

The Influence of Health Consciousness, Social Media Marketing, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on Purchase Intention through Attitude towards Stevia Natural Sweetener Products

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Abstract

Keywords:

health consciousness; social media marketing; electronic word-of-mouth; attitude; purchase intention

The increasing prevalence of metabolic diseases and the imbalance between sugar production and consumption in Indonesia have intensified interest in alternative sweeteners, particularly Stevia. This study examines the effects of health consciousness, social media marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on consumers' purchase intention toward Stevia products, with attitude functioning as a mediating variable. A quantitative research design was employed using a survey of 250 urban consumers in Jakarta who were familiar with Stevia and actively engaged in social media. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchase intention, both directly and indirectly. Attitude is identified as the strongest predictor of purchase intention and serves as a significant partial mediator across all examined relationships. The structural model demonstrates moderate explanatory and predictive power, indicating its robustness. These results support the Theory of Planned Behavior in the context of functional food consumption and suggest that purchase intention toward Stevia products is primarily driven by positive attitudinal formation rather than promotional exposure alone. The study implies that marketing strategies for alternative sweeteners should emphasize health education, credible social media engagement, and authentic peer communication to enhance consumer attitudes, thereby contributing to public health improvement and national food security.

INTRODUCTION

Increased global awareness of the risks of metabolic diseases such as obesity and diabetes due to excessive sugar consumption has driven significant changes in consumer behavior towards a healthier lifestyle. This phenomenon is reflected in the increasing demand for health-promoting food and beverage products, including low-sugar, functional, and natural products, especially in the post-pandemic era (Nguyen & Phan, 2022). This trend is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, Good Health and Well-Being, which emphasizes the importance of preventing non-communicable diseases through healthy and sustainable consumption patterns. One implication of this shift is the growing interest in healthier alternative sweeteners compared to conventional sugar, such as Stevia, which has long been adopted in developed countries such as Japan and South Korea (Khilar et al., 2022).

Stevia is a natural sweetener derived from *Stevia rebaudiana* leaf extract. It is 200–300 times sweeter than sugar, low in calories, and safe for consumption by people with diabetes and obesity (Jahangir Chughtai et al., 2020; Khilar et al., 2022). Stevia's stability to temperature and pH makes it versatile for use in a variety of processed food and beverage products. Numerous studies and international regulatory agencies have also confirmed that Stevia is safe for consumption and has the potential to help control blood sugar and body weight (Jahangir Chughtai et al., 2020). With these characteristics, Stevia has the potential to be a strategic solution that not only addresses consumer needs for healthy sweeteners but also supports national food security.

In the Indonesian context, the urgency of developing alternative sweeteners is increasing due to the imbalance between national sugar production and consumption. Amaliya et al. (2025) projected that Indonesian sugar production in 2025 would only reach 2.72 million tons, while national consumption is estimated at 8.45 million tons. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data from the National Sugar Summit (2023) also shows that national sugar consumption has increased significantly since 2013, while production tends to stagnate and decline. Dependence on sugar imports not only impacts price stability but also weakens national food security. In this situation, Stevia offers a strategic opportunity as an alternative sweetener that can reduce pressure on conventional sugar demand.

Several regions in Indonesia, such as Tawangmangu (Central Java) and Minahasa (North Sulawesi), have successfully cultivated Stevia with promising yields. In fact, Indonesia exported Stevia leaves to South Korea in 2021 (Directorate General of Customs and Excise, 2023), demonstrating the competitiveness of this commodity in the global market. However, the high export orientation actually indicates that domestic consumer demand and purchase intention for Stevia products remain relatively low.

Purchase intention represents a consumer's behavioral predisposition, reflecting a deliberative synthesis of internal evaluations, cognitive beliefs, and evaluative attitudes (Ajzen, 1991; Prakash et al., 2023). Functioning as a psychological conduit, this construct bridges the gap between latent perceptions and manifest consumption, where a heightened level of intentionality serves as a robust predictor of actual market transactions (Iqbal et al., 2021). Within the strategic marketing landscape, purchase intention constitutes a fundamental metric for evaluating the success of market entry and consumer adoption, especially for functional alternatives like Stevia, where shifting established consumption patterns is a primary objective.

Various studies have shown that purchase intention for healthy products is influenced by psychological and social factors, one of which is health consciousness. Health consciousness describes an individual's level of concern for health and their awareness in choosing products that support a healthy lifestyle (Iqbal et al., 2021; Su et al., 2022). Consumers with high levels of health consciousness tend to be more selective, actively seek nutritional information, and are open to more natural food innovations (Huang et al., 2022; Jung et al., 2020). However, empirical findings regarding the influence of health consciousness on purchase intention have been inconsistent. Jung et al. (2020) found a significant effect in the context of US consumers, while Huang et al. (2022) and Su et al. (2022) showed that purchase intention does not always increase without the support of other factors such as perceived benefits, taste, price, and attitude toward the product.

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media has transitioned from a supplementary tool to a foundational marketing communication conduit, exerting a profound influence on the architecture of consumer perception and behavioral patterns. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube facilitate bidirectional engagement, allowing firms to deploy social media marketing (SMM) strategies that are increasingly personalized and interactive (Chunyan & Cheng, 2024). Longitudinal data from Indonesia reveals a significant surge in social media penetration from 173.77 million users in 2019 to 228.76 million in 2023, with projections estimating a reach of 268.48 million by 2028 (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2024). This underscores the importance of social media marketing in shaping consumer awareness and purchase intention.

Despite the rapid growth of Stevia production potential and extensive social media usage in Indonesia, a disconnect persists between market availability and domestic consumer adoption. On-the-ground trends indicate a gap between high consumer digital activity and low visibility and awareness of Stevia products on social media. A pre-survey revealed that although the majority of consumers rely on social media as their primary source of information about healthy products, their knowledge and exposure to Stevia promotions remain very low. This suggests that existing social media marketing efforts within the Stevia industry have not been optimized.

Furthermore, while prior studies have examined the role of health consciousness and social media marketing independently in influencing purchase intention, empirical evidence remains fragmented and context-dependent, particularly in emerging markets such as Indonesia and for alternative sweetener products. This highlights the need for an integrated examination of these factors within the specific context of Stevia consumption.

In addition, recent empirical evidence from reputable journals further strengthens the relevance of examining purchase intention through an integrated behavioral framework. Saleh et al. (2025), in a study published in the *Journal of Applied Data Sciences*, demonstrated that consumer purchase intention toward innovative and sustainable products is shaped not only by technological and functional considerations but also by prior experience and attitudinal evaluation. Their findings emphasize that intention formation is a multidimensional process in which individual awareness, information exposure, and evaluative attitudes interact to influence consumer decision-making. This reinforces the argument that, similar to other emerging products such as electric vehicles, alternative sweeteners like Stevia require an integrated analytical approach that combines psychological factors and marketing stimuli to effectively explain consumer purchase intention.

Based on the identified gaps, this study seeks to investigate how health consciousness and social media marketing influence consumers' purchase intention toward Stevia products in Indonesia. The research objectives are: (1) to analyze the effect of health consciousness on purchase intention for Stevia products, (2) to examine the role of social media marketing in shaping purchase intention, and (3) to provide empirical evidence that supports the development of effective marketing strategies for alternative sweeteners.

The novelty of this research lies in its contextual focus on Stevia as an alternative sweetener in Indonesia, integrating psychological (health consciousness) and digital marketing (social media marketing) perspectives to explain purchase intention. This study contributes to the literature by

addressing inconsistencies in prior findings and offering practical insights for strengthening domestic market adoption of Stevia in support of public health and national food security goals.

METHODS

This study was conducted from August to December 2025, encompassing stages of instrument preparation, data collection and processing, as well as report writing. The research was carried out in the Jakarta Administrative City, which was selected due to its consumer characteristics, including high levels of health awareness, digital literacy, social media engagement, and openness to healthy food innovations (Agustina et al., 2024). The study covered five administrative cities Central, North, West, South, and East Jakarta excluding the Seribu Islands in accordance with Law No. 2 of 2024 Article 6. This area is considered representative of urban consumer behavior with high access to modern retail channels and digital information (NielsenIQ, 2025).

The research employed a quantitative approach using a survey method. Quantitative methodology was chosen as it allows for objective and measurable analysis of relationships among variables through statistical testing (Sugiyono, 2023). The study was designed to examine the influence of health consciousness, social media marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention for Stevia as a natural sweetener, with consumer attitude acting as a mediating variable. This structural approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive consumer decision-making within the functional food sector.

The population of this study consisted of potential consumers residing in Jakarta. A purposive sampling technique within a non-probability sampling framework was applied to ensure that respondents met specific inclusion criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2023). The criteria included individuals who resided in Jakarta, were at least 17 years old, were aware of or had seen Stevia products, actively used social media within the past three months, and had been exposed to Stevia-related marketing content. These criteria were established to maintain the validity and contextual relevance of the data, considering that purchase intention is shaped by prior exposure and information experience (Agustina et al., 2024; F. Li et al., 2021). In determining sample size, the study followed the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2021), which recommend a ratio of 5 to 10 observations per indicator. With 30 indicators included in the model, a sample size between 150 and 300 respondents was deemed appropriate. To meet the requirements of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and ensure adequate statistical power, a minimum of 200 respondents was targeted (Bentler & Chou, 1987; Hair et al., 2014; Kline, 2023). Accordingly, this study collected data from 250 respondents to anticipate potential invalid responses.

Primary data were collected using a structured digital questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed to measure the independent variables (health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM), the mediating variable (attitude), and the dependent variable (purchase intention). The online survey method was chosen for its efficiency in reaching respondents within the Special Capital Region of Jakarta and its suitability for respondents who are active social media users.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4.0. This analytical technique was selected due to its ability to handle complex models with multiple latent variables and its flexibility regarding data distribution assumptions, making it appropriate for predictive-oriented research (Ghozali & Kusumadewi, 2023). The analysis consisted of two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model and assessment of the structural model. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio with a threshold of less than 0.90, while construct reliability and multicollinearity were examined through composite reliability values greater than 0.70 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 5, respectively (Hair et al., 2021). Structural model evaluation employed R^2 , Q^2 , and f^2 values to assess predictive relevance and effect sizes, with model fit evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) criterion below 0.10.

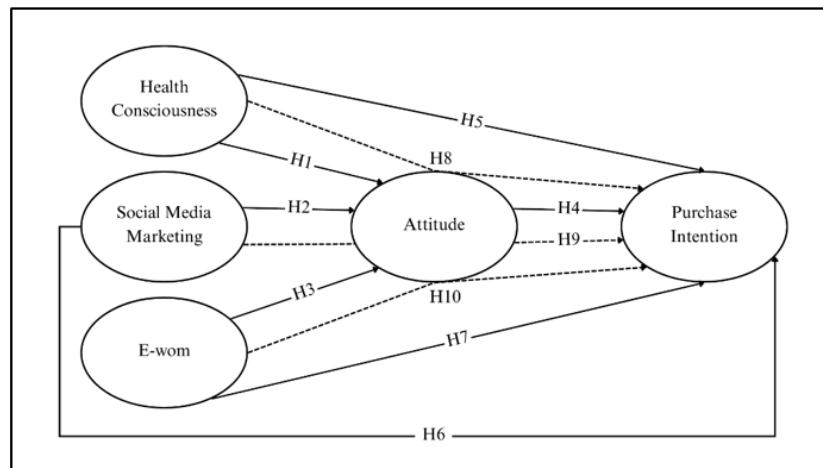
Hypothesis testing and inferential analysis were performed using a bootstrapping procedure, applying a significance level of t-values greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2022). In addition to testing direct relationships, the mediating role of attitude was examined following the mediation analysis procedures recommended for PLS-SEM by Hair et al. (2022).

Research Model

The research model was developed to examine the structural relationships among health consciousness, social media marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), attitude, and purchase intention toward Stevia products. Health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM are positioned as exogenous variables, while attitude functions as a mediating variable that links these antecedents to purchase intention as the endogenous variable. The model is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that behavioral intention is primarily shaped by attitudinal factors formed through individual beliefs, information exposure, and social influence. Accordingly, the proposed model hypothesizes that health consciousness, social media marketing,

and eWOM influence purchase intention both directly and indirectly through consumer attitude. The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model



Based on the theoretical review and previous research findings, this research proposes the following study hypotheses:

H1: Health Consciousness has a positive and significant effect on Attitude toward Stevia sweetener products.

H2: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Attitude toward Stevia sweetener products.

H3: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on Attitude toward Stevia sweetener products.

H4: Attitude has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Stevia sweetener products.

H5: Health Consciousness has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Stevia sweetener products.

H6: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Stevia sweetener products.

H7: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention for Stevia sweetener products.

H8: Health Consciousness has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention through Attitude toward Stevia sweetener products.

H9: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention through Attitude toward Stevia sweetener products.

H10: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention through Attitude toward Stevia sweetener products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Reliability testing based on Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
<i>Attitude</i>	0.94	0.941	0.954
<i>Health consciousness</i>	0.843	0.867	0.888
<i>Purchase intention</i>	0.934	0.935	0.95
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	0.896	0.91	0.923
<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth</i>	0.914	0.917	0.936

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Empirical evidence presented in Table 1 validates the reliability of the study's constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values surpassing the 0.70 benchmark. Attitude had the highest value (CR = 0.954) and health consciousness the lowest, but remained reliable (CA = 0.843; CR = 0.888). Other variables, such as purchase intention, social media marketing, and e-WOM, also demonstrated strong internal consistency, with values approaching 0.90, thus declaring the research instrument reliable and worthy of proceeding to the next stage of analysis. Consequently, the model is free from multicollinearity issues, allowing for a stable estimation of the relationships between health consciousness, social media marketing, eWOM, and consumer attitudes.

Table 2. VIF Multicollinearity Test

	<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Purchase intention</i>
<i>Attitude</i>		2.005
<i>Health consciousness</i>	1.166	1.426
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	1.11	1.305
<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth</i>	1.121	1.322

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Multicollinearity assessment yielded VIF values within the acceptable range (< 5.00), spanning from 1.110 to 2.005. Such findings demonstrate that the independent variables are not highly correlated, ensuring that each construct contributes unique variance to the model. Having met these instrument quality criteria, the analysis progressed to the inner model evaluation to examine the hypothesized causal relationships.

Table 3. R-Square

	R-square
<i>Attitude</i>	0.501
<i>Purchase intention</i>	0.610

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

The structural model assessment reveals R^2 values of 0.501 for attitude and 0.610 for purchase intention. These figures imply that the antecedent variables successfully explain 50.1% and 61.0% of the fluctuations in their respective target constructs. In accordance with Hair et al. (2021), both coefficients represent a moderate level of explanatory power. This suggests that while the current predictors are robust, a significant portion of the variance 39.0% for purchase intention is derived from unobserved variables outside the scope of this research

Table 4. Q-Square

	Q^2 predict
<i>Attitude</i>	0.479
<i>Purchase intention</i>	0.481

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

The predictive relevance of the model was further evaluated using the Stone-Geisser criterion (Q^2), as detailed in Table 4. The Q^2 values for attitude and purchase intention were 0.479 and 0.481, respectively. Falling within the 0.25–0.50 range, these results denote moderate predictive relevance. Furthermore, as these values approach the 0.50 threshold, they signify that the structural model possesses a robust capacity for reconstructing observed data, thereby validating its predictive accuracy, so that the variables of health consciousness, social media marketing, and e-WOM not only explain the variance statistically, but also have adequate predictive accuracy on the attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers of natural sweetener Stevia products.

Table 5. f-Square

	<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Purchase intention</i>
<i>Attitude</i>		0.27
<i>Health consciousness</i>	0.222	0.027
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	0.175	0.092
<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth</i>	0.179	0.078

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Based on Table 5, the formation of consumer attitudes towards Stevia products is most strongly influenced by health consciousness ($f^2 = 0.222$; medium category), which indicates that health awareness is the main foundation of a positive attitude, while e-WOM ($f^2 = 0.179$) and

social media marketing ($f^2 = 0.175$) provide a balanced contribution as supporting external factors. Furthermore, in purchase intention, attitude is the most dominant determinant ($f^2 = 0.270$; medium category), far exceeding the direct influence of social media marketing ($f^2 = 0.092$), e-WOM ($f^2 = 0.078$), and health consciousness ($f^2 = 0.027$) which are classified as weak. This finding indicates that consumer purchasing interest is not formed directly through promotion or health awareness alone, but rather through the process of forming a positive attitude first, so that Stevia marketing strategies are more effective directed at strengthening attitudes than a hard selling approach.

Table 6. Model Fit

	<i>Saturated model</i>
SRMR	0.051
d_ULS	0.835
d_G	0.421
Chi-square	627.762
NFI	0.875

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Model fit diagnostics revealed an SRMR of 0.051, surpassing the 0.10 benchmark and indicating an acceptable fit between the hypothesized model and the empirical data. With a Chi-square of 627.762 and an NFI of 0.875, the results validate the model's overall soundness. Consequently, the conceptual framework meets the requisite quality standards for examining the structural paths and causal linkages between variables.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing: Path Coefficients & Significance of Effect

	<i>Original sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P values</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>Health consciousness -> Attitude</i>	0.36	0.366	0.043	8.271	0.000	Accepted
<i>Health consciousness -> Purchase intention</i>	0.123	0.125	0.054	2.285	0.022	Accepted
<i>Social Media Marketing -> Attitude</i>	0.312	0.316	0.044	7.06	0.000	Accepted
<i>Social Media Marketing -> Purchase intention</i>	0.216	0.219	0.044	4.869	0.000	Accepted
<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Attitude</i>	0.317	0.316	0.042	7.564	0.000	Accepted
<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Purchase intention</i>	0.201	0.202	0.053	3.758	0.000	Accepted
<i>Attitude -> Purchase intention</i>	0.46	0.455	0.052	8.924	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Empirical evidence from the structural model supports all hypothesized paths. Notably, the data reveals that attitude is the primary driver of purchase intention, yielding the highest path coefficient ($\beta = 0.460$). The precursors to attitude, health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM, all demonstrated robust significance with t-statistics well above the 1.96 threshold. While these antecedents also directly propel purchase intention, their impact is partially channeled through the formation of positive consumer attitudes. This underscores the dual role of digital communication and health awareness in the decision-making process for functional food alternatives like Stevia

Table 8. Indirect Effect/Mediation Test

	<i>Original sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P values</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>Health consciousness -> Attitude -> Purchase intention</i>	0.165	0.167	0.028	5.816	0.000	Accepted (Partial Mediation)
<i>Social Media Marketing -> Attitude -> Purchase intention</i>	0.143	0.144	0.025	5.672	0.000	Accepted (Partial Mediation)
<i>Electronic Word-of- Mouth -> Attitude -> Purchase intention</i>	0.146	0.144	0.025	5.825	0.000	Accepted (Partial Mediation)

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

The results of the mediation analysis, as detailed in Table 8, confirm that attitude serves as a significant positive mediator in the relationships between the independent constructs and purchase intention. Specifically, attitude significantly mediates the effects of health consciousness ($\beta = 0.165$; $t = 5.816$), social media marketing ($\beta = 0.143$; $t = 5.672$), and eWOM ($\beta = 0.146$; $t = 5.825$) on the target variable ($p < 0.05$), thereby providing empirical support for H8, H9, and H10. Given that the direct paths from these antecedents to purchase intention remain statistically significant, the mediating role of attitude is classified as complementary partial mediation. This suggests that while attitude is a crucial mechanism, it does not exhaustively account for the total influence of health factors and digital stimuli on consumer intentions. This finding confirms that positive consumer attitudes are a key mediator that bridges and strengthens the influence of health awareness and digital marketing in encouraging purchase interest in Stevia natural sweetener products.

Overall, the empirical findings across Tables 1 to 8 provide strong theoretical confirmation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the most relevant and integrative framework for explaining consumer purchase intention toward Stevia products. TPB posits that behavioral intention is primarily driven by attitude, which is formed through underlying beliefs shaped by personal values and external information sources (Ajzen, 1991). In the present study, health consciousness represents an internal value-based belief, while social media marketing and electronic word-of-mouth function as external informational and social influence factors, all of which significantly contribute to the formation of consumer attitudes.

The dominant effect of attitude on purchase intention, evidenced by the highest path coefficient and effect size, as well as its significant mediating role, reflects the core causal

mechanism proposed in TPB, whereby antecedent beliefs influence intention predominantly through attitude formation rather than direct pathways alone. This pattern is fully aligned with the findings of Sadat and Lin (2020), who demonstrated that attitude acts as a central explanatory construct in TPB-based models and must be supported by strong measurement reliability, structural validity, and predictive relevance. Accordingly, the results of this study not only validate TPB within the context of functional food consumption, but also extend its applicability by incorporating health awareness and digital communication channels as salient background factors in contemporary consumer decision-making.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Key Findings

The results indicate that the developed research model met all statistical test eligibility criteria, both in terms of instrument quality and structural model fit. All latent constructs were declared valid and reliable, and no indication of multicollinearity was found between constructs, thus confirming the model's suitability for testing the hypothesized causal relationships. Empirical findings demonstrate that the model possesses adequate explanatory and predictive capabilities. Specifically, the R^2 values of 0.501 for attitude and 0.610 for purchase intention indicate that the hypothesized antecedents explain a moderate proportion of the constructs' variance (Hair et al., 2021). The robustness of the model is underscored by Q^2 values that confirm moderate predictive relevance, alongside an SRMR of 0.051. As the SRMR value is significantly lower than the maximum threshold of 0.10, the model exhibits a good fit, ensuring that the theoretical framework aligns closely with the observed data.

Empirical results confirm that health consciousness significantly bolsters positive attitudes toward Stevia, reinforcing the notion that health-centric motivations are vital in consumer decision-making (Abdillah et al., 2025; Haro, 2015). Interestingly, while Haro (2015) supports the general importance of health evaluation, the results of this study contradict his specific conclusion regarding non-food items. Haro (2015) reported a non-significant relationship between health consciousness and attitudes toward organic shampoos, whereas this research demonstrates a robust association within the natural sweetener category. Such a contrast indicates that consumer health-driven attitudes are likely product-category specific, with a stronger resonance in the functional food sector. In his study, he explained that this insignificant difference occurred because consumers tended to associate health awareness more closely with products consumed internally (food/drinks) and physical activity, compared to external care products such as shampoo. This difference in results actually strengthens the relevance of this research context. Because Stevia is a food product that is consumed directly, it is natural that health consciousness is a very significant determining factor in shaping consumer attitudes, unlike personal care products. This confirms that in the healthy food product category (such as Stevia), health motives are a much stronger primary evaluation basis than in the non-food product category. The analysis also confirms that social media marketing and eWOM are significant antecedents of attitude formation. This underscores the dual role of firm-created content and user-generated narratives in providing the informational cues necessary for consumer evaluation. Beyond mere information dissemination, these digital interactions offer a form of social proof, where the experiences of others validate the benefits of Stevia, thereby strengthening positive attitudes. Consequently, the synergy between strategic digital branding and organic social conversations becomes a powerful determinant in influencing how consumers perceive and value natural sweeteners (Pop et al., 2020; Phan et al., 2023; Bajat et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence reveals that attitude serves as the most potent predictor of purchase intention, overshadowing other exogenous constructs in the model. This finding strongly resonates with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which postulates that a favorable evaluation of a behavior is the foundational precursor to behavioral intention. These

results further corroborate a growing body of literature highlighting positive attitude as the quintessential driver of consumer interest in health-oriented products (Abdillah et al., 2025; Bajat et al., 2024; Haro, 2018). Notably, the universality of attitude's role in the Indonesian consumer landscape is underscored by Haro (2018); despite focusing on a distinct sector, halal cosmetics, that study similarly identified attitude as a significant determinant of purchase intention among the Muslim female demographic. Collectively, these findings reinforce the notion that regardless of the product category, attitudinal formation remains a critical threshold in the Indonesian consumer's path to purchase. The similarity in the pattern of results between that study and this study confirms that in the Indonesian consumer behavior landscape, personal evaluation factors (attitude) play a consistent key role within the TPB framework, regardless of the product type, as long as the product involves value considerations (such as health or religious values). Although health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM also have a significant direct influence on purchase intention, the magnitude of this influence is relatively smaller, indicating that these three variables play a more dominant role in shaping attitudes than directly triggering purchase decisions (Escobar-Farfán et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024).

In accordance with the mediation framework of Hair et al. (2021), this study identifies attitude as a partial mediator of the effects of health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM on purchase intention. The presence of significant direct and indirect effects across all exogenous constructs confirms that the mediation is partial in nature. This finding underscores that attitude acts as an important intermediary conduit; however, the direct influence of health-centric motivations and digital information remains potent. This dual-pathway mechanism highlights a complex decision-making process where consumers are influenced both by their underlying evaluations and by direct exposure to informational and motivational cues. These findings confirm that consumer purchase intention for Stevia products is shaped by two mechanisms: the direct influence of health awareness and digital marketing stimuli, and the indirect influence through an evaluative process that forms a positive attitude. Thus, attitude plays a key psychological role, bridging internal and external factors in driving consumer purchase intention. In summary, the findings of this research provide robust empirical support for the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within the functional food domain, specifically for natural sweeteners like Stevia. The results underscore that marketing strategies are most effective when they are meticulously designed to cultivate favorable consumer attitudes. Rather than relying solely on transactional direct-sales tactics, firms should prioritize educational marketing that enhances health literacy, strengthens the credibility of digital communication, and fosters positive perceptual shifts. Such an attitude-centric approach is demonstrated to be a more potent catalyst for driving behavioral intention than traditional marketing orientations.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The empirical results of this study identify attitude as the predominant determinant of purchase intention, while simultaneously functioning as a significant partial mediator. This finding provides robust support for the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework (Ajzen, 1991), which postulates that a favorable evaluative judgment is a foundational precursor to behavioral commitment. The observed significance is highly congruent with the findings of Zayed et al. (2022), Prakash et al. (2023), and Nguyen et al. (2024), who consistently identify attitude as a superior predictor of purchase interest compared to other exogenous constructs. Collectively, these results underscore that in the context of health-conscious consumption, purchase intention is not an impulsive reaction but rather the culmination of a cognitive evaluative process.

Furthermore, by situating these dynamics within the specific context of the natural sweetener Stevia and the urban Indonesian demographic, this research extends the generalizability of the TPB. The findings emphasize that for functional food alternatives, fostering a positive psychological disposition is a non-negotiable prerequisite for stimulating market adoption. This suggests that consumer trust and positive perceptions must be meticulously cultivated through an

evaluative phase before behavioral intentions can manifest. Consequently, this study reinforces the argument that attitudinal formation remains the primary gateway to understanding consumer behavior in the healthy food sector.

The study further demonstrates that health consciousness significantly influences both attitude and purchase intention through direct and indirect pathways. This finding is congruent with research by Iqbal et al. (2021) and Escobar-Farfán et al. (2025), which identifies health awareness as a pivotal driver of consumer interest in functional products. However, these results stand in contrast to the findings of Zayed et al. (2022) and Abdillah et al. (2025), who observed non-significant or even adverse effects of health consciousness on intention. Such discrepancies suggest that the "health-to-action" mechanism is highly contingent upon cultural nuances, health literacy levels, and specific product attributes. In the case of Stevia, its tangible benefits as a low-calorie sugar substitute likely facilitate a more seamless translation of health awareness into favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions compared to other organic categories.

In the realm of digital marketing, the significant impact of social media marketing and eWOM on consumer dispositions aligns with the frameworks established by Pop et al. (2020) and An & Ngo (2025). These findings emphasize that social media serves as a multifaceted instrument for education, persuasion, and perception formation rather than a mere promotional channel. Consistent with Phan et al. (2023), the data suggests that digital information must first cultivate a positive attitudinal shift before it can effectively catalyze purchase intentions. By providing social proof and credible informational cues, these digital stimuli reduce perceived risks and validate the natural health values sought by consumers, thereby reinforcing the structural relationships within the model.

The empirical evidence from this study demonstrates that electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) serves as a significant antecedent to both attitudes and purchase intentions, exerting its influence through both direct and indirect pathways. These findings are congruent with the research of Kunja et al. (2022) and An & Ngo (2025), who positioned peer-generated discourse as a central driver of behavioral intent among younger demographics. However, a notable academic divergence is observed when compared to the studies of Zayed et al. (2022) and Phan et al. (2023), who identified no direct correlation between eWOM and intention. This discrepancy implies that the efficacy of eWOM is not universal; rather, it is likely moderated by the degree of consumer trust in digital narratives and the intensity of social media consumption within a specific market.

The capacity of social media marketing to convert latent interest into active purchasing decisions for health-centric products is increasingly driven by interaction quality and trend relevance. As postulated by An & Ngo (2025), personalized and up-to-date content functions as a validation mechanism for the intrinsic health values sought by consumers. In the Indonesian context, this intensive digital exposure has emerged as a robust predictor of behavioral intentions across diverse industry boundaries. This relationship is empirically substantiated by Syifa Nadiastuti et al. (2025) in the tourism sector, confirming that digital stimuli possess a profound conative driving force that effectively propels consumers from the stage of awareness to the point of acquisition.

Based on the mediation analysis, attitude is identified as a significant partial mediator that intercedes the influence of health consciousness, social media marketing, and eWOM on purchase intention. This result is highly congruent with the frameworks established by Nguyen et al. (2021) and Phan et al. (2023), which characterize attitude as a pivotal psychological conduit that harmonizes internal motivations and external stimuli to formulate behavioral intent. Consequently, this study substantiates the premise that the efficacy of healthy product marketing is not merely a function of promotional frequency or exposure intensity; rather, it fundamentally depends on the strategic cultivation of favorable evaluative dispositions within the consumer's mindset.

CONCLUSION

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence on the determinants of consumer purchase intention toward Stevia natural sweetener products in Indonesia by integrating health consciousness, social media marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. Overall, the findings demonstrate that all examined antecedent variables significantly influence purchase intention, both directly and indirectly, with consumer attitude emerging as the most dominant predictor. This confirms that purchase intention for functional food products such as Stevia is primarily shaped through an evaluative cognitive process, where favorable attitudes act as the central mechanism translating personal values and external information into behavioral intention.

Health consciousness was found to play a crucial role in shaping positive consumer attitudes and, to a lesser extent, directly stimulating purchase intention. This indicates that Stevia is perceived as highly relevant to health-oriented motivations, particularly in an urban consumer context characterized by rising awareness of metabolic diseases and healthy lifestyles. The results suggest that for food products consumed internally, health considerations constitute a core evaluative basis, making health consciousness a fundamental driver of attitude formation rather than merely a supporting factor.

Furthermore, the significant effects of social media marketing and eWOM highlight the strategic importance of digital communication in influencing consumer perceptions and intentions. Firm-generated social media content and peer-generated online reviews both function as critical informational and social cues that reduce uncertainty, build credibility, and reinforce perceived health benefits. However, their strongest influence operates through attitude formation rather than direct persuasion, indicating that digital exposure alone is insufficient unless it successfully cultivates positive consumer evaluations.

The mediation analysis confirms that attitude serves as a complementary partial mediator in the relationships between health consciousness, social media marketing, eWOM, and purchase intention. This finding reinforces the core proposition of TPB that behavioral intention is predominantly driven by attitude, while also acknowledging that direct effects from health awareness and digital stimuli remain relevant. The results collectively extend the application of TPB to the context of alternative sweeteners in an emerging market and demonstrate the model's robustness in explaining consumer decision-making for functional food products.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that marketing strategies for Stevia should prioritize attitude-building approaches rather than relying solely on promotional intensity or price-based tactics. Educational campaigns emphasizing health benefits, transparent and credible social media engagement, and the encouragement of authentic consumer reviews are likely to be more effective in stimulating purchase intention. Such strategies not only support market adoption but also align with broader public health objectives and national food security goals.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. The model focused on a limited set of psychological and digital marketing variables and did not incorporate economic or sensory factors such as price perception, taste, product availability, or perceived risk, which may further explain consumer behavior. Additionally, the sample was confined to urban consumers in Jakarta, limiting the generalizability of the findings to rural areas or other regions in Indonesia. The study also measured purchase intention rather than actual purchasing behavior and did not differentiate between specific social media platforms.

Future studies are therefore encouraged to expand the model by including economic, sensory, and trust-related variables, as well as to apply longitudinal or experimental research designs to better capture actual consumer behavior over time. Broader geographical coverage and comparative

studies across demographic segments would also enhance generalizability. Moreover, platform-specific analyses of social media marketing and eWOM could provide deeper insights into how different digital environments shape attitudes and purchase intention toward functional food products such as Stevia.

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