

Brand Image Mediating Word of Mouth and Marketing Performance in Aloe Vera MSMEs

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Abstract

One of the leading commodities in West Kalimantan is aloe vera. However, the marketing performance of processing aloe vera into food products is still relatively low due to suboptimal marketing strategies. WOM has the potential to improve MSME marketing performance by fostering a positive consumer perception. This study aims to analyze how brand image mediates the relationship between WOM and marketing performance among MSMEs producing processed aloe vera food products in Pontianak and Kuburaya. This study uses a quantitative approach, with questionnaires distributed offline. The sample consisted of 115 respondents, and a census method was used. The data were processed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach in Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) to determine the influence of the relationships among variables. The results of this study show that WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image and marketing performance. Still, brand image has no effect and is not significant on marketing performance. Brand image is also unable to mediate the effect of WOM variables on the marketing performance of processed aloe vera food MSMEs in Pontianak and Kuburaya. Therefore, MSMEs need to improve communication and interaction to make positive WOM a strategy for expanding market share and boosting marketing performance.

Keywords: Brand Image; Marketing Performance; MSMEs; WOM.

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I. Introduction

Aloe vera is one of the leading commodities in West Kalimantan, with a harvest area of approximately 365,963 m². Most aloe vera harvests are in Pontianak, while in the Kubu Raya Regency, it is harvested on a smaller scale (Source: West Kalimantan Central Statistics Agency 2025). Under the auspices of the Pontianak City Regional National Crafts Council (Dekranasda), aloe vera is processed into various food and beverage products, including chocolate, fresh drinks, tea, nastar cookies, crackers, and aloe vera oyster mushrooms (Dekranasda Pontianak, 2023). Processed aloe vera products are still widely marketed locally, with lower sales volumes. This condition indicates that the marketing strategy for processed aloe vera products needs to be improved to give them a competitive edge over non-processed aloe vera products and to enable them to enter foreign markets.

The lack of sales volume for aloe vera-processed food products can be attributed to ineffective marketing strategies, leading to poor performance. WOM is a marketing strategy often used by consumers because the information obtained is more easily trusted. However, if the information provided by one consumer is not fully known to other consumers, it can leave those consumers unaware of the product, leading them not to purchase it, which can further reduce sales volume. This shows that WOM as a marketing strategy is not working well and is reducing the marketing performance of MSME business units (Cahyani et al., 2022; Harahap et al., 2023).

Brand image plays an important role for MSME businesses because it can help products become more widely known (Triadi & Darnita, 2021). The stronger the brand image of MSME food businesses that use aloe vera in consumers' eyes, the better their marketing performance. Effective marketing strategies can enable SME entrepreneurs to build more personal relationships with consumers by creating strong branding that influences consumer perceptions of the brand (Setiawati et al., 2024). In every business unit, such as aloe vera processed products, effective marketing strategies are the goal for business actors because strong relationships with consumers can increase loyalty, expand market share, and increase the profitability of aloe vera processed food MSME marketing performance.

WOM is a marketing activity that involves the dissemination of information about a product from one consumer to another, so that they are willing to give positive reviews about the product, thereby creating an impression of the product consumer (Kotler et al., 2022). WOM influences the brand image of a product, because the more consumers who give positive recommendations through WOM about the product, the better the brand image that is created, and the more consumers will trust the MSME product (Hasanah et al., 2024). Similar consumer tastes and a better understanding of the product can influence consumer perceptions of the product, thereby creating a good brand image in the minds of consumers (Putri & Dwiyanto, 2023). WOM plays a role in shaping a positive brand image, which can then influence purchasing decisions (Rizkiana et al., 2024). WOM that highlights positive aspects of a product will also foster a positive brand image. If the brand image is good, consumers will be willing to buy the product. However, if WOM contains negative things about a product, it will also give a bad brand image perception, which will make the market share uninterested in buying the product (Saputra & Rahanatha, 2025; Sari & Isharina, 2024). This means that WOM is not only a communication tool but also a highly strategic marketing tactic for building a product's reputation and brand image.

Brand image is how consumers assess a brand's quality, including the values, quality, and associations associated with it (Kotler et al., 2022). When consumers begin to remember a brand on a product, it can influence their perception of that product and their decision to purchase it (Sanjaya et al., 2022). A product has a strong brand image when consumers prefer it to other products and are even willing to pay a higher price for it. This certainly has a direct impact on improving marketing performance, such as increasing sales volume, market share, and company profitability. It is very important for companies to consistently build a unique, attractive, and strong brand image so that consumers believe in the product's benefits (Qadrifa et al., 2025). By building a good brand image, MSMEs can create a sustainable competitive advantage in the market. Products with a strong brand image will attract consumers' attention and increase the likelihood of purchase (Ardiyansyah & Purnama, 2024). Therefore, the higher the sales level, the better the marketing performance of MSME business units.

The role of WOM in helping companies improve their product marketing is becoming increasingly important. This is because the market will trust positive reviews from ordinary people more than company advertisements. When consumers are willing to share product information with other consumers, it can increase sales of that product. WOM has a significant impact on marketing performance by driving sales growth, increasing customer satisfaction, boosting profit growth, and enhancing the responsiveness

of business actors (Mosavi & Gunawan, 2024). Consumers can engage in WOM by discussing, promoting, and recommending the product to other consumers, spreading information effectively to influence consumers to make a purchase (Arafah & Subali, 2023). Many consumers decide to buy a product because they feel that recommendations from other consumers who have experience with the product are more trustworthy than advertisements (Tamtama et al., 2025). Marketing strategies that involve promotion through WOM have been proven to improve marketing performance because the positive reviews spread by consumers help potential consumers in purchasing products (Hildayanti & Satriyani, 2022).

Positive WOM can build a good brand image for a product, and this brand image strengthens the influence of WOM on improving business marketing performance. Without a strong brand image, the influence of WOM on marketing performance will not be optimal because the brand image reflects the quality of the product itself (Rahmawati & Witjaksono, 2024). With a strong brand image, consumers are encouraged to share their experiences with others, so strategic brand image management is crucial to ensure WOM contributes optimally to marketing results. In mediating between WOM and marketing performance, MSMEs need to strengthen their brand image to make it more attractive to consumers. In addition, MSMEs must also focus on strengthening their brand image so that WOM can be maximally utilized as an effective marketing tool (Putra et al., 2025; Rizkiana et al., 2024). Furthermore, a strong brand image is also obtained through the role of consumers in promoting products by sharing their experiences with other consumers, so that promotions carried out by consumers can become an advantage for MSMEs themselves in increasing sales volume and marketing performance (Hakim et al., 2022).

II. Method

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the relationship between brand image and word of mouth on marketing performance in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) producing processed foods made from aloe vera. This study uses an associative causality model with a quantitative approach. The population in this study consists of 115 MSME actors in the aloe vera-based food industry in Pontianak and Kuburaya, obtained from data from the Cooperative, Micro Business, and Trade Office in 2024.

The sample size was set at 115 respondents, and a census sampling method was used, in which all members of the population were included. This technique was chosen because the number of MSME entrepreneurs who incorporate aloe vera into food is limited. Data will be collected through a questionnaire measured using a rating scale with a value range of 1-10 and interpreted using Three Box Method (Sujarweni, 2015). The collected data will be processed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach in Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) to simultaneously test the influence of the relationships among variables and obtain relevant results. Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework showing the relationships between variables.

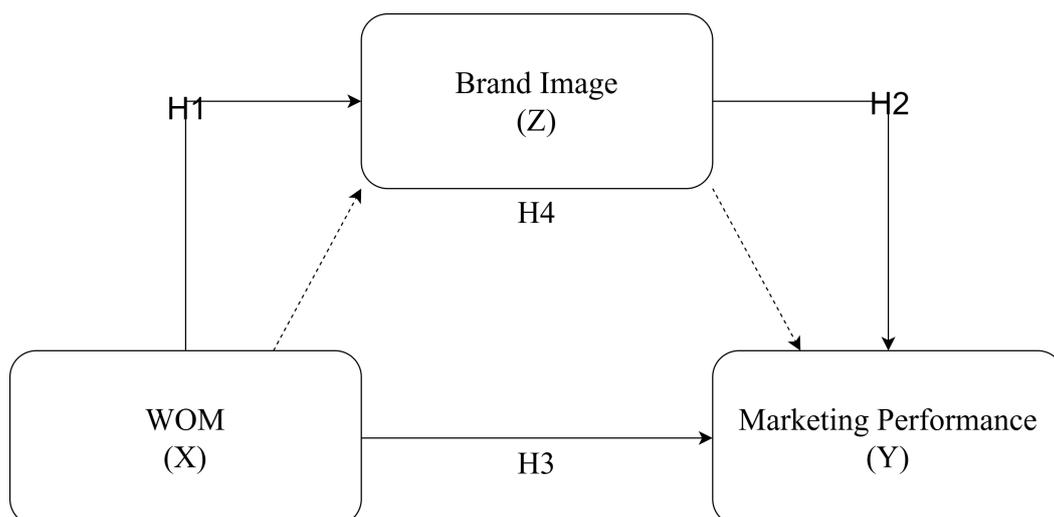


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Table 1. Variables and Indicators

Research Variable	Operational Definitions	Indicators
WOM	WOM is a form of communication or recommendation from one consumer to another about their experience, whether positive or negative, with processed aloe vera food products from MSMEs.	1. Discuss 2. Recommendations 3. Encouragement
Brand Image	Brand image is the perception and feelings consumers have in their minds, based on their experiences and impressions of processed aloe vera food MSME products, so that consumers continue to remember and use these products.	1. Brand strength 2. Brand advantages 3. Brand differentiation
Marketing Performance	The level of success achieved by MSME actors in the processed aloe vera food industry through the implementation of effective marketing strategies to meet customer needs and generate sustainable competitive value for these MSME actors.	1. Increase in sales volume 2. Addition of new customers 3. Achievement of profit targets

Table 1 shows the three variables studied: Word of Mouth (WOM), Brand Image, and Marketing Performance. Each variable has three indicators. For the WOM variable, the indicators include Discussion, Recommendations, and Encouragement. For the Brand Image variable, the indicators are Brand Strength, Brand Advantages, and Brand Differentiation. Finally, the Marketing Performance variable has the indicators Increase in Sales Volume, Addition of New Customers, and Achievement of Profit Targets. Each indicator in this research variable serves as a measurement tool to assess the extent to which each variable influences the others.

III. Results and Discussion

1. Testing the Validity and Reliability of Endogenous Constructs

Researchers use validity testing to determine whether the data collected from the questionnaire are valid. Data input from the questionnaire can be considered valid if the Average Variance Extract (AVE) value is greater than or equal to 0.5. Meanwhile, the reliability test is used to ensure that the questionnaire produces consistent data when used repeatedly. Questionnaire data is considered reliable if the Construct Reliability (CR) value is greater than 0.70. Table 2 below presents the calculation results and the obtained reliability values.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Variance Extract of Endogenous Constructs

Construct	Word of Mouth			Brand Image			Marketing Performance		
	Std Loading	(Std Loading) ²	Std. Error	Std Loading	(Std Loading) ²	Std. Error	Std Loading	(Std Loading) ²	Std. Error
WOM 1	0.809	0.654	0.346						
WOM 2	0.681	0.464	0.536						
WOM 3	0.729	0.531	0.469						
CM 1				0.749	0.561	0.439			
CM 2				0.730	0.533	0.467			
CM 3				0.722	0.521	0.479			
CM 4				0.660	0.436	0.564			
KP 1							0.618	0.382	0.618
KP 2							0.647	0.419	0.581
KP 3							0.755	0.570	0.430

Construct	Word of Mouth			Brand Image			Marketing Performance			
	Item	Std Loading	(Std Loading) ²	Std. Error	Std Loading	(Std Loading) ²	Std. Error	Std Loading	(Std Loading) ²	Std. Error
$\sum \lambda$	2.219				2.861			2.020		
$\sum \epsilon_j$	1.350				1.949			1.629		
$(\sum \lambda)^2$	1.650				2.051			1.371		
$(\sum \lambda)^2 + \sum \epsilon_j$	3				4			3		
CR	0.785				0.808			0.715		
AVE	0.550				0.513			0.500		

Using the output table above, the validity of each research indicator can be seen from the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value and the Construct Reliability (CR) value by looking at the cut-off value of 0.5 and the Construct Reliability (CR) value, with a cut-off value of 0.70. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for each variable is WOM at 0.550, brand image at 0.513, and marketing performance at 0.500. Meanwhile, for the Construct Reliability (CR) value, the cut-off value is 0.70. The table also shows the Construct Reliability (CR) value for each variable, namely WOM at 0.785, brand image at 0.808, and marketing performance at 0.715, which means that the values are greater than 0.70.

2. Assessing Structural Model Identification

A model can be declared suitable for identification if the degrees of freedom value is positive. Table 3 presents the results of the degrees-of-freedom calculation.

Table 3. Calculation of Degrees of Freedom

Number of distinct sampel moments:	55
Number of distinct parameters to be estimated:	23
Degrees of freedom (55-23):	32

Based on the results in Table 3, the degrees of freedom are positive (32), indicating that the research model meets the criteria and is feasible to proceed to the next stage of research.

3. Goodness-of-Fit Test

This study used a sample of 115 respondents, obtained by distributing questionnaires to aloe vera MSME entrepreneurs in Pontianak and Kuburaya, in accordance with SEM requirements of between 100 and 200 samples. The results of the Goodness-of-Fit test are shown in more detail in Figure 2.

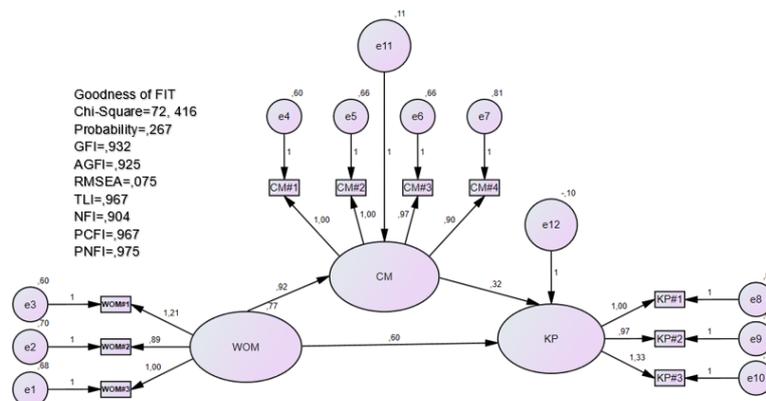


Figure 2. Path Analysis Model Results of WOM Variables on Marketing Performance through Brand Image

Based on the model in the [Figure 2](#), it can be concluded that the analysis results are fit, as can be seen from the goodness of fit index test results in [Table 4](#) below:

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Index Test Results

Goodness of Fit Index	Research Results	Cut of value	Model Evaluation
Chi-square	72.416	≥ 46.194	Very good
GFI	0.932	≥ 0.90	Very good
AGFI	0.925	≥ 0.90	Very good
RMSEA	0.075	≤ 0.08	Good
TLI	0.967	≥ 0.95	Very good
NFI	0.904	≥ 0.90	Good
PCFI	0.967	≥ 0.95	Very good
PNFI	0.975	≥ 0.90	Very good

From the output path diagram table above, the chi-square value is 72.416, indicating that it meets the Model Goodness of Fit Index criteria because it exceeds the threshold of 46.194. In addition, the GFI value is 0.932, indicating that it meets the Model Fit Index criteria because it exceeds the threshold of 0.90. The AGFI value is 0.925, which also meets the Model Fit Index criteria because the threshold value is greater than 0.90, so it can be considered reasonable. Furthermore, the RMSEA value is 0.075, which meets the Model Fit Index criteria because it is less than the threshold of 0.08.

Furthermore, the TLI value is 0.967, which meets the Model Fit Index criteria (threshold > 0.95), so it is considered good. Similarly, the NFI value is 0.904, which exceeds the 0.90 threshold, so it can be considered reasonable and meets the Model Fit Index criteria. The PCFI value also meets the Model Suitability Index criteria, with a threshold greater than 0.95 and a PCFI value of 0.967. Similarly, the PNFI value meets the Model Suitability Index criteria, with a threshold greater than 0.90 and a value of 0.975.

4. Hypothesis Test Results

This study tested hypotheses using regression weights to obtain valuable insights into the influence of variables. A hypothesis can be accepted if the critical ratio (CR) value is equal to or greater than 1.658 and the probability value (p-value) is less than 0.05, meaning that there is a significant relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables. However, if the critical ratio (CR) is less than 1.658 and the p-value is greater than 0.05, the relationship between the variables is considered insignificant or ineffective ([Table 5](#)).

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Critical Ratio	Cut of Value	P-value
H1: WOM has an influence on brand image.	6.984	≥ 1.658	0.000
H2: Brand image has no influence on improving marketing performance.	1.115	≥ 1.658	0,265
H3: WOM has an influence on improving marketing performance.	2.035	≥ 1.658	0.042

[Table 5](#) shows the results of hypothesis testing for each variable. Hypothesis 1 was accepted with a p-value of 0.000. Meanwhile, Hypothesis 2 was rejected (p-value = 0.265), indicating no significant effect. Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 was accepted with a p-value of 0.042.

5. Mediation Testing

In this study, the researcher sought to test the relationship between the WOM and marketing performance variables via the brand image variable, using the Sobel test. The following are the results

of the Sobel test calculations regarding the relationship between the WOM variable and marketing performance with brand image as the mediating variable (Figure 3).

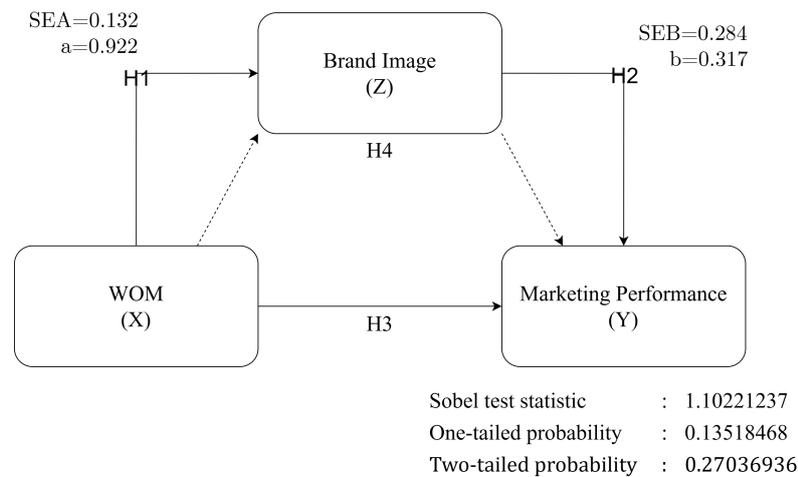


Figure 3. Results of the Sobel Test Calculation of the WOM Variable on Marketing Performance Through Brand Image

The results of the Sobel test indicate that brand image acts as a mediating variable, with a mediating effect of 1.10221237 and a significance value of 0.27036936. This Sobel test uses criteria to determine whether a variable can be declared capable of mediating the relationship between variables, based on the test statistic for variable Z being above 1.658 and below the cut-off value of 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that brand image cannot mediate the relationships between WOM and marketing performance.

The Relationship between WOM and Brand Image

Based on the test results table above, it can be seen that the Critical Ratio (CR) value in H1 is 6.984 and the probability value (p-value) is 0.000, which means that WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image. The more communication or recommendations occur between consumers, the stronger and more positive the perceptions of the product brand become in consumers' minds. Consumers who have a positive experience with a brand will not only feel satisfied but also tend to share that experience with others through various forms of communication, both in person and online. Recommendations arising from these positive experiences can shape other consumers' perceptions, increase trust, and strengthen the brand's image in the public eye. The more frequently positive information about a brand is shared, the stronger the positive associations formed in consumers' minds. This demonstrates that WOM plays a crucial role in influencing how a brand is perceived and accepted by the market. These findings align with research conducted by Putri and Dwiyanto (2023) and Martin and Rachman (2024), which demonstrated that WOM significantly contributes to strengthening brand image through the dissemination of positive consumer experiences.

The Relationship between Brand Image and Marketing Performance

Table 4 shows that the Critical Ratio (CR) value for H2 is 1.115 and the probability value (p-value) is 0.265, which means that brand image does not have a positive and significant effect on improving marketing performance. This shows that even though consumers are familiar with and have perceptions of the brand, its brand image cannot directly improve marketing performance, because several other factors, such as price and product quality, can also influence marketing performance. So even though a brand has a good perception in consumers' minds, if it has poor price and product quality management, it can render marketing performance ineffective and reduce the marketing performance of business actors. This statement is in accordance with the results of research by Azahari and Hakim (2021) and Wowor

et al. (2021).

The Relationship between WOM and Marketing Performance

Table 4 shows that the Critical Ratio (CR) value in H3 is 2.035 with a probability value (p-value) of 0.042, which means that WOM has a positive and significant effect on improving marketing performance. This is because when consumers voluntarily share their positive experiences and recommendations about a product brand with other consumers, it can generate stronger, more trusted promotional ideas. WOM conducted by consumers can expand market reach, increase brand trust, and create a unique appeal for consumers. Positive consumer feedback can strengthen perceptions of a brand's quality and reputation, ultimately improving marketing performance. This statement is supported by research conducted by Hildayanti and Satriyani (2022) and (Yusuf et al., 2025).

The Relationship between WOM and Marketing Performance

The results of the Sobel test indicate that brand image acts as a mediating variable, yielding a mediating effect of 1.10221237 and a p-value of 0.27036936. Thus, it can be concluded that brand image cannot mediate the relationships between WOM and marketing performance. This is because consumers tend to trust the experiences and recommendations they get from other consumers more than the perceptions built by brand image, so that the role of brand image as a mediator variable becomes less significant and is unable to connect the influence of WOM on marketing performance because consumers are quicker to respond to information obtained from experiences between consumers, as supported by statements from Tj et al. (2022) and Indrawan et al. (2024). These findings indicate that brand image is unable to mediate WOM in improving marketing performance because MSME consumers' decisions to purchase MSME products are more influenced by the integrated purchasing experiences of other consumers, as information from other consumers is considered more accurate and realistic (Shafitry and Octaviani (2024) and Humris et al. (2022).

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion regarding the influence of Brand Image as a mediator of the relationship between WOM and Marketing Performance in MSMEs producing processed foods made from aloe vera in Pontianak & Kubu Raya, it can be concluded that WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image and marketing performance in MSMEs producing processed foods made from aloe vera. Communication and recommendations made by one consumer to another can strengthen a brand's image and directly improve marketing performance. However, brand image does not have a significant effect on marketing performance, indicating that positive perceptions in consumers' minds are not sufficient to drive performance without other supporting factors, such as product quality and cost. The Sobel test indicates that brand image also fails to mediate the influence of the WOM variable on marketing performance. This is because consumers tend to trust and prioritize direct experiences and information obtained from fellow consumers rather than perceptions built by brand image.

Based on the conclusions, several recommendations are given to MSME players, namely that they should improve the quality of their interactions and communication with consumers to strengthen promotion through positive WOM. Although brand image is important in shaping consumer perceptions, MSME players need to focus on improving positive consumer experiences so that consumers are encouraged to recommend and share their experiences with others voluntarily.

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Declaration

I declare that the entire contents of this article, including data, analysis, and interpretation, are my original work. Any material taken from the work of others has been appropriately cited, and its

source has been acknowledged in accordance with applicable scientific writing conventions.

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