-related opinions and experiences with others of the same interests, and even brand managers (Bilgin, 2018).

Eighty-four percent of buyers are inclined to do their research on the internet before making a payment. People nowadays share the tendency to put everyday things online, including their personal experience with products that they have bought or used (Kazmi & Mehmood, 2016). Word-of-mouth, or customer's honest testimonial, is known to be more reliable in informing customers' attitudes and behavioral intentions as it is perceived to be of great credibility and trustworthiness (Jalilvand, 2013). Moreover, according to Mohanapriya, Padmavathi, & Prasathkumar (2019), due to globalization and advancement in technology, there has been a substantial change in people's mindsets and an increase in the level of literacy in urban cities as well as in the even in the rural ones, that induces more exposure on the awareness of beauty and skincare. In terms of skincare, in a study conducted by Rodan, Fields, Majewski, & Falla (2016), customers of all ages keep searching for the best-suited skincare products for them to attain perfect skin. Every store at which customers opt for, whether it is an offline or online one, tends to have a certain kind of practical impediments that get in the way of their product analysis. Consequently, they rely on recommendations from the people around them, e.g., their friends, and strangers whose remarks they trust, e.g., their favorite bloggers, to prevent buyers' remorse.

According to Mohanapriya et al. (2019), the skincare industry is having an obvious shift of customers from the older generation to the millennial one that is very enthusiastic about social acceptance of grooming as an important part of their lives. This phenomenon results in what BIZTEKA found in observation in 2015, wherein the Indonesian cosmetics market sectors grew by around 8.3% with a value reaching Rp. 13.9 trillion, an increase compared to 2014, in which it amounted to Rp. 12.8 trillion. Even during the 2010-2015 period, the national cosmetic industry market increased by an average of 9.67% per year. The massive potential of the market has urged the government to keep this industry sustainable. One of the means is through the modernization of the cosmetic industry machinery that began in 2016 (Citra Cendekia Indonesia, 2015). Meanwhile, in 2017, the national cosmetics industry recorded an increase of 20% or four times the national economic growth in 2017. This increase in growth was driven by massive demand from the domestic market and the export sector, going hand-in-hand with the trend to pay attention to body care products. This is also supported by a statement from the Minister of Industry noting that, currently, cosmetic products have become primary needs (Perindustrian, Kementrian, 2019)

Many studies have shed light on the relationships among the three variables, E-WOM, Brand Image, and Purchase Intention. However, there has not been a study that contains all the four variables simultaneously, i.e., E-WOM, Brand Image, Purchase Intention, and Brand Awareness. Furthermore, studies of E-WOM that scrutinize the impact of E-WOM on purchase intentions in skincare products in Indonesia, especially in the cosmetic industry, are still lacking. As for E-WOM and purchase intention, there is a study by Alrwashdeh, Emeagwali, & Aljuhmani (2019), that claims that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intentions as well as for the brand's image. According to the World Intellectual Property Report (2013), purchase intention could affect customers' purchase intention through the image of a brand. Bilgin (2018) argues that social media marketing (E-WOM) requires a particularly low cost to inform customers and raise brand awareness about the products and the brands (brand image) by appearing on social media platforms and reaching millions of users. Therefore, E-WOM is a particular variable that is to be examined in terms of its effect on brand image and purchase intentions. Moreover, this study also intends to look into the effect of brand image and brand awareness on purchase intentions in skincare products specifically in Indonesia. Provided that the cosmetics industry market increases significantly every year, and 84% of buyers are doing research on the internet before making a buying decision (Kazmi & Mehmood, 2016), remarks on skincare on the internet, both reviews and persuasive recommendations, may contribute to the comprehension of E-WOM's effect on purchase intention. With that being said, by introducing a model to better understand the effect of E-WOM on brand image and purchase intentions, as well as the effect of brand image and brand awareness on purchase intention in skincare products in Indonesia, this study is expected to be able to aid marketers in making leveraging strategies to improve the atmosphere of the skincare industry in Indonesia.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Electronic Word-of-Mouth*

E-WOM, also known as electronic word of mouth, is internet-based remarks and encouragement that reviews the overall experience of consuming products or services that usually circulates among customers. Positive or negative opinions, as well as, recommendations, can get any feedback from both customers and companies. The personal assessments often cover the use and specialty of both products and sellers (Dwidienawati, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, Gandasari, & Munawaroh, 2020). An E-WOM is not merely information, as it deals with personal experience and subjective assessments. Compared to its verbal counterpart, written communication is thought to be more logical given that the process entails shared rules that adjust one's personal experiences embodied in a systematic, linear process. Subsequently, E-WOM can improve the atmosphere of the customers' collective criticality against a product. In other words, E-WOM in social media provides rather critical information that users tend to need when it comes to the value of a product through the testimonial of others (Choi, Scott, Denver, & Scott, 2013). E-WOM is to be

particularly highlighted because unendorsed users of social media tend to upload, repost, and give honest, sugar-coated reviews of products or services that they have consumed (Yunus, Ariff, Mohd Som, Zakuan, & Sulaiman, 2016). Therefore, electronic word-of-mouth tends to be more reliable and trustworthy since it is an unbiased assessment of an overall experience gained by using a specific product. Typically, it can be found in unsponsored pages across the internet, e.g., discussion forums, boycott websites, and newsgroups.

### B. *Brand Image*

According to Wijaya (2013), brand image is a setup that is created out of all the expectations and information about the product or services; an important determinant towards purchase intention. The brand image of the product or services will affect customers' purchase intention by accommodating the ideas and the information that a customer has experienced about the differences and features of the products of the brand (Lee & Lee, 2011). Brand image can tease out significant success to a company if customers are willing to buy products or services at a higher price (Kazmi & Mehmood, 2016). It is also through a brand image that the information about customer belief in products and non-product characteristics is obtained. It is arguably a personal symbol associating the customer with the label, which is related to brand information and evaluation. (Lee & Lee, 2011)

### C. *Brand Awareness*

The power of brand presence in customers' decision-making processes refers to the importance of brand awareness on the customer's side, wherein it defines the extent to which customer is able to recognize a brand as a significant part of the category of a product. Personal views of the brand and consciousness play a role in the organization's intended impression of the brand. Moreover, customers' awareness of a brand has also played a crucial role in the development of the process (Pantea, 2019). A higher degree of awareness can improve customers' possibility to purchase a product or service. Consequently, when utilized properly, it can provide the company with a long-standing sustainable competitive advantage (Pantea, 2019). Social marketers highlight how raising awareness among the public can affect attitudes, associations, and beliefs toward a particular organization or brand. According to Tariq, Abbas, Abrar, & Iqbal (2017), brand awareness is the customer's ability to recognize and recall the brand in different situations, and it is made up of brand familiarity and brand recognisability. Brand awareness is at the lowest end of brand knowledge wherein the parameter starts from the simple brand recognition and ends in the cognitive-thinking-based approach which is based on detailed information about the brand. Brand awareness is also the fundamental and foremost limitation in any brand-related search. In decision-making processes, brand awareness affects customers' consideration when they are to buy something from the brand (Shahid, Hussain, Park, Bagh, & Scheme, 2017).

#### D. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the desire of a customer to buy products from a certain brand. As a party that demands any service or commodity, customers play a vital role in the economic system as they pay money and subsequently set trends of the goods or services produced. If customers' demand is not known, producers will lose the sense of motivation to produce, and it will significantly affect the economic system (Shahid et al., 2017). Therefore, increased awareness in customers can tease out a particular degree of economic growth, starting from the creation of purchase intention which then prolongs the company's productivity competitiveness. Purchase intention can be considered as one of the main components of customers' cognitive behavior that can accommodate the pattern by which an individual decides to buy a certain brand or a specific product (Hosein, 2016).

### III. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

E-WOM has become a permanent element of the online marketing strategy by making a major contribution to brand image and online customers' purchasing decisions. It entails outstanding customers' satisfaction to secure their positive reviews, both for goods or service products. As for service companies that are committed to providing a specific sensation of experience, it is important that they must make sure of every organizational worker's awareness of the importance of delivering consistent, predictable, and high-quality performance to their customers. Besides indicating business integrity, excellent service can also stimulate positive statements from prospective, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which will then be available to many people and institutions across the Internet (Jalilvand, 2013).

Previous research on smartphone brands in the North Sirpus Country found that E-WOM had a positive and significant effect on purchase intentions (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019), and also that on airline e-tickets (Ahmad, Obeidat, & Abuhashesh, 2020). In addition, based on (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019), the internet has stressed the use of E-WOM in giving recommendations by incorporating affiliations with reviewers who have had or are paid to have, experience with the brands. Such endorsement can be used as a strategic communication network since customers' opinions and reviews influence other customers' purchasing decisions. Therefore, it is suggestive that marketers strive to pay attention to the potential of these methods as they can influence the shape of these computing tools.

*H1: E-WOM has a positive effect on Brand Image in The Skincare Industry*

Online platforms, especially social media, are increasingly being recognized for the many ways they influence the use of products and services. As of now, E-WOM messages will be a substantial reference for customers to establish their purchasing decision-making process. This claim is founded upon the finding of E-WOM experimental studies on customers' use of online recommendation sources to influence product choice (Jalilvand, 2013). Previous research on smartphone brands

in the North Sirpus Country found that E-WOM had a positive and significant effect on purchase intentions (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019). Furthermore, Ahmad, Obeidat, & Abuhashesh (2020) found how the E-WOM marketing method was influential on airline e-ticket purchasing intentions. The revolutionary invention in marketing has led to the intensified use of collaboration between brands and social media influencers to generate effective communication networks (Alrwashdeh, et al., 2019). Dependently, buyers' purchase intentions and subsequent decisions are formed. In order to survive and adapt, marketers are suggested to pay attention to the potential of these methods, as they can influence the shape of these computing tools. Therefore, this phenomenon teases out a hypothesis as below:

*H2: E-WOM has a positive effect on Purchase Intention in the Skincare Industry*

When customers are to buy products and services, brand image can contribute to the success of the company. It is the value and adequacy of the products that stimulate customers' interest to buy certain brands. In other words, purchase intentions and decisions occur after an in-depth evaluation, creating positive feelings about the reputation of the brand, and increasing their purchase intention (Priyanthi & Kerti, 2020). Therefore, according to previous research (Wijaya, 2013), brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, is one of the most important factors to determine the quality of goods or services to create customer purchase intention, and occupies substantial space in supporting the quality of goods and services. Wijaya also found that customers can assess the quality of goods by weighing the image of the brand. Furthermore, a study conducted by students in Samarahan City, Malaysia found that brand image had a positive and significant effect on smartphone purchase intentions (Shahrinaz, Kasuma, & Yacob, 2016).

*H3: Brand Image has a positive effect on Purchase Intention in the Skincare Industry.*

An advertisement stimulates customers' consideration and awareness of the brand. Hence, should they come across the brand, they can easily internalize the value of the brand and its products. Customers then choose those brands and have a purchase intention. In other words, brand awareness helps them recognize the brand in the product category, and it influences their decision-making process (Tariq et al., 2017). Previous research from Wijaya (2013) found that brand awareness is the variable that has the most influence on customer purchase intention of Apple smartphones. That is, brand awareness can create perceptions of the quality of the good and service, leading to customer intentions. Another study also found there is a significant relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and brand awareness (Sharifpour, Khan, Alizadeh, Rahim, & Mahmodi, 2016), and according to a study on Taiwan cellular phone companies, brand awareness has a positive impact on purchase intentions (Chi, Yeh, & Yang, 2009).

*H4: Brand Awareness has a positive effect on Purchase Intention in the Skincare Industry.*

#### IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

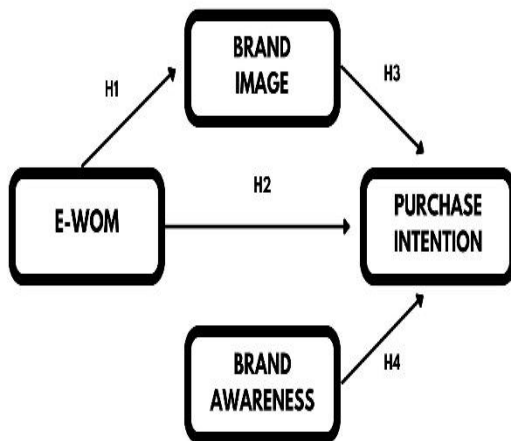


Fig. 1: The Research Framework

Source: Author

The quantitative research method is utilized to test the proposed theories and assumptions about the relations of E-WOM with brand image, brand awareness, and purchase intention. The form of this method is numerical, and it is collected so that it can be quantified and analyzed using statistical methods in order to espouse alternative knowledge claims (Apuke, 2017).

##### A. Research Population

The research population of this study is the Indonesian community who uses the internet daily and is active on social media. The evaluation of the said community emphasizes one of the four variables, i.e., E-WOM.

##### B. Sampling Technique

This study uses non-probability purposive sampling because the participants are selected through researchers' subjectivity. Respondents are not selected randomly but rather selected by using the assessment of the interviewers. As a result, there are unknown possible inclusions for each sample unit selected (Ayhan, 2011).

##### C. Data Collection

The data is collected through an online questionnaire focusing on the Indonesian community. Specifically, it uses the sample size that, Hair et al. (2011); Peng & Lai (2012) claim to be the minimum sample size estimation method most widely used in PLS-SEM, i.e., the '10 times rule' method. The most commonly seen among the variations of this method is based on the rule that the sample size must be greater than 10 times the maximum number of inner or outer model links pointing to any latent variable in the model (Goodhue et al., 2012). This study makes use of 21 questionnaire items. Using the 10-times-rule method, it is important to collect at least 210 respondents who live in areas that are the target of skincare distribution most prominent on social media's demography. Demographic variables in the questions include age, gender, profit, average online time on social media, and skincare purchases per three months.

##### D. Measurements

This study contains 4 variables, Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), Brand Image, Brand Awareness, and Purchase Intention. To make sure of the validity of the content, this study uses the measurement from previous studies for each variable. Particular attention is paid to local skincare products. There are six items to measure the electronic word-of-mouth variable (Jalilvand, 2013); five for the brand image variable (Batra & Alden, 2000; Jalilvand, 2013); five for the brand awareness variable (Oh, 2000), and; five for the variable of purchase intention (Roudposhti et al., 2018). Likert scales (1~5), ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree", is used to feasibly conclude the answer of the questions (Zeng, 2008).

##### E. Questionnaire Design

###### a) Electronic Word of Mouth

- I often read other customers' online local skincare product reviews to help choose the right product/brand
- I often read other customers' online product reviews to make sure I buy the right local skincare product/brand
- I often consult other customers' online product reviews to help choose the right local skincare product/brand
- I frequently gather information from online customers' product reviews before I buy a certain local skincare product/brand
- If I don't read customers' online product reviews when I buy a local skincare product, I worry about my decision
- When I buy a local skincare product/brand, customers' online product reviews make me confident in purchasing the product/brand

###### b) Brand Awareness

- Local skincare products are very familiar to me
- Local skincare products are very well known
- Local skincare products are very visible
- I have heard a lot about local skincare products
- Local skincare products are very famous

###### c) Brand Image

- Local skincare products have a very good reputation
- Local skincare products make me look good in front of my friends
- Local skincare products/brand has higher quality compared to other products/brands
- Local skincare products have a rich history
- I can reliably predict how a certain product/brand will perform

###### d) Purchase Intention

- I would buy local skincare products as recommended, given the opportunity
- I predict that I will buy local skincare products for my future shopping
- I would like to buy local skincare products the next time I go shopping

- If I find local skincare products the next time I go shopping, I will buy them
- I will make a special effort to buy local skincare products

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We use an SEM approach to be able to analyze this model. The Smart-PLS 3.0 application is used to assist model calculations. For acceptable construct validity, it is proposed that each item should have a minimum factor loading of 0.6 for the hypothesized construct (Cheon & John, 2004). Out of 21 questionnaire items, there are 2 that did not meet the expected factor loading figures so they had to be eliminated from the calculation.

	ba	bi	ewom	pi
BA1	0,807			
BA2	0,785			
BA3	0,679			
BA4	0,770			
BA5	0,757			
BI1		0,695		
BI2		0,661		
BI3		0,757		
BI4		0,816		
BI5		0,826		
EWOM1			0,719	
EWOM2			0,622	
EWOM3			0,596	
EWOM4			0,690	
EWOM5			0,453	
EWOM6			0,742	
PI1				0,622
PI2				0,860
PI3				0,881
PI4				0,855
PI5				0,779

Table 1: OuterLoading

AVE values of 0.50 and higher indicate a sufficient degree of convergent validity, which means that the latent variable explains more than half the variance of the indicator. For the assessment of discriminant validity, two measures have been proposed - Fornell-Larcker criteria and cross-loadings. The Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker 1981a) postulates that latent constructs share more variance with the set indicator compared to other latent variables in the structural model. In statistical terms, the AVE of each latent construct must be greater than the

highest square correlation of the latent constructs with the other latent constructs. The second criteria of discriminant validity is usually a little more liberal: the loading of the indicator with the associated latent construct must be higher than the load with all the remaining constructs, i.e., the cross-loadings (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). All questionnaire items (after deducting invalid items) have met the reliability test requirements and can proceed to the calculation of the hypothesis.

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ba	0,819	0,833	0,873	0,579
bi	0,808	0,821	0,667	0,568
ewom	0,759	0,797	0,839	0,567
pi	0,861	0,877	0,901	0,649

Table 2: AVE

	ba	bi	ewom	pi
ba	0,761			
bi	0,525	0,754		
ewom	0,337	0,351	0,753	
pi	0,484	0,620	0,398	0,805

Table 3: Fornell-Lacker

	ba	bi	ewom	pi
BA1	0,807	0,380	0,237	0,442
BA2	0,785	0,441	0,184	0,361
BA3	0,679	0,399	0,310	0,262
BA4	0,770	0,378	0,358	0,398
BA5	0,757	0,420	0,209	0,339
BI1	0,569	0,702	0,280	0,502
BI2	0,210	0,658	0,183	0,395
BI3	0,346	0,755	0,160	0,395
BI4	0,406	0,815	0,327	0,476
BI5	0,396	0,824	0,324	0,534
EWOM1	0,266	0,278	0,786	0,328
EWOM2	0,265	0,151	0,672	0,179
EWOM4	0,253	0,189	0,757	0,223
EWOM6	0,250	0,356	0,791	0,386
PI1	0,322	0,330	0,321	0,626
PI2	0,452	0,473	0,376	0,862
PI3	0,425	0,509	0,354	0,882
PI4	0,394	0,547	0,248	0,854
PI5	0,350	0,612	0,315	0,776

Table 4: Cross Loadings

In the calculation of the hypothesis, it is found that the value of the influence of brand awareness on brand image is 0.182. Meanwhile, the effect value of brand image on purchase intention is 0.483, and the value of the influence of

E-WOM on brand image is 0.351. It is also found that the value of the effect of E-WOM on purchase intention is 0.174. With that being said, it can be stated that all the proposed hypotheses are accepted.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Hypothesis
ba -> pi	0,182	0,188	0,071	2,533	0,005	Supported
bi -> pi	0,463	0,463	0,059	7,818	0,000	Supported
ewom -> bi	0,351	0,357	0,059	5,945	0,007	Supported
ewom -> pi	0,174	0,176	0,071	2,449	0,007	Supported

Table 5: Path Coefficients

## VI. CONCLUSION

With the results of calculations showing that all variables, i.e., E-WOM, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention, have a positive effect, it can be concluded that this study has a similarity/relationship with previous studies that examined the same variables, wherein hypotheses from previous studies that are similar to this study's are also accepted. Moreover, we also suspect that, in the context of skincare, E-WOM is indeed one of the means to be particularly incorporated in purchasing decisions. There are risks in using skincare, therefore, drawing on other people's opinions/reviews about a skincare product is relatively central in terms of buying skincare products. In addition, likewise, other industries, customer awareness of the existence of the brand (brand awareness) and a good brand image can certainly support the intention to buy products from certain brands.

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**Appendix 1. Questionnaire**

No	Questions	Scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I often read and consult other customers' online product reviews to help choose the right product/brand	1	2	3	4	5
2	I frequently gather information from online customers' product reviews before I buy a certain product/brand	1	2	3	4	5
3	If I don't read customers' online product reviews when I buy a skincare product, I worry about my decision	1	2	3	4	5
4	When I buy a product/brand, customers' online product reviews make me confident in purchasing the product/brand	1	2	3	4	5
5	Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y seems to be of high quality after reading people's review on online sites	1	2	3	4	5
6	I think Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y is reliable after seeing people's review on online sites	1	2	3	4	5
7	I believe Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y is a high-performing product after seeing people's review on online sites	1	2	3	4	5
8	I like this Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y	1	2	3	4	5
9	I am interested in Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y	1	2	3	4	5
10	I can imagine buying Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y	1	2	3	4	5
11	I would recommend Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y to my friends	1	2	3	4	5
12	I would prefer Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y to others in the same product category	1	2	3	4	5
13	Have you heard of AXIS-Y before reading an online review?	1	2	3	4	5
14	I know what this brand stands for	1	2	3	4	5
15	AXIS-Y has a very cheap/poor (good/high) image	1	2	3	4	5
16	AXIS-Y really makes me look good (not too good) in front of my friends	1	2	3	4	5
17	This product/brand has higher quality compared to other products/brand,	1	2	3	4	5
18	This product/brand has a rich history	1	2	3	4	5
19	Customers (we) can reliably predict how this product/brand will perform	1	2	3	4	5
20	After reading online reviews/comments provided by anonymous accounts on online sites, I want to purchase Mugwort Pore Clarifying Wash Off Mask from AXIS-Y	1	2	3	4	5
21	I intend to seek more reviews/comments provided by anonymous accounts on my social networking sites	1	2	3	4	5
22	I would buy this product/brand rather than any other brands available	1	2	3	4	5
23	I am willing to recommend others to buy this product/brand	1	2	3	4	5
24	I intend to purchase this product/brand in the future	1	2	3	4	5