

## FROM GREEN PRODUCT TO GREEN REPUTATION: AN ANALYSIS OF HOW WORD OF MOUTH AND INNOVATION SHAPE A BRAND'S SUSTAINABILITY IMAGE

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### Keyword

word of mouth, green product innovation, brand image, purchase decision, PLS-SEM, smartphone, xiaomi, sustainability.

### Abstract

These Technological advancement in the modern era has significantly transformed how people communicate, making it faster, more efficient, and more accessible. One sector that has experienced rapid growth due to this development is the smartphone industry. Intense competition among manufacturers has driven the emergence of various product innovations to meet consumer needs and preferences, including support for sustainability values. Xiaomi has become one of the leading brands in the Indonesian market by offering affordable pricing strategies through popular sub-brands such as Redmi and Poco. This study is grounded in the Triple Bottom Line theory and the concept of marketing communication as its theoretical framework. The research utilizes a quantitative method with an associative design. The sampling process applied purposive sampling, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS version 4.1.1.2. The findings demonstrate that all direct paths in the proposed model exert a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decisions. However, the indirect effects through Brand Image are not significant, indicating that Brand Image does not mediate the relationship between Word of Mouth and Green Product Innovation with Purchase Decisions. Therefore, product innovation and communication strategies should focus directly on influencing consumer Purchase Decisions.

## INTRODUCTION

The need for communication in the era of globalization has led to an increase in demand for communication devices, which has triggered business competition in the telecommunications sector. This has encouraged international and multinational trade by mobile phone manufacturers, as seen in the large number of manufacturers offering various brands and new products with different innovations. The products offered make it easier for consumers to communicate (Ihya, 2022:2-3). One technology that is inseparable from consumers' lives is the smartphone or smart phone. Smartphones function as communication tools, and the high consumer demand for smartphones has driven manufacturers to continuously innovate, introducing more advanced smartphones with various features and prices to attract consumers (Kurniawati et al., 2022:77). Product innovation is key to attracting consumer attention and fostering business competition, including through a sustainability approach.

Table 1. Growth of 5 Smartphone Companies in the World

Smartphone Company	2024		2023		Year on year Change
	Shipping	Market Share	Shipping	Market Share	
Samsung	60.2	20.1%	60.5	22.5%	-0.5%
Apple	52.6	17.5%	55.4	20.7%	-5.1%
Xiaomi	40.8	13.6%	30.5	11.4%	33.7%
Transsion	28.5	9.5%	15.4	5.7%	85%
Vivo	25.2	8.4%	27.6	10.3%	-8.5%
Others	92.9	30.9%	79.0	29.4%	17.6%
Total	300.3	100%	268.5	100%	11.8%

Global smartphone sales have experienced rapid growth every year. Based on IDC data for the first quarter of 2024. As shown in Table 1 above, Samsung holds the top position in terms of sales volume, followed by Apple, with Xiaomi ranking third. Xiaomi is known as a technology manufacturer offering premium-quality products at affordable prices. In 2018, Xiaomi managed to increase its smartphone sales to the second-highest position within just five years of entering the Indonesian market (Anggara, 2020:2-3).

Xiaomi is also known for its commitment to sustainability, such as recycling fishing nets and materials like copper, gold, and aluminum from unused smartphones to make new components. This is part of the company's Green Product Innovation strategy, as shown in Figure 1 below.



Picture 1. Certification & Sustainable Future Xiaomi

Xiaomi has successfully built a community-based business strategy by leveraging Word of Mouth, which has helped shape a strong Brand Image. Word of Mouth is the verbal dissemination of information from one user to another, and can influence the decisions of potential consumers based on the experiences of previous users (Tarigan et al., 2023:73). According to Saekoko et al. (2020), social elements, including the impact of friends and coworkers, significantly affect the choice to buy a Xiaomi smartphone.

Environmentally conscious consumers also tend to seek information about Green Product Innovation, and this information is often spread through Word of Mouth. Growing awareness of environmental issues is encouraging companies to offer products that not only meet consumer needs but also support environmental well-being. As a result, environmentally friendly product innovations will strengthen consumer trust in a brand's image. Companies that prioritize sustainability principles will be more easily recognized and remembered by consumers.

According to Firmansyah (2019), Brand Image is the perception or impression that arises in consumers' minds about a brand. One of Xiaomi's marketing strategies in building Brand Image is through active communities such as Mi Fans and the Mi Community platform (Marketing Explainers, 2024). A positive Brand Image has been proven to greatly influence purchasing decisions, especially if it can foster awareness of sustainability values. According to Tjiptono (2019:21), a purchasing decision is a process in which consumers identify a problem, seek information, evaluate alternatives, and make a purchasing decision.

The present research draws upon multiple prior studies, including (1) Kurniawati et al. (2022) entitled "The Influence of Word of Mouth (WOM) and Product Attributes on the Decision to Purchase Vivo Smartphones Through Brand Image," (2) Mumpuni et al. (2023) titled "The Influence of Green Products and Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Decisions through Brand Image as an Intervening Variable (A Study of Generation Z Garnier Skincare Consumers in

Semarang City),” (3) Triana & Hidayat (2023) titled “Analysis of Brand Image as a Mediating Variable between the Influence of Price and Promotion on Purchase Decisions (Case Study of Xiaomi Product Users among Students in Yogyakarta),” and (4) Apriandhi et al., 2024, titled “Marketing Communication Strategies of the Xiaomi Palembang Marketing Team in Increasing Consumer Purchase Interest.”

This study uses a marketing communication theory and triple bottom line approach. (1) Marketing communication plays an important role in shaping the Brand Image of a product (Syahputra et al., 2022). According to Firmansyah (2020:11), the elements of marketing communication consist of five components: sender, message encoding, transmission medium, message decoding, and feedback, which align with Elias St. Elmo Lewis's AIDA model (1898). Additionally, this study also adopts the concept of (2) Triple Bottom Line (TBL) by John Elkington, which emphasizes that business success is not only measured by (profit) alone but also by human (people) and environmental (planet) aspects.



Picture 2. Theory AIDA Model & Triple Bottom Line

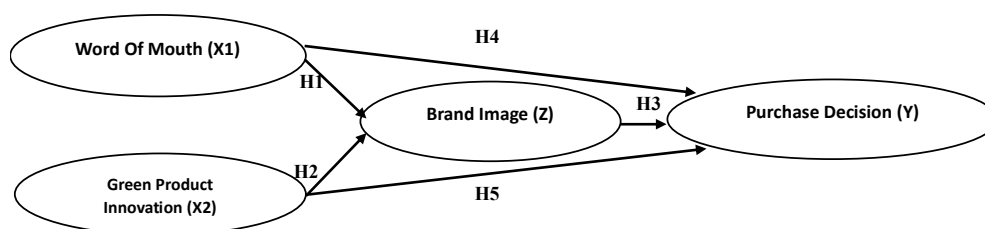
This study focuses specifically on the characteristics of local consumers in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, so it can provide more relevant data for local businesses and Xiaomi distributors in the area. Research on Xiaomi remains limited, particularly in specific regions such as Samarinda. Additionally, another novelty lies in the variable of Green Product Innovation. Unlike previous studies that focused on the concept of green products, this research emphasizes that Green Product Innovation is the next phase of green products, which must be continuously updated and developed within sustainable business strategies and innovation.

## METHOD

This study utilizes a quantitative methodology with an associative hypothesis design, aiming to examine the relationships among predetermined variables. Data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling employing the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) technique, with data processing facilitated by SmartPLS software version 4.1.1.2. This approach was chosen because it is considered capable of handling complex structural models and is suitable for relatively small sample sizes.

This research targeted all Xiaomi smartphone users residing in Samarinda City as the study population. A non-probability sampling approach, specifically purposive sampling, was employed. The sample comprised 100 participants, with the size determined through the Lemeshow formula due to the absence of precise data on the total population.

The variables used in this study consist of four variables, namely: (X1) Word of Mouth and (X2) Green Product Innovation as independent variables, (Z) Brand Image as an intervening variable, and (Y) Purchase Decision as a dependent variable. All variables are measured using indicators compiled in a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1 to 5.



Picture 3. Research Model

This study was conducted in Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, with data collection taking place from May to June 2025. The research tool employed was a closed-ended questionnaire, which was distributed both online and offline to participants who fulfilled the specified criteria. This analysis aimed to assess the instrument's validity and reliability, evaluate the relationships among latent variables, and determine the significance of both direct and indirect effects within the research model.

## RESULTS

### *Respondent Characteristics*

This study involved 100 respondents who are Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda City. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the respondents' profiles, they were grouped based on several demographic characteristics, as shown in the table below:

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

No	Category	Frequency	
1	Gender	Famale	63
		Male	37
2	Age Group	16-20 yrs	21
		21-25 yrs	71
		26-30 yrs	5
		31-35 yrs	3
3	Xiaomi User Type	POCO	16
		Redmi	34
		Xiaomi	50
4	Employment Status	Student (School)	7
		University Student	64
		Entrepreneur	3
		Private Empllyee	13
		Civil Servant (PSN)	2
		Unemploed	4
		Others	7

This study involved 100 respondents who are Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda City. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were female, totaling 63 people (63%), while males accounted for 37 people (37%). In terms of age, the largest group of respondents was in the 21–25 age range, totaling 71 people (71%), indicating that Xiaomi users are predominantly from the young, productive age group. Regarding the type of product used, the majority of respondents used the main Xiaomi series, totaling 50 people (50%), followed by Redmi users (34%) and POCO users (16%). Meanwhile, in terms of employment status, the majority of respondents were students, totaling 64 people (64%), reflecting that the Xiaomi market segment in this study primarily comes from the academic community.

### *Data Analysis*

#### *Results of the Analysis Analisis Deskriptif*

Table 3. Composite Mean Scores of Each Research Variable

Variable	Mean	Description
Word of Mouth	3,90	High
Green Product Innovatioan	4,24	Very High
Brand Image	4,24	Very High
Purchase Decision	4,12	High

Drawing on the results obtained from the descriptive statistical analysis by looking at the mean values of the variable items, it shows that the Green Product Innovatioan variable obtained the highest average value of 4.24, followed by Brand Image with the same value of 4.24, both of which are in the very high category. Furthermore, the Purchase Decision variable obtained an average value of 4.12, and the Word of Mouth variable obtained a value of 3.90, both of which fall

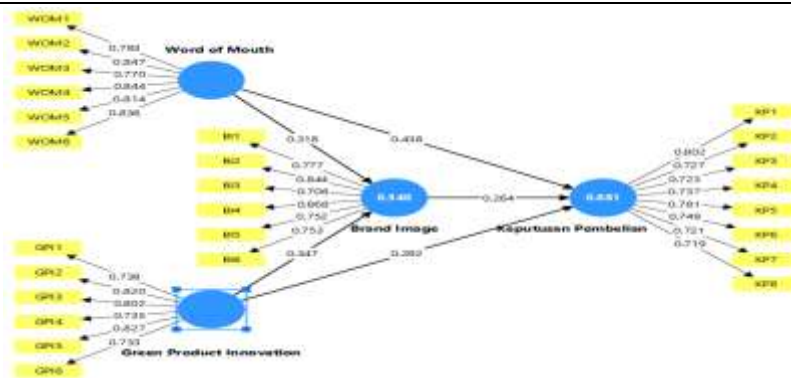
into the high category. These findings indicate that respondents have a very positive perception of environmentally friendly product innovation and the Xiaomi Brand Image. Although Word of Mouth and Purchase Decisions are in the high category, both still show significant influence.

*Results of the Analysis Outer Model*

The data were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling using the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) technique, supported by SmartPLS software 4.1.1.2. The results of data processing showed that the research model met the outer and inner model evaluation criteria.

Table 4. Measurement Model Evaluation Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Description
X1	0,875	0,906	0,617	Valid
X2	0,868	0,901	0,603	Valid
Z	0,887	0,909	0,556	Valid
Y	0,900	0,923	0,666	Valid



Picture 3. PLS-SEM Algorithm, 2025

In the Outer Model Test, convergent validity is assessed by examining the values of outer loadings, which show that all outer loading values are >0.7 and AVE values are >0.5. Therefore, it can be stated that this study has good convergent validity. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values have variable values >0.7, indicating that the instrument has valid or reliable reliability.

*Results of the Inner Model Analysis*

Table 5. Results of the Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

Variable	R-square	Description
Brand Image	0,340	Weak
Purchase Decision	0,681	Moderate

In the Inner model test, the test results can be seen from the R-square. The R-square value for the Brand Image variable is 0.340, which is classified as weak, and for the Purchase Decision variable, it is 0.681, which is classified as moderate.

*Results of the Direct Effect Analysis*

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results - Direct Effect

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Description
H1	0,318	2,533	0,009	+ Significant
H2	0,347	2,741	0,006	+ Significant
H3	0,264	2,622	0,001	+ Significant
H4	0,438	5,113	0,011	+ Significant
H5	0,292	3,442	0,000	+ Significant

In the significance test of the direct relationship, the test results on the Word of Mouth variable had a positive and significant effect on Brand Image with an original sample value of 0.318 (t = 2.533, p = 0.009). furthermore, the Green Product Innovation variable has a positive

and significant effect on Brand Image with an original sample value of 0.347 ( $t = 2.741$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ), the Brand Image variable has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision with an original sample value of 0.264 ( $t = 0.264$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), then the Word of Mouth variable has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision with an original sample value of 0.438 ( $t = 5.113$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ), and finally, the Green Product Innovation variable has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision with an original sample value of 0.292 ( $t = 3.442$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

#### *Results of the Indirect Effect Analysis*

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results – Indirect Effect

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Description
H6	0,091	1,806	0,071	+ No Significant
H7	0,084	1,708	0,088	+ No Significant

In the indirect relationship significance test, the test results for the Word of Mouth variable on Purchase Decision through Brand Image as a mediating variable had a positive but insignificant value with an original sample value of 0.091 ( $t = 1.806$ ,  $p = 0.071$ ). Green Product Innovation on Purchase Decision through Brand Image as a mediating variable has a positive but insignificant value with an original sample value of 0.084 ( $t = 1.708$ ,  $p = 0.088$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that Brand Image does not significantly mediate the relationship between Word of Mouth or Green Product Innovation on Purchase Decision..

## **DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the results of the research that has been obtained. The discussion focuses on the relationship between the variables studied, both directly and indirectly, which are explained as follows:

### *(1) Hypothesis 1 – Word of Mouth > Brand Image*

The results of the study indicate that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the brand image of Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda. Based on field observations, one respondent stated, “In my opinion, when someone recommends a product to me, it means they have had a good experience with it.” Therefore, word of mouth is a powerful communication tool in shaping positive perceptions of the Xiaomi brand. This research is also supported by previous studies by (Kurniawati et al., 2022) & (Tarigan et al., 2023). These results also align with the marketing communication theory proposed by Firmansyah (2020), where Word of Mouth serves as an indirect communication tool between the company and consumers, even though it is not directly initiated by the company but rather through the positive experiences of Xiaomi users. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is **Accepted**.

### *(2) Hypothesis 2 - Green Product Innovation > Brand Image*

The results of the study indicate that Green Product Innovation has a positive and significant impact on the brand image of Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda City. Based on the questionnaire results, 99 respondents stated that they care about environmental issues and sustainability. One respondent commented, “I believe that the environmentally friendly innovations implemented by Xiaomi undoubtedly enhance the brand’s image in the eyes of consumers, as these innovations make people feel more involved in the implementation of Xiaomi’s environmentally friendly innovations.” Therefore, Green Product Innovation is an important factor in building a brand image that is not only innovative but also environmentally responsible, and it is a key element in fostering long-term consumer trust in the brand. This research is supported by previous studies by (Mumpuni et al., 2023) & (Putri et al., 2023). These results also align with the Triple Bottom Line (3P) theory proposed by Rochmaniah & Sinduwiatmo (2020), which states that a company’s success is not solely measured by profit but must also consider its concern for the environment and people. Therefore, the role of Green Product Innovation is necessary to reflect the company’s responsibility toward environmental concerns, which indirectly strengthens the brand image in consumers’ minds. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is **Accepted**.

*(3) Hypothesis 3 - Brand Image > Purchase Decision*

The results of the study indicate that brand image has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda. Based on field observations, one respondent stated, "In my opinion, Xiaomi's image has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Xiaomi is well known among the public, and I feel compelled to buy their products because of my positive experiences with them. In fact, several people have recommended them to me because of their high quality." In this context, Xiaomi is deemed successful in building the perception of its Brand Image, thereby encouraging consumers to choose and purchase Xiaomi products. This research finding is supported by previous studies by (Triana & Hidayat, 2023) and (Kusuma et al., 2022). These results align with marketing communication theory at the encoding, decoding, and feedback stages, where the brand image conveyed by others and positively perceived by consumers can influence or play a role in the purchasing decision-making process. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is **Accepted**.

*(4) Hypothesis 4 - Word of Mouth > Purchase Decision*

The results of the study indicate that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda. Based on field observations, one respondent stated, "Recommendations have a significant influence, because I have seen several people who purchased the product based on recommendations from friends or family. They trust the recommendation before even seeing the product, because their close ones say they are satisfied with Xiaomi." Therefore, Word of Mouth is a powerful and effective communication tool in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. This research is also supported by previous studies by (Kurniawati et al., 2022) & (Tarigan et al., 2023). These results align with marketing communication theory, which states that Word of Mouth serves as a form of personal communication voluntarily shared by consumers. Through recommendations and the sharing of information about a product's advantages and benefits, Word of Mouth can build trust in the brand among potential consumers. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is **Accepted**.

*(5) Hypothesis 5 - Brand Image > Purchase Decision*

The results of the study indicate that Green Product Innovation has a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of Xiaomi smartphone users in Samarinda City. Based on field observations, one respondent stated, "The importance of such innovation lies in the fact that environmentally friendly products can help reduce waste and pollution. So it's not just good for us, but also for a safe and clean environment." Therefore, Green Product Innovation fosters their trust and confidence that choosing environmentally innovative products is not only functionally beneficial but also supports social responsibility. This research is supported by previous studies by (Mumpuni et al., 2023) & (Hidayat & Harsoyo, 2025). These findings align with the Triple Bottom Line theory, which focuses on planet, people, and profit. Green Product Innovation reflects concern for natural resources, which will influence purchasing decisions that impact profitability while still considering social and environmental impacts. This is what makes Green Product Innovation an important factor in encouraging consumers to purchase, as they feel they are contributing to supporting sustainable business practices. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is **Accepted**.

*(6) Hypothesis 6 - Word of Mouth > Brand Image > Purchase Decision*

The results of the study indicate that the Word of Mouth variable does not influence Purchase Decisions through Brand Image, with a t-statistic value  $< 1.96$  and a p-value  $> 0.05$ , thus rendering H6 positive insignificant. Based on the questionnaire results, most respondents stated that Brand Image formed from Word of Mouth information can influence their Purchase Decisions. However, the remaining respondents stated that they did not feel such an influence. This indicates that the expected mediating effect does not occur consistently across all respondents. Therefore, Brand Image is not proven to be a significant mediator regarding the link between Word of Mouth and Purchase Decisions. These findings are further reinforced by earlier studies conducted by (Kurniawati et al., 2022). In this study, Brand Image formed from Word of Mouth was not proven to significantly mediate the relationship. This indicates that information received by consumers through Word of Mouth is not necessarily strong or consistent in forming perceptions of the brand that drive purchasing decisions. Thus, Hypothesis 6 **No Mediation**.

(7) *Hypothesis 7 – Green Product Innovation > Brand Image > Purchase Decision*

The results of the study indicate that the Green Product Innovation variable does not influence purchasing decisions through brand image, with a t-statistic value  $< 1.96$  and a p-value  $> 0.05$ , thus H7 positive is not significant. Based on the questionnaire results, most respondents stated that Green Product Innovation is considered important, and most respondents also understand products that prioritize environmental sustainability. Based on field observations, one respondent stated, "If Xiaomi develops green product innovations, it will enhance Xiaomi's positive image in the eyes of consumers and the public." From the above statement, although they consider Green Product Innovation important, it does not effectively shape a brand image that encourages them to make a purchase. Therefore, it can be concluded that although green innovation is theoretically expected to enhance positive perceptions of the brand, this study does not provide evidence supporting Brand Image as a significant mediator in the Purchase Decision-Making process. The results of this study contradict the findings of (Mumpuni et al., 2023), which generally investigate how Green Products affect Purchase Decisions, with Brand Image serving as a mediating factor, without distinguishing the innovation dimension. However, in practice, Green Product Innovation is an advanced form of Green Products that emphasizes the creative and sustainable development of environmentally friendly features. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 **No Mediation**.

## CONCLUSION

- (1) Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on the Brand Image of Xiaomi users in Samarinda City. The novelty of this study presents a new perspective by placing Word of Mouth as an initial determinant in the formation of Brand Image, not only as a direct trigger for Purchase Decisions as commonly found in previous studies.
- (2) Green Product Innovation has a positive and significant effect on the brand image of Xiaomi users in Samarinda City. The novelty of this study lies in the use of the Green Product Innovation variable as a company approach to strengthening brand image through the perception of green product sustainability built in the eyes of consumers.
- (3) Brand image has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Xiaomi users in Samarinda. The novelty of this study lies in testing the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions in developing cities such as Samarinda, which have not been widely studied in relation to Xiaomi smartphone products.
- (4) Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Xiaomi users in Samarinda. This study found that word of mouth remains relevant and trusted in influencing purchasing decisions, even as e-WOM variables continue to evolve. The novelty lies in the emphasis that consumers place greater trust in information from close acquaintances while still filtering it through public opinion on social media, ultimately leading consumers to make purchasing decisions in a more conscious and selective manner.
- (5) Brand image has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of Xiaomi users in Samarinda. The novelty of this research lies in the context of Xiaomi smartphone users, where consumers not only consider price and features, but are also influenced by perceptions of quality and brand value formed through user communities and consistent branding strategies, thereby strengthening purchasing decisions.
- (6) Word of Mouth has no effect or No Mediation on Purchasing Decisions through Brand Image as a mediating variable for Xiaomi users in Samarinda City. This indicates that although Word of Mouth can shape Brand Image, its influence is not strong enough to indirectly drive Purchasing Decisions through brand image, especially for technology products such as smartphones. This indicates that the role of Brand Image as a mediator is beginning to weaken in situations where trust in information sources becomes the primary factor.
- (7) Green Product Innovation does not influence purchasing decisions through brand image as a mediating variable for Xiaomi users in Samarinda City. These findings indicate that

Green Product Innovation has not been able to exert a significant influence on the formation of brand image, which in turn affects purchasing decisions. Unlike previous studies that focused on Green Products, this result emphasizes that without proper education and communication of innovation values, consumers do not yet view Green Product Innovation as an important factor in shaping their perception of the brand.

### *Recommendation*

#### (1) For Companies

The research results show that Word of Mouth and Green Product Innovation do not indirectly influence purchasing decisions through Brand Image, indicating that Brand Image is not yet effective as a mediator. This suggests that consumer information and environmentally friendly innovations have not yet fully shaped a strong brand image. Companies are advised to activate forums such as Mi Community and expand digital interactions that allow consumers to share experiences, testimonials, and education related to product innovation and the company's environmental commitments, thereby forming an authentic and influential brand image in Purchase Decisions.

#### (2) For future researchers

It is also recommended that future research focus more on identifying and analyzing companies that have implemented environmental sustainability programs. Researchers can explore how these programs are designed and implemented, as well as their impact on brand image and consumer decisions. By comparing sustainability practices between companies, future research is expected to provide a broader picture of trends and the effectiveness of environmentally-based business strategies in various industrial sectors.

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