

## ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOR IN THE FROZEN FOOD INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF DAPUR TEMBEM

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The frozen food industry in Indonesia is experiencing rapid growth owing to changing lifestyles, increasing digital access, and consumer demand for convenience. However, Dapur Tembem, a local SME, has faced a sharp decline in sales, despite these opportunities.

**Purpose:** This study examined the influence of brand awareness, perceived price, electronic word of mouth (e-WoM), and resellers on purchase behavior, with brand trust serving as a mediating variable. The goal was to generate practical marketing recommendations to support sales recovery.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative approach was used with structural equation modeling partial least squares (SEM-PLS) on survey data collected from 120 consumers selected through purposive sampling. Respondents met the following specific criteria: they had purchased and consumed Dapur Tembem frozen food products at least twice, with their most recent purchase occurring no later than October 2024.

**Findings/Result:** Brand trust is the most influential factor in driving purchase behavior and mediates the effects of perceived price, e-WoM, and resellers. e-WoM directly affects purchase behavior, whereas brand awareness does not have a significant impact.

**Conclusion:** Consumers perceive fair pricing, reseller credibility, and online recommendations as the key drivers of trust and purchase intent. These results suggest that Dapur Tembem should focus on strengthening brand trust through strategic pricing, reseller optimization, and digital engagement.

**Originality/value (State of the art):** This study offers new insights into the role of brand trust and resellers in influencing consumer behavior, especially in the context of SMEs in Indonesia's frozen food sector, with Instagram identified as the most effective engagement platform.

**Keywords:** brand trust, electronic word of mouth, perceived price, purchase behavior, reseller

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## INTRODUCTION

The increasing awareness of healthy lifestyles, food safety, and accessibility of products through e-commerce platforms have encouraged consumers to opt for more practical food options, such as frozen food (Chen et al. 2023). The Indonesian frozen food market saw unprecedented 50% growth in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic (Fitri, 2021), driven largely by increasing online sales, particularly by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Market forecasts predict that Indonesia's frozen food sector will expand from USD 1.93 billion in 2023 to USD 2.78 billion by 2028, fueled by premiumization trends, changing family structures, and increasingly busy lifestyles (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). Millennials, who prioritize convenience in their fast-paced lifestyles, further support the expansion (Keskin et al. 2024). The popularity of frozen food extends beyond large-scale manufacturers to include restaurants and small businesses that utilize online platforms, making it a highly preferred choice in urban markets (Bender et al. 2022).

Given the increasing competition in the frozen food market, businesses must understand consumer purchasing behavior to remain competitive. One such business is UMKM Dapur Tembem, an SME that started in 2020 offering non-MSG baso aci as its flagship product. Over time, the brand expanded its offerings, with frozen kebabs under the "Kebab Sultan" brand

gaining popularity. However, in recent years, Dapur Tembem has faced declining sales because of heightened competition. The sales of Dapur Tembem experienced a significant decline from 9,902 units in 2021 to 3,893 units in 2023, with a sharp drop, particularly between 2022 and 2023, as shown in Figure 1. Understanding the factors influencing purchase behavior is crucial for businesses such as Dapur Tembem to enhance their marketing strategies and retain customers. Effective identification and analysis of consumer behavior allows businesses to improve their competitive advantage, enhance profitability, and sustain long-term operations (Abdelsalam et al. 2024).

The frozen food industry continues to expand globally, as consumers seek convenient, ready-to-serve meals that match their dynamic lifestyles. In Indonesia, frozen food products have grown in popularity, especially during the post-pandemic era when digital platforms, such as Instagram and online marketplaces, became dominant sales channels. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), such as Dapur Tembem, have emerged to meet this demand, competing not only through product innovation but also through digital marketing strategies. However, empirical studies specifically addressing consumer purchase behavior within the Indonesian SME frozen food sector remain limited. To better understand the factors driving purchase decisions in this growing sector, it is essential to examine how various marketing elements influence consumer trust and behavior.

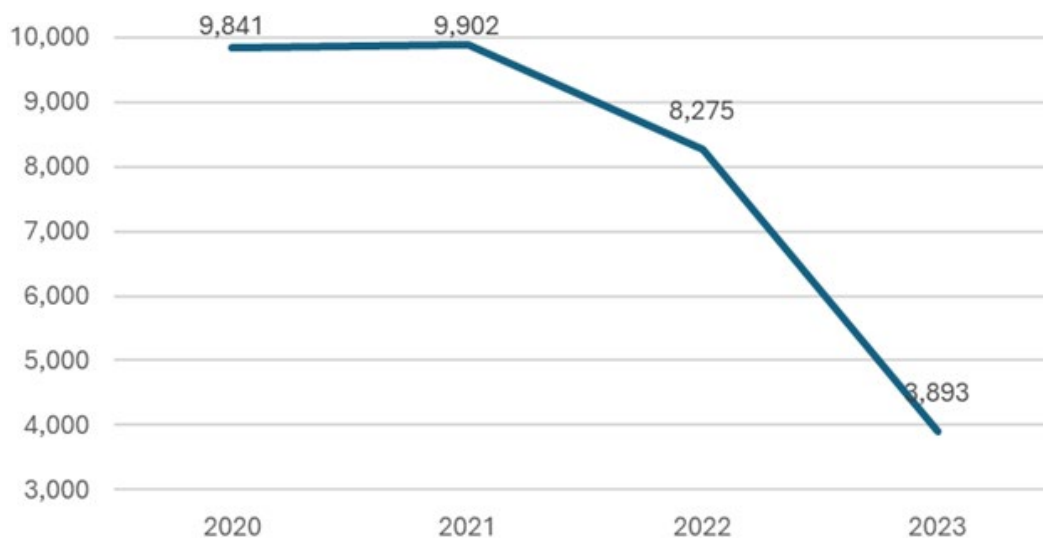


Figure 1. Dapur Tembem's total consumer from 2020-2023

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that Brand Awareness helps consumers recognize and recall a brand, yet its impact on purchasing decisions often depends on the presence of perceived quality and strong brand image (Chusniartiningsih & Andjarwati, 2019; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2016). Perceived Price not only contributes to purchase intentions but also significantly enhances Brand Trust, particularly when consumers believe that the price reflects the actual value of the product (Ayub & Kusumadewi, 2021; Jeng et al. 2014). In terms of promotion, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), such as online reviews and social media content, has proven to boost consumer confidence and trial intention, both directly and indirectly, by reinforcing trust (Nurittamont, 2021; Farizy, 2023). From a distribution perspective, resellers play a strategic role in influencing consumer trust and purchase behavior through service reliability and responsiveness (Liao & Chu, 2013; Maulana et al. 2023). Collectively, these four variables brand awareness, perceived price, e-WoM, and reseller performance have been widely recognized as antecedents of Brand Trust. Meanwhile, trust itself remains a central determinant of Purchase Behavior, particularly in contexts where consumers cannot physically evaluate the product, such as online frozen food transactions (Kuant & Erdiansyah, 2022; Siddiqui et al. 2021). Thus, current scientific evidence affirms that building brand trust through the strategic application of marketing mix elements is critical for driving consumer purchase decisions in digital marketplaces.

Consumer Behavior Theory and the Marketing Mix Framework (product, price, promotion, and place) are the main theories explaining how consumers form trust and make purchasing decisions in online settings. In the realm of online frozen food sales, physical product assessment is minimal; hence, consumers rely on cognitive cues, such as branding, pricing, reviews, and reseller interaction. These cues collectively shape Brand Trust, which is a psychological state that reduces uncertainty and enhances purchase confidence. This study integrates these variables into a comprehensive conceptual framework that examines both the direct and indirect relationships between Brand Awareness, Perceived Price, e-WoM, and Resellers on Purchase Behavior, with Brand Trust as the mediating variable. By understanding these relationships, this study provides both theoretical insights and practical implications for SMEs in the Indonesian frozen food sector, aiming to build trust and increase consumer purchase behavior through optimized marketing strategies.

The novelty of this study lies in several respects. First, it investigates the mediating role of brand trust by examining how perceived price, e-WoM, and resellers contribute to trust formation and influence purchase decisions. Second, it evaluates whether brand awareness significantly impacts purchase behavior or if its effect is weaker than expected. Finally, it provides a fresh perspective on the role of resellers in influencing consumer trust and brand perception, an area that has been largely overlooked in frozen food research. This study provides new insights by integrating multiple consumer behavior factors and analyzing their impact on purchase behavior in the frozen food industry, particularly for SMEs. Unlike previous studies that focus on general food consumption, this study specifically explores the frozen food sector, where factors such as product durability, online marketing, and reseller influence play unique roles.

This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to analyze the influence of brand awareness, perceived price, electronic word of mouth (e-WoM), and resellers on the purchase behavior of Dapur Tembem's customers. Second, this study examined how these factors affect brand trust. The findings of this study can be used to develop strategic marketing recommendations to help Dapur Tembem regain sales growth and strengthen customer trust in the brand.

## **METHODS**

This study was conducted from October 2023 to January 2025 from preparation until the results were obtained in the Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek) area. This area was selected as the study site because of its role as the primary consumer segment of Dapur Tembem. The brand's marketing activities and customer base are largely concentrated in this region, making it a strategic location for capturing relevant consumer behavior data. Primary data were collected via an online questionnaire using purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on two specific criteria: they had to purchase and consume frozen food products from Dapur Tembem at least twice and they had not made any purchases from the brand since October 2024. These criteria ensured that all respondents had relevant product experiences, enabling the study to explore both active and previously active consumers within the same sampling frame.

The questionnaire was distributed digitally through WhatsApp to previous customers and through Dapur Tembem's official Instagram account. It was hosted on the JotForm platform and comprised structured, closed-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of the key constructs. While online distribution enables broad and efficient reach, it also presents the potential for self-selection bias and limited exposure, especially since not all consumers who met the criteria may have received or accessed the survey link. As a result, there is a possibility that the responses reflect more visible or digitally engaged

segments, and certain consumers whose perspectives may be equally or more representative were not captured. This limitation was acknowledged and considered when interpreting the results.

The constructs measured in this study include Brand Awareness, Perceived Price, Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), Resellers, Brand Trust, and Purchase Behavior. Detailed definitions of each indicator and its relevance to the latent variables are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational variables and indicators

Variabel	Definition	Code	Indikator
Brand Awareness (BA) (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Sumarwan, 2014)	The ability of consumers to identify a brand when faced with several choices.	BA1	The Dapur Tembem brand is easily recognizable.
		BA2	The brand remembered when thinking about frozen food
		BA3	The first brand that comes to mind when thinking about frozen food
		BA4	Knowledge about the product
Perceived Price (PP) (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2012)	Consumers' perception of the price of a product or service compared to the value delivered by the product or service.	PP1	The product price is fair compared to competitors
		PP2	The price is affordable for consumer needs
		PP3	The price reflects the product quality
		PP4	Competitors offer more competitive prices
		PP5	Consider switching to alternatives if the price increases
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) (Cheung et al., 2008)	Reviews from consumers delivered through electronic media, particularly the Internet.	EWOM1	Internet reviews are honest about the product
		EWOM2	Internet reviews are informative and detailed
		EWOM3	The number of online reviews increases trust
		EWOM4	Positive reviews enhance purchase interest
Reseller (RS) (Jiao & Wu, 2023; Ke & Liu, 2017)	Consumers' perception of the convenience, purchasing experience, and service responsiveness provided by resellers during the product purchase process.	RS1	The product is easy to buy through resellers
		RS2	Prices through resellers are more affordable
		RS3	Reseller products are of good quality
		RS4	Transactions through resellers are secure
		RS5	The purchasing experience through resellers is positive
		RS6	Reseller service is responsive
Brand Trust (BT) (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Palmatier & Steinhoff, 2019)	The extent to which consumers trust a brand based on several key aspects.	BT1	Expertise in providing high-quality products.
		BT2	Product understanding by resellers.
		BT3	Clear and comprehensive product information.
		BT4	Transparent communication from resellers.
		BT5	Commitment to long-term relationships.
		BT6	Investment in consumer relationships.
Purchase Behaviour (PB) (Ajzen, 2005)	The actual actions taken by consumers in selecting, purchasing, and using products or services to fulfill their needs or desires.	PB1	Purchasing Dapur Tembem satisfies consumers.
		PB2	Products match consumer preferences.
		PB3	Dapur Tembem provides greater value than other products.
		PB4	Products are easy to purchase without difficulty.
		PB5	Products are available for purchase at any time.
		PB6	Consumers have full control over purchasing decisions.

A total of 120 valid responses were collected, exceeding the minimum sample size requirement for SEM-PLS analysis, which recommends five to ten times the number of indicators for the most complex construct. As the largest construct in this study had six indicators, a minimum of 60 responses were required. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS), following three key stages: measurement model assessment, structural model assessment, and hypothesis testing.

The measurement model assessment evaluated convergent validity using the Average Variance Extracted ( $AVE \geq 0.5$ ) and outer loadings ( $\geq 0.7$ ), and reliability using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (both  $\geq 0.6$ ). The structural model was assessed using  $R^2$  values to evaluate the predictive power. Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using path coefficient analysis and bootstrapping with a 0,05 significance level, following the established SEM-PLS procedures recommended by Hair et al. (2022).

In this context, Brand Awareness (product) is believed to influence purchase behavior by increasing product familiarity and brand recognition. However, studies have shown that while brand awareness contributes to consumer attention, it does not always lead directly to trust or purchase unless reinforced by quality perception or a strong brand image (Chusniartiningsih & Andjarwati, 2019; Ramadania et al. 2020). Romaniuk and Sharp (2016) emphasized that awareness must be followed by credible experiences to drive actual purchases. Therefore:

**H1:** Brand Awareness significantly influences Purchase Behavior.

**H5:** Brand Awareness significantly influences Brand Trust.

Perceived Price (price) is another critical factor. Consumers do not evaluate prices in absolute terms but rather in relation to perceived value and product quality. A fair and reasonable price reinforces a brand's credibility (Ayub & Kusumadewi, 2021). Erkmen (2014) found that perceived price significantly affects brand trust when customers believe that price accurately reflects the product's value. However, Jeng et al. (2014) showed that perceived price may influence purchase behavior, both directly and indirectly, often depending on trust as a mediating factor. Thus:

**H2:** Perceived Price significantly influences Purchase Behavior.

**H6:** Perceived Price significantly influences Brand Trust.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) (promotion), such as online reviews, ratings, and social media mentions, have become a powerful influence in shaping consumer decisions. Unlike traditional marketing, e-WoM is consumer-generated and is perceived as more authentic. Nurittamont (2021) and Farizy (2023) found that positive online reviews increase consumer confidence and willingness to try a product. However, the effect of e-WoM is often channeled through Brand Trust, as consumers validate online information before purchasing. Hermanda et al. (2019) and Liu et al. (2018) also support the idea that e-WoM enhances brand trust, particularly when aligned with consistent brand performance. Therefore:

**H3:** Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WoM) significantly influences Purchase Behavior.

**H7:** Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) significantly influences Brand Trust.

Resellers (places) serve as intermediaries who deliver brand experience to customers. In digital marketplaces, resellers can influence brand perception and trust through their responsiveness, reliability, and service quality. Liao and Chu (2013) showed that trust in resellers increases consumers' willingness to purchase, whereas Maulana et al. (2023) emphasized the strategic role of resellers in building trust through personal interaction and service consistency. In the context of SMEs such as Dapur Tembem, resellers are vital in expanding product reach and delivering consistent services that reinforce brand value. Thus:

**H4:** Resellers significantly influence Purchase Behavior.

**H8:** Resellers significantly influence Brand Trust.

Finally, Brand Trust plays a central role in reducing consumer risk, especially when a product cannot be physically examined prior to purchase. Kuant and Erdiansyah (2022) found that trust is a key determinant of purchase intention across the food and beverage sectors. Siddiqui et al. (2021) confirmed that trust mediates the relationship between marketing cues and purchase behavior. In digital commerce, trust is often more decisive than promotional efforts alone. Therefore:

**H9:** Brand Trust significantly influences Purchase Behavior.

The research framework in Figure 2 shows the relationship between various factors influencing consumer purchase behavior in the frozen food market, specifically for Dapur Tembem. The framework is based on increasing market opportunities driven by a growing healthy lifestyle. It examines four key independent variables brand awareness, perceived price, electronic word of mouth (e-WoM), and resellers that impact purchase behavior. Brand image acts as an intervening variable that mediates the influence of these factors on purchase behavior. The analysis is conducted using SEM-PLS to derive managerial implications, helping Dapur Tembem optimize its marketing strategies based on consumer insights.

## RESULTS

The findings highlight that Instagram is the preferred platform for discovering Dapur Tembem's frozen food products, with 77 respondents (64.17%) selecting it as their primary choice. TikTok followed as a secondary platform, with 46 respondents (38.33%) choosing it as their second option. Facebook, while still relevant, was mostly a third-choice platform (64 respondents or 53.33%). The largest concentration of consumers was in Jakarta (55 respondents, 45.79%) and Bekasi (50 respondents, 41.59%), showing strong potential in urban markets. Women constitute 68.33% (82 respondents) of consumers, reinforcing the importance of targeting female decision-makers in marketing strategies. Additionally, most respondents had a

high school diploma (46.67%) or bachelor's degree (34.17%), reflecting a consumer base that is likely to be well-informed about product quality and safety.

Consumer purchasing habits showed high product loyalty, with 49 respondents (40.83%) consuming frozen food 4-6 times per week and 47 respondents (39.17%) consuming it 2-3 times per week. The most purchased products included Siomay (30.00%), Bakso Aci (27.14%), and Batagor Kuah (27.62%). Most consumers buy from Dapur Tembem's central outlet (57.69%), although resellers (42,31%) serve as important sales channels. In terms of spending, IDR200,001–IDR300,000 per month (40.83%) was the dominant range, followed by IDR100,001–IDR200,000 (30.00%), indicating a mid-range spending tendency. Given these insights, Instagram should be the primary marketing platform with pricing strategies and reseller engagement optimized to maintain consumer trust and competitive positioning.

## Outer model

The outer model assessment in this study evaluated the validity and reliability of the measurement model using outer loadings, as shown in Figure 3. Based on this picture, all of the outer loading exceed 0.7 with values range from 0.765 to 0.921. This confirms that all indicators effectively measure their respective constructs, as they exceed the minimum threshold of 0.7 for validity (Hair et al. 2022).

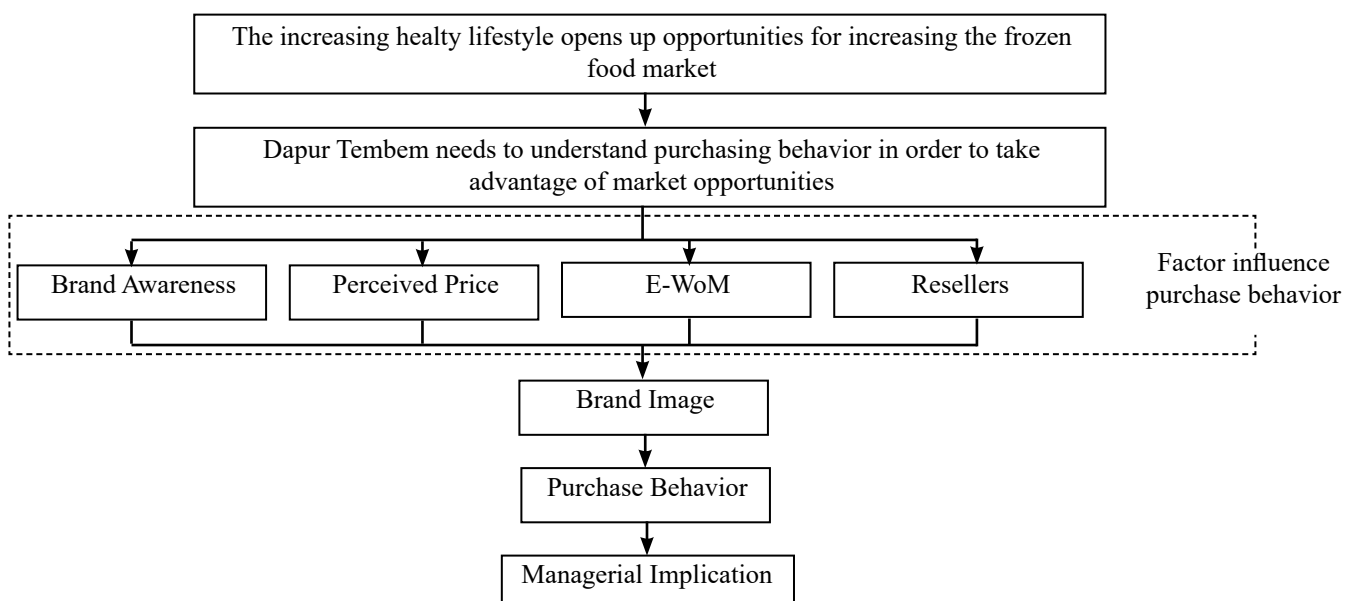


Figure 2. Research framework

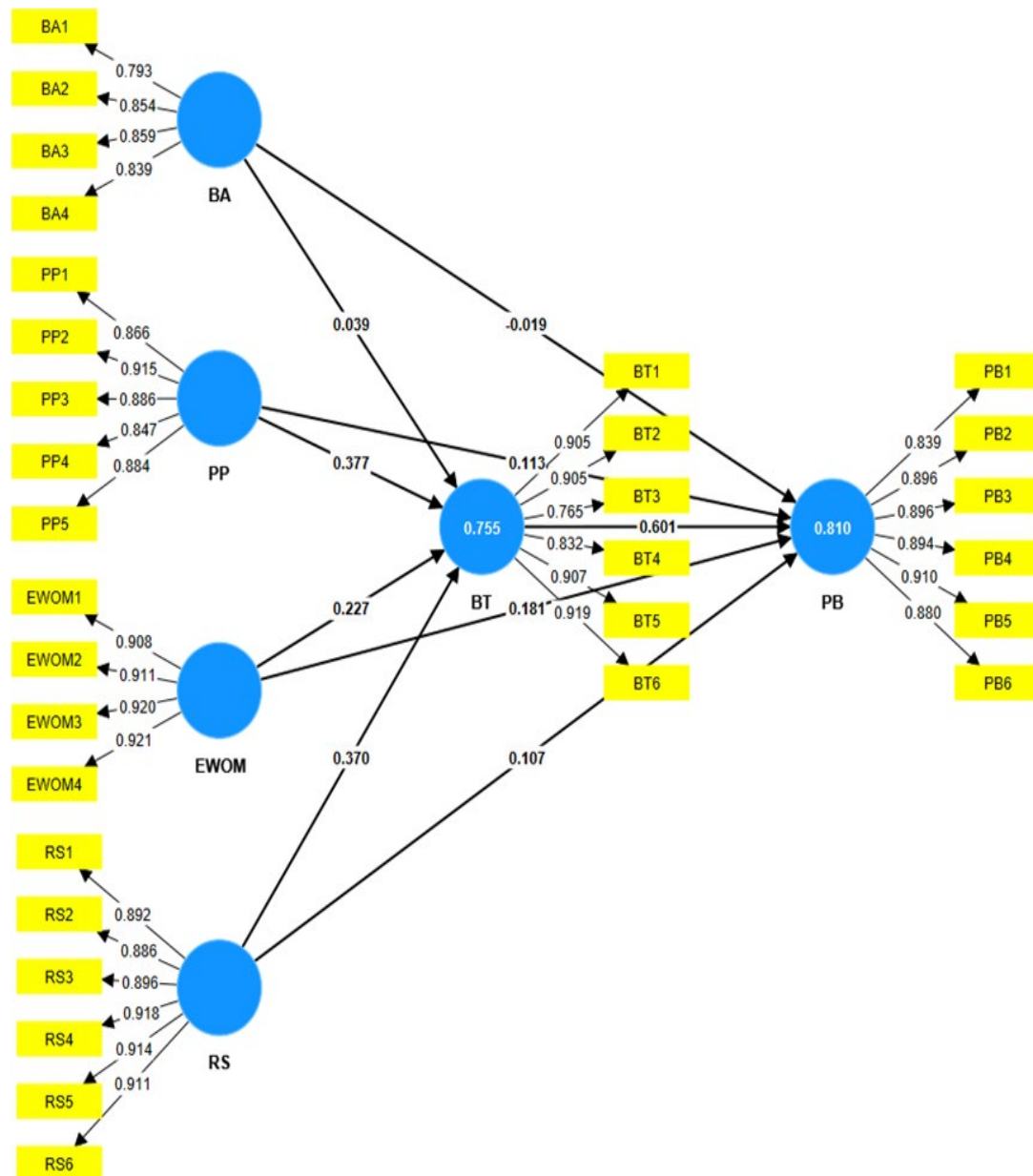


Figure 3 SEM-PLS Path diagram

In addition to the outer loading value, Table 2 shows the construct reliability and validity of the measurement model assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (CA). The AVE values for all constructs were above the threshold of 0.5, indicating adequate convergent validity, where each latent construct explained more than half of the variance of its indicators. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceed 0.6, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency. The CR values were also above 0.7, confirming the strong construct reliability. These results collectively indicate that the outer model satisfies the required standards for validity and reliability, thereby supporting the continuation of the structural model analysis to test the hypothesized relationships among variables.

### Structural Measurement Models (R-Squared)

The R-square test aims to evaluate the predictive strength of the model in explaining the variance of the dependent variable. Based on Table 2, the R-squared value indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The R² value of 0.755 for Brand Trust (BT) indicates that 75.5% of its variation is influenced by Brand Awareness (BA), Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), Perceived Price (PP), and Reseller (RS), with e-WoM and price perception playing key roles. Similarly, the R² value of 0.810 for Purchase Behavior (PB) shows that 81% of its variation is explained by the same variables, with Brand Trust as a mediating factor. The remaining

24,5% of Brand Trust and 19% of Purchase Behavior were attributed to external factors not included in the model. These high R-squared values indicate that the selected factors e-WoM, Perceived Price, and Reseller are highly relevant for shaping consumer trust and purchasing decisions. This finding reinforces the importance of marketing strategies that enhance Brand Trust, optimize the role of resellers, and leverage positive online recommendations to increase consumer purchases of Dapur Tembem's frozen food products.

### Hypotesis Testing

This study used bootstrapping to test this hypothesis. Based on Table 3, the decision to accept or reject a hypothesis is determined by the p-value, where a p-value < 0.05 indicates that the hypothesis is accepted, while a p-value > 0.05 indicates that the hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1)** examines the effect of Brand Awareness (BA) on Purchase Behavior (PB). A path coefficient of -0.019 with a T-statistic of 0.349 and a p-value of 0.727 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. A standard deviation (STDEV) of 0.055 and an F-square value of 0.001 confirm that the effect is negligible. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that mere familiarity with a brand does not necessarily translate into purchasing decisions. Consumers may recognize Dapur Tembem, but still prioritize other factors, such as product quality, reviews, and brand trust, before making a purchase. In a highly competitive frozen food market, product differentiation and perceived quality may play a more significant role in purchase decisions. This result contradicts studies that suggest Brand Awareness has a direct positive influence on purchasing behavior (Chusniartiningsih & Andjarwati, 2019), but aligns with findings that indicate awareness alone does not guarantee conversion into actual purchases without supporting factors such as credibility or perceived quality (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2015).

Table 2. Construct measurements of validity and reliability

Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	R-Square
BA	0.858	0.903	0.700	
EWOM	0.935	0.954	0.837	
PP	0.927	0.945	0.774	
RS	0.955	0.964	0.815	
BT	0.937	0.951	0.764	0.755
PB	0.945	0.956	0.785	0.810

Note: Brand Awareness (BA); Perceived Price (PP); Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM); Reseller (RS); Brand Trust (BT); Purchase Behaviour (PB)

Table 3. Bootstrapping result

Hypotesis	Variables	Path Coef.	STDEV	T-Stats	P-value	Hypotesis Conclusion	F-Square
H1	BA -> PB	-0.019	0.055	0.349	0.727	Rejected	0.001
H2	PP -> PB	0.113	0.163	1.265	0.206	Rejected	0.021
H3	EWOM -> PB	0.181	0.067	2.708	0.007*	Accepted	0.091
H4	RS -> PB	0.107	0.089	1.201	0.230	Rejected	0.024
H9	BT -> PB	0.601	0.122	4.919	0.000*	Accepted	0.467
H5	BA -> BT	0.039	0.077	0.508	0.611	Rejected	0.003
H6	PP -> BT	0.377	0.163	2.316	0.021*	Accepted	0.223
H7	EWOM -> BT	0.227	0.080	2.829	0.005*	Accepted	0.124
H8	RS -> BT	0.370	0.141	2.630	0.009*	Accepted	0.284

Note: Brand Awareness (BA); Perceived Price (PP); Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM); Reseller (RS); Brand Trust (BT); Purchase Behaviour (PB)



**Hypothesis 2 (H2)** tested the impact of Perceived Price (PP) on Purchase Behavior (PB). With a path coefficient of 0.113, T-statistic of 1.265, p-value of 0.206, and STDEV of 0.163, the result is statistically insignificant, leading to hypothesis rejection. The F-squared value of 0.021 further indicates a small effect size. Although pricing remains a critical consideration, its impact on purchase decisions appears to be indirect, as consumers may prioritize brand trust or perceived value over absolute pricing. If consumers perceive the product as high-quality, they are more likely to justify the price, thus reducing the direct effect of price perception on purchasing behavior. This finding contrasts with previous studies suggesting that pricing directly influences purchase decisions (Jeng et al. 2014), but aligns with research emphasizing that Perceived Price strengthens purchasing behavior through Brand Trust rather than acting as an independent factor (Damayanti, 2023).

**Hypothesis 3 (H3)** investigates the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) on Purchase Behavior (PB). The path coefficient was 0.181, with a T-statistic of 2.708, p-value of 0.007, and STDEV of 0.067, indicating a significant relationship. As the p-value was below 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted. An F-Square value of 0.091 categorizes this influence as low to moderate. This suggests that while online recommendations influence purchasing behavior, the impact is not dominant. Consumers tend to rely on reviews and peer recommendations for validation, particularly in industries with limited direct product experience, such as frozen food. However, since the impact remains relatively small, this suggests that while e-WoM contributes to purchasing behavior, other factors such as brand trust or perceived product quality may play a more crucial role. This finding aligns with research that highlights the growing influence of online reviews in shaping consumer decisions (Nurittamont, 2021; Farizy, 2023), reinforcing the idea that e-WoM serves as an external credibility enhancer but may not always be a primary purchase driver.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4)** evaluates the effect of resellers (RS) on Purchase Behavior (PB). With a path coefficient of 0.107, T-statistic of 1.201, p-value of 0.230, and STDEV of 0.089, the result is not significant, leading to rejection of the hypothesis. The F-squared value was 0.024, indicating a minimal effect. This suggests that, while resellers improve accessibility, they may not play a primary role in shaping consumer buying decisions.

Consumers are likely to prioritize brand perception, quality assurance, and reviews simply where they purchase products. While resellers offer convenience, their influence may be more indirect, enhancing distribution rather than serving as a core motivator for purchases. This contrasts with findings suggesting that resellers increase brand credibility and consumer trust, leading to higher purchase intent (Liao & Chu, 2013; Maulana et al. 2023), reinforcing that reseller influence may vary by industry and product type.

**Hypothesis 5 (H5)** examines the relationship between Brand Awareness (BA) and Brand Trust (BT). The path coefficient of 0.039, T-statistic of 0.508, p-value of 0.611, and STDEV of 0.077 indicate no significant relationship, resulting in the rejection of the hypothesis. The F-squared value was 0.003, reflecting a very weak effect. This suggests that consumers do not automatically trust a brand simply because they recognize it. Brand Trust requires consistent product quality, transparency, and a positive consumer experience. Awareness does not necessarily imply credibility or reliability. This finding contradicts research suggesting that higher brand awareness leads to stronger trust (Ramadania et al. 2020), but aligns with studies that argue that trust formation requires long-term validation through brand experience and consumer perception (Rahmatulloh et al. 2019).

**Hypothesis 6 (H6)** assessed the effect of Perceived Price (PP) on Brand Trust (BT). A path coefficient of 0.377, T-statistic of 2.316, p-value of 0.021, and STDEV of 0.163 indicate a significant and positive relationship. Thus, this hypothesis was accepted. An F-Square value of 0.223 classifies this as a medium effect. This finding confirms that perceived price fairness enhances consumer trust. Consumers who believe that a product's price accurately reflects its value and quality are more likely to trust the brand. Transparent pricing reinforces brand credibility and strengthens customer confidence in a product's worth. This finding supports previous research indicating that perceived price influences brand trust when pricing is perceived as reasonable and aligns with product quality (Erkmen, 2014).

**Hypothesis 7 (H7)** explores the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) on Brand Trust (BT). The path coefficient was 0.227, with a T-statistic of 2.829, p-value of 0.005, and STDEV of 0.080. As the p-value was below 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted. An

F-square value of 0.124 suggests a modest effect. This suggests that, while online recommendations contribute to Brand Trust, they are not the primary determinants. Consumers rely on e-WoM for validation, but trust formation depends on factors such as product consistency, customer service, and brand transparency. While positive e-WoM builds credibility, consumers still expect real-world product reliability to reinforce their trust. This aligns with research stating that e-WoM enhances trust, but requires brand support through quality assurance and positive customer interactions (Liu et al.2018; Hermanda et al.2019).

**Hypothesis 8 (H8)** evaluated the effect of resellers (RS) on Brand Trust (BT). A path coefficient of 0.370, T-statistic of 2.630, p-value of 0.009, and STDEV of 0.141 indicate a statistically significant effect. These results imply that hypothesis is accepted. The F-Square value of 0.284 categorizes this effect as medium. This finding confirms that reliable resellers enhance consumer trust. Consumers perceive a strong reseller network to be an indicator of brand legitimacy and reliability. When resellers offer consistent product availability and service quality, they reinforce their consumer confidence in the brand. This supports the finding that state resellers contribute to trust-building by creating a seamless and accessible purchasing experience (Kim & Kim, 2020; Maulana et al.2023).

**Hypothesis 9 (H9)** analyzed the effect of Brand Trust (BT) on Purchase Behavior (PB). The path coefficient of 0.601, T-statistic of 4.919, p-value of 0.000, and STDEV of 0.122 clearly indicate a significant and strong relationship and support the hypothesis. The F-Square value of 0.467 confirms this is the strongest influence among all tested variables. Consumers are far more likely to purchase from brands that they trust, as trust reduces perceived risk and increases confidence in the product. This finding aligns with studies that emphasize Brand Trust as a primary driver of purchase decisions (Kuant & Erdiansyah, 2022; Siddiqui et al.2021), reinforcing that, in markets such as frozen food, trust is a major factor influencing consumer choices.

### Indirect Effect

The analysis of indirect effects confirms that Brand Trust (BT) plays a crucial mediating role in influencing Purchase Behavior (PB), particularly for Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), Perceived Price (PP),

and Resellers (RS), whereas Brand Awareness (BA) does not have a significant indirect impact. The insignificant relationship between BA and PB through BT (coefficient 0.023, p-value 0.589) suggests that merely recognizing the brand does not necessarily lead to trust-based purchasing decisions. Conversely, EWOM significantly strengthens PB through BT (coefficient 0.136, p-value 0.025), indicating that online recommendations not only influence purchases directly but also enhance consumer trust in the brand. Similarly, Perceived Price positively affects PB via BT (coefficient 0.227, p-value 0.035), suggesting that fair price perception fosters trust, which in turn drives purchases. Resellers also contribute to PB through BT (coefficient 0.222, p-value 0.009), meaning that their presence and reliability improve brand trust and encourage consumer buying behavior. These findings highlight that Dapur Tembem's marketing strategy should focus on reinforcing Brand Trust by leveraging positive EWOM, ensuring price competitiveness, and optimizing reseller partnerships to enhance consumer confidence, which ultimately boosts sales.

### Managerial Implications

Based on research findings, Brand Trust has been proven to have the strongest influence on Purchase Behavior, both directly and as a mediating variable for Perceived Price, Resellers, and e-WOM. Therefore, Dapur Tembem should prioritize marketing strategies that explicitly focus on enhancing consumer trust. This objective can be effectively achieved by consistently maintaining high product quality, providing transparency regarding ingredients and production processes, and strengthening customer service through clear communication and responsive interactions. Additionally, leveraging positive testimonials and consumer feedback as promotional content can reinforce trust as it provides tangible evidence of customer satisfaction and brand reliability.

Although Perceived Price and Resellers do not directly influence Purchase Behavior, they significantly shape Brand Trust, highlighting their indirect strategic value. Prices perceived as reflecting the true product quality positively impact consumer trust, underscoring the importance of Dapur Tembem in maintaining competitive, fair, and transparent pricing strategies. Meanwhile, resellers should be strategically leveraged and empowered to function as brand ambassadors rather than merely as distribution points. This can be

realized by providing resellers with comprehensive product knowledge training, professional marketing materials, and reliable and responsive support to ensure consistency in brand messaging and customer experience.

Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) is the only independent variable identified as directly influencing Purchase Behavior while simultaneously reinforcing Brand Trust. Honest, informative, and positive online reviews significantly increase consumer confidence and purchase intention. Therefore, Dapur Tembem must actively encourage and facilitate consumer-generated content, reviews, and testimonials across digital platforms such as Instagram and online marketplaces. Additionally, Dapur Tembem should engage proactively in digital conversations, respond to customer feedback, and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to quality and customer care.

Conversely, this study finds that Brand Awareness does not have a significant influence on Purchase Behavior, either directly or indirectly, through Brand Trust. This indicates that the current strategies aimed solely at raising brand awareness are insufficient and require reassessment. As Instagram has been identified as the primary source of brand discovery among consumers, strategic marketing efforts should focus increasingly on developing engaging visual content and interactive promotions tailored to Instagram users. Highlighting authentic consumer experiences through storytelling and testimonials can enhance brand credibility and indirectly strengthen purchase decisions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study makes important contributions by confirming the pivotal role of Brand Trust as a mediator within the digital marketing framework, particularly in the context of SMEs operating in emerging digital markets. These findings advance the consumer behavior theory by highlighting the limited effectiveness of standalone brand awareness strategies in driving consumer purchase decisions without trust-based validation. Additionally, the study supports and extends the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) framework, where perceived price, e-WoM, and reseller interactions function as external stimuli, brand trust represents the internal cognitive and affective response (organism), and purchase behavior acts as the ultimate consumer response. Thus, this study not only validates but also deepens our understanding of the nuanced interactions among digital marketing

elements, trust formation, and purchase behavior, offering meaningful theoretical insights applicable to SMEs and digital consumer markets more broadly.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The study concludes that brand awareness, perceived price, electronic word of mouth (e-WoM), and resellers influence consumer purchase behavior and brand trust in different ways. Brand trust has emerged as the most significant factor affecting purchase behavior, confirming its crucial role in consumer decision-making. While brand awareness was found to have no significant impact on purchase behavior, e-WoM was the only independent variable that directly influenced it. Perceived price and resellers contribute to consumer trust, which, in turn, affects purchase behavior, highlighting the indirect role played by these factors. These findings indicate that building brand trust is essential for improving purchase behavior, particularly through positive online recommendations, competitive pricing, and reseller reliability.

Furthermore, this study confirms that brand trust serves as a mediating variable for perceived price, e-WoM, and resellers, reinforcing their indirect effects on purchase behavior. This suggests that businesses such as Dapur Tembem should focus on strengthening brand trust by leveraging digital marketing, ensuring price fairness, and optimizing reseller partnerships. This research also highlights the effectiveness of Instagram as a primary marketing platform, suggesting that targeted social media strategies can enhance consumer engagement and trust. These insights will help Tembem formulate strategic marketing recommendations to regain sales growth, enhance brand positioning, and foster long-term customer loyalty in the competitive frozen food market.

### Recommendations

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the sample only includes consumers of frozen Dapur Tembem food in specific regions, making it difficult to generalize the findings to consumers in other areas with different demographic characteristics and purchasing behaviors. Second, the study is limited to variables such as Brand Awareness,

Perceived Price, EWOM, Reseller, Brand Trust, and Purchase Behavior, while other potential influencing factors, such as product quality, customer satisfaction, and brand image, were not included in the research model. Additionally, the data collection method relied on online questionnaires, which may introduce response bias as it only captures respondents who have Internet access and are active on social media.

Based on these limitations, future research should expand the sample scope by involving consumers from various geographic regions and diverse backgrounds to improve the generalizability of the results. Additionally, future studies could incorporate other variables, such as product quality, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence Purchase Behavior. Researchers may also consider using a mixed-method approach by conducting in-depth interviews to gain richer insights into consumers' motivations and perceptions. Finally, employing a longitudinal research method could help track changes in consumer behavior over time.

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