

MEDIATION OF *BRAND AWARENESS* IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING* AND (E-WOM) KOREAN COSMETICS

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Abstract: This study examines how Social Media Marketing Influences Brand Awareness and Electronic Word of Mouth in the context of Korean cosmetic products, with particular attention to the mediating role of Brand Awareness. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 130 respondents through purposive sampling and analyzed using SEM-PLS with SmartPLS. The measurement model demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted values exceeding 0.50. The structural model results show that Social Media Marketing significantly strengthens Brand Awareness and directly stimulates Electronic Word of Mouth. Brand Awareness also significantly increases Electronic Word of Mouth and functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth. This pattern suggests that social media activities do not merely trigger immediate sharing behavior, but first enhance consumers' cognitive recognition of the brand, which subsequently motivates them to engage in online advocacy. The specific contribution of this study lies in clarifying the sequential mechanism underlying digital marketing effectiveness in the Korean cosmetics sector. Rather than positioning Brand Awareness and Electronic Word of Mouth as parallel outcomes, the findings demonstrate that Brand Awareness acts as a psychological bridge that transforms marketing exposure into consumer-driven communication. This offers a more precise explanation of how value is created through social media interactions in trend-driven beauty markets. By empirically validating this mediating structure, the study enriches digital marketing literature with evidence that awareness is not only an outcome of Social Media Marketing but also a necessary condition that amplifies consumer-generated promotion in highly competitive cosmetic industries.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Brand Awareness, Electronic Word-of-Mouth*

Submitted: 2026-01-26; Revised: 2026-02-14; Accepted: 2026-02-22

1. Introduction

The global cosmetics industry is currently undergoing a major transformation with the dominance of the Korean beauty segment, or K-Beauty, which is massively influencing consumer trends in various parts of the world (Park & Hong 2023). The success of Korean products in penetrating the market is driven by the rapid growth of the beauty sector, which has

very high development potential compared to other industrial sectors (Zollo et al., 2021). The phenomenon of the success of K-Beauty brands such as TIRTIR in international markets, including Indonesia, demonstrates the importance of appropriate adaptation strategies in facing global competition (Taufiqurrahman & Aslami, 2025).

One of the main keys to this success is the use of digital technology and social media as key instruments in reaching a wide audience (Hamid et al., 2022). The rapid spread of social media platforms has made them an integral part of the daily habits of global society (Appel et al., 2020). enables organizations to build a strong brand identity through the transparent delivery of visual information, product details, and business locations (Jeswani, 2023). As an efficient communication channel, digital platforms allow companies to interact directly with the public while analyzing market reactions in *real-time* (Jin et al., 2025).

However, companies still face significant challenges regarding the authenticity of information, which often varies in professionalism compared to traditional media (Jin et al., 2025). Massive investments in digital marketing require continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the relationship between brands and consumers.

In a competitive business environment, social media serves as a sustainable marketing strategy tool that can support positive customer behavior growth (Wibowo et al., 2020). The proper use of social media marketing networks can help companies build long-term relationships not only with consumers but also with all stakeholders in the business ecosystem (Luttrell, 2025). This is particularly relevant for new brands such as TIRTIR, which must strive to build *brand awareness* in an already crowded cosmetics market (Jeswani, 2023).

Active marketing on social media is expected to be the main instrument for increasing consumer awareness and recall of brands (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). When consumers have reached a high level of brand awareness, they tend to talk about and recommend the product through *Electronic Word of Mouth* (E-WOM) (Putri, 2022).

E-WOM has now become a vital mechanism that translates brand awareness into consumer advocacy in the digital space (Ansari et al., 2023). In addition to brand awareness, engaging social media content can directly encourage consumers to provide reviews without having to go through significant awareness-building stages (Andi et al., 2023). The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the TIRTIR brand, which is in its growth phase, providing unique insights into the marketing strategies of brands that are on the rise in the digital market (Jin et al., 2025). In addition, testing the role of brand awareness as a mediating variable will provide a deeper understanding of the influence of digital marketing on E-WOM (Cheung et al., 2020). This study ultimately provides empirical contributions in the context of the Korean cosmetics market, where consumer trust and social media interactions are crucial to a brand's success (Nguyễn et al., 2021).

2. Literature Review

Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is defined as a strategic process that utilizes Web 2.0-based technology to create, communicate, and exchange offers that have value for organizational stakeholders through collaborative digital platforms (Li et al., 2021). More specifically, SMM is a marketing activity that uses online communities and social networks to build two-way consumer engagement, rather than simply transmitting information in one direction (Jin et al., 2025). Social media marketing is also seen as an effort to integrate digital technology with social interaction to create a deep brand experience, where consumers no longer play the role of passive audiences, but rather as active content creators (Odoom, 2025).

Effective social media marketing often involves collaborating with content creators or influencers to increase the credibility of messages in the eyes of the public (Andi S et al., 2023). The use of multimedia elements such as short videos and attractive graphics has proven to be more effective in capturing the audience's attention amid the flood of digital information (Jin et al., 2025). Social media also functions as a market research laboratory where companies can observe the latest trends and consumer preferences directly (Appel et al., 2020). The flexibility of social media platforms allows brands to quickly adjust their promotional strategies in line with the changing dynamics of the market (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Thus, integrating social media into the marketing mix is a must for companies that want to remain competitive in the era of digital transformation (Verhoef et al., 2021).

Through hashtag management and viral content distribution, a brand can gain massive exposure in a short period of time at a more efficient cost (Odoom, 2025). The inclusive nature of social media provides opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses to compete with large companies in the global market. Well-planned digital activities can build brand authority in the relevant industry by providing educational content that is useful to users (Mason et al., 2021). Ultimately, the effectiveness of social media marketing is measured by its ability to turn passive audiences into active brand advocates who promote the brand voluntarily (Chu et al., 2020).

Brand Awareness

The implementation of marketing activities through social media platforms has been widely recognized as a crucial determinant in escalating the visibility of a business entity in the digital space (Pattiasina et al., 2025). Integrated content strategies enable companies to transcend geographical boundaries, thereby facilitating brand recognition among a broader and more diverse audience segment (Suarsa et al., 2025).

Brand involvement in digital discourse not only increases reach, but also deepens public familiarity through the consistent dissemination of brand values (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Through the use of interactive features such as short videos and digital collaborations, companies are able to create visual stimuli that trigger instant brand recognition when consumers are exposed to similar stimuli in the market (Appel et al., 2020). This phenomenon is supported by the fact that digital platforms provide space for brands to build an authentic presence, which significantly reduces consumer uncertainty about the brand's existence (Cheung et al., 2021).

Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) is a form of digital marketing communication that arises from interactions between consumers through online media, where experiences and evaluations of a product are openly shared with the public. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) emphasize that in the era of connectivity-based marketing, consumer recommendations have a higher level of trust compared to one-way marketing communications. Information disseminated through eWOM can reach a wide audience across geographical boundaries, thus playing a significant role in shaping brand image and reputation in the digital space (Kotler & Keller, 2022). From a consumer behavior perspective, eWOM also serves as a means for individuals to express their identity and social affiliation, where brand choices are used as symbols of membership in certain digital communities (Solomon, 2020). The accumulation of consumer reviews and recommendations creates a social proof mechanism that influences the trust and purchasing decisions of potential consumers, especially in situations of information

uncertainty (Cialdini, 2021). Additionally, consumers' emotional attachment to a brand encourages active participation in sharing product usage experiences through user-generated content, which further strengthens the influence of eWOM (Keller, 2020). Therefore, integrated eWOM management within digital marketing strategies is a key factor for companies to build sustainable competitive advantage in the midst of increasingly dynamic global competition (Kotler et al., 2021).

The Relationship Between Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness

Social media marketing strategies are an important tool that enables companies to establish direct two-way communication with consumers, creating more personal and relevant interactions than various social media platforms help increase brand visibility amid the high flow of digital information and strengthen brand identity in the minds of consumers (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Through the delivery of informative, educational, and valuable content, social media serves as a strategic tool in expanding brand reach without geographical limitations (Appel et al., 2020). The use of interactive features such as visual posts, stories, and live broadcasts encourages active consumer engagement in recognizing the characteristics and uniqueness of the products offered (Hudson et al., 2020). Repeated brand exposure in the social media ecosystem gradually builds familiarity, which in turn becomes the foundation for long-term brand awareness (Keller, 2020). In addition, collaboration with credible digital influencers can strengthen brand association and accelerate the brand recognition process in the early stages of consumer interaction (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Based on the theoretical description and empirical findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness.

The Relationship Between Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Social media marketing strategies serve as the primary means for consumers to disseminate information quickly and widely through digital networks (Appel et al., 2020). The effectiveness of social media marketing is largely determined by a brand's ability to present relevant, meaningful, and engaging messages that encourage audiences to engage and share them with their social networks (Ashley & Tuten, 2020). Active consumer engagement on digital platforms creates a sense of closeness with the brand, which then triggers voluntary promotional behavior in the form of online recommendations (Dessart et al., 2021). Strategic use of social media can transform conventional marketing messages into personal recommendations that have a higher level of credibility in the eyes of consumers (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; reaffirmed by Erkan & Evans, 2021). Content that follows trends, is entertaining, and involves user participation has been proven to accelerate the dissemination of product information in the digital space (Voorveld, 2021). In addition, consistent brand presence on social media plays a role in strengthening brand credibility and validation, so that consumers feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and giving reviews openly (Cheung et al., 2020). The frequency and quality of interactions between brands and consumers on social media are key factors in encouraging electronic word-of-mouth communication (Ismagilova et al., 2021). In this digital ecosystem, consumers not only act as recipients of information, but also as agents who spread messages that express their identity through the brands they support (Kaur et al., 2020). Therefore, the more unique and authentic the content presented, the greater the tendency for consumers to recommend products to their social networks (Rosario et al., 2020). Based on the above description, the following hypothesis is formulated

H2: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM).

The Relationship between *Electronic Word-of-Mouth* and *Brand Awareness*

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) activities serve as a crucial social validation mechanism in shaping audience perceptions of a brand's quality and credibility (Ismagilova et al., 2021). The dissemination of user reviews through various digital platforms enables companies to accelerate public familiarity while strengthening consumer recall of brand identity and products offered (Appel et al., 2020). The consistency of positive narratives in the digital ecosystem conventional marketing media (Tuten & Solomon, 2020). Consistent marketing activities across ensures that brands remain in the consumer's consideration set amid increasingly competitive markets (Cheung et al., 2020). Intense interaction in the eWOM environment is a determining factor in attracting and retaining consumer attention to a brand (Dessart et al., 2021). The high volume of online reviews not only increases consumer interest but also strengthens brand recognition through repeated and continuous exposure to information (Rosario et al., 2020). In addition, the speed of opinion distribution in digital media serves as an accelerator in building brand familiarity, which has a direct impact on increasing consumer interest and purchase intent (Erkan & Evans, 2021). User-generated content acts as a catalyst in strengthening positive associations and increasing brand credibility in the public eye (Kaur et al., 2020). Therefore, effective and sustainable eWOM management is a strategic factor in expanding brand awareness, especially in the context of global competition in the era of digital transformation. Based on the theoretical description and empirical findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness.

Mediation of Brand Awareness in the Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) for Korean Cosmetics

Social media marketing not only serves as a means of direct communication between brands and consumers, but also as a strategic instrument in building brand awareness through repeated, interactive, and relevant content exposure across various digital platforms (Appel et al., 2020; Voorveld, 2021). High brand awareness enables consumers to more easily recognize, remember, and distinguish a brand from its competitors, thereby strengthening the brand's position in consumers' cognitive structure. Strong brand awareness further plays an important role in encouraging Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) behavior, as consumers tend to be more confident in sharing their experiences, opinions, and recommendations about brands that are well-known and have a positive image (Erkan & Evans, 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2021). In the highly competitive and trend-based Korean cosmetics industry, brand awareness is the main foundation before consumers are encouraged to engage in voluntary communication through social media. Consistent exposure to digital marketing activities helps brands build familiarity, which then strengthens consumers' tendency to participate in online information dissemination. Therefore, Social Media Marketing not only directly influences eWOM, but also indirectly through increased brand awareness. This indicates that the effectiveness of social media marketing in driving eWOM will be stronger when consumers have a high level of brand awareness. Thus, brand awareness plays a strategic role as an intervening variable in explaining the mechanism of Social Media Marketing's influence on eWOM for Korean cosmetic brands. Based on this description, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Brand Awareness mediates the influence of Social Media Marketing on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) for Korean cosmetic products.

3. Research Method

The method used in this study was quantitative with a survey approach to analyze the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and electronic word of mouth on TirTir cosmetic products. Data were collected by distributing online questionnaires through Google Forms to female respondents residing in Surabaya who were familiar with TirTir cosmetic products. The total population of 320 individuals was based on the overall users of TirTir cosmetic products identified during the research period in Surabaya. From this population, purposive sampling was applied to select respondents who met specific research criteria, such as having used or being familiar with TirTir products and actively using social media. Through this selection process, 130 respondents met the required criteria and were considered valid for further analysis in this study.

The research instruments used have been tested for validity and reliability, with measurements using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from a score of 1 for "Strongly Disagree" to a score of 5 for "Strongly Agree". The collected data were then analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). Convergent validity was evaluated through *factor loadings* analysis, *average variance extracted (AVE)*, and *composite reliability (CR)*. All constructs were confirmed to be reliable through *Cronbach's alpha* and CR values exceeding the recommended threshold of >0.60 . Hypothesis testing was then conducted to investigate the relationships between variables in the research model through the estimation of *path coefficients* and their significance levels (*p-values*).

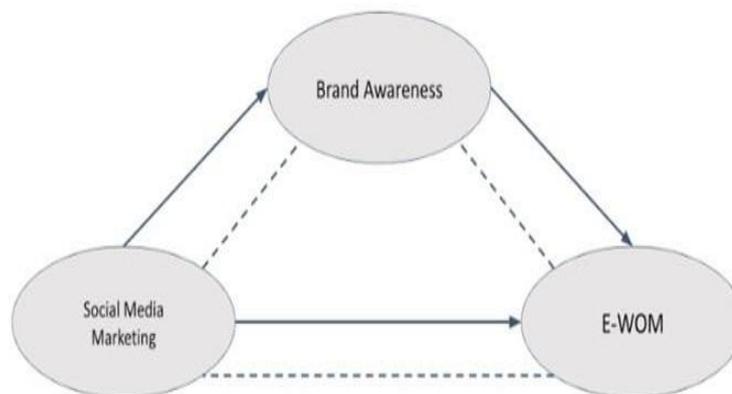


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Respondent Characteristics

Research data was obtained from 130 female respondents residing in Surabaya who were familiar with the Tirtir cosmetics brand. The characteristics of the respondents in this study are as follows:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Residence	West Surabaya	28	21.54
	South Surabaya	31	23.85
	East Surabaya	22	16.92
	North Surabaya	19	14.62
	Central Surabaya	30	23.08
Age	15–20 years	24	18.50
	21–25 years	33	25.40
	26–30 years	30	23.10
	31–40 years	20	15.40
	41–45 years	11	8.50
	> 45 years	12	9.20%
Occupation	Entrepreneur	35	26.90
	Self-employed	70	53.90
	Student/University Student	25	19.20
Social Media Information Source	Instagram	68	52.30
	TikTok	62	47.70%
Interest Factors	Country of origin	23	17.70
	Discount	29	22.30
	Brand ambassador	41	31.50
	Engaging content	37	28.50
Content Exposure Intensity	Quite often	64	49.20
	Frequently	35	26.90
	Rarely	31	23.90
Content Type	Photo	54	41.50
	Video	76	58.50
Marketing Activity Preferences	Live	23	17.70
	Events	31	23.90%
	Interactive social media content	25	19.20
	Collaborative content	29	22.30
	Discount content	22	16.90
Purchase channels	E-commerce	51	39.20
	Sociolla	43	33.10
	Official website	36	27.70
Well-known Tir-tir products	Makeup	61	46.90
	Skincare	69	53.10
Total Respondents		130	100.00%

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 1, the characteristics of the respondents show that the majority of

respondents reside in South Surabaya (23.85%) and Central Surabaya (23.08%), with a predominance of the productive age groups of 21–25 years (25.40%) and 26–30 years (23.10%), and most of them are self-employed (53.90%). Instagram (52.30%) and TikTok (47.70%) are the main sources of information about Korean cosmetics, with the biggest factors of interest being brand ambassadors (31.50%) and interesting content (28.50%). Respondents are generally quite often exposed to Korean cosmetics content on social media (49.20%), with video being the most viewed content type (58.50%). The most popular marketing activities are events (23.90%) and collaborative content (22.30%), while e-commerce is the main purchasing channel (39.20%). Additionally, the most recognized Tir-tir products among respondents were in the skincare category (53.10%), indicating that brand awareness for skincare products is relatively stronger and has the potential to act as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and *electronic word-of-mouth* (E-WOM) for Korean cosmetics.

Outer Model

The outer model is a measurement model that explains the relationship between latent variables (constructs) and their indicators in *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) analysis. *The outer model* is used to assess the extent to which indicators are able to measure the constructs under study accurately and consistently. The outer model focuses on the validity and reliability of the instrument, thereby ensuring that each indicator truly represents the latent variable being formed. The evaluation of the outer model is conducted before testing the relationships between variables in the inner model. The results of the outer model in this study are as follows:

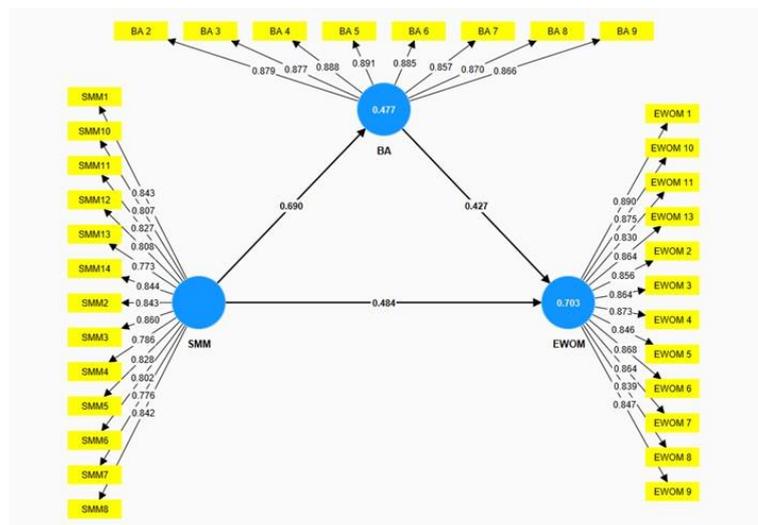


Figure 2. Research Outer Model
Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

1) Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is used to measure the extent to which each indicator truly represents and correlates strongly with the latent variable it measures. The results of the Convergent Validity test in this study are presented as follows:

Table 2. Outer Loading

Variable	Item	Outer Loading	Description
Brand Awareness	BA2	0.879	Valid
	BA3	0.877	Valid
	BA4	0.888	Valid
	BA5	0.891	Valid
	BA6	0.885	Valid
	BA7	0.857	Valid
	BA8	0.87	Valid
	BA9	0.866	Valid
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	EWOM1	0.89	Valid
	EWOM2	0.856	Valid
	EWOM3	0.864	Valid
	EWOM4	0.873	Valid
	EWOM5	0.846	Valid
	EWOM6	0.868	Valid
	EWOM7	0.864	Valid
	EWOM8	0.839	Valid
	EWOM9	0.847	Valid
	EWOM10	0.875	Valid
	EWOM11	0.83	Valid
	EWOM12	0.864	Valid
Social Media Marketing	SMM1	0.843	Valid
	SMM2	0.843	Valid
	SMM3	0.86	Valid
	SMM4	0.786	Valid
	SMM5	0.828	Valid
	SMM6	0.802	Valid
	SMM7	0.776	Valid
	SMM8	0.842	Valid
	SMM10	0.807	Valid
	SMM11	0.827	Valid
	SMM12	0.808	Valid
	SMM13	0.773	Valid
	SMM14	0.844	Valid

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the *Loading Factors* values for each indicator in the research variable are greater than 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruments in this study are valid.

2) *Discriminant Validity*

Discriminant validity aims to ensure that a latent variable has clear differences from other latent variables. The results of the *Discriminant Validity* test in this study are as follows:

Table 3. Fornel Larcker Criterion

Variable	BA	EWOM	SMM
BA	0.877		
EWOM	0.762	0.860	
SMM	0.690	0.780	0.819

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 3, the results of discriminant validity testing using the *Fornell–Larcker* criteria show that the AVE square root values for each latent variable, namely *Brand Awareness* (0.877), *Electronic Word-of-Mouth* (0.860), and *Social Media Marketing* (0.819), are greater than the correlation values between other latent variables. This indicates that each construct has a good level of uniqueness and is able to explain its indicators more strongly than its relationship with other constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that all variables in this study have met the discriminant validity criteria and are suitable for use in structural model testing. In addition, *Discriminant Validity* was also measured using HTMT as follows:

Table 4. HTMT

Variable	<i>Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)</i>
EWOM <-> BA	0.786
SMM <-> BA	0.711
SMM <-> EWOM	0.798

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 4, the results of discriminant validity testing using the *Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)* show that all HTMT values between latent variables are below the criterion limit of 0.90. The HTMT value between *Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)* and *Brand Awareness* is 0.786, between *Social Media Marketing* and *Brand Awareness* is 0.711, and between *Social Media Marketing* and *Electronic Word-of-Mouth* is 0.798. These results indicate that each construct has sufficient differences from one another and that there are no conceptual overlaps between variables. Thus, it can be concluded that the research model meets the discriminant validity criteria based on the HTMT test.

3) *Reliability Test*

Reliability testing is a process to assess the consistency and reliability of a research instrument in measuring a concept repeatedly. If the instrument can produce consistent results when used under the same conditions, then the instrument is considered reliable. The reliability test results in this study are as follows:

Table 4. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BA	0.957	0.959	0.769
EWOM	0.968	0.968	0.739
SMM	0.959	0.961	0.670

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 4, the reliability test results show that all variables in this study have Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values greater than 0.70. The variables of *Brand Awareness (BA)*, *Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)*, and *Social Media Marketing (SMM)* each show high reliability values, so it can be concluded that all research instruments have a very good level of internal consistency and are declared reliable for use in testing the research model.

Inner Model

Inner model testing or structural model evaluation was conducted after the outer model test or measurement model evaluation had been completed. The results of the Inner Model are as follows:

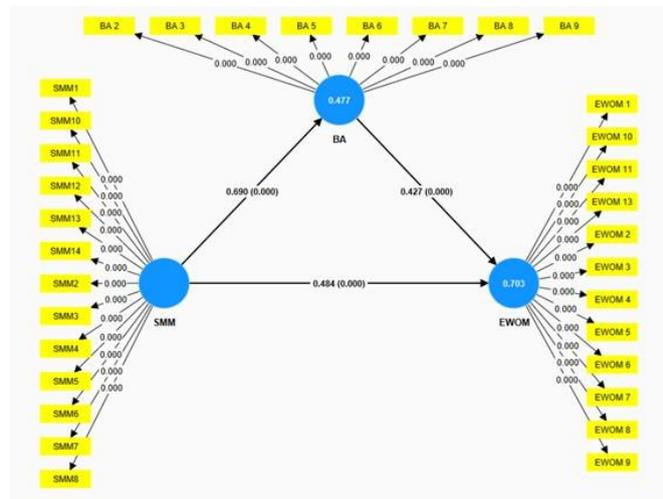


Figure 3. Research Inner Model

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

1) Coefficient of Determination

R^2 (R Square/ R^2) indicate the ability of exogenous latent variables to explain endogenous latent variables, with values ranging from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate better model explanatory power. Meanwhile, Adjusted R Square is an R^2 value that has been adjusted for the number of variables and the level of error, thus providing a more accurate picture of the contribution of exogenous variables to endogenous variables. The results of the coefficient of determination test in this study are as follows:

Table 5. Determination Coefficient Test

Endogenous Variable	R-square	Adjusted R-square
BA	0.477	0.473
EWOM	0.703	0.699

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 5, the results of the coefficient of determination test show that Social Media Marketing is able to explain 47.7% of the variation in Brand Awareness ($R^2 =$

0.477), indicating that marketing activities through social media play a significant role in shaping awareness of Korean cosmetics brands. Furthermore, an R^2 value of 0.703 shows that the combination of Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness can explain 70.3% of the variation in Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). This finding reinforces the role of Brand Awareness as a mediating variable in the relationship between Social Media Marketing and E-WOM, where increased brand awareness contributes significantly to driving the spread of E-WOM for Korean cosmetic products.

2) *F Square*

The *F Square* value is used to see how much relative contribution exogenous latent variables have in influencing endogenous latent variables. The higher the *F Square* value, the stronger the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables in the model. The *F Square* calculation results in this study are presented as follows:

Table 6. *F Square*

Variable	<i>F-square</i>
BA -> EWOM	0.322
SMM -> BA	0.911
SMM -> EWOM	0.414

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 6, the *F Square* test results show that the relationship between *Social Media Marketing* and Brand Awareness has an f^2 value of 0.911, which is classified as very strong, indicating that *Social Media Marketing* contributes significantly to shaping the Brand Awareness of Korean cosmetics. Furthermore, the influence of Brand Awareness on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) has an f^2 value of 0.322, which is in the moderate to strong category, indicating that increased brand awareness plays an important role in encouraging E-WOM. Meanwhile, the direct influence of Social Media Marketing on E-WOM has an f^2 value of 0.414, which is in the strong category, so it can be concluded that Social Media Marketing not only has a direct effect on E-WOM, but also indirectly through the mediation of Brand Awareness in the context of Korean cosmetics.

3) *Model Fit*

Model fit evaluation in this study was conducted using *Standardized Root Mean Square Residual* (SRMR). SRMR is one of the indices that indicates the level of conformity between the estimated model and the actual data. The results of the model fit test in this study are as follows:

Table 7. *Model Fit*

Indicator	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.067	0.067
d_ ULS	2.485	2.485
d_ G	1.495	1.495
Chi-square	1000.632	1000.632
NFI	0.801	0.801

Source: Processed by The Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 7, the results of the model feasibility evaluation show that the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value in *the saturated model* and

estimated model is 0.067, which is below the criterion limit of 0.08. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research model has a good level of conformity between the estimated model and empirical data. In addition, the *d_ULS* and *d_G* values in both models show consistent results, which indicates model stability. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.801 indicates a fairly good and acceptable level of model fit in PLS-SEM-based research. Thus, the structural model used in the study of *Brand Awareness Mediation in the Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) of Korean Cosmetics* is considered feasible for use in further hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

1. Direct Effect Test

Direct Effect Analysis aims to test the direct effect between exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables. The results of the direct test in this study are as follows:

Table 8. Direct Effect Test

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample means (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
BA -> EWOM	0.427	0.420	0.122	3.498	0.000
SMM -> BA	0.690	0.691	0.088	7.859	0.000
SMM -> EWOM	0.484	0.492	0.129	3.749	0.000

Based on the results of the direct effect test, it can be explained as follows:

- a. The effect of *Brand Awareness* on *Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)* shows a path coefficient of 0.427 with a *t-statistics* value of 3.498 and *p-values* of 0.000. These results indicate that *Brand Awareness* has a positive and significant effect on E-WOM, so that the higher the level of brand awareness, the greater the tendency for consumers to spread information and recommendations about Korean cosmetics.
 - b. The effect of *social media marketing* on *brand awareness* has a path coefficient of 0.690 with a *t-statistic* value of 7.859 and a *p-value* of 0.000. These findings indicate that *social media marketing* has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness, which means that marketing activities through social media can increase consumer awareness of Korean cosmetic brands.
 - c. The effect of *Social Media Marketing* on *Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)* shows a path coefficient of 0.484 with a *t-statistics* value of 3.749 and *p-values* of 0.000. These results confirm that *Social Media Marketing* has a direct, positive, and significant effect on E-WOM, so that effective social media marketing strategies can encourage the dissemination of information and consumer reviews about Korean cosmetics.
- #### 2. Mediation Effect Test

Mediation Effect Test is an analysis used to determine whether the mediation variable can bridge or influence the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The results of the mediation test in this study are as follows:

Table 9. Mediation Effect Test

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
SMM -> BA -> EWOM	0.295	0.290	0.095	3.109	0.002

Based on the results of the mediation effect test, the indirect effect of Social Media

Marketing on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) through Brand Awareness shows a path coefficient of 0.295 with a *t-statistics* value of 3.109 and a *p-value* of 0.002. These results indicate that Brand Awareness is able to significantly mediate the relationship between *social media Marketing* and E-WOM. Therefore, it can be concluded that Brand Awareness acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between Social Media Marketing and *Electronic Word-of-Mouth* (E-WOM) for Korean cosmetic products.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study extend previous literature by positioning Social Media Marketing, Brand Awareness, and Electronic Word of Mouth as an integrated and sequential mechanism rather than examining them as separate constructs. The positive and significant effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness confirms that consistent, interactive, and trend-adaptive content strengthens the cognitive accessibility of brands in consumers' memory. In line with Appel et al. (2020) and Voorveld (2021), the intensity and quality of social media activities enhance brand recall. However, this study contributes further by providing contextual insight from the Korean cosmetics industry, where digital aesthetics, influencer culture, and rapidly changing beauty trends amplify the impact of algorithm-driven exposure. In this context, Social Media Marketing functions not only as a communication channel but also as a cognitive reinforcement mechanism shaped by platform dynamics.

Despite these supportive findings, prior studies have not always reached consistent conclusions. Some researchers argue that excessive promotional content can lead to advertising fatigue, which may reduce brand salience and engagement. In highly saturated markets such as Korean beauty, consumers are continuously exposed to competing brands, potentially weakening awareness even when social media activity is high. Therefore, this study emphasizes that frequency alone is insufficient. Relevance, authenticity, and interactive engagement serve as important conditions that determine whether Social Media Marketing effectively strengthens Brand Awareness.

The positive and significant influence of Social Media Marketing on Electronic Word of Mouth also reinforces the interactive nature of digital platforms. Consistent with Ismagilova et al. (2021) and Erkan and Evans (2021), active engagement stimulates consumers to share experiences and recommendations online. However, conflicting findings in previous research suggest that Electronic Word of Mouth is not always directly generated by firm-created content. In some cases, consumers perceive highly commercial campaigns as less authentic, which may limit voluntary sharing behavior. This study refines that debate by indicating that Social Media Marketing must first create perceived value, whether informational, emotional, or social, before Electronic Word of Mouth behavior is stimulated. Thus, its influence operates through relational and experiential mechanisms rather than purely promotional efforts.

The significant effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Awareness strengthens the social validation perspective proposed by Rosario et al. (2020) and Cheung et al. (2020). Consumer reviews and peer recommendations enhance credibility and increase brand visibility because they are perceived as more trustworthy than corporate messages. Nevertheless, earlier studies also highlight that negative Electronic Word of Mouth can spread more rapidly and potentially harm brand perceptions. In the context of the Korean cosmetics industry, which is characterized by strong digital communities and beauty enthusiasts, positive engagement and collective identity appear to reinforce favorable awareness. This contextual nuance suggests that the cultural and community environment plays an important role in shaping how Electronic Word of Mouth influences Brand Awareness.

The mediation analysis provides the primary theoretical contribution of this research. The findings indicate that Brand Awareness plays an intervening role in strengthening the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth. This implies that awareness acts as a psychological foundation that encourages consumers to engage in online advocacy behavior. When consumers recognize and remember a brand clearly, they are more likely to share experiences and express opinions. This perspective extends the work of Dessart et al. (2021) and Kaur et al. (2020) by demonstrating empirically that Brand Awareness is not merely an outcome of marketing activity but also a driver of subsequent consumer communication behavior.

Overall, this study contributes theoretically by proposing a dynamic and sequential digital marketing framework in which Social Media Marketing enhances cognitive salience, which in turn encourages social sharing behavior. It also critically acknowledges that these relationships are influenced by content authenticity, market saturation, and the characteristics of digital communities. By situating the findings within the competitive and trend-driven Korean cosmetics industry, this research offers mechanism-based and contextual insights rather than simply reaffirming previously established relationships.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, the conclusions of this study are as follows:

1. Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness for Korean cosmetic products, indicating that marketing activities through social media can increase consumer recognition and recall of the brand.
2. Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), indicating that effective social media marketing strategies can encourage consumers to share information, reviews, and product recommendations online.
3. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness, meaning that the more intense the electronic word-of-mouth communication, the higher the consumer awareness of Korean cosmetic brands.
4. Brand Awareness has been proven to mediate the influence of Social Media Marketing on Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), indicating that the increase in eWOM does not only occur directly through social media marketing, but also through the increase in brand awareness that was formed previously.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all those who have provided support and contributed to the preparation of this research paper. Special thanks are extended to the supervising lecturer for the guidance, direction, and valuable input provided throughout the research and writing process. In addition, the author would also like to thank the relevant parties who have assisted in the collection of data and provided the necessary information. The support of family and friends was also very important in completing this research.

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