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WORD OF MOUTH AND PERSONAL SELLING TO INCREASE PURCHASE DECISION OF READYMIX CONCRETE PRODUCTS THROUGH COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND CORPORATE TRUST

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ABSTRAK

This research integrates two marketing approaches that are often considered separately, word of mouth (WOM) and personal selling, to explore their influence on purchase decision in the context of concrete products. This study offers new insights into the synergy of these two strategies in influencing purchase decisions by considering the role of corporate trust and competitive advantage as mediator variables. Corporate trust serves as a link between the impact of WOM and personal selling on purchase decision, while competitive advantage allows companies to offer products that are superior to their competitors. This analysis uses a quantitative method with causal explanatory. The customers of the Gresik branch of PT Varia Usaha Beton were selected as the sample in this survey, who made cash purchases of ready-mixed concrete products in July-September 2024. Obtained as many as 103 respondents, selected using a purposive sampling using the Slovin method. The findings revealed the following that *word of mouth* significantly affects *competitive advantage*, *personal selling* also significantly affects *competitive advantage*. Additionally, *word of mouth* has been shown to have a significant influence on *corporate trust*, while *personal selling* significantly influences *corporate trust* as well. Moreover, *word of mouth* and corporate trust significantly impacts *purchase decisions*, but *personal selling*, and *competitive advantage* do not have a considerable impact on *purchase decisions* related to readymix concrete products at PT. Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Kata kunci : *word of mouth, personal selling, competitive advantage, corporate trust, purchase decision*

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly fierce business competition encourages every company to continue to strive to maintain and develop its business. Various steps are taken by companies to build trust in the brand and form a positive experience in the eyes of consumers. To strengthen this, companies need to provide quality products and services, have a competitive advantage over competitors, prioritize positive customer (Mashuri et al., 2024).

Companies need to possess the ability to endure and navigate intense competition by leveraging sustainable competitive advantages to maintain superiority in the global market over their competitors, prioritize positive customer experiences, sales force reliability, and ease of access to purchases. These efforts will help companies build a strong brand identity, reputation and relationship with customers. (Shabrina et al., 2023). This competitive rivalry directly affects consumer purchase decisions by encouraging companies to offer products and services that have a competitive advantage.

Consumers are becoming more selective and careful in choosing a concrete provider by not only considering basic aspects such as price and product quality, but also paying attention to various advantage factors offered by each provider. Such as the influence of word of mouth (WOM), namely recommendations and reviews from other users in shaping consumer perceptions of reputation, credibility in the form of non-commercial communication about products, brands, or organizations. Consumers tend to be more willing to share information about their experiences when they feel there is an opportunity to share with the closest people they trust (Yuan & Peluso,

2021).

This study aims to examine the impact of word of mouth and personal selling generated on competitive advantage. and corporate trust and impact toward the purchase decision of readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. The research focus includes the extent to which word of mouth and personal selling influence competetive advantage, build consumer trust, and influence purchasing decisions for readymix concrete products, as well as the extent to which competitive advantage and corporate trust have an impact on these decisions.

This research is supposed to make a significant advancement to scientific development, especially in understanding marketing management analysis by emphasizing the influence of variables such as word of mouth, personal selling, competitive advantage, corporate trust, and purchase decision. The consequence of this exploration are anticipated to offer substantial insights to both practitioners and scholars for the development of more efficient marketing strategies. Furthermore, from a practical standpoint, this research aims to give companies a comprehensive understanding to support decision-making processes aimed at enhancing the factors that shape consumer purchase decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kotler and Keller (2016: 27), "*marketing management is described as the technique and knowledge of selecting target markets, attracting and maintaining customers, and driving customer growth by delivering, creating, and communicating superior value"*. It plays a crucial role in understanding and influencing consumer behavior by implementing strategic approaches, such as marketing communications, market segmentation, and adjustments to products or services, to align with consumer needs, preferences, and motivations throughout the purchasing decision-making journey.

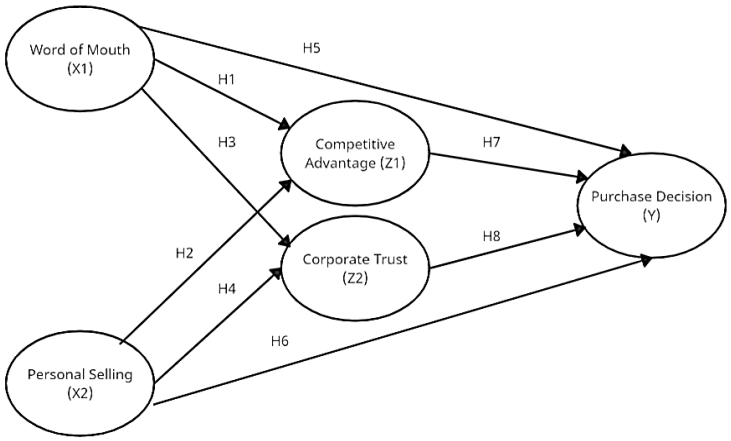
Consumer behavior refers to the dynamic interplay between external influences, thought processes, actions, and the events surrounding individuals as they navigate various aspects of their lives. Several factors shape consumer behavior, with *word of mouth (WOM)* and *personal selling* being among the key influencers. Word of mouth command a key role in shaping consumer perceptions and beliefs through recommendations and reviews from others, which often influence purchasing preferences and decisions. Word of mouth (WOM) is an interpersonal communication that occurs informally between individuals, where people share information, experiences and opinions about products or services. (Sun et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, personal selling provides direct interaction between the company and potential customers, which allows the delivery of more in-depth information and builds strong relationships with consumers. According to Nashih (2017:5) in (Julitawaty et al., 2020), Personal selling is defined as in-person communication that occurs in direct contact with the aim of establishing, strengthening, maintaining, or managing mutually beneficial exchange relationships. This approach is instrumental in building trust, establishing a competitive advantage, and shaping consumer behavior, thereby playing a key role in the decision-making process for purchases.

Excellence is organization's proficiency to provide stronger value differentiation from competitors. Providing more value that is considered important by customers (Makalew et al., 2016). A competitive advantage arises when a company delivers superior value to its customers that goes beyond the costs incurred to create it. This allows the company to stand out in the market by offering unique benefits that competitors struggle to match. (Sunyoto & Saksono, 2022). Value represents the worth that buyers are willing to pay for a product or service. To attain a cost advantage, a company must be positioned as the lowest-cost producer within its industry. (Budiarti, 2018). Trust is essential in building and maintaining relationships, particularly in service-oriented industries characterized by uncertainty, risk, and limited information exchange among interconnected parties. (Halik, 2016). ccording to Kotler and Armstrong (2018: 102), purchasing decisions are described as the stage in

which consumers, during the evaluation process, develop preferences among the available brand options and may also establish an intention to purchase their most preferred choice. While according to. Agesti et al., (2021) a purchasing decision is the stage in which consumers evaluate multiple alternatives when deciding whether to buy or refrain from purchasing a particular good or service. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2016) in (Melindawaty & Istikomah, 2024). The indicators of purchasing decisions include: product choice, brand selection, choice of distribution channel, quantity of purchase, timing of purchase, and method of payment.

Conceptual Framework



Gambar 1 Conceptual Framework

The hypotheses explained and described in this study is outlined below::

Hypothesis 1: Word of mouth significantly influences the competitive advantage of readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Hypothesis 2: Personal selling significantly influences the competitive advantage of readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Hypothesis 3: Word of mouth significantly affects corporate trust in relation to readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Hypothesis 4: Personal selling significantly influences corporate trust in readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Hypothesis 5: Word of mouth significantly influences on purchase decisions regarding readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Hypothesis 6: Personal selling significantly impacts the purchase decisions of readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

Hypothesis 7: Competitive advantage significantly influences on the purchase decisions of readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

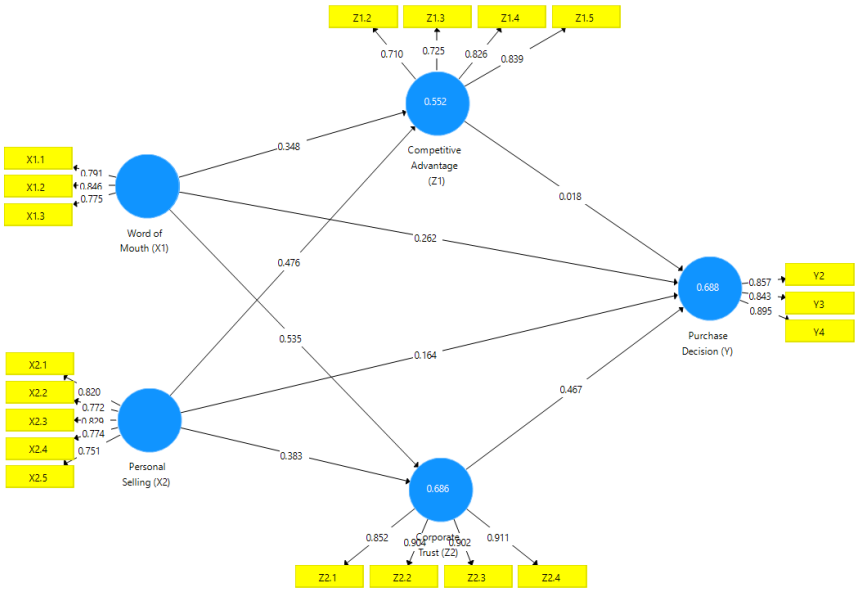
Hypothesis 8: Corporate trust significantly affects the purchase decisions of readymix concrete products at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a purposive sampling method for its sampling technique. The population of this study consists of all customers of PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik who had made cash purchases of readymix products in July - September 2024, namely 138 people. The formula used to determine the sample is using the Slovin formula. So that with a population (N) of 138 consumers and an error rate of 5%, this study surveyed 103

respondents as its chosen participants. The data collection method uses questionnaires distributed online and directly. Data was analyzed using several tests, namely validity test, reliability test and path analysis. Outer analysis of the measurement model includes convergent validity, discriminant validity, reliability and multicollinearity test. The entire data processing process was carried out using SmartPLS 3 software..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Gambar 2. Outer Loading Model

Testing the measurement model using factor loading aims to evaluate the validity of indicators through convergent validity analysis. Every indicator in the model must comply with the convergent validity requirement, with loading factor value above 0.7. From the output above, the outer loading table is produced as follows:

Tabel 1
Outer Loading Model 2

Variabel	Indikator	Outer Loading
Word of Mouth (X1)	X1.1	0.791
	X1.2	0.846
	X1.3	0.775
Personal Selling (X2)	X2.1	0.820
	X2.2	0.772
	X2.3	0.829
	X2.4	0.774
	X2.5	0.751
Competitive Advantage (Z1)	Z1.2	0.710
	Z1.3	0.725
	Z1.4	0.826
	Z1.5	0.839
Corporate Trust (Z2)	Z2.1	0.852
	Z2.2	0.904

	Z2.3	0.902
	Z2.4	0.911
Purchase Decision (Y)	Y2	0.857
	Y3	0.843
	Y4	0.895

source : data results by researchers.

Apart from the outer loading value parameter, the validity test also uses an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. An indicator is determined to align with good convergent validity criteria if it has an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of more than 0.5 (Chin & Todd, 1995).

Tabel 2

Average Varian Extracted (AVE)

	AVE value
Word of Mouth (X1)	0.647
Personal Selling (X2)	0.624
Competitive Advantage (Z1)	0.604
Corporate Trust (Z2)	0.796
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.749

source: Data results by researchers.

Data in the table above show Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.5, which means that each variable is able to explore further 50% of the variance of its indicators. Thus, all variables have met the convergent validity criteria and are valid for further analysis.

The discriminant validity test is conducted Fornell-Larcker and Cross Loading method with the following results

Tabel 3

Fornell-Larcker

	CA (Z1)	CT (Z2)	PS (X2)	PD (Y)	WOM (X1)
CA (Z1)	0.777				
CT (Z2)	0.760	0.892			
PS (X2)	0.691	0.713	0.790		
PD (Y)	0.654	0.799	0.671	0.865	
WOM (X1)	0.642	0.771	0.617	0.735	0.804

source: data results by researchers.

Tabel 4

Cross Loading

	WOM (X1)	**PS (X2)**	**CA (Z1)**	**CT (Z2)**	**PD (Y)**
X1.1	**0.791**	0.495	0.499	0.576	0.495
X1.2	**0.846**	0.561	0.529	0.688	0.698
X1.3	**0.775**	0.427	0.522	0.589	0.562
X2.1	0.391	**0.820**	0.471	0.495	0.439
X2.2	0.357	**0.772**	0.377	0.432	0.357
X2.3	0.587	**0.829**	0.653	0.729	0.649
X2.4	0.593	**0.774**	0.610	0.580	0.619
X2.5	0.424	**0.751**	0.529	0.491	0.488
Z1.2	0.417	0.434	**0.710**	0.510	0.483
Z1.3	0.461	0.496	**0.725**	0.494	0.427

Z1.4	0.505	0.571	**0.826**	0.654	0.559
Z1.5	0.596	0.626	**0.839**	0.681	0.554
Z2.1	0.627	0.632	0.642	**0.852**	0.670
Z2.2	0.667	0.603	0.731	**0.904**	0.729
Z2.3	0.738	0.642	0.662	**0.902**	0.725
Z2.4	0.717	0.668	0.678	**0.911**	0.728
Y2	0.644	0.607	0.570	0.693	**0.857**
Y3	0.618	0.549	0.545	0.657	**0.843**
Y4	0.646	0.585	0.582	0.723	**0.895**

source: data results by researchers.

The result table shows that the correlation values of each indicator with the research variables are as follows it forms has the largest Fornell-Larcker and Cross Loading values compared to the correlation value between indicators and other variables. Thus, the indicators in this study are indicative of good discriminant validity. This means that each indicator clearly distinguishes and represents its respective variable.

In the reliability test, the components used for assessing the reliability of a construct include composite reliability, rho_A and Cronbach's alpha. A good level of reliability is one that has a composite reliability value between 0.6 and 0.7 (Ghozali, 2021: 70), while the expected rho_A and Cronbach's alpha values should be more than 0.7 (Ghozali & Latan, 2015: 130).

Tabel 5
Composite Reliability dan *Cronbach's Alpha*

	Composite Reliability	**rho_A**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Word of Mouth	0.846	0.736	0.727
Personal Selling	0.892	0.867	0.851
Competitive Advantage	0.859	0.794	0.780
Corporate Trust	0.940	0.916	0.914
Purchase Decision	0.899	0.834	0.832

source: data results by researchers.

The data in Table 5 represent that each variables have a composite reliability greater than 0.6, with rho_A and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7. This indicates that the reliability criteria are met for each variable, confirming that all variables in this study are highly reliable.

The existence of a collinearity problem can be determined by looking at the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value. In line with the theory from Hair et al. (2014), data does not experience collinearity problems, if the VIF value is less than 5.

Tabel 6
Inner VIF

	Competitive Advantage (Z1)	**Corporate Trust (Z2)**	**Personal Selling (X2)**	**Purchase Decision (Y)**	**Word of Mouth (X1)**
Competitive Advantage (Z1)				2.672	
Corporate Trust (Z2)				3.811	
Personal Selling (X2)	1.616	1.616		2.308	
Purchase Decision (Y)					

Word of Mouth (X1)	1.616	1.616		2.548	

Source: Data results by researchers.

Based on Table 6, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value for each indicator as a whole shows results less than 5. So it can be supposed that the data has no collinearity problems.

The R-Square results for endogenous latent variables in the structural model indicate that the model has strong, medium, or weak quality, according to the assessment of Hair et al. (2014). indicate that the model has strong, medium, or weak quality, according to the assessment of Hair et al. (2014). According to Chin (1998), The R-Square value is considered strong if it is more than 0.67, moderate if it is in the range of 0.33 to 0.67, and weak if it is between 0.19 to 0.33.

Tabel 7

R-Square

Variabel Laten Endogen	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Competitive Advantage (Z1)	0.552	0.543
Corporate Trust (Z2)	0.686	0.680
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.688	0.675

Source: Data results by researchers.

In relation to the calculations contained in Table 7, the following results are obtained:

1. The purchase decision variable (Y) has an R-Square value of 0.688, indicates that the ability of exogenous variables (word of mouth, personal selling, competitive advantage and corporate trust) to explain endogenous variables (purchase decision) is 68.8% (strong). Meanwhile, the remaining 31.2% is the effect of additional exogenous variables not accounted.
2. The competitive advantage variable (Z1) has an R-Square value of 0.552, which indicates that competitive advantage as an endogenous Variable can be interpreted by 55.2.1% by the exogenous variables of word of mouth and personal selling. Meanwhile, as of 44.8% is affected by other variables not measured.
3. The corporate trust variable (Z2) has an R-Square value of 0.686, which indicates that competitive advantage as an endogenous variable can be explained by 68.6% by the exogenous variables of word of mouth and personal selling. Meanwhile, the remaining 31.4% is influenced by other exogenous variables not measured.

Tabel 8

Hypothesis Test Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Significance
Word of Mouth -> Competitive Advantage	0.348	0.368	0.130	2.676	0.004	Significant
Personal Selling -> Competitive Advantage	0.476	0.477	0.162	2.937	0.002	Significant
Word of Mouth -> Corporate Trust	0.535	0.540	0.079	6.787	0.000	Significant
Personal Selling -> Corporate	0.383	0.389	0.102	3.762	0.000	Significant

Trust						
Word of Mouth -> Purchase Decision	0.262	0.245	0.145	1.806	0.035	Significant
Personal Selling -> Purchase Decision	0.164	0.161	0.120	1.374	0.085	Not Significant
Competitive Advantage -> Purchase Decision	0.018	0.049	0.136	0.129	0.449	Not Significant
Corporate Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.467	0.455	0.148	3.149	0.001	Significant

source : data results by researchers.

The Effect of Word Of Mouth on Competitive Advantage at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results reveal that the original sample value is 0.348, suggesting a positive relationship between the two variables under investigation. This suggests that an increase in the *word of mouth* variable leads to an increase in the *competitive advantage* variable. Furthermore, the t-statistic value of 2.676 demonstrates that this relationship meets the significance threshold (t-statistic > 1.96). The significance level is 0.004 (P-value < 0.05) and emphasizes that its effect is statistically significant.

The Effect of Personal Selling on Competitive Advantage at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results indicate that the original sample value is 0.476, demonstrating a positive association between personal selling and competitive advantage. This suggests that an increase in personal selling activities contributes to enhancing the company's competitiveness. Moreover, the t-statistic value of 2.937 is above the critical threshold of 1.96, confirming that the relationship is statistically significant. The significance level is 0.002 (P-value < 0.05), offering additional support for the conclusion that this effect is statistically significant.

The Effect of Word Of Mouth on Corporate Trust at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results show that word of mouth has a significant influence on corporate trust. This can be seen from the original sample value of 0.535, which indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. With a t-statistics value of 6.787 that far exceeds the minimum standard of 1.96, this result confirms that the relationship is significant. In addition, the significance level of 0.000 (P-value <0.05) further strengthens the validity of the effect of word of mouth on corporate trust.

Effect of Personal Selling on Corporate Trust at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results reveal that the original sample value of 0.383 indicates a positive relationship between personal selling and corporate trust, with t-statistics of 3.762 which beyond the minimum limit of 1.96, and a significance level of 0.000 (P-value <0.05). This indicates that personal selling has a significant influence on corporate trust. This positive relationship suggests that the company's direct interaction with customers through personal selling strategies can enhance customer trust in the organization.

The Effect of Word Of Mouth on Purchase Decision at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results reveal that word of mouth has a positive and significant relationship with purchasing decisions. This is indicated by the original sample value of 0.262, which indicates that the better the word of mouth, the greater the influence on consumer purchasing decisions. The t-statistics

value of 1.806, which exceeds the threshold of 1.96, and the P-value of 0.035, which is smaller than 0.05, confirm that the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

Effect of Personal Selling on Purchase Decision at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results show that the original sample value for the relationship between the personal selling variable and purchase decision is 0.164, which indicates a positive relationship." However, the obtained t-statistics value of 1.374 does not meet the minimum standard of t-statistics required, which is greater than 1.96. In other words, t-statistics smaller than this value indicate that the influence between personal selling and purchasing decisions is not strong enough to be considered significant. In addition, with a significance level of 0.085 (P-value > 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship has no significance, as the P-value is greater than 0.05, which is the commonly used limit in hypothesis testing. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis in this study is rejected, which means that personal selling has no substantial effect on purchasing decisions in the company

The Effect of Competitive Advantage on Purchase Decision at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

The analysis results indicate that the original sample value is 0.018, suggesting a positive relationship between competitive advantage and purchase decision. However, the obtained t-statistic value is 0.129, which falls short of the required threshold of 1.96. Additionally, the significance value is 0.449 (P-value > 0.05), leading to the rejection of the seventh hypothesis. This implies that competitive advantage does not significantly impact purchasing decisions.

The Effect of Corporate Trust on Purchase Decision at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik

According to proceeds of the PLS analysis, the original sample value of 0.467 demonstrates a positive relationship between the corporate trust variable and purchase decision. The t-statistic value of 3.419 meets the standard threshold of t-statistic > 1.96, and the significance value of 0.001 (P-value < 0.05) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. This indicates that consumer trust in the company plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

The research found that:

1. The results have found a significantly influence for Word of Mouth on competitive advantage. at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. This implies that the circulation of good and satisfying word of mouth can reinforce the corporate's market position., provide more advantages than competitors, and increase attractiveness for new customers. Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) which suggests a positive relationship between WOM and competitive advantage is proven true and accepted.
2. The results have found a significantly influence for Personal selling on competitive advantage at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. Which means that a direct or personal sales approach by salespeople from PT Varia Usaha Beton can have a significant positive impact in building and maintaining a superior company position compared to competitors.
3. The results have found a significantly influence for Word of Mouth on corporate trust at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. This means that positive information spread through WOM can increase the level of customer trust in the company, which in turn can strengthen business relationships and increase customer loyalty. The more customers who recommend PT Varia Usaha Beton products or services positively, the higher the level of trust formed.
4. The results have found a significantly influence for Personal selling on corporate trust at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik.. This means that a direct or personal sales approach can build a stronger relationship between PT Varia Usaha Beton and customers which has an impact on increasing the level of customer trust.

5. The results have found a significantly influence for Word of Mouth on purchase decisions at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. This means that recommendations from other people who have used products from PT Varia Usaha Beton can encourage potential buyers to choose to purchase products.
6. Personal selling does not significantly influence purchase decisions at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik, which means that personal selling cannot have a significant effect on purchasing decisions. Although personal selling involves direct interaction between the seller and the customer, other factors may be more dominant in influencing purchasing decisions.
7. Competitive advantage does not significantly influence purchase decisions at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. This suggests that, despite the company's competitive advantages—such as offering better prices or superior products—other factors may play a more influential role in customers' purchasing decisions. These factors could include personal preferences, immediate needs, or other external considerations that are more pertinent to customers.
8. Corporate trust has been shown to have a significant impact on purchase decisions at PT Varia Usaha Beton in Gresik. This indicates that customers' level of trust in the company influences their decisions to purchase ready-mix concrete products. Customers trust PT Varia Usaha Beton highly, as they believe the products offered are of excellent quality and dependable for their construction needs.

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