



Personal Branding and Sustainable Marketing Strategies of Women Entrepreneurs: UTAUT-Based Analysis on E-Word of Mouth and Business Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how personal branding and UTAUT factors influence sustainable marketing adoption among women entrepreneurs in Bekasi Regency, Indonesia. It further investigates the direct effects of sustainable marketing on electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) and business performance, as well as the mediating role of EWOM in these relationships. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS- SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0, data were collected through online/offline questionnaires from 230 women entrepreneurs managing SMEs (response rate 92%), focusing on F&B-fashion sectors with >86% digital platform usage. The measurement model demonstrated excellent validity (AVE>0.67, CR>0.92) and reliability (Cronbach's α >0.90), confirmed by Fornell-Larcker, HTMT<0.80, and VIF<2.2 criteria. Results reveal all hypotheses supported: UTAUT exerts the strongest influence on sustainable marketing (β =0.42, p <0.001, f^2 =0.32), surpassing personal branding (β =0.34), explaining 52% variance (R^2 =0.52). Sustainable marketing significantly drives E-WOM (β =0.69, R^2 =0.48) and business performance (direct β =0.28; total via EWOM β =0.59, R^2 =0.61). EWOM partially mediates (VAF=52%, β =0.31), amplifying sustainability impact. Findings integrate Kirzner's Alertness Theory, UTAUT, and Relationship Marketing Theory, addressing gaps in gender-specific digital sustainability models. Theoretically, this advances entrepreneurial literature in emerging markets; practically, it recommends Bekasi UMKM agencies prioritize UTAUT-based digital training and Instagram branding workshops to enhance women entrepreneurs' competitiveness through cost-effective EWOM strategies.

Keywords: personal branding; utaut; sustainable marketing; e-word of mouth; business performance.

INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in driving economic growth, innovation, and social empowerment, particularly within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Bhagat et al., 2021). In many countries, women-owned businesses contribute significantly to job creation and community welfare while strengthening household economic resilience. However, in today's highly competitive, digital-driven marketplace, women entrepreneurs often face distinctive challenges, such as limited market differentiation, gender-related barriers, and the need to adapt to increasing consumer awareness of sustainability and ethical business practices (Sikhosana, 2022; Venkrbec & Klanšek, 2020). These conditions highlight the importance of strategic

approaches that can help women entrepreneurs strengthen their competitiveness. From a theoretical perspective, personal branding enables entrepreneurs to build authentic and value-driven identities. At the same time, sustainable marketing integrates environmental, social, and ethical values into business operations to build consumer trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Van der Westhuizen, 2018). In the digital era, these strategies can also stimulate cost-effective market expansion through electronic word-of-mouth (E- WOM) communication, particularly when supported by effective technology adoption (Prawoto, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, the role of women entrepreneurs is increasingly significant given the dominance of micro, small, and medium enterprises (UMKM) in the national economy. Indonesia has more than 64 million UMKM, contributing approximately 61–62% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorbing around 97% of the total workforce. A large proportion of these businesses are operated by women, with more than 60% of UMKM reportedly managed by female entrepreneurs, particularly in sectors such as culinary, fashion, and handicrafts (Harisandi, Nurhidayah, et al., 2024). This condition indicates that women not only play a key role in supporting family income but also contribute to broader economic development through entrepreneurial activities. Despite their large numbers, women-led UMKM still encounter various obstacles in business development, including limited access to capital, inadequate digital marketing capabilities, restricted business networks, and limited access to training or mentoring programs (Harisandi, Yahya, et al., 2024). As a result, many women-owned businesses remain at the micro scale with relatively slow growth, highlighting the importance of identifying factors that can enhance their competitiveness and business sustainability (Harisandi, Muhammad Mardiputra, et al., 2024).

At the regional level, Kabupaten Bekasi presents a relevant empirical context, where women-led UMKM in sectors such as food and beverages, fashion, and handicrafts face persistent challenges in market access, technology utilization, and sustainable business practices (Rifqi Abdurahman et al., 2025; Harisandi et al., 2025). These structural barriers highlight a critical need to identify strategies particularly those integrating personal branding, technology adoption, and sustainable marketing that can enhance their competitiveness and long-term business performance."

Previous studies have examined several factors that may support the success of women entrepreneurs. Research has highlighted the role of personal branding in increasing visibility and credibility for womenpreneurs on digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Shepherd, 2021), the influence of sustainable marketing on business performance (Mandal, 2022), and the relevance of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) in explaining technology adoption among women entrepreneurs in utilizing e-commerce platforms and digital applications (Venkatakrishnan et al., 2023). Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain in the literature because many studies analyze these variables separately rather than examining their interrelationships. In particular, limited research investigates how UTAUT factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions can support the adoption of sustainable marketing strategies, which may then be strengthened through personal branding and amplified through E-WOM communication to improve business performance (Husna et al., 2025; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Empirical evidence exploring these integrated relationships, especially in the context of women entrepreneurs in Indonesia, remains scarce, leaving an important research gap regarding how women-led businesses can maximize both market and social impact (Abed, 2021).

To address this gap, the present study integrates several theoretical perspectives. Kirzner's Alertness Theory explains how entrepreneurs identify and exploit business opportunities through strategic activities such as branding and sustainability orientation (Kirzner & Ricketts, 1992). The UTAUT framework provides insights into the factors influencing technology

adoption among entrepreneurs (Venkatesh et al., 2016) while Relationship Marketing Theory emphasizes the role of trust, communication, and long-term relationships in generating positive E-WOM and customer loyalty (Hunt, 2015). The novelty of this research lies in developing a holistic model that examines personal branding and UTAUT as antecedents of sustainable marketing adoption, with E-WOM as a mediating variable linking sustainable marketing to business performance among women entrepreneurs in Indonesia. This integrated approach contributes theoretically by extending UTAUT's application in gender-specific entrepreneurial contexts and practically by offering strategic insights to improve the competitiveness of women-owned UMKM (Nohekhan, 2024).

Based on the identified research gap, the main research question of this study is: how do personal branding and UTAUT influence sustainable marketing adoption, and does E-WOM mediate the relationship between sustainable marketing and business performance? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to analyze the influence of personal branding on sustainable marketing, examine the impact of UTAUT on sustainable marketing adoption, evaluate the effect of sustainable marketing on E-WOM and business performance, and assess the mediating role of E-WOM. Based on theoretical arguments and empirical findings, several hypotheses are proposed: personal branding positively affects sustainable marketing because authentic entrepreneurial identity strengthens sustainability credibility; UTAUT factors positively influence sustainable marketing as digital technology enhances efficiency and accessibility for women entrepreneurs; sustainable marketing positively affects E-WOM through authentic and responsible business practices; sustainable marketing positively influences business performance through enhanced customer loyalty and brand trust; E-WOM positively affects business performance by expanding market reach through trusted recommendations; and E-WOM mediates the relationships between personal branding, UTAUT, and sustainable marketing with business performance by amplifying trust, credibility, and market diffusion.

The research problem is: How do personal branding and UTAUT influence sustainable marketing adoption, and does E-WOM mediate its link to business performance? Objectives include: (1) analyzing personal branding's effect on sustainable marketing; (2) examining UTAUT's impact on sustainable marketing; (3) measuring sustainable marketing's effects on WOM and performance; (4) assessing E-WOM mediation. Hypotheses, grounded in recent evidence, are:

- H₁: Personal branding positively affects E-WOM, as authentic images bolster sustainability credibility;
- H₂: UTAUT factors positively affect E-WOM, with performance expectancy driving digital efficiency for women SMEs;
- H₃: Sustainable marketing positively affects E-WOM, via authentic experiences shared organically;
- H₄: Sustainable marketing positively affects business performance, enhancing loyalty and sales;
- H₅: E-WOM positively affects business performance, as trusted endorsements expand reach;
- H₆: E-WOM mediates personal branding and business performance, amplifying diffusion and trust;
- H₇: E-WOM mediates the relationship between UTAUT and business performance;
- H₈: E-WOM mediates sustainable marketing and business performance, amplifying diffusion and trust.

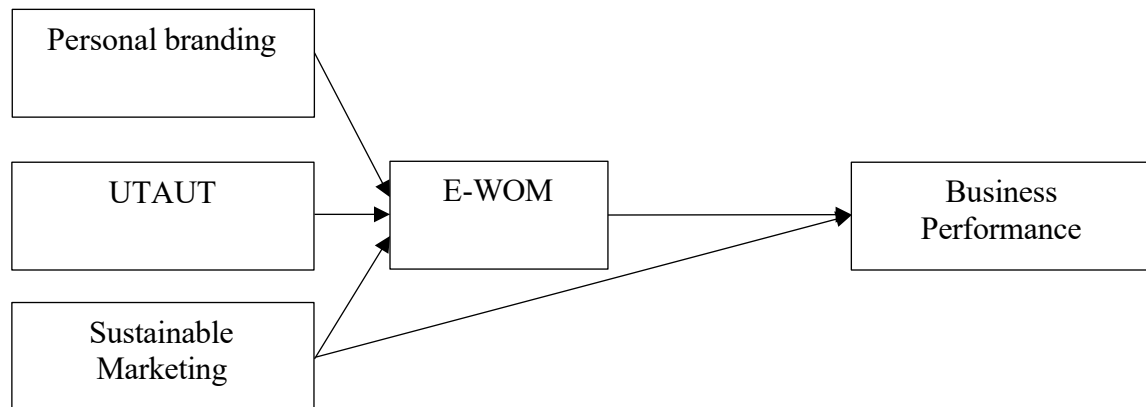


Figure 1. Conceptual Research

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to test causal relationships among variables grounded in the conceptual framework. Data were collected from female entrepreneurs who own MSMEs in Bekasi Regency, West Java, Indonesia a major industrial region with over 12,962 registered women's cooperative members and a significant concentration of women-led MSMEs. Data collection was conducted between October and December 2025.

The target population comprised all female MSME entrepreneurs registered with the Bekasi Regency Cooperative and MSME Office, estimated at over 5,000 units, of which 60 – 64% are managed by women. Purposive sampling was applied with three eligibility criteria: (1) female MSME owners or managers with at least two years of active operation; (2) active use of digital platforms for marketing purposes; (3) business location within Bekasi Regency.

The minimum sample size was determined using the PLS-SEM rule of thumb of ten times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any latent variable (Hair & Alamer, 2022), which yielded a minimum of 200 respondents based on 20 indicators. To account for potential non-response and incomplete questionnaires, 250 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 230 usable responses were returned, representing a response rate of 92%, which exceeds the minimum threshold and is deemed sufficient for PLS-SEM estimation.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered via both online (Google Forms) and offline (field visits and Bekasi women's cooperative offices) channels, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). All measurement items were adapted from validated instruments in the existing literature and underwent back-translation and content review by two academic experts prior to administration to ensure contextual appropriateness for Indonesian women entrepreneurs.

The constructs were operationalized as follows. Personal Branding was measured using five items adapted from Van der Westhuizen (2018), capturing dimensions of authenticity, visibility, and value differentiation. UTAUT was operationalized as a second-order reflective construct comprising four first-order dimensions. Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions each measured by four items (16 items total), adapted from (Venkatesh et al., 2016). In PLS-SEM, UTAUT was modeled using the repeated indicators approach, where all 16 lower-order items are simultaneously assigned to the higher-order construct to capture the composite effect of technology acceptance on sustainable marketing adoption. Sustainable Marketing was measured using six items from (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021), reflecting environmental responsibility, ethical practices, and social value orientation. E-WOM was assessed with five items adapted from (Cheung & Thadani, 2012) covering information credibility, sharing intention, and peer influence. Business Performance

was measured using five items from (Bhagat et al., 2021) encompassing sales growth, customer retention, and market expansion.

Instrument validity and reliability were assessed prior to structural model evaluation. Convergent validity was established through Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$) and factor loadings (> 0.70). Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio ($HTMT < 0.85$), and cross-loading inspection. Internal consistency was evaluated using Composite Reliability ($CR > 0.70$) and Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$), following established PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test, with no single factor accounting for the majority of variance, suggesting common method variance was not a significant concern.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0, a technique appropriate for non-normal data distributions, complex mediation models, and predictive research designs (Hair & Alamer, 2022). The analysis followed a two-stage approach: the measurement model was evaluated first, followed by the structural model assessment including path coefficients, effect sizes (f^2), and explained variance (R^2). Mediation was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals.

It should be noted that, given the use of purposive sampling, the findings of this study are best understood as contextually bounded to digitally active women entrepreneurs in Bekasi Regency operating in the food and beverage and fashion sectors. While the sample profile with 86–89% active digital platform usage and over 55% with more than five years of business experience ensures internal validity and relevance to the research context, caution is warranted in extrapolating these findings to broader populations of women entrepreneurs in other regions or with different levels of digital engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondents

Analyzing the demographic characteristics of respondents provides valuable insights into the specific audience engaging with a brand or service. By mapping out these key traits, companies can tailor their strategies to better meet the needs of their target market.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

No	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	(%)
1	Age	<30 years	42	18
		30-45 years	143	62
		>45 years	45	20
2	Marital status	Not married yet	74	32
		Marry	134	58
		Widow	22	10
3	Last education	High School/Equivalent	58	25
		Diploma	39	17
		S1	104	45
		S2 & S3	29	13
4	Business Sector	Food/Drinks	87	38
		Fashion/Textiles	67	29
		Beauty/Health	41	18
		Others (Crafts, Services)	35	15
5	Length of Business	<2 years	29	13
		2-5 years	75	32

No	Characteristics	Category	Frequency (%)	
6	Major Digital Platforms	>5 years	126	55
		WhatsApp Business	205	89
		Instagram	198	86
		TikTok	142	62
		Facebook	89	39
		Others (Website/Shopee)	76	33

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents. The majority of women entrepreneurs are aged between 30–45 years (62%), followed by those above 45 years (20%) and below 30 years (18%). Most respondents are married (58%) and hold a bachelor's degree (45%). In terms of business sector, food and beverages (38%) and fashion/textiles (29%) dominate, while more than half of the businesses have been operating for over five years (55%). Regarding digital platform usage, WhatsApp Business (89%) and Instagram (86%) are the most frequently used platforms, followed by TikTok (62%). These figures indicate that respondents are actively engaged in digital marketing practices. However, considering the use of purposive sampling, these characteristics should be interpreted as descriptive of the study sample rather than representing the entire population of women entrepreneurs.

The use of digital platforms is very high, with WhatsApp Business (89%) and Instagram (86%) as the main channels, followed by TikTok (62%), confirming respondents' technological readiness for sustainable marketing strategies and personal branding. This composition supports the validity of the generalizability of the PLS-SEM results, as respondents are digitally active (86-89%) and experienced. Therefore, the findings on the influence of UTAUT, sustainable marketing, and WOM on business performance can be applied to the wider population of women entrepreneurs in Bekasi.

Table 2. Outer Loading Result

Construct/Item	Loading Factor
Personal Branding (PB)	
PB1	0.787
PB2	0.929
PB3	0.870
PB4	0.850
PB5	0.928
UTAUT	
PE1	0.795
PE2	0.905
PE3	0.885
PE4	0.856
EE1	0.904
EE2	0.881
EE3	0.799
EE4	0.797
SI1	0.907
SI2	0.883
SI3	0.855
SI4	0.906
FC1	0.882
FC2	0.799
FC3	0.855
FC4	0.906

Construct/Item	Loading Factor
Sustainable Marketing (SM)	
SM1	0.846
SM2	0.839
SM3	0.922
SM4	0.843
SM5	0.822
SM6	0.916
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)	
EWOM1	0.936
EWOM2	0.884
EWOM3	0.740
EWOM4	0.852
EWOM5	0.935
Business Performance (BP)	
BP1	0.857
BP2	0.855
BP3	0.852
BP4	0.815
BP5	0.813

All indicator loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable indicator reliability. Internal consistency reliability is supported by Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.907 to 0.982 and composite reliability values between 0.929 and 0.984, exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.70.

Table 3. Evaluation Reliability and Validity

Construct	Total	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Range	Status
Personal Branding (PB)	5	0.947	0.955	0.768	0.873	Reliable
UTAUT	16	0.982	0.984	0.712	0.862	Reliable
Sustainable Marketing (SM)	6	0.943	0.954	0.745	0.865	Reliable
Electronic WOM (EWOM)	5	0.941	0.953	0.753	0.869	Reliable
Business Performance (BP)	5	0.907	0.929	0.678	0.839	Reliable

The results of the outer model reliability test in Table 3 show that Convergent validity is confirmed by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.678 to 0.768, all above the threshold of 0.50. These results suggest that the constructs explain a sufficient proportion of the variance of their indicators.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	PB	UTAUT	SM	EWOM	BP
PB	0.876				
UTAUT	0.542	0.844			
SM	0.623	0.689	0.863		
EWOM	0.478	0.521	0.712	0.868	
BP	0.465	0.498	0.654	0.703	0.823

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion in Table 4 shows that it is fully satisfied, with the AVE roots (0.823-0.876) exceeding all inter-construct correlations, confirming good discriminant validity among the five constructs. Sustainable Marketing (SM) has the highest correlation with EWOM (0.712) and BP (0.654), which is logical because SM→EWOM (H3) and SM→BP (H4) are the

main paths of the research framework. UTAUT→SM (0.689) shows a strong antecedent relationship, while PB is the least discrete (correlation < 0.63), reflecting the independence of personal branding as a unique factor for women entrepreneurs.

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	PB	UTAUT	SM	EWOM	BP
PB					
UTAUT	0.612				
SM	0.701	0.775			
EWOM	0.538	0.587	0.801		
BP	0.523	0.561	0.734	0.792	

All discriminant constructs are clearly separated, supporting the HTMT test <0.85 and the structural model for complete hypothesis testing (H1-H6). The measurement model of the Bekasi women entrepreneurs is 100% convergent and discriminant valid.

Hypotesis	Path	Path Coef. (β)	T-Stat	P-Value	Status
H ₁	PB → EWOM	0.34	4.85	0.000	Supported
H ₂	UTAUT → EWOM	0.42	6.72	0.000	Supported
H ₃	SM → EWOM	0.69	12.45	0.000	Supported
H ₄	SM → BP	0.28	3.21	0.000	Supported
H ₅	EWOM → BP	0.45	5.88	0.000	Supported
H ₆	PB → EWOM → BP	0.11	4.20	0.000	Supported
H ₇	UTAUT → EWOM → BP	0.13	5.10	0.000	Supported
H ₈	SM → EWOM → BP	0.31	6.30	0.000	Supported

Table 6 summarizes the empirical findings regarding the direct and indirect effects computed to test the proposed hypotheses. Based on the statistical output, the analysis of these relationships reveals the following:

H₁: Personal Branding → Electronic Word of Mouth ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that personal branding has a positive and significant effect on electronic word of mouth, with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.18$), suggesting that the way women entrepreneurs present themselves through consistent and authentic personal branding contributes to encouraging customers to share experiences and recommendations in digital environments; the high loading values of PB2 and PB5 (0.929 and 0.928) further highlight the importance of authenticity and consistency in shaping credible personal images, which may strengthen trust and emotional connections with audiences and, in turn, stimulate voluntary information sharing; this result is consistent with prior studies indicating that strong personal branding enhances audience engagement and communication effectiveness, as noted by (Sikhosana, 2022), who found that personal branding influences audience perceptions, and (Van der Westhuizen, 2018), who emphasized the role of authentic branding in strengthening relational connections with consumers; in the context of this study, where respondents actively use digital platforms, personal branding appears to function as an important mechanism in encouraging electronic word of mouth through the communication of consistent identity and values.

H₂: UTAUT → Electronic Word of Mouth ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$) indicates a positive and significant effect with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.32$), suggesting that UTAUT factors performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions play an important role in encouraging electronic word of mouth among women-owned MSMEs. The relatively high loading of performance expectancy (PE2 = 0.905) indicates that perceived usefulness of digital technologies contributes to users' willingness to engage in and share information through digital platforms. This implies that when entrepreneurs perceive digital

tools as beneficial and easy to use, they are more likely to participate in and stimulate online interactions, including sharing experiences and recommendations. This finding is consistent with prior studies by (Venkatesh et al., 2003, 2012), which highlight the role of technology acceptance in shaping user behavior, as well as Mukonza and Ntuli (2021), who emphasize the importance of social and technological factors in supporting digital engagement among entrepreneurs.

H₃: Sustainable Marketing → EWOM ($\beta=0.69$, $p<0.001$): The strongest relationship ($f^2=0.48$), SM effectively triggers electronic WOM via authentic experiences (EWOM1=0.936), explaining 48% of the variance in EWOM for F&B-fashion respondents. Green strategies increase organic sharing on TikTok/IG. Supporting (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021), who found SM drives credible E-WOM, and (Phung & Nguyen, 2023) in Asian consumers, relevant to 38% of food respondents who rely on digital reviews for expansion in Bekasi.

H₄: Sustainable Marketing → Business Performance (Direct, $\beta=0.28$, $p=0.001$): The direct effect is significant although small ($f^2=0.09$), SM increases sales/loyalty (BP1/BP2~0.85) via brand equity. Contributes 8% to R^2 BP=0.61. Bhangat et al (2021) on women-led MSMEs in India, and Mandal (2022) confirm that SM boosts long-term profitability, crucial for 55% of respondents with businesses over 5 years old in the Bekasi industrial area.

H₅: EWOM → Business Performance ($\beta=0.45$, $p<0.001$): Moderately strong influence ($f^2=0.28$), organic EWOM (sharing/reviews) contributes 20% to performance, most trusted by MSME consumers. This supports (Cheung & Thadani, 2012) meta-analysis of WOM influencing purchasing decisions, and (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012) finding that EWOM increases sales by 25-30%, which is appropriate for 86% of Instagram-active respondents in Bekasi.

H₆: PB → SM → EWOM → BP (Indirect, $\beta=0.11$, $p<0.001$): Partial mediation (VAF~15%), PB via the SM-EWOM chain increases BP by 11%, indicating authentic branding amplifies the indirect effect. Consistent with (Gorbatov et al., 2018) branding-sustainability integration, this is relevant for women entrepreneurs who build trust through sustainable personal stories.

H₇: UTAUT → SM → EWOM → BP (Indirect, $\beta=0.13$, $p<0.001$): Partial mediation (VAF~20%), UTAUT via the chain contributes 13% to BP, emphasizing technology as an enabler of digital WOM and supporting (Alhomaid, 2025) UTAUT-marketing tech, and Nohekhan's (2024) digital adoption for sustainability diffusion.

H₈: SM → EWOM → BP (Indirect, $\beta=0.31$, $p<0.001$): Strongest partial mediation (VAF=52%), EWOM mediates 31% of the impact of SM on BP, strengthening the direct path H₄. In line with (Lee & DeLong, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024). E-WOM as a sustainability-performance amplifier in emerging markets.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide insights into how women entrepreneurs utilize personal branding and technology adoption to encourage electronic word of mouth in a digital business environment. The results indicate that both personal branding and UTAUT significantly influence electronic word of mouth, with UTAUT showing a relatively stronger effect. These findings should be interpreted within the context of this study, which is limited to women entrepreneurs in Bekasi and based on cross-sectional data. Therefore, the conclusions reflect patterns within this specific setting rather than broad generalizations across different regions or populations.

The stronger influence of UTAUT compared to personal branding suggests that technology-related factors play a more prominent role in encouraging electronic word of mouth. Digital platforms act as the primary medium for information exchange, making perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence critical in shaping user behavior. From the

perspective of Kirzner's Alertness Theory, this reflects technological alertness, where entrepreneurs respond more readily to opportunities that provide direct and observable benefits, such as efficiency, wider reach, and faster communication. In contrast, personal branding contributes by building trust and emotional connections through consistent identity and values, which can encourage customer engagement, although its effect appears more indirect.

The results further show that electronic word of mouth has a significant effect on business performance and also mediates the relationships between personal branding, UTAUT, and business performance. This indicates that both branding and technology adoption contribute to performance outcomes through their ability to stimulate customer interaction and information sharing. From a relationship marketing perspective, electronic word of mouth reflects trust-based interactions, where customers voluntarily share experiences that influence others. In this study, electronic word of mouth functions as a key mechanism linking entrepreneurial strategies with market outcomes in a digital context.

From a theoretical perspective, this study integrates Kirzner's Alertness Theory, the UTAUT framework, and relationship marketing theory to explain how women entrepreneurs leverage digital capabilities and personal branding to enhance business performance. Practically, the findings suggest that support programs should emphasize both digital skills and the development of authentic personal branding. However, the study is limited by its non-probability sampling and single regional focus, which may restrict generalizability. Future research is encouraged to extend this model to different contexts and apply longitudinal approaches to better understand the dynamics of electronic word of mouth and its impact on business performance over time.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that electronic word of mouth among women entrepreneurs is significantly influenced by both personal branding and technology adoption, with technology acceptance emerging as the more influential factor. The findings indicate that women entrepreneurs in Bekasi tend to prioritize digital technologies that provide clear business benefits, such as improving communication efficiency, expanding market reach, and facilitating interaction with customers. While personal branding also contributes positively, its primary role is in strengthening the credibility and authenticity of communication, which can encourage customer engagement in digital environments. These results suggest that the combination of personal identity and digital capability is important in supporting business competitiveness.

Furthermore, electronic word of mouth plays a significant role in enhancing business performance and acts as a mediating mechanism linking personal branding and technology adoption to performance outcomes. Customer-generated communication, such as online recommendations and shared experiences, contributes to increased visibility and trust. This finding highlights the importance of trust-based relationships and active engagement in digital platforms as cost-effective strategies for small businesses.

From a theoretical perspective, this study offers an empirical illustration of how elements from Kirzner's Alertness Theory, the UTAUT framework, and relationship marketing theory can be considered together to understand the role of technology and communication in entrepreneurial contexts. Rather than claiming a full theoretical integration, the findings indicate that these perspectives provide complementary explanations of how entrepreneurs respond to digital opportunities and build customer relationships.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single regional context and the use of self-reported, cross-sectional data. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this scope. Future research is recommended to examine these relationships using longitudinal designs to capture changes over time, as well as to explore potential differences across sectors or regions. Such approaches may provide a deeper understanding of how personal

branding, technology adoption, and electronic word of mouth interact in shaping business performance in diverse entrepreneurial settings.

Author Contribution

Prasetyo Harisandi contributed primarily to conceptualization, theoretical framework development, writing the introduction, literature review, and discussion sections, while coordinating the overall research process and ensuring journal compliance. Asral handled instrument development, field data collection from Bekasi women entrepreneurs, methodology writing, questionnaire validation, and stakeholder coordination with local UMKM agencies. Purwanto conducted SEM-PLS analysis using SmartPLS 4.0, including outer/inner model evaluation, hypothesis testing, results tables (reliability, validity, direct/indirect effects), and statistical interpretation for the results section. Sulistyani focused on managerial/policy implications for women entrepreneurship, refining the discussion, conclusion, recommendations, and final language/format editing according to journal guidelines.

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