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Brand Equity Mediates Firm-Created Content, User-Generated Content, and Digital Word of Mouth

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Abstract

This study analyzes the mediating role of brand equity in the relationships between firm-created content (FCC), user-generated content (UGC), and digital word of mouth (dWOM) on purchase intention in the context of social media marketing. A quantitative design with an associative causality approach was employed, with data collected online from TikTok users in Indonesia who had interacted with Mosdoom bag content. Purposive sampling was applied with criteria including being at least 18 years old, residing in Indonesia, and having engaged with Mosdoom-related content within the last three months, yielding 140 valid responses based on Hair's formula. Data were obtained through differential-scale questionnaires and analyzed using regression techniques to examine direct and indirect effects. The findings demonstrate that FCC, UGC, and dWOM each exert positive and significant effects on brand equity and purchase intention, while brand equity itself significantly enhances purchase intention. Furthermore, brand equity is confirmed to play a significant mediating role in strengthening the influence of FCC, UGC, and dWOM on purchase intention. These results highlight the strategic importance of brand equity in digital consumer behavior, offering theoretical contributions to the literature on social media marketing and practical implications for firms seeking to optimize consumer engagement and purchasing decisions.

INTRODUCTION

The development of social media and e-commerce has transformed the way companies interact with consumers and market their products. One of the most significant changes is the shift from traditional shopping to digital shopping, influenced by factors such as ease of access, product variety, and a more personalized shopping experience (Marlena, 2022). Social media, especially platforms like TikTok, has evolved from a social space into a highly effective marketing tool, enabling brands to communicate directly with audiences through engaging and interactive content. The use of user-generated content (UGC), such as reviews and photos shared by consumers, further strengthens brand credibility and provides social proof that influences purchasing decisions (Setiana & Tjahjaningsih, 2024).

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In addition, the integration of social media with online shopping features makes it increasingly easier for consumers to view, search, and purchase products directly through the platform, creating a smoother and more practical shopping experience. Meanwhile, e-commerce has grown to become a key pillar of modern trade, allowing consumers to purchase products online more easily and quickly. The rise of mobile commerce (m-commerce) and personalization features has made the shopping experience more efficient and relevant to individual needs. E-commerce platforms now offer more interactive and data-driven shopping experiences, providing convenience in transactions and enabling brands to better understand consumer behavior. With the synergy between social media and e-commerce, companies can utilize both channels to enhance brand visibility and effectively drive consumer purchase intentions.

Amid the growing public awareness of the importance of supporting local products, Indonesian local bag brands have begun to gain a significant presence in the market, especially among the younger generation. The growth of social media platforms, particularly TikTok, has created new opportunities for local brands to reach a wide audience and build loyal fan communities. Local products are now not only seen as alternatives but have become the top choice due to their improved quality, creative designs, and competitive prices. Below is data on local brands based on the number of followers, total products sold, TikTok likes, and store ratings:

Table 1. Local Brand Data Based on Number of Followers, Total Products Sold, TikTok Likes, and Store Rating

No	Brand	TikTok Followers	Total Products Sold	TikTok Likes	Store Rating
1	MOSSDOOM	1 million	2.6 million	2.3 million	4.7
2	NAMIKITA	683.6 thousand	1.2 million	2.8 million	4.6
3	ANDARI ROOM	995.2 thousand	140 thousand	2 million	4.2
4	TGIF PROJECT	154 thousand	311.6 thousand	961.2 thousand	4.7
5	FLICKA BAGS	355.7 thousand	137.3 thousand	5.8 million	4.9
6	AGE FREE	425.4 thousand	399.3 thousand	1 million	4.7
7	CALEP OFFICIAL	525.8 thousand	511.8 thousand	718.6 thousand	4.8

Based on data collected from seven local bag brands on TikTok, a comparison was conducted across four key indicators relevant to this research focus, namely the number of followers, total products sold, number of likes (an indicator of user engagement and e-WOM), and store ratings (an indicator of consumer brand equity). From the comparison results, Mosdoom consistently shows the highest or near-highest performance across all major indicators. With 1 million followers, Mosdoom has the largest audience among the brands, indicating its strong presence and wide reach of Firm-Created Content. In terms of sales, Mosdoom records the highest figure, with 2.6 million products sold, demonstrating its success in converting consumer interest into purchase decisions. In terms of user engagement, Mosdoom received 2.3 million likes, indicating positive responses and significant user-generated content and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Although not the highest, this number is still within the top three and is supported by a 4.7 store rating, reflecting a high level of consumer satisfaction and trust.

Several other brands also show outstanding performance in specific indicators, such as Flicka Bags, which has the highest number of likes (5.8 million) and the highest store rating (4.9). However, its sales figure is very low

(137.3 thousand), indicating that high engagement does not always translate to high purchasing levels. Namikita, although having more likes (2.8 million) compared to Mosdoom, recorded only 1.2 million products sold and a lower rating (4.6).

Mosdoom is one of the successful examples of a local bag brand that has managed to leverage the power of TikTok to strengthen brand image and increase sales. With trendy designs and affordable prices, Mosdoom has captured the attention of millennials and Gen Z, who increasingly appreciate original Indonesian products. The popularity of Mosdoom on TikTok as one of the top local brands demonstrates how local products can compete effectively with international brands through creative and interactive digital marketing strategies. The official TikTok account of Mosdoom, @mossdoom.indonesia, currently has around 1 million followers. This reflects the high consumer interest in the brand's uploaded content, which generally showcases modern and trendy bags favored by young generations.

Fig 1. TikTok Account Profile – Mosdoom

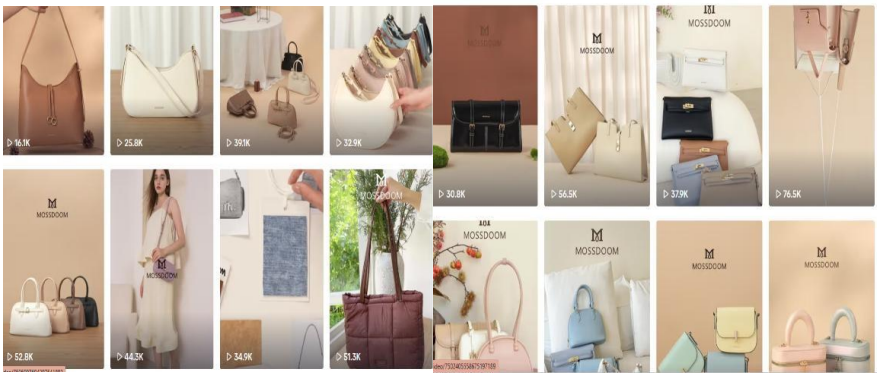

Fig 2. Firm-Created Content – Mosdoom

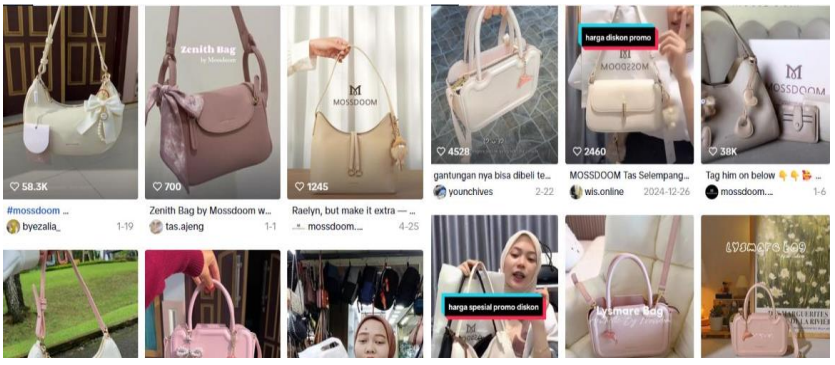

Fig 3. User-Generated Content – Mosdoom

Mosdoom's success is reflected not only in its follower count but also in its sales performance on TikTok Shop. In terms of content, Mosdoom products have been reviewed in more than 1,824 TikTok videos, with 1,851

creators promoting their products organically or through collaborations. This proves that local brands like Mosdoom have strong potential to compete globally, as their products have even entered the sales rankings in countries such as the Philippines. High exposure from followers, interactions, and social validation from other users' videos serve as major factors influencing consumer purchase intention.

Purchase intention is a psychological measure that describes a consumer's desire or tendency to buy a certain product or service (Rahanatha, 2017). Purchase intention is a crucial initial step in the decision-making process, as it often serves as a strong predictor of actual purchasing behavior. In the context of digital marketing, purchase intention becomes a key indicator of the success of marketing strategies implemented on social media platforms such as TikTok, where interactions between brands and consumers are highly dynamic (Angelica et al., 2020). Purchase intention represents the degree to which consumers are likely to purchase a product based on influencing factors, such as brand evaluation, information received, or the influence of content they encounter. In this case, User-Generated Content (UGC), Firm-Created Content (FCC), and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) play crucial roles in shaping consumer perceptions that ultimately influence their purchase intentions. Each factor affects consumers in different ways, and its impact may be stronger or weaker depending on various conditions (Irelli & Chaerudin, 2020).

Firm-Created Content (FCC), which refers to content created directly by companies, is one of the main marketing tools used to attract consumer attention and build brand image (Soekotjo et al., 2025). FCC may include advertisements, product photos, promotional videos, or other creative content designed with specific goals such as highlighting product quality, brand superiority, or informing audiences about the latest offers. One of the main advantages of FCC is that companies have full control over the message delivered to the audience. This allows them to create structured and focused narratives, presenting products in ways aligned with their marketing strategies. In Indonesia, FCC trends are particularly prominent among local fashion brands, especially bag brands, which actively use FCC on TikTok to build brand awareness and reach a wider market, especially younger audiences. Findings from studies such as (Kim & Park, 2023; Lee et al., 2023), and (Cheng & Zhu, 2021) show that informative, consistent, and aesthetically appealing FCC can enhance perceived product quality, consumer trust, emotional connection, and ultimately, purchase intention.

However, some studies indicate that FCC does not always significantly influence purchase intention. Thai et al., (2021) found that consumers tend to be skeptical of overly promotional content. Rahanatha, (2017) indicated that FCC misaligned with consumer values can cause cognitive dissonance, reducing purchase intention. Liu et al., (2025) reported that in an information-saturated environment, FCC can easily be overshadowed, diminishing its impact. These findings suggest that FCC does not consistently show a significant effect on purchase intention.

Meanwhile, User-Generated Content (UGC) content created by consumers has been shown to significantly influence purchasing decisions (Ridwan Adetunji et al., n.d.). UGC may include photos, videos, reviews, or testimonials shared on platforms such as Instagram. One main advantage of UGC is its high credibility; consumers perceive it as more authentic and objective, as it stems from real user experiences. UGC strengthens social proof, thereby increasing consumer confidence in purchase decisions. Studies

by Zahrah et al., (2024) show that UGC positively affects brand image and purchase intention. However, other studies such as (Astarini et al., 2018; Azhar et al., 2024; Rahmawati & Pandjaitan, 2020) suggest that the influence of UGC is not always significant, depending on factors such as brand reputation, content quality, and authenticity.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is another major factor influencing purchase intention. Defined by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), e-WOM refers to informal communication among consumers through digital platforms such as social media, online forums, blogs, and reviews. e-WOM is seen as more honest and objective, making it a critical component of consumer decision-making, especially in online markets. Research by Astarini et al., (2018); Elvina et al., (2022); Rahmawati & Pandjaitan, (2020) confirms that e-WOM positively influences brand image, purchase intention, and consumer loyalty. However, some studies such as Tafolli et al. (2025), Bogdan et al. (2025), and Cuong (2024) indicate that e-WOM does not always have a direct significant effect, as factors such as perceived risk, emotional response, and product quality perception may mediate the relationship.

Another influential factor is brand equity, referring to the value a brand holds in consumers' perceptions. Brand equity includes components such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty, which contribute to consumer evaluation of a brand. In digital marketing, strong brand equity significantly enhances the effectiveness of FCC, UGC, and e-WOM in shaping purchase intention.

The inconsistency in previous findings regarding FCC, UGC, and e-WOM suggests that their influence on purchase intention is not always direct or linear. This indicates the presence of a mediating variable brand equity. Brand equity acts as a cognitive filter through which consumers interpret marketing content. It strengthens or weakens the impact of FCC, UGC, and e-WOM, depending on consumers' existing perceptions of the brand.

Based on these phenomena and to address research gaps particularly related to purchase intention after exposure to brand-related content and consumer reviews it is important to analyze the influence of Firm-Created Content, User-Generated Content, and Electronic Word of Mouth mediated by Brand Equity on consumer purchase intention of local bag products in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative method with an associative causality approach to examine the direct and indirect effects of firm-created content, user-generated content, and electronic word of mouth on purchase intention, with brand equity as a mediating variable (Dasrizal et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2023, 2024; Wekke et al., 2024). The research was conducted online, targeting TikTok users across Indonesia, particularly those exposed to and interacting with Mosdoom bag content. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria, such as residing in Indonesia, being at least 18 years old, and having interacted with Mosdoom content within the last three months. A minimum sample size of 140 respondents was determined using Hair's formula. Data were collected through questionnaires using a differential scale, while the type of data used was quantitative data obtained from primary sources in the form of respondents' answers and secondary sources from relevant literature. This approach enables an objective and measurable analysis of the relationships among variables through appropriate statistical data processing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Testing (Outer Model)

The outer model explains the relationship between constructs or latent variables and their indicators (manifest variables), indicating the extent to which the indicators are able to represent the constructs being measured. In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the evaluation of the outer model is used to assess the level of validity and reliability of each indicator. This evaluation process includes three main aspects: convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability (Hair et al., 2019; Hermaren & Achyar, 2018).

Convergent Validity Test

The convergent validity test aims to ensure that each indicator within a construct consistently reflects the intended concept. Convergent validity is measured using the outer loading values, where an indicator is accepted if the value exceeds 0.5 (Macheka et al., 2024). The complete results are presented in the following table and figure.

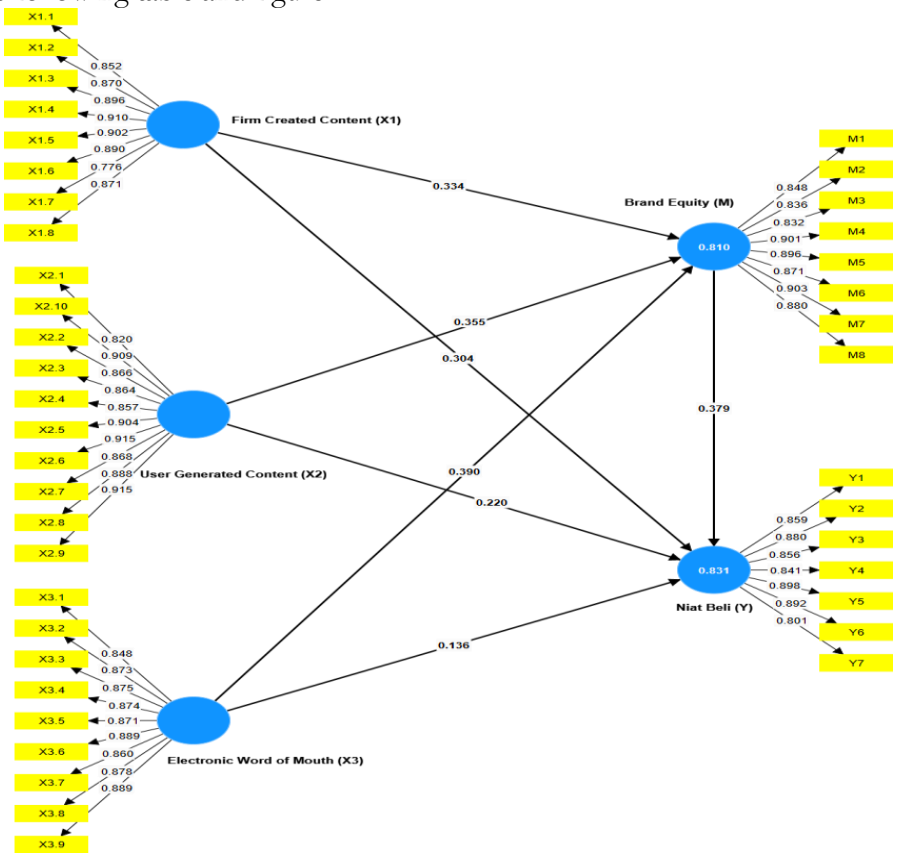

Fig 4. Outer Model Results

Table 2. Outer Model Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
Firm Created Content (X1)	X1.1	0.852
	X1.2	0.870
	X1.3	0.896
	X1.4	0.910
	X1.5	0.902
	X1.6	0.890
	X1.7	0.776
	X1.8	0.871
	X2.1	0.820
	X2.2	0.866
	X2.3	0.864

User Generated Content (X2)	X2.4	0.857
	X2.5	0.904
	X2.6	0.915
	X2.7	0.868
	X2.8	0.888
	X2.9	0.915
	X2.10	0.909
Electronic Word of Mouth (X3)	X3.1	0.848
	X3.2	0.873
	X3.3	0.875
	X3.4	0.874
	X3.5	0.871
	X3.6	0.889
	X3.7	0.860
	X3.8	0.878
	X3.9	0.889
Brand Equity (M)	M1	0.848
	M2	0.836
	M3	0.832
	M4	0.901
	M5	0.896
	M6	0.871
	M7	0.903
	M8	0.880
Intention to buy (Y)	Y1	0.859
	Y2	0.880
	Y3	0.856
	Y4	0.841
	Y5	0.898
	Y6	0.892
	Y7	0.801

The results show that all indicators have outer loading values above 0.5, indicating that the criteria for convergent validity have been fulfilled. This confirms that the indicators are valid and reliable.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and a construct is considered valid if its AVE value is greater than 0.5 (Bambang & Heriyanto, 2017). The test results are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Results

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Equity (M)	0.760
Electronic Word of Mouth (X3)	0.762
Firm Created Content (X1)	0.760
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.742
User Generated Content (X2)	0.777

The findings show that all latent constructs have AVE values greater than 0.5, meaning that each construct is able to explain more than half of the variance of the indicators forming it.

Reliability Test

Construct reliability is measured through Composite Reliability (CR), and a construct is considered reliable if CR ≥ 0.7 (Christodoulides et al., 2012).

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

	Composite ***reliability (rho_a)***	*Composite* ***reliability (rho_c)***
Brand Equity (M)	**0.956**	**0.962**

Electronic Word of Mouth (X3)	**0.962**	**0.966**
Firm Created Content (X1)	**0.957**	**0.962**
Purchase Intention (Y)	**0.943**	**0.953**
User Generated Content (X2)	**0.969**	**0.972**

The Composite Reliability (CR) results show that all constructs meet the criteria, indicating that the instruments in this model have good internal consistency.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

R-Square

R-Square is used to evaluate the quality of the structural model based on endogenous variables. According to Jena (2020), although no single consensus exists regarding boundary values, Cohen's guidelines classify R^2 values as follows: 0.10 (small), 0.25 (medium), and 0.36 (large). The detailed R^2 values can be seen in the table below.

Table 5. R-Square Results

Variable	*R Square*
Brand Equity (M)	0.810
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.831

Based on SmartPLS data processing, the R^2 value for Brand Equity (M) is 0.810 and for Purchase Intention (Y) is 0.831. These results indicate very strong predictive ability, showing that most of the variance in both endogenous variables can be explained by the constructs forming them.

F-Square

F-Square is used to measure the effect size of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, as well as the mediation effect on endogenous variables. The values are categorized as follows: >0.35 (strong), 0.15–0.35 (medium), and 0.02–0.15 (weak). The F-Square results are presented in the following table.

Table 6. F-Square Values

Variable	*F-Square*
Brand Equity (M)	0.161
Electronic Word of Mouth (X3)	0.047
Firm Created Content (X1)	0.248
User Generated Content (X2)	0.118
Brand Equity (M)	0.161
Electronic Word of Mouth (X3)	0.047

Data processing through SmartPLS (2025) shows an f^2 value of 0.248 for Firm-Created Content (X1), indicating a medium effect; 0.118 for User-Generated Content (X2), indicating a weak effect; and 0.047 for Electronic Word of Mouth (X3), also categorized as weak. Meanwhile, the f^2 value of 0.161 for Brand Equity (M) indicates a medium effect on the endogenous variable.

Q-Square

The Q-Square (Q^2) value is used to assess the model's ability to reconstruct observation values and measure predictive relevance. A model has good predictive relevance if Q^2 is greater than 0, while Q^2 less than 0 indicates insufficient predictive power.

Table 7. Q-Square Values

Variabel	*Q-Square*
Brand Equity (M)	0.600
Purchase Intention (Y)	0.608

Data processing results show Q^2 values of 0.600 for Brand Equity (M) and 0.608 for Purchase Intention (Y). These results indicate that the model has strong and relevant predictive ability in explaining variations in both endogenous variables.

Hypothesis Testing

The T-Statistic (bootstrapping) method is used to assess the significance of relationships between variables in SEM-PLS. A t-statistic value exceeding ±1.96 at the 5% significance level indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. This study uses the bootstrapping technique in SmartPLS to evaluate direct and indirect effects. If $p < 0.05$, the hypothesis is accepted, indicating a significant effect; otherwise, it is rejected (Soekotjo et al., 2025; Suri et al., 2023; Taruna, 2020).

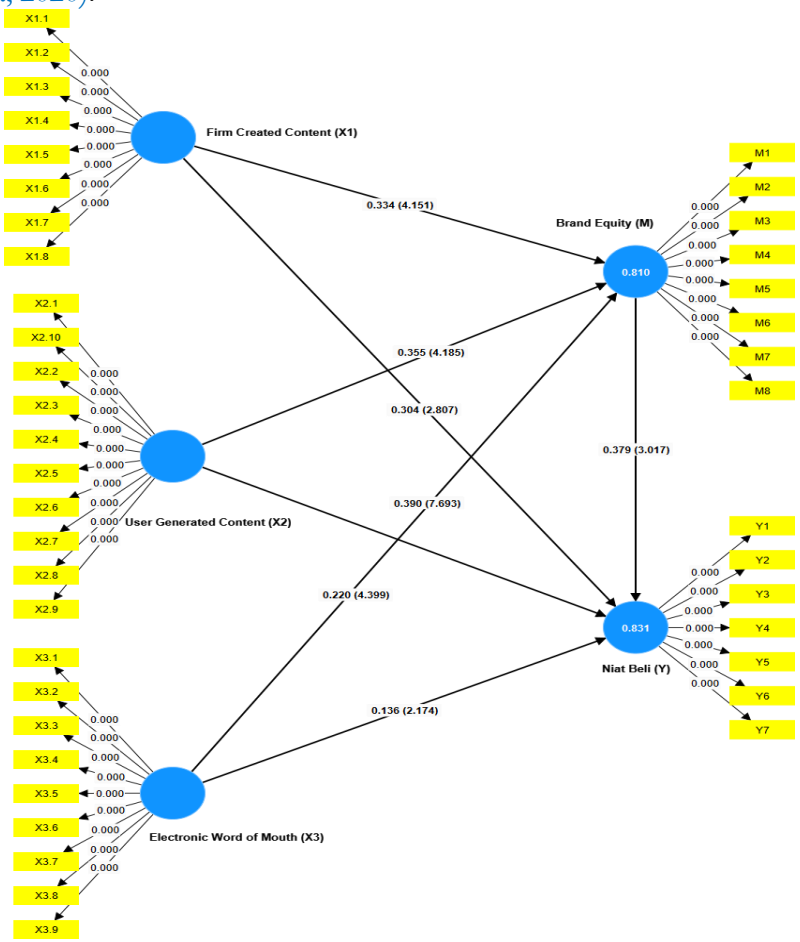

Fig 5. Bootstrapping Results

Table 8. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	O (Original Sample)	T (T-Statistics)	P (P-Value)	Description
direct effect				
H1 Firm-Created Content (X1) → Purchase Intention (Y)	0.304	2.807	0.005	Accepted
H2 User-Generated Content (X2) → Purchase Intention (Y)	0.220	4.399	0.000	Accepted
H3 Electronic Word of Mouth (X3) → Purchase Intention (Y)	0.136	2.174	0.030	Accepted
H4 Firm-Created Content (X1) → Brand Equity (M)	0.334	4.151	0.000	Accepted
H5 User-Generated Content (X2) → Brand Equity (M)	0.355	4.185	0.000	Accepted
H6 Electronic Word of Mouth (X3) → Brand Equity (M)	0.390	7.693	0.000	Accepted
H7 Brand Equity (M) → Purchase	0.379	3.017	0.003	Accepted

	Intention (Y)				
indirect effect					
H8	Firm-Created Content (X1) → Purchase Intention (Y) (via M)	0.127	2.018	0.044	Accepted
H9	User-Generated Content (X2) → Purchase Intention (Y) (via M)	0.135	2.650	0.008	Accepted
H10	Electronic Word of Mouth (X3) → Purchase Intention (Y) (via M)	0.148	3.255	0.001	Accepted

Based on the hypothesis testing results in table from bootstrapping, all hypotheses are accepted because they have t-statistic values greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully developed strategies and approaches to enhance employee performance at PT. Murgung Nusa Parama Bogor, based on the following research findings: There is a significant positive direct effect ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.05$) of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance, indicating that strengthening organizational culture can improve employee performance. There is a positive but not significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.05$) of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance, meaning that strengthening transformational leadership has not yet been able to significantly improve employee performance. There is a significant positive direct effect ($\beta = 0.584$, $p < 0.05$) of Work Motivation on Employee Performance, implying that enhancing work motivation can increase employee performance. There is a significant positive direct effect ($\beta = 0.317$, $p < 0.05$) of Organizational Culture on Work Motivation, suggesting that strengthening organizational culture can boost work motivation.

There is a significant positive direct effect ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.05$) of Transformational Leadership on Work Motivation, meaning that improving transformational leadership can enhance work motivation. There is a positive but not significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.0266$, $p < 0.05$) of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance through Work Motivation, indicating that strengthening organizational culture through work motivation has not yet significantly improved employee performance. There is a positive but not significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.0251$, $p < 0.05$) of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance through Work Motivation, showing that enhancing transformational leadership through work motivation has not yet significantly improved employee performance.

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