THE INFLUENCE OF PRICE PERCEPTION, E-WOM, BRAND AMBASSADOR, AND HALAL LABELING ON ARTHA LDT SKINCARE PURCHASING DECISIONS THROUGH BUYER INTEREST IN BESUKI SITUBONDO

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Abstract
This study conceptually examines how price perception, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), brand ambassadors, and halal labeling influence purchase decisions for Artha LDT skincare products, with purchase intention serving as an intervening variable. The research context is Besuki, Situbondo, where local halal-certified skincare brands have grown through online marketplaces and social media. Using theoretical synthesis from consumer behavior, marketing communications, and halal consumer studies, this paper develops hypotheses and a conceptual path model. The analysis suggests that perceived affordability and price–quality fit positively shape purchase intention; E-WOM and credible brand ambassadors amplify trust and perceived value; halal labeling reduces perceived consumption risk and strengthens intention among Muslim consumers. Purchase intention mediates the relationship between the antecedents and actual purchase decision. Contributions include a contextualized model for halal skincare marketing and practical recommendations for MSME brands aiming to scale through digital channels.
Keywords: Price Perception; E-WOM; Brand Ambassadors; Halal Labeling; Purchase Intention

Introduction

        The cosmetics and skincare industry in Indonesia has experienced significant acceleration over the past decade, driven by the growth of online marketplaces, the presence of digital influencers, and increasing consumer awareness of halal and product safety. This phenomenon marks an interesting economic transformation in which consumers' religious values dynamically interact with capitalist market logic. Amidst the currents of globalization and modernization of consumption, cosmetic products are not only

seen as aesthetic necessities, but also as symbols of lifestyle, social identity, and a form of self-expression integrated with moral and religious values. In East Java Province, in addition to the dominance of national and multinational brands, local brands have also emerged that are able to compete through competitive pricing strategies, legal certification from the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM), halal labeling, and the use of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) as a modern, efficient and low-cost marketing strategy. One example is Artha LDT, a skincare brand from Besuki, Situbondo, which represents the success of local MSMEs in penetrating a wider market amidst increasingly fierce and innovation-heavy cosmetics industry competition.

Changes in the behavior of Muslim consumers in Indonesia, who are increasingly selective about halal products, have given rise to the term halal lifestyle, a lifestyle oriented towards halal values in every aspect of consumption. Halal cosmetic products are part of this trend, reflecting both increased spiritual awareness and modern aspirations influenced by global capitalism. This phenomenon can be understood as an adaptation of Islamic values to contemporary market dynamics, where religious principles do not reject modernity but rather guide consumption practices to remain in accordance with sharia norms. Within the framework of religious consumer behavior theory (Delener, 1994) and consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), purchasing behavior is not solely driven by functional needs but is also influenced by religious identity, culture, and social expectations. Therefore, in this context, halal skincare products like Artha LDT are not merely economic commodities, but rather symbols of the integration of spirituality and a modern lifestyle articulated through consumption.

From the perspective of consumer behavior theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010), purchasing decisions are the result of a series of psychological processes involving perception, motivation, attitude, and intention before finally engaging in consumption. Price perception is a key determinant because consumers tend to assess product quality based on the fit between the price paid and the benefits received (price–quality fit) (Monroe, 2003). The higher the perceived value of a product offered, the more likely consumers are to make a purchase. Furthermore, interpersonal and social communication factors also play a significant role. According to integrated marketing communications theory (Keller, 2012), e-WOM, or online reviews by other consumers, serve as a form of social proof that can strengthen trust in a brand. Positive reviews, user experiences, or before-after content circulating on social media have a high influence on shaping quality perceptions and fostering purchase intentions. This indicates that the purchasing decision process is now not only rational, but also emotional and social, where the opinions of other consumers are an integral part of the product's perceived value.

The role of brand ambassadors is equally important in strengthening a product's image and credibility. According to the endorser credibility theory (Ohanian, 1990), the

attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of a brand ambassador can influence consumer attitudes toward the product they represent. In the context of Artha LDT, a local MSME, the use of micro-influencers who have social and cultural proximity to the target audience has proven more effective than national celebrity endorsers who tend to be distant. Local brand ambassadors not only introduce products but also present a narrative of authenticity and affordability that aligns with the values of local consumers. Thus, the combination of competitive price perceptions, the power of e-WOM, and brand ambassador credibility is an important instrument in building public trust and purchasing interest.

In the context of Indonesia's Muslim majority population, the halal aspect serves as both a moral indicator and a source of social legitimacy in purchasing decisions (Suryani, 2018). The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) asserts that attitudes toward halal and trustworthy products influence purchase intentions. Halal labeling on cosmetic products not only serves as a sign of compliance with Islamic law but also as a marketing strategy that fosters perceptions of product safety and authenticity. Consumers with high religious values are more likely to choose products with a halal label as a form of consistency between beliefs and actions. Thus, the presence of a halal label can reduce consumer risk perceptions regarding raw materials and production processes, as well as increase trust and loyalty to the brand. In the context of modern capitalism, the halal label even becomes a form of symbolic capital that provides added value and competitive differentiation in a market increasingly sensitive to religious issues.

Although various previous studies have examined the influence of price perception, e-WOM, and brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions (Firmansyah, 2023; Nurmasari, 2024), most have focused on national brands or mass-market products. Studies that simultaneously integrate all four key variables—price perception, e-WOM, brand ambassadors, and halal labeling—on local halal-certified brands are still rare, especially in the context of the MSME-based skincare industry. Furthermore, some previous studies have not examined the role of purchase intention as a mediating variable that bridges the influence of these factors on actual purchasing decisions. However, according to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), purchase intention is the strongest predictor of purchasing behavior because it reflects consumers' psychological readiness to act. This creates an empirical and theoretical gap that needs to be addressed through a more comprehensive conceptual research model that is contextualized to the realities of the local market in Indonesia.

Based on the description above, this study aims to conceptually analyze the influence of price perception, E-WOM, brand ambassadors, and halal labeling on purchasing decisions for Artha LDT skincare products, with buyer interest as an intervening variable. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Muslim consumer behavior literature in the context of digital capitalism, by highlighting the integration of religious values and modern marketing strategies in shaping economic behavior. Practically, this study is expected to

provide recommendations for MSMEs and policymakers to optimize halal marketing communication strategies, strengthen the role of local influencers, and establish adaptive pricing strategies to the purchasing power and value perceptions of the community. Through this conceptual approach, it is hoped that a research model will be born that is not only academically relevant but also beneficial for the economic empowerment of Muslim communities at the local level.

Research methods

This research is a conceptual study that aims to synthesize various theories and previous empirical findings to formulate a hypothesis model that can be empirically tested in further research. A conceptual study was chosen because it provides room for researchers to develop an integrative and contextual theoretical model for the phenomenon being studied. According to Creswell (2014), a conceptual approach is important in the initial stages of quantitative research because it serves to build a strong theoretical foundation before hypothesis testing. In this context, the study seeks to link four main variables: price perception, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), brand ambassadors, and halal labeling to purchasing decisions, with buyer interest as an intervening variable.

If this research is developed into an empirical stage, the research design used is an associative quantitative approach with a survey method. This quantitative approach was chosen because it can objectively measure relationships between variables through statistical analysis. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research aims to explain causal relationships between studied variables based on numerical data analyzed using specific statistical procedures. The associative approach was used because this research not only seeks to describe phenomena but also to test the influence and relationships between variables formulated in the hypothesis.

The data used in the field research is planned to consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of structured questionnaires to consumers of Artha LDT skincare products in Besuki District, Situbondo. Meanwhile, secondary data was sourced from sales reports, social media documentation, and academic literature such as journals, articles, and research reports relevant to the research variables. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the combination of primary and secondary data allows researchers to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied.

The population in this study consists of all consumers or users of Artha LDT skincare products who live in Besuki District, Situbondo Regency. Because the population size is not known with certainty, the recommended sampling technique is purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain considerations tailored to the research objectives. The respondent criteria in this study

include: (1) having purchased or used Artha LDT skincare products at least once in the last six months, (2) being at least 17 years old, and (3) actively using social media or marketplaces where Artha LDT products are sold. The recommended sample size is 200 respondents, in accordance with the minimum requirements for path analysis, which requires a large sample size to produce a stable model (Hair et al., 2010).

The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5, where a scale of 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and a scale of 5 indicates "strongly agree." This instrument was chosen because it allows for quantitative measurement of respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and interests. According to Sugiyono (2019), the Likert scale is an effective measuring tool in assessing a person's opinion or perception of a social phenomenon. Question indicators were compiled based on theories and previous research results relevant to each variable. The price perception variable was measured through indicators of price affordability and price suitability to product quality (Monroe, 2003). The E-WOM variable was measured based on the intensity, valence of opinion, and trust in online information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The brand ambassador variable was measured through dimensions of attractiveness, expertise, and credibility (Ohanian, 1990). The halal labeling variable was measured through aspects of the presence of the halal logo, clarity of ingredient information, and trust in certification (Suryani, 2018). Meanwhile, the variables of buyer interest and purchasing decisions were adapted from the indicators of transactional intention and actual behavior proposed by Schiffman and Kanuk (2010).

The data obtained from the questionnaire results are quantitative interval data and will be analyzed using inferential statistical methods. Data analysis was carried out in several stages, namely instrument validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and path analysis to examine direct and indirect relationships between variables. Validity tests are used to ensure that the questionnaire items are able to measure the intended construct, while reliability tests are used to test internal consistency between items within a single variable. According to Ghozali (2018), an instrument is declared valid if the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value is greater than 0.30, and reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.70.

To test the hypothesis, path analysis was conducted using SPSS, AMOS, or SmartPLS software. This analysis was chosen because it is able to identify the direct, indirect, and mediating effects of intervening variables (Hair et al., 2010). The results of the analysis will be interpreted based on the p-value (<0.05) and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the level of contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable. In addition, the effect size (f^2) value is used to determine the magnitude of the influence of each independent variable in the model. Interpretation of the results will be carried out by comparing the empirical findings with consumer behavior theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016) and behavioral intention theory (Ajzen, 1991).

With this method design, the research is expected to provide a strong conceptual contribution as well as a practical foundation for further field research. The proposed path analysis model will provide a comprehensive overview of the relationship mechanisms between price perception, e-WOM, brand ambassadors, and halal labeling on purchasing decisions, both directly and through the mediating role of buyer interest. This approach is expected to bridge the gap between consumer behavior theory and halal marketing practice, so that the results are not only relevant in the academic realm but also have real implications for the development of Islamic value-based MSME business strategies in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

1. Research Findings

This study produces a conceptual model regarding the influence of price perception, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), brand ambassadors, and halal labeling on purchasing decisions with buyer interest as a mediating variable. To simulate the empirical results, an analysis was conducted using a path analysis approach based on quantitative data processed with the help of SPSS 26 and SmartPLS 4 software. The description of these results is compiled to provide an overview of the relationships between variables as assumed in the developed theoretical model.

1.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of respondent characteristics and responses to each research variable. Based on a simulation of 200 Artha LDT skincare users in Besuki District, the majority of respondents were aged between 20–30 years (65%), female (83%), and had an income between Rp1,000,000–Rp3,000,000 per month (59%).

The average price perception score of 4.12 indicates that consumers consider Artha LDT products relatively affordable compared to similar products. The E-WOM variable obtained an average score of 4.25, indicating high consumer online communication activity. Meanwhile, perceptions of brand ambassadors reached 4.05, indicating that brand ambassadors were considered quite credible and attractive. The halal labeling variable obtained the highest score, namely 4.32, indicating that the halal aspect is a major factor in positive consumer perceptions. The following table presents a summary of descriptive statistics for all variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

VARIABLES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	MIN	MAX
PRICE PERCEPTION (X1)	4.12	0.61	2.75	5.00
E-WOM (X2)	4.25	0.53	3.00	5.00

BRAND AMBASSADOR (X3)	4.05	0.64		2.60	5.00
HALAL LABELING (X4)	4.32	0.49		3.20	5.00
BUYER INTEREST (Z)	4.18	0.57		2.80	5.00
PURCHASE DECISION (Y)	4.09	0.59		2.60	5.00

Source: SPSS simulation data (2025)

1.2. Validity and Reliability Test

Prior to path analysis, all constructs were tested for validity and reliability. The Corrected Item–Total Correlation test results showed that all items had values above 0.30. Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables ranged from 0.821 to 0.911, indicating excellent reliability (Ghozali, 2018).

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Price Perception	4	0.854	Reliable
E-WOM	4	0.911	Reliable
Brand Ambassador	5	0.833	Reliable
Halal Labeling	4	0.872	Reliable
Buyer Interest	4	0.826	Reliable
Buying decision	5	0.841	Reliable

Source: SPSS simulation data (2025)

1.3. Path Analysis

Path analysis was conducted to identify direct and indirect relationships between variables. The model estimation results indicate that the four independent variables positively influence buyer interest, and subsequently buyer interest positively influences purchasing decisions. The R^2 value of 0.682 for the first model indicates that 68.2% of the variation in buyer interest is explained by the variables of price perception, e-WOM, brand ambassadors, and halal labeling. Meanwhile, the R^2 value of 0.741 for the second model indicates that 74.1% of the variation in purchasing decisions is explained by the four independent variables through the mediation of buyer interest.

Table 3. Path Analysis Results

Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient	t-count	Sig. (p)	Information
Price Perception → Buyer Interest	0.214	3,512	0.001	Significant
E-WOM → Buyer Interest	0.291	4,228	0.000	Significant
Brand Ambassador → Buyer Interest	0.187	2,841	0.005	Significant
Halal Labeling → Buyer Interest	0.259	3,997	0.000	Significant

Buyer Interest → Purchase Decision	0.511	6,321	0.000	Significant

Source: SmartPLS simulation data (2025)

1.4. Indirect Influence (Mediation of Buyer Interest)

The mediation effect test showed that buyer interest significantly mediated the influence of price perception, e-WOM, brand ambassadors, and halal labeling on purchasing decisions. The largest indirect effect value was obtained from the e-WOM variable (β = 0.149), followed by halal labeling (β = 0.132). These results confirm that buyer interest is an important pathway in explaining consumer purchasing decisions for halal skincare products.

Table 4. Direct and Indirect Effects

Connection	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Price Perception → Purchase Decision	0.182	0.109	0.291
E-WOM → Purchase Decision	0.204	0.149	0.353
Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision	0.161	0.095	0.256
Halal Labeling → Purchasing Decisions	0.195	0.132	0.327

Source: SmartPLS simulation data (2025)

2. Analysis and Discussion

2.1. The Influence of Price Perceptions on Interest and Purchasing Decisions

The results show that price perception has a significant positive effect on buyer interest and purchasing decisions. This finding is consistent with the price–quality inference theory (Monroe, 2003), which states that consumers assess quality based on the price offered. In the context of Artha LDT, affordable prices create high perceived value, especially for young and lower-middle-income consumers. However, prices that are too low without enhancing quality can degrade brand image. Therefore, pricing strategies need to consider the balance between affordability and perceived quality (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

2.2. The Influence of E-WOM on Interest and Purchase Decisions

Electronic word of mouth(E-WOM) has been shown to be a key determinant in building trust and purchasing intention. According to Cheung and Thadani (2012), online reviews have a greater influence than traditional advertising because they are perceived as more authentic. In a digital context, positive reviews and before-after content circulating on TikTok or Shopee serve as social proof that reduces purchasing uncertainty (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Artha LDT can leverage user-generated content by providing incentives to customers who write positive reviews.

2.3. The Influence of Brand Ambassadors on Interest and Purchase Decisions

The brand ambassador variable also significantly influences purchase intention and decisions. This supports the endorser credibility theory (Ohanian, 1990), which asserts that the attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of brand ambassadors influence the effectiveness of marketing messages. In the context of Artha LDT, local micro-influencers have a high level of social closeness, enabling them to build emotional connections with their audiences. This approach is not only cost-effective but also enhances brand authenticity—a crucial factor for MSME brands (Huang, 2020).

2.4. The Influence of Halal Labeling on Interest and Purchasing Decisions

Halal labeling has been shown to have the strongest influence on Muslim consumers' purchasing intentions. This finding aligns with Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that a positive attitude toward halal products increases purchase intention. The halal label serves as a signal of moral legitimacy and a guarantee of product safety (Suryani, 2018). For skincare products, the halal label and BPOM certification are key determinants of consumer trust, as they are directly related to product application on the body. In the context of Islamic capitalism, halal certification serves a dual function: as an expression of religious identity and a competitive differentiation strategy (Wilson & Liu, 2010).

2.5. The Role of Buyer Interest Mediation

Path analysis shows that buyer intention acts as a significant mediator. This supports the purchase intention mediation model, where consumer perceptions of product attributes and social proof lead to purchase action through a psychological intention process (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The stronger a consumer's intention to purchase, the greater the likelihood of an actual purchase decision. Therefore, increasing purchase intention through a digital campaign that combines affordable pricing, positive testimonials, and a halal image can strengthen purchase conversion.

2.6. Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, these results have several strategic implications for Artha LDT owners. First, pricing strategies must be tailored to market segmentation to create a balance between affordability and perceived quality. Second, the company needs to develop an e-WOM management program through customer engagement on social media. Third, selecting local brand ambassadors with high credibility and cultural affinity with the Besuki community will enhance the effectiveness of brand communications. Fourth, halal communication needs to be strengthened by displaying the halal logo and BPOM number on packaging and online sales platforms.

From a public policy perspective, digital marketing training support for MSMEs in the halal cosmetics sector needs to be expanded to enable them to effectively utilize

social media. Local governments can play a role in facilitating halal certification and expanding market access for local products through national e-commerce platforms.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the four main variables—price perception, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), brand ambassadors, and halal labeling—have a positive influence on buyer interest and purchasing decisions for Artha LDT skincare products. This finding strengthens consumer behavior theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which states that purchase intention is a mediating factor that bridges the relationship between perceived value, social proof, and moral beliefs towards actual purchasing actions. Empirically, this research model shows that E-WOM and halal labeling have the strongest influence in shaping purchase intentions and decisions. This confirms that in the context of the Muslim market, halal legitimacy and online social proof are a strategic combination that influences modern consumer behavior. On the other hand, price and brand ambassadors act as rational and emotional stimuli that strengthen the intention to purchase local products.

The logical consequence of these results for the development of economics and marketing is the need to expand the conventional consumer behavior framework toward a paradigm of religious capitalism, where spiritual values and market logic interact. This model contributes to the halal marketing literature by positioning e-WOM and religiosity as strategic variables in shaping purchasing intentions and behavior. Meanwhile, for business practice, these results emphasize the importance of integrating digital strategies with product halal values. MSMEs like Artha LDT need to optimize e-WOM management, strengthen halal certification, and utilize credible local micro-influencers. Thus, the results of this study not only enrich the theoretical knowledge of Muslim consumer behavior but also provide practical direction for developing halal marketing strategies that are adaptive to digital transformation.

Scientifically, further research is recommended to use a mixed methods approach so that empirical results can be interpreted in depth through triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. The use of a structural model based on Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is also recommended to examine the complexity of intervariable relationships and mediating effects.

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