

The Effect of Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion with Brand Image as a Mediating Variable at Flamboyan MSMEs in Gorontalo

Darman¹, Aulia Abdul Rahman², Irfan Akadji³

¹⁻³ Universitas Bina Mandiri Gorontalo

Corresponding author: darman@ubmg.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion with Brand Image as a mediating variable in Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs. This study is motivated by the importance of utilizing social media and word of mouth communication in increasing the effectiveness of MSME marketing promotion amidst increasingly competitive business competition. The research method used is a quantitative approach with a survey technique. Data were obtained by distributing questionnaires to consumers who have purchased Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME products. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling. Data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) through the SmartPLS application. The results of the study indicate that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Marketing Promotion. Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image. Conversely, Social Media Marketing has no significant effect on Brand Image or Marketing Promotion. In addition, Word of Mouth also has no significant effect on Marketing Promotion. The results of the indirect effect test indicate that Brand Image is unable to mediate the effect of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion or the effect of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion. The research findings indicate that the success of marketing promotions in the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME is more determined by the strength of its brand image than by social media marketing activities and direct word-of-mouth communication. This research contributes to the development of digital marketing and brand management literature, and provides input for MSMEs in designing marketing strategies that focus on strengthening brand image to increase the effectiveness of marketing promotions and business competitiveness.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Word of Mouth, Brand Image, Marketing Promotion, MSMEs.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has changed the way companies and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) interact with consumers. Social media no longer functions solely as a means of communication but has evolved into a crucial instrument in modern marketing activities, expanding market reach, enhancing customer interaction, and building long-term relationships with consumers. The increasingly rapid digital transformation is encouraging businesses to utilize various social media platforms as an effective and efficient means of promotion. This condition aligns with the findings of [1], who explain that digitalization has become a crucial need for organizations to improve operational efficiency, expand service coverage, and provide a better user experience through the use of digital technology. According to [2], social media marketing is a marketing strategy that can improve consumer perception of a brand through the rapid, broad, and interactive dissemination of information. These findings are reinforced by [3], who found that marketing activities through social media positively contribute to the formation of consumer brand image and purchase intention. This condition indicates that social media has become a strategic instrument that cannot be separated from MSME marketing activities in the digital era.

Besides social media, Word of Mouth (WOM) is also a crucial factor influencing the success of a product's marketing. WOM is informal communication between consumers about their experiences with a product or service, which can shape the perceptions of other consumers. In modern marketing practices, information obtained from friends, family, and social circles is often considered more credible than promotional messages delivered directly by the company. [4] explain that electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) has a strong influence on the formation of consumer perceptions, brand trust, and purchasing decisions. These findings align with research by Erkan and Evans, which shows that positive information spread through social media can improve consumer evaluations of a brand and encourage the formation of positive attitudes toward the product being offered. Therefore, WOM is seen as a marketing asset that plays a strategic role in increasing consumer trust in a brand.

From a marketing perspective, the success of marketing activities is determined not only by the intensity of promotions carried out by the company, but also by the company's ability to build a positive brand image. Brand image is a collection of perceptions, beliefs, associations, and impressions that are embedded in the minds of consumers about a brand. Keller's Brand Equity Theory explains that brand image is formed through the accumulation of experiences and information received by consumers about a product. The more positive the brand image formed, the more likely consumers are to respond positively to the company's various marketing activities. [5] found that brand image plays a role as a strategic asset that can increase brand value and strengthen the effectiveness of marketing activities. In addition, [6] explain that brand image can function as a mediating variable that connects the influence of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth on various marketing outcomes.

Conceptually, Social Media Marketing is a series of marketing activities carried out through social media platforms to increase brand awareness, build interactions with customers, and create value for consumers. Kaplan and Haenlein explain that social media is an internet-based application that allows the creation and exchange of content by users, making it an effective tool in modern marketing communications. Meanwhile, Word of Mouth is a form of interpersonal communication that arises based on consumer experience with a product or service and can influence the attitudes and behavior of other potential consumers. In this study, Social Media Marketing is seen as a variable that has the potential to shape consumer perceptions of brands, while Word of Mouth is positioned as a source of information that can increase consumer trust and confidence in MSME products.

In the context of the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME, social media has been utilized as a promotional tool to introduce products to the wider community. However, based on the phenomena found in the field, the effectiveness of marketing promotions still faces various challenges, particularly in building a strong brand image and maintaining positive communication between consumers. Increasingly fierce business competition requires MSMEs not only to be able to utilize social media optimally, but also to be able to build positive experiences that encourage consumers to provide recommendations to other potential customers. This condition indicates that the success of marketing promotions is not only determined by the use of social media alone, but is also influenced by consumer perceptions of the brand and the communication that develops between consumers.

Various previous studies have examined the relationship between social media marketing, word of mouth, and brand image on various marketing variables. [2] demonstrated that social media marketing and electronic word of mouth positively influence brand image and purchase intention

for MSME products. [3] also found that social media marketing and e-WOM significantly influence brand image and consumer purchase intention. Furthermore, [5] demonstrated that brand image acts as an important mechanism bridging the influence of social media marketing activities on brand equity. However, most previous studies still focus on purchase intention, purchasing decisions, customer loyalty, and brand equity as dependent variables. Research that specifically positions marketing promotions as the dependent variable is still relatively limited, especially in the context of local MSMEs in Indonesia.

Based on the description above, there are several research gaps that serve as an important basis for conducting this research. First, there is still limited research examining Marketing Promotion as a dependent variable in the relationship between Social Media Marketing, Word of Mouth, and Brand Image. Second, research that simultaneously integrates Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth with Brand Image as a mediating variable in the context of regional MSMEs is still rare. Third, there has been no research that specifically tests the relationship model of Social Media Marketing to Marketing Promotion through Brand Image and Word of Mouth to Marketing Promotion through Brand Image in Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion with Brand Image as a mediating variable in Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of digital marketing literature, consumer behavior, and brand management, while also providing practical contributions for MSMEs in formulating more effective and sustainable marketing strategies.

2. METHODS

2.1 Data Types and Sources

This study uses primary data, namely data obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of questionnaires. Primary data was chosen because it is able to provide relevant information and is in accordance with the research objectives, thus enabling researchers to obtain accurate data regarding the influence of Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion with Brand Image as a mediating variable in Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs. Primary data is a data source collected directly by researchers from research objects to answer the research problems being studied [7], [8].

2.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study was all consumers or members of the public who had purchased products from the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME. Because the exact population size was unknown, the sampling technique used was accidental sampling, a sampling technique based on chance, where anyone encountered by the researcher who met the criteria as a consumer who had purchased Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME products could be used as a research respondent. This technique falls into the non-probability sampling category, which is often used when the population is difficult to identify with certainty and researchers need to easily obtain respondents who match the research characteristics [9], [10].

2.3 Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires compiled based on the indicators of each research variable. The questionnaire was given to

respondents to obtain data regarding their perceptions of Social Media Marketing, Word of Mouth, Brand Image, and Marketing Promotion. Respondents' answers were measured using a Likert Scale with a score range of 1 to 5, where a score of 1 indicates strongly disagree and a score of 5 indicates strongly agree. The Likert Scale is one of the most widely used measurement techniques in social and business research because it is able to systematically measure respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions and is easy to analyze quantitatively [7].

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study used the Partial Least Squares (PLS)-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The PLS method was chosen because it is capable of testing complex relationships between latent variables, both direct and indirect (mediation) relationships, is capable of handling models with multiple indicators, and does not require strict multivariate normality assumptions [11]. Furthermore, PLS-SEM is highly suitable for use in predictive research and theory development in the fields of management, marketing, and business [11].

2.4.1 Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Outer Model Evaluation aims to test the validity and reliability of the indicators used to measure research constructs. According to [11], evaluation of a reflective measurement model is conducted through tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability.

1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is used to determine an indicator's ability to reflect the construct being measured. Testing is performed by examining the outer loading value of each indicator against its construct. An indicator is considered to meet convergent validity if its outer loading value is ≥ 0.70 . However, a loading value between 0.60 and 0.70 can still be maintained in exploratory research if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value and construct reliability meet the established criteria [12].

2. Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity aims to ensure that a construct has a clear distinction from other constructs. Testing is conducted by comparing the indicator loading values on the measured construct with the loading values on other constructs (cross-loading). A construct is said to have good discriminant validity if the indicator loading value on its own construct is higher than the loading value on other constructs [11]. Furthermore, discriminant validity can also be evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criteria recommended by [13].

3. Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values. A construct is considered reliable if its Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than or equal to 0.70 [14]. Furthermore, construct validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A construct is considered to have convergent validity if its AVE value is greater than or equal to 0.50, indicating that more than 50% of the indicator variance can be explained by the latent construct being measured [15].

2.4.2 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Inner Model testing is conducted to determine the model's ability to explain the relationships between the latent variables studied. Structural model evaluation is conducted using the following measurements:

1. Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The R-Square (R^2) value is used to measure the ability of an independent variable to explain variation in the dependent variable. The higher the R^2 value, the better the model's ability to explain the phenomenon under study. According to [16], an R^2 value of 0.75 is categorized as strong, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.25 as weak.

2. Path Coefficient

Path coefficient used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between variables in a research model. A positive path coefficient indicates a unidirectional relationship, while a negative value indicates an inverse relationship. The higher the path coefficient, the stronger the influence of one variable on another [17].

3. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The Predictive Relevance (Q^2) value is used to assess the model's predictive ability. Testing is performed using a blindfolding procedure. A model is said to have good predictive relevance if the Q^2 value is greater than zero ($Q^2 > 0$), indicating that the model has good predictive ability for endogenous variables [17].

2.5 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the Bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS to obtain the t-statistic, p-value, and path coefficient for each relationship between variables. The bootstrapping technique was used because it can estimate parameter significance levels nonparametrically without requiring a normal distribution of the data [17].

The decision making criteria are as follows:

1. If the t-statistic value > 1.96 and p-value < 0.05 , then the hypothesis is accepted.
2. If the t-statistic value ≤ 1.96 and p-value ≥ 0.05 , then the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis testing in this study includes:

- a. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion.
- b. The Influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion.
- c. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Image.
- d. The Influence of Word of Mouth on Brand Image.
- e. The Influence of Brand Image on Marketing Promotion.
- f. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion through Brand Image as a mediating variable.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion through Brand Image as a mediating variable.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Outer Model or Measurement Model

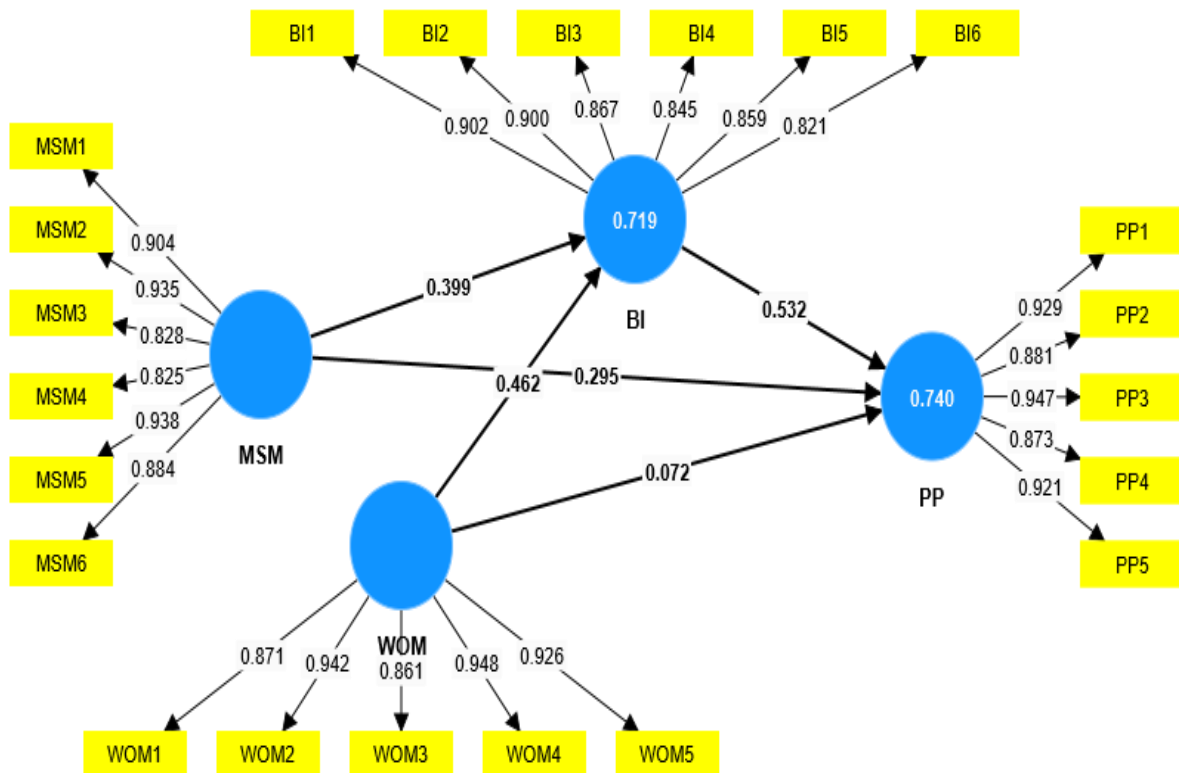


Figure 1. Outer Loadings (Measurement Model)

Based on the evaluation results of the measurement model (Outer Model), all indicators in the Social Media Marketing (MSM), Word of Mouth (WOM), Brand Image (BI), and Marketing Promotion (PP) variables have outer loading values above 0.70. Thus, all indicators meet the convergent validity criteria and no indicators need to be eliminated. These results indicate that each indicator is able to adequately reflect the latent construct being measured. Therefore, the measurement model has met the requirements for convergent validity and can proceed to the stage of testing discriminant validity, construct reliability, and evaluation of the structural model (Inner Model).

3.2 Discriminant Validity

Table 1. Discriminant validity value (Cross loading)

	BI	MSM	PP	WOM
BI1	0.902	0.711	0.794	0.704
BI2	0.900	0.782	0.755	0.784
BI3	0.867	0.685	0.777	0.643
BI4	0.845	0.581	0.657	0.644
BI5	0.859	0.749	0.747	0.725
BI6	0.821	0.802	0.610	0.838
MSM1	0.797	0.904	0.804	0.856

MSM2	0.726	0.935	0.716	0.826
MSM3	0.677	0.828	0.759	0.811
MSM4	0.696	0.825	0.571	0.817
MSM5	0.818	0.938	0.793	0.879
MSM6	0.702	0.884	0.601	0.810
PP1	0.789	0.786	0.929	0.803
PP2	0.678	0.724	0.881	0.649
PP3	0.825	0.832	0.947	0.823
PP4	0.758	0.601	0.873	0.649
PP5	0.753	0.705	0.921	0.670
WOM1	0.768	0.853	0.780	0.871
WOM2	0.762	0.861	0.749	0.942
WOM3	0.685	0.836	0.600	0.861
WOM4	0.773	0.849	0.713	0.948
WOM5	0.810	0.879	0.753	0.926

Based on the results of the cross-loading test, all indicators in the variables Brand Image (BI), Social Media Marketing (MSM), Marketing Promotion (PP), and Word of Mouth (WOM) have the highest loading values on the constructs they measure compared to the loadings on other constructs. Thus, all constructs in the research model have met the criteria of Discriminant Validity, which indicates that each construct has an adequate level of difference and is able to explain different concepts from each other. These results indicate that the measurement model (Outer Model) has good quality and is worthy of being continued to the stage of construct reliability evaluation and testing the structural model (Inner Model).

3.3 Evaluating Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Table 2. Summary of Reliability and Construct Validity Evaluation

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Information
BI	0.933	0.935	0.947	0.750	Reliable and Valid
MSM	0.945	0.951	0.957	0.786	Reliable and Valid
PP	0.948	0.953	0.960	0.829	Reliable and Valid
WOM	0.948	0.951	0.960	0.829	Reliable and Valid

Based on the results of the reliability and construct validity tests, all research variables, namely Brand Image (BI), Social Media Marketing (MSM), Marketing Promotion (PP), and Word of Mouth (WOM), have Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values above 0.70. These results indicate that all constructs have a very good level of reliability and are able to produce consistent measurements. In addition, all constructs also have AVE values above 0.50, even in the range of 0.750–0.829, which indicates that each construct has met the requirements of convergent validity. Thus, the measurement model used in this study is declared reliable and valid, so it is worthy to proceed to the evaluation stage of the structural model (Inner Model).

3.4 Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Table 3. Summary of Results of Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	BI \rightarrow PP	0.532	2,609	0.009	Accepted
H2	MSM \rightarrow BI	0.399	1,832	0.067	Rejected
H3	MSM \rightarrow PP	0.295	0.913	0.361	Rejected
H4	WOM \rightarrow BI	0.462	2,049	0.041	Accepted
H5	WOM \rightarrow PP	0.072	0.209	0.835	Rejected

Hypothesis testing in the structural model (Inner Model) was conducted using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS. The basis for decision making refers to the t-statistic and p-value, namely: (1) the hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic value is > 1.96 and the p-value is < 0.05 , and (2) the hypothesis is rejected if the t-statistic value is ≤ 1.96 and the p-value is ≥ 0.05 (Hair et al., 2022).

Based on the test results, the relationship between Brand Image (BI) and Marketing Promotion (PP) shows a path coefficient of 0.532, a t-statistic value of 2.609, and a p-value of 0.009. Because the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, the influence of Brand Image on Marketing Promotion is proven to be positive and significant. These results indicate that the better the brand image of the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME, the more effective the marketing promotion will be.

The relationship between Social Media Marketing (MSM) and Brand Image (BI) yields a path coefficient of 0.399, a t-statistic of 1.832, and a p-value of 0.067. Since the t-statistic is less than 1.96 and the p-value is greater than 0.05, the effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Image is insignificant. Therefore, the hypothesis that Social Media Marketing influences Brand Image is rejected.

Furthermore, the relationship between Social Media Marketing (MSM) and Marketing Promotion (PP) has a path coefficient of 0.295, a t-statistic of 0.913, and a p-value of 0.361. These results indicate that the t-statistic is below 1.96 and the p-value is above 0.05, so the influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion is insignificant. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is an influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion is rejected.

The relationship between Word of Mouth (WOM) and Brand Image (BI) yielded a path coefficient of 0.462, a t-statistic of 2.049, and a p-value of 0.041. Since the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, Word of Mouth has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on Brand Image. This finding indicates that the more positive word-of-mouth communication consumers receive, the stronger the brand image they form.

Meanwhile, the relationship between Word of Mouth (WOM) and Marketing Promotion (PP) yields a path coefficient of 0.072, a t-statistic of 0.209, and a p-value of 0.835. These values indicate that the influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion is insignificant, because the t-statistic is less than 1.96 and the p-value is greater than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is an influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion is rejected.

Table 4. Summary of Mediation Test Results

Hypothesis	Mediation Relationship	Indirect Effect Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H6	MSM \rightarrow BI \rightarrow PP	0.212	1,519	0.129	Rejected
H7	WOM \rightarrow BI \rightarrow PP	0.246	1,453	0.146	Rejected

Based on the results of the indirect effect test, the influence of Social Media Marketing (MSM) → Brand Image (BI) → Marketing Promotion (PP) has an indirect effect coefficient of 0.212, a t-statistic value of 1.519, and a p-value of 0.129. A t-statistic value smaller than 1.96 and a p-value greater than 0.05 indicate that the indirect effect is not significant. Thus, Brand Image is unable to mediate the influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion. These results indicate that marketing activities through social media are not strong enough to form a Brand Image that can ultimately increase Marketing Promotion significantly.

Meanwhile, the influence of Word of Mouth (WOM) → Brand Image (BI) → Marketing Promotion (PP) has an indirect influence coefficient of 0.246, a t-statistic value of 1.453, and a p-value of 0.146. These results indicate that the t-statistic value is smaller than 1.96 and the p-value is greater than 0.05. Thus, the indirect influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion through Brand Image is not statistically significant. Although in direct testing Word of Mouth is proven to have a significant influence on Brand Image, this influence is not strong enough to be continued to increase Marketing Promotion through a mediation mechanism.

The Influence of Brand Image on Marketing Promotion

The results of the study indicate that Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Marketing Promotion in Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs. This is evidenced by the path coefficient value of 0.532, the t-statistic value of 2.609, and the p-value of 0.009. This finding indicates that the better the brand image owned by Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs, the more effective the marketing promotion activities carried out. Theoretically, Brand Image is a collection of perceptions, beliefs, and impressions stored in the minds of consumers towards a brand. A positive brand image will increase consumer trust so that promotional messages delivered by the company are more easily accepted and trusted by the market. When consumers have a good perception of a brand, then every promotional activity will receive a more positive response compared to brands that do not have a strong image.

The results of this study align with research conducted by [2], which found that brand image plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of marketing strategies and consumer behavior. This finding is also supported by research by [5], which states that brand image is a strategic asset capable of strengthening a company's various marketing activities. In the context of the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME, these results indicate that consumers already have a fairly positive perception of the products offered. Therefore, continuous improvement of product quality, brand identity consistency, good service, and continuous marketing communications are necessary to strengthen brand image and enable more effective marketing promotions.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Image

The results of the study indicate that Social Media Marketing does not have a significant effect on Brand Image. This is indicated by a path coefficient value of 0.399, a t-statistic value of 1.832, and a p-value of 0.067. Although the path coefficient indicates a positive relationship, statistically the effect is not yet significant. This finding indicates that marketing activities through social media carried out by MSMEs Flamboyan Gorontalo have not been able to form a strong brand image in the minds of consumers. This condition can be caused by several factors, such as low content intensity, lack of creativity in presenting product information, limited interaction with customers, or the suboptimal use of various social media features as a branding tool.

Theoretically, social media is an important tool for building relationships with consumers and strengthening brand image. However, the effectiveness of social media is determined not only by its presence but also by the quality of content, consistency of communication, and the level of user engagement. If these aspects are not optimally implemented, the influence of social media on brand image formation will be less significant. The results of this study differ from those of [6], [18], and [2], which found that social media marketing significantly influences brand image. These differences in results are likely influenced by the characteristics of the research subjects, business scale, and the different levels of social media utilization between large companies and local MSMEs.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion

The results of the study indicate that social media marketing has no significant effect on marketing promotion. This is indicated by a path coefficient of 0.295, a t-statistic of 0.913, and a p-value of 0.361. These findings indicate that marketing activities through social media carried out by the Flamboyant Gorontalo MSME have not been able to make a real contribution to increasing the effectiveness of marketing promotions. Although social media has been used as a marketing communication tool, its use has not been able to significantly increase market reach or promotional appeal.

This phenomenon can occur because some consumers still obtain product information through other communication channels such as direct recommendations from family, friends, or their surroundings. In addition, limited upload frequency, quality of promotional content, and unstructured digital marketing strategies can also be factors causing the suboptimal role of social media in supporting marketing promotions. The results of this study are not in line with the research of [19] which states that social media marketing activities can increase marketing effectiveness and consumer interest. However, the results of this study provide an illustration that the existence of social media alone is not enough to increase marketing promotions if it is not supported by an attractive content strategy and professional social media management.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Brand Image

The results of the study indicate that Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image with a path coefficient value of 0.462, a t-statistic value of 2.049, and a p-value of 0.041. These findings indicate that positive word of mouth communication can improve the brand image of Flamboyant Gorontalo MSMEs. When consumers receive recommendations, positive experiences, or good reviews from others, their perception of the brand will increase. Information from other consumers is generally considered more credible than information from the company because it is considered more objective and based on real experiences.

According to marketing communication theory, Word of Mouth is a form of promotion that has a high level of trust because it comes from the direct experience of product users. The more consumers who provide positive recommendations, the stronger the brand image formed in the minds of potential consumers. The results of this study support the research of [20], as well as the research of [21], which found that Word of Mouth has a significant influence on the formation of Brand Image. In the Flamboyant Gorontalo MSME, these results indicate that consumer satisfaction resulting in positive recommendations is a major factor in building brand image. Therefore, companies need to maintain product and service quality so that consumers are willing to provide recommendations to other potential customers.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion

The results of the study indicate that Word of Mouth does not have a significant effect on Marketing Promotion with a path coefficient value of 0.072, a t-statistic value of 0.209, and a p-value of 0.835. This finding indicates that although word of mouth communication is able to shape a brand image, its influence is not strong enough to directly increase the effectiveness of marketing promotions. This condition can occur because the information conveyed between consumers is limited to a certain social scope so that it has not been able to reach a wider market.

Furthermore, marketing promotions require more planned and systematic activities, such as advertising, digital marketing, product publications, and various other promotional programs. Therefore, although word of mouth has a positive impact on consumer perception, its direct influence on marketing promotions has not been significantly seen. The results of this study differ from several previous studies that stated that word of mouth can increase marketing effectiveness. However, in the context of the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME, communication between consumers appears to play a greater role in building trust and brand image than directly driving marketing promotional activities.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion through Brand Image

The results of the study indicate that Brand Image is unable to mediate the influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion. This is evidenced by the indirect effect value of 0.212, the t-statistic value of 1.519, and the p-value of 0.129. These findings indicate that the social media marketing activities carried out by Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs have not been able to form a brand image that is strong enough to then increase the effectiveness of marketing promotions. In other words, the indirect influence path through Brand Image has not been able to explain the relationship between social media marketing and marketing promotions.

The insignificant mediation effect is consistent with the results of direct testing, which showed that social media marketing had no significant effect on brand image. Because the initial relationship was insignificant, the mediation process was also not optimally formed. This finding implies that the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME needs to improve the quality of its social media management, both in terms of content, customer interaction, and consistency of brand communication so that social media can function as an effective brand image building instrument.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion through Brand Image

The results of the study indicate that Brand Image is unable to mediate the influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion. This is indicated by the indirect effect value of 0.246, the t-statistic value of 1.453, and the p-value of 0.146. Although Word of Mouth is proven to have a significant effect on Brand Image, this influence is not strong enough to be passed on to increase Marketing Promotion through a mediation mechanism. Thus, Brand Image does not function as a mediator in the relationship between Word of Mouth and Marketing Promotion.

These results indicate that the brand image formed from positive communication between consumers has not been fully translated into higher marketing promotion effectiveness. In other words, the success of building a brand image through Word of Mouth does not automatically increase the success of marketing promotions. These findings suggest that Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs need to integrate Word of Mouth strategies with more structured promotional programs, so

that the established brand image can be optimally utilized to support the success of marketing promotions. Overall, the results of this study confirm that Brand Image is a factor that directly influences Marketing Promotion, while Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth have not been able to provide a significant influence on Marketing Promotion either directly or through the Brand Image mediation mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the influence of Social Media Marketing and Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion with Brand Image as a mediating variable on Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) **Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Marketing promotion** on the Flamboyan Gorontalo MSME. These results indicate that the better the brand image of the MSME, the more effective the marketing promotional activities carried out.
- 2) **Social Media Marketing does not have a significant effect on Brand Image.** These findings indicate that marketing activities through social media carried out by Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs have not been able to form a strong brand image in the minds of consumers.
- 3) **Social Media Marketing does not have a significant impact on Marketing Promotion.** This indicates that the use of social media as a marketing tool has not provided an optimal contribution in increasing the effectiveness of marketing promotions.
- 4) **Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image.** These results show that recommendations and positive communication between consumers can improve the brand image of Flamboyan Gorontalo MSMEs.
- 5) **Word of Mouth does not have a significant effect on Marketing Promotion.** Despite being able to build brand image, word of mouth communication has not had a direct impact on increasing marketing promotion.
- 6) **Brand Image unable to mediate the influence of Social Media Marketing on Marketing Promotion.** Thus, increasing marketing activities through social media has not been able to increase marketing promotion through brand image formation.

Brand Image unable to mediate the influence of Word of Mouth on Marketing Promotion.

Although Word of Mouth has an influence on Brand Image, this influence is not strong enough to increase marketing promotion through mediation mechanisms.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Rumra, T. A. Sandy, A. Sarif, K. D. Wibawa, A. C. Alwi, and T. Septianto, "Exploring public sentiment toward Islamic banking apps: A case study of BSI mobile in Indonesia," *Multidiscip. Sci. J.*, vol. 8, no. 6, p. 2026385, 2025.
- [2] M. Jasin, "The role of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention of SMEs product," *J. Inf. Syst. Manag.*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 54–62, 2022.
- [3] T. Kartika and D. Pandjaitan, "Electronic word-of-mouth and social media marketing on brand image and purchase intention," *J. Ilm. Manaj. Kesatuan*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 687–694, 2023.
- [4] E. Ismagilova, Y. K. Dwivedi, E. Slade, and M. D. Williams, "Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)," in *Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in the Marketing Context: A State of the Art Analysis and Future Directions*, Springer, 2017, pp. 17–30.
- [5] L. Peng, I. Adeel, A. Ayub, and Z. Rasool, "Investigating the roles of word of mouth and brand image between social media marketing activities and brand equity," *Sage open*, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 21582440231220110, 2024.
- [6] Y. İ. S. Bilgin, "The effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty," *Bus. Manag. Stud. an Int. J.*, 2018.
- [7] U. Sekaran and R. Bougie, *Research methods for business: A skill building approach*. John Wiley & Sons, 2016.

- [8] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*, vol. 8, no. 5. 2019.
- [9] P. D. Sugiyono, "Quantitative, qualitative, and R&D research methods," *Bandung(ALFABETA, Ed.)*, 2018.
- [10] N. K. Malhotra, "A scale to measure self-concepts, person concepts, and product concepts," *J. Mark. Res.*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 456–464, 1981.
- [11] J. F. Hair Jr *et al.*, "Evaluation of formative measurement models," *Partial Least Squares Struct. Equ. Model. Using R A Workb.*, pp. 91–113, 2021.
- [12] I. Ghozali, "Aplikasi analisis multivariate edisi 10," *Badan Penerbit Univ. Diponegoro*, 2021.
- [13] J. Henseler, G. Hubona, and P. A. Ray, "Using PLS path modeling in new technology research: updated guidelines," *Ind. Manag. data Syst.*, vol. 116, no. 1, pp. 2–20, 2016.
- [14] J. Nunnally and I. Bernstein, "Psychometric Theory 3rd edition (MacGraw-Hill, New York)." 1994.
- [15] C. Fornell and D. F. Larcker, "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error," *J. Mark. Res.*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 39–50, 1981.
- [16] J. Hair and A. Alamer, "Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example," *Res. Methods Appl. Linguist.*, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 100027, 2022.
- [17] J. Hair and A. Alamer, "Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in second language and education research: Guidelines using an applied example," *Res. Methods Appl. Linguist.*, vol. 1, no. 3, Dec. 2022, doi: 10.1016/j.rmal.2022.100027.
- [18] E. Woo and Y. G. Kim, "Consumer attitudes and buying behavior for green food products: From the aspect of green perceived value (GPV)," *Br. Food J.*, vol. 121, no. 2, pp. 320–332, 2019.
- [19] I. Safitri and Ali Mauludi, "Pengaruh Brand Image, Brand Trust, Harga Dan Kualitas Produk Terhadap Loyalitas Konsumen Produk Emina Cosmetics Pada Mahasiswi Fakultas Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Islam Uin Satu Tulungagung Angkatan Tahun 2018," *Juremi J. Ris. Ekon.*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 305–320, 2022, doi: 10.53625/juremi.v2i3.3398.
- [20] B. Sivathanu, "Food marketing and its impact on adolescents' food choices," *Indian J. Mark.*, vol. 47, no. 8, pp. 46–60, 2017, doi: 10.17010/ijom/2017/v47/i8/117432.
- [21] R. I. Elseidi and D. El-Baz, "Electronic word of mouth effects on consumers' brand attitudes, brand image and purchase intention: an empirical study in Egypt," *Bus. Manag. Rev.*, vol. 7, no. 5, p. 268, 2016.