

The Pathway from Integrated Marketing Communication to Brand Preference

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates how Integrated Marketing Communication shapes brand preference through the mediating roles of Brand Awareness and Brand Image within the ceiling and interior materials industry in Indonesia. Using survey data from 345 consumers and analysed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, the study demonstrates that Integrated Marketing Communication has significant positive effects on awareness, image, and preference. Brand Awareness and Brand Image also emerge as strong predictors of brand preference, indicating that both familiarity and favourable associations are central to consumer decision making. The results further reveal a sequential mediation pathway in which Integrated Marketing Communication enhances awareness, awareness strengthens image, and image ultimately drives preference. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the cognitive and evaluative processes linking communication strategy to consumer choice. The study offers practical insights for firms seeking to build brand equity in competitive markets.

Keywords: integrated marketing communication, brand awareness, brand image, brand preference, consumer decision making

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital media landscapes has compelled firms to adopt communication strategies that maintain coherence across diverse platforms (Dewayani & Loreño, 2025). Integrated marketing communication has become central to this effort because it unifies message content and timing to strengthen consumer understanding and memory retrieval. Scholars have noted that coordinated communication enhances the clarity and persuasiveness of brand messages, which ultimately increases the effectiveness of brand building activities (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). This is particularly important in sectors where consumers face overwhelming information and must rely on consistent cues to evaluate brands. Studies show that integrated communication can generate stronger brand awareness and more favourable brand image, both of which are foundational elements of brand equity (Marques Muniz et al., 2023; Tafesse & Wien, 2024). Despite these insights, firms continue to navigate challenges in translating communication investments into measurable consumer preference outcomes.

Research on integrated marketing communication has made significant progress, yet important gaps remain. Existing studies confirm that communication influences brand awareness and brand image (Febriyantoro, 2020), but many have examined these variables in isolation rather than tracing their combined or sequential effects on brand preference. For example, evidence shows that brand awareness increases the likelihood of brand retrieval and reduces perceived risk, while brand image shapes the emotional and symbolic meanings consumers attach to a brand (Gier et al., 2023; Hutter et al., 2025). However, relatively



few studies analyse whether integrated marketing communication directly influences brand preference or operates primarily through brand equity components. Likewise, the relationship between brand awareness and brand image has received less empirical attention, even though exposure driven familiarity is known to enhance brand evaluations in other consumer behaviour contexts (Min, 2022; So & Liu, 2023). These gaps constrain the field's ability to understand how communication strategies generate consumer loyalty and preference in increasingly competitive markets.

The purpose of this study is to address these gaps by examining a comprehensive model that links integrated marketing communication, brand awareness, brand image, and brand preference. The study tests whether communication exerts both direct and indirect effects on preference and evaluates whether brand awareness contributes to the shaping of brand image. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that connect communication strategies with consumer preference formation.

This study offers several contributions. First, it advances current scholarship by empirically testing the direct effect of integrated marketing communication on brand preference, an effect suggested in theory but not consistently demonstrated in empirical work (Porcu et al., 2024). Second, it clarifies the mediating roles of brand awareness and brand image, thereby illuminating the pathways through which communication influences consumer choices. Third, it introduces a sequential mediation structure in which awareness precedes image, connecting cognitive accessibility with evaluative brand judgments. Fourth, the study enriches the branding literature by integrating communication theory with contemporary models of brand equity, offering a more holistic explanation of how coordinated communication activities stimulate consumer preference. This integrative framework contributes valuable insights for scholars and practitioners seeking to optimise communication strategies in dynamic marketplace environments.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in contemporary brand equity theory and integrated marketing communication scholarship, which together explain how coordinated communication activities shape consumer cognition and preference formation. Integrated marketing communication is conceptualised as a strategic process that aligns message content, tone, and delivery across multiple channels to strengthen brand meaning and enhance consumer processing fluency. Research indicates that coherent communication improves message reinforcement and increases the likelihood that consumers store and recall brand related information (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). This theoretical position suggests that integrated communication serves as an antecedent to both brand awareness and brand image.

Brand awareness is understood as the consumer's ability to recognise and recall a brand, functioning as a cognitive gateway in the development of brand equity. Studies show that higher levels of awareness increase brand retrieval probabilities and reduce perceived risk, thereby facilitating downstream behavioural responses such as preference and choice (Rahman et al., 2020). Awareness can also influence image formation because familiarity fosters more favourable evaluations through mere exposure and fluency mechanisms (Min, 2022; So & Liu, 2023).

Brand image represents the set of associations and meanings consumers attribute to a brand. It reflects emotional, symbolic, and functional evaluations that shape consumer attitudes and serve as a critical determinant of brand preference. Integrated marketing communication contributes to image formation by consistently reinforcing desirable associations and reducing message ambiguity (Tafesse & Wien, 2024).

Brand preference is positioned as the behavioural outcome of both cognitive accessibility and emotional evaluation. Prior studies confirm that awareness and image jointly influence preference by enabling easier recall and improving brand evaluations (Gier et al., 2023; Hutter et al., 2025). Within this framework, integrated marketing communication influences brand preference directly and indirectly through the mediating roles of awareness and image, forming a comprehensive pathway from communication strategy to consumer behavioural intentions.

Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Awareness

Integrated marketing communication is widely recognised as a strategic process that unifies message content, form, and delivery across diverse media platforms to ensure coherence in consumer communication encounters. Contemporary scholarship argues that integrated communication strengthens message reinforcement and improves the likelihood that consumers encode and retain brand related

information (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). When communication activities are harmonised, consumers encounter consistent cues that enhance recognition and recall, which are fundamental indicators of brand awareness. This process aligns with cognitive processing theories suggesting that repeated and coordinated exposure increases the accessibility of brand memory structures and reduces ambiguity in consumer interpretation (Tafesse & Wien, 2024). Furthermore, research shows that consumers are more likely to recognise and retrieve brands that present unified narratives and visual identities, since informational congruence enhances perceptual fluency and strengthens associative links (Marques Muniz et al., 2023). Firms that employ integrated marketing communication also benefit from improved cross channel synergy, where each communication element reinforces the others, thereby generating cumulative effects on awareness creation (Porcu et al., 2024). Given this theoretical and empirical foundation, integrated marketing communication is expected to function as a critical antecedent of brand awareness by shaping how consumers process and recall brand information in crowded communication environments.

Hypothesis 1. Integrated Marketing Communication positively influences brand awareness.

Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Image

Integrated marketing communication plays a central role in shaping the meanings, associations, and evaluative judgments that consumers attach to a brand. Because integrated communication ensures that messages across media channels are coherent and strategically aligned, it enhances the clarity and persuasiveness of brand related cues. Scholars argue that the consistency of narrative and visual identity reduces ambiguity in consumer interpretation and fosters stronger associative networks that contribute to favourable brand image formation (Tafesse & Wien, 2024). When consumers encounter unified messages that reflect the same personality, values, and positioning, they are more likely to form stable impressions that integrate both functional and symbolic attributes of the brand. Empirical studies demonstrate that integrated communication activities strengthen emotional and relational dimensions of brand image by presenting brands as credible, authentic, and trustworthy (Marques Muniz et al., 2023). Moreover, coordinated messaging increases perceptual fluency, which enhances the ease with which consumers process evaluative content and form positive brand judgments (Hutter et al., 2025). As firms navigate increasingly saturated media environments, the ability of integrated marketing communication to reinforce desirable brand meanings becomes essential for sustaining favourable image perceptions. Given these theoretical insights, integrated marketing communication is expected to serve as a strong antecedent to brand image formation.

Hypothesis 2. Integrated Marketing Communication positively influences brand image.

Brand Awareness and Brand Preference

Brand awareness represents the consumer's ability to recognise and recall a brand, and it functions as an essential cognitive gateway in the preference formation process (Praharjo et al., 2025). Awareness increases the likelihood that a brand will be retrieved during decision making, which gives it a competitive advantage in environments where consumers face abundant product alternatives. Studies indicate that familiar brands are often perceived as safer and more trustworthy, because awareness reduces cognitive effort and lowers perceived risk in evaluation and choice (Marques Muniz et al., 2023). This cognitive simplification mechanism increases the probability that consumers will gravitate toward brands they recognise. Moreover, the mere exposure effect suggests that repeated contact with a brand enhances perceptual fluency and fosters more favourable attitudes, which subsequently support preference development (Biswas, 2022; Roy, 2024). Empirical evidence confirms that higher levels of brand awareness are associated with stronger purchase intentions and enduring preference because familiar brands evoke a sense of comfort and assurance that facilitates decision making (Hutter et al., 2025). As markets become more saturated and consumer attention becomes increasingly fragmented, the ability of a brand to secure mental availability is critical for shaping preference outcomes. Consequently, brand awareness is expected to exert a positive influence on brand preference by increasing cognitive accessibility and reducing uncertainty during brand evaluation.

Hypothesis 3. Brand awareness positively influences brand preference.

Brand Image and Brand Preference

Brand image encompasses the set of functional, emotional, and symbolic meanings that consumers associate with a brand, and it serves as a central determinant of their evaluative and behavioural responses (Thien Duc & Mujahida, 2024). A favourable brand image provides consumers with positive expectations about product quality, emotional resonance, and value alignment, which together shape preference formation. Prior research demonstrates that when consumers perceive a brand as credible, appealing, and distinctive, they are more inclined to exhibit positive attitudes and stronger preference intentions (Marques Muniz et al., 2023). Theoretical perspectives on symbolic consumption further suggest that brand image contributes to preference by allowing consumers to express identity, social belonging, and lifestyle aspirations through brand choice. Empirical studies also confirm that emotional associations embedded in brand image enhance brand attractiveness, reduce perceived sacrifice, and reinforce attachment, all of which increase the likelihood of preference (Hutter et al., 2025). Integrated communication environments amplify this process by providing consumers with coherent cues that reinforce favourable interpretations of brand attributes (Keller, 2016). In markets characterised by high competition and product similarity, brand image becomes particularly influential because consumers often rely on perceived meanings rather than purely functional comparisons. Thus, brand image is expected to positively shape brand preference by influencing consumer attitudes, emotional evaluations, and symbolic fit during decision making.

Hypothesis 4. Brand image positively influences brand preference.

Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Preference

Integrated marketing communication is increasingly recognised not only as a tool for enhancing awareness and image but also as a strategic driver of consumer preference (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). By coordinating message content, tone, and delivery across communication channels, integrated marketing communication creates a unified brand experience that strengthens consumer trust and perceived value. Scholars argue that coherent communication reduces message ambiguity, enhances credibility, and reinforces brand meaning, all of which influence consumers' affective and cognitive evaluations during brand choice (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). When consumers encounter consistent narratives that articulate a brand's identity and benefits, they are more likely to develop favourable attitudes that translate into preference formation. Empirical studies in fashion, retail, and service industries show that integrated marketing communication improves consumers' perceived fit with the brand and increases their willingness to consider it when making purchase decisions (Tafesse & Wien, 2024). The persuasive power of integrated communication also increases perceived brand reliability because consistent messaging aligns expectations with actual brand performance, which strengthens preference intentions over time (Porcu et al., 2024).

In increasingly competitive markets where consumers must choose among brands with similar functional attributes, communication quality often becomes a decisive factor. Therefore, integrated marketing communication is expected to exert a direct positive influence on brand preference by enhancing brand credibility, emotional resonance, and overall evaluative appeal.

Hypothesis 5 Integrated Marketing Communication positively influences brand preference.

The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness

Brand awareness functions as an essential cognitive mechanism through which integrated marketing communication can influence consumer behavioural outcomes such as brand preference. Integrated marketing communication strengthens message consistency, increases the frequency of exposure, and enhances the recognisability of brand cues, which together elevate consumers' ability to recall and identify the brand (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). When awareness increases, consumers experience greater cognitive fluency, meaning that familiar brands are easier to process and evaluate, which in turn fosters more favourable attitudes. Studies show that heightened familiarity reduces perceived risk and uncertainty, enabling consumers to evaluate brands more confidently and positively (Marques Muniz et al., 2023). This cognitive simplification makes familiar brands more likely to be selected, especially in competitive environments where many brands offer similar functional benefits.

Empirical work further suggests that awareness often operates as a gateway condition for preference, because consumers cannot develop strong evaluations or intentions toward brands they do not recognise (Biswas, 2022; Roy, 2024). Integrated marketing communication therefore shapes preference not only through emotional or symbolic appeals but also by ensuring the brand occupies mental availability in the consumer's memory. Through increased recognisability and retrieval ease, brand awareness becomes a meaningful conduit that links communication strategies with preference formation.

Hypothesis 6. Integrated Marketing Communication positively influences brand preference through brand awareness.

The Mediating Role of Brand Image

Brand image represents the constellation of functional, emotional, and symbolic associations that consumers attach to a brand, and it often serves as a key pathway through which integrated marketing communication shapes consumer preference (Bhat et al., 2024). Integrated marketing communication provides coordinated messages that reinforce desirable meanings and reduce interpretive ambiguity, making it easier for consumers to form coherent impressions about the brand's personality, quality, and values. Research shows that consistent communication enhances the credibility and attractiveness of brand associations, which contributes to the development of favourable brand image structures (Tafesse & Wien, 2024). When consumers internalise these positive associations, they interpret the brand as more trustworthy, distinctive, and aligned with their personal or social identities.

A favourable brand image has been repeatedly linked to strong preference intentions because positive associations evoke emotional resonance and increase perceived value. Studies demonstrate that brand image shapes consumer judgment by influencing expectations and perceived fit, both of which have strong implications for preference formation (Marques Muniz et al., 2023). Moreover, consumers often rely on imagery and symbolic meanings rather than purely functional comparisons when making choices in highly competitive markets (Hutter et al., 2025). Consequently, integrated marketing communication affects brand preference indirectly by cultivating a compelling and favourable brand image that guides consumer evaluation.

Hypothesis 7. Integrated Marketing Communication positively influences brand preference through brand image.

Brand Awareness and Brand Image

Brand awareness plays a foundational cognitive role in shaping how consumers interpret and evaluate brand related information, making it a precursor to the formation of brand image (Thien Duc & Mujahida, 2024). Awareness reflects the consumer's ability to recognise and recall the brand, and higher recognisability enhances perceptual fluency, which increases the likelihood that consumers will respond more favourably to subsequent brand cues. According to processing fluency theory, familiar stimuli are evaluated more positively because they are easier to process and generate a sense of comfort and credibility (Min, 2022; So & Liu, 2023). When consumers repeatedly encounter a brand through consistent communication, familiarity strengthens their confidence in understanding the brand's identity, which facilitates the development of more refined evaluative judgments.

Research further shows that consumers tend to assign more favourable meanings and associations to brands they easily recognise, because familiarity reduces uncertainty and promotes interpretive coherence (Ng et al., 2021). This process helps consumers construct stable mental representations of the brand's functional, emotional, and symbolic attributes. Empirical evidence in fashion, retail, and service sectors confirms that brand awareness significantly predicts brand image because familiar brands are more capable of forming strong associative networks and retaining positive evaluative impressions (Rahman et al., 2020). As a result, awareness functions as a gateway through which image is constructed.

Hypothesis 8. Brand awareness positively influences brand image.

Sequential Mediation of Brand Awareness and Brand Image

The combined influence of brand awareness and brand image forms a sequential pathway that helps explain how integrated marketing communication ultimately shapes brand preference. Integrated marketing communication increases the frequency and consistency of brand exposure, which first enhances brand awareness by strengthening recognition and recall (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). Once awareness is established, consumers become more receptive to interpreting brand related cues, allowing them to construct meaningful evaluations and symbolic associations that contribute to brand image. Theoretical perspectives on consumer information processing suggest that familiarity generated through awareness improves perceptual fluency, thereby facilitating more favourable interpretations of brand attributes and emotional meanings (Min, 2022; So & Liu, 2023). This implies that awareness is not only an outcome of communication but also a necessary antecedent for deeper evaluative responses.

As brand image becomes more positive through exposure driven familiarity, consumers develop stronger preference intentions because image conveys functional expectations, emotional resonance, and symbolic fit. Research confirms that both awareness and image together create stronger pathways to preference than either construct alone, since awareness enables mental availability while image guides evaluative judgment (Rahman et al., 2020). In this context, integrated marketing communication is expected to influence brand preference through a sequential mechanism that begins with awareness and culminates in image formation.

Hypothesis 9. Integrated Marketing Communication positively influences brand preference through sequential mediation of brand awareness and brand image.

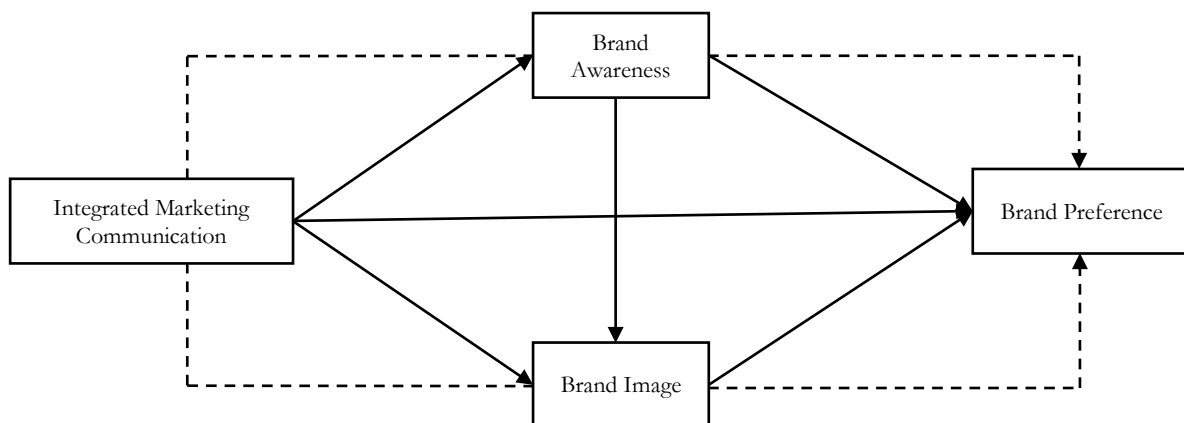


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine how Integrated Marketing Communication influences brand preference through the mediating roles of brand awareness and brand image, including the sequential pathway in which awareness precedes image formation. The research was conducted in the ceiling and interior materials industry in Indonesia, a sector in which consumers rely heavily on communication consistency and brand credibility due to the utilitarian and risk sensitive nature of the products. Investigating these relationships in this context provides both theoretical and practical relevance because integrated communication can substantially affect brand meaning, cognitive accessibility, and consumer choice.

Data collection took place between February and April 2025 using a combination of online and offline channels to ensure adequate coverage of the target population. A total of 345 valid responses were obtained, consisting of 213 participants who completed the survey through Google Forms and 132 respondents surveyed in person at retail stores where ceiling and interior materials are commonly purchased. The study implemented a pilot test with 35 respondents to assess clarity, contextual relevance, linguistic accuracy, and reliability of the measurement instruments. Feedback from the pilot resulted in minor revisions to enhance item comprehension. Ethical procedures were rigorously followed. Participants received an informed

consent form describing the study's aims, voluntary participation, confidentiality protections, and their right to discontinue at any point. Only individuals who provided explicit consent were included.

The target population comprised individual consumers who had recent experience purchasing or influencing purchasing decisions for ceiling or interior materials for residential or commercial use. Respondents ranged primarily between 25 and 45 years old, representing homeowners, small business owners, renovation decision makers, and freelance interior contractors. Approximately sixty percent identified as male and forty percent as female. Most participants possessed at least a high school diploma, with a substantial proportion holding higher education credentials, ensuring adequate representation of informed consumer decision makers.

Table 1. Item Construct

Construct	Sample Item	Source
Integrated Marketing Communication	The brand communicates consistently across different platforms.	Adapted from Budianto (2024) and Rehman et al. (2022)
	The brand delivers a unified message across all advertising channels.	
	I notice alignment between this brand's ads and in-store experience.	
	Social media messages of the brand match with TV and print advertising.	
Brand Awareness	I can easily recognize this brand among competitors.	Adapted from Chen (2024)
	I am aware of this brand when I shop for ceiling materials.	
	This brand is among the first I recall in its category.	
Brand Image	This brand has a good reputation in the industry.	Adapted from Aaker (1996)
	This brand reflects high quality and innovation.	
	This brand is associated with modern and stylish design.	
	This brand creates a favorable image in my mind.	
Brand Preference	I prefer this brand over other similar brands.	Adapted from Ligaraba et al. (2024)
	This brand would be my first choice among alternatives.	
	I would recommend this brand to others.	

To minimise potential common method variance, several procedural controls were implemented. Item order was randomised, psychological separation was applied between predictor and criterion constructs, and positively and negatively oriented statements were interspersed to prevent patterned responses. Statistical assessment of common method variance was also performed using the full collinearity approach advocated by Kock (2015). All variance inflation factor values were below the recommended threshold of 3.3, indicating that common method bias did not threaten the validity of the dataset.

Data analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling using SmartPLS version 4. This method was selected because it is well suited for complex models that include multiple mediators and sequential pathways. The analysis followed a two stage procedure. The measurement model was first evaluated for internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, convergent validity through the average variance extracted, and discriminant validity using both the Fornell Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait Monotrait ratio. Once the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability, the structural model was assessed. Bootstrapping with five thousand subsamples was

used to estimate the significance of direct, indirect, and sequential effects. Model performance was further evaluated using R squared for explanatory power, f squared for effect size, Q squared for predictive relevance, and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual as a global model fit indicator.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The demographic distribution shows that the sample aligns with the expected characteristics of consumers who actively purchase ceiling and interior materials. The age structure is concentrated in the 25 to 34 and 35 to 45 categories, which together account for more than seventy percent of the respondents. These age groups typically engage in home renovation, property investment, and commercial facility improvements, suggesting relevance to the study context.

Table 2. Respondent Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	18 to 24	32	9.28
	25 to 34	128	37.10
	35 to 45	121	35.07
	Above 45	64	18.55
Gender	Male	207	60.00
	Female	138	40.00
Education Level	High school diploma	124	35.94
	Vocational or diploma degree	86	24.93
	Bachelor degree	102	29.57
	Postgraduate degree	33	9.56
Occupation	Homeowner or household decision maker	142	41.16
	Small business owner	68	19.71
	Interior contractor or freelancer	77	22.32
	Other occupations	58	16.81
Purchase Experience	Residential ceiling materials	221	64.06
	Commercial ceiling materials	124	35.94

The gender profile indicates that sixty percent of respondents are male, reflecting common purchasing patterns in building materials markets where men frequently take primary responsibility for material selection. Educational backgrounds are relatively diverse but skew toward higher education, with almost forty percent holding a bachelor degree or postgraduate qualification. This suggests that respondents are capable of evaluating integrated marketing communication and forming informed judgments about brand attributes.

The occupational data further strengthens the representativeness of the sample. Homeowners and household decision makers form the largest group at over forty percent, while interior contractors and freelancers account for more than twenty percent, contributing professional perspectives on brand performance and communication. Purchasing experience is also balanced across residential and commercial segments, ensuring that the data capture insights from varied usage contexts.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Integrated Marketing Communication	5.45	1.02	-0.43	0.15
Brand Awareness	5.67	0.91	-0.51	0.31
Brand Image	5.61	1.05	-0.40	0.21
Brand Preference	5.48	0.94	-0.36	0.25

The descriptive statistics indicate generally favourable perceptions across all constructs. Integrated Marketing Communication recorded a mean of 5.45 with a standard deviation of 1.02, suggesting that respondents view the brand's communication strategies as coherent and consistent, although there is

moderate variability in individual evaluations. The skewness value of negative zero point forty three indicates a slight concentration of responses toward the upper end of the scale, while the kurtosis value near zero suggests a distribution close to normal.

Brand Awareness demonstrated the highest mean score at 5.67 with relatively low variability (standard deviation 0.91). This indicates that respondents find the brand easy to recognise and recall within the product category. The more pronounced negative skewness of negative zero point fifty one further suggests that most respondents rated awareness items positively, while the mild positive kurtosis indicates a slightly more peaked distribution.

Brand Image also achieved a strong mean of 5.61 with a standard deviation of 1.05. This reflects favourable perceptions of the brand’s quality, reputation, and symbolic appeal. The distribution shows mild negative skewness and a kurtosis value near zero, indicating generally symmetrical response patterns.

Brand Preference recorded a mean of 5.48 and a standard deviation of 0.94, suggesting that respondents demonstrate strong preference tendencies, including the likelihood of choosing and recommending the brand. The slight negative skewness and mild kurtosis again indicate predominantly positive evaluations with a distribution that does not deviate significantly from normality.

Overall, these results reflect a respondent group with consistently positive attitudes toward the brand in terms of communication, awareness, image, and preference, providing a suitable foundation for subsequent structural analysis..

Common Method Variance Test

The full collinearity variance inflation factor results indicate that all constructs exhibit VIF values well below the recommended threshold of 3.3. Integrated Marketing Communication recorded a VIF of 2.41, Brand Awareness 2.18, Brand Image 2.27, and Brand Preference 2.36. These values suggest that no excessive collinearity exists among the latent constructs and that the responses were not inflated by single source bias. The results also confirm that common method variance does not pose a significant threat to the validity of the dataset. The relatively uniform VIF values across constructs indicate that respondents were able to differentiate clearly among the measures of communication, awareness, image, and preference. Consequently, the structural model can be interpreted with confidence that the relationships among these variables are not artefacts of common method bias.

Table 3. Common Method Variance and Full Collinearity VIF Test

Construct	Full Collinearity VIF
Integrated Marketing Communication	2.41
Brand Awareness	2.18
Brand Image	2.27
Brand Preference	2.36

Threshold for CMV concern: VIF greater than 3.3 indicates potential common method variance (Kock 2015).

Measurement Model

The results of the measurement model demonstrate strong reliability and convergent validity for all constructs. All factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each item appropriately reflects its underlying latent variable. The Cronbach alpha values range from 0.88 to 0.90, which demonstrates high internal consistency among the items in each construct. Composite reliability values are also strong, ranging from 0.92 to 0.93, confirming that the constructs exhibit satisfactory reliability beyond the minimum required standard of 0.70.

The average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs fall between 0.73 and 0.78, exceeding the threshold of 0.50. This indicates that more than half of the variance in the observed indicators is explained by their respective latent constructs. Collectively, these results show that the measurement model exhibits strong psychometric properties and is suitable for testing the structural relationships among integrated marketing communication, brand awareness, brand image, and brand preference.

Table 4. Measurement Model Results

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Integrated Marketing Communication	IMC1	0.84	0.89	0.92	0.73
	IMC2	0.87			
	IMC3	0.86			
	IMC4	0.85			
Brand Awareness	BA1	0.83	0.88	0.92	0.76
	BA2	0.89			
	BA3	0.91			
Brand Image	BI1	0.82	0.90	0.93	0.78
	BI2	0.87			
	BI3	0.91			
	BI4	0.92			
Brand Preference	BP1	0.85	0.88	0.92	0.75
	BP2	0.90			
	BP3	0.86			

The Fornell–Larcker results confirm discriminant validity among all constructs. The square root of each construct’s AVE, displayed on the diagonal in bold, is greater than its correlations with other constructs. For example, the square root of AVE for integrated marketing communication is 0.85, which exceeds its correlations with brand awareness (0.61), brand image (0.58), and brand preference (0.55). This pattern holds across all variables, demonstrating that each construct is empirically distinct and captures unique variance not explained by other constructs in the model.

Table 5. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	IMC	BA	BI	BP
IMC	0.85			
Brand Awareness	0.61	0.87		
Brand Image	0.58	0.63	0.88	
Brand Preference	0.55	0.59	0.66	0.87

The results confirm that integrated marketing communication, brand awareness, brand image, and brand preference are not only theoretically distinct but also statistically separable. These findings support the adequacy of the measurement model and justify proceeding to structural model testing.

Table 6. HTMT Ratios

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
IMC – Brand Awareness	0.70
IMC – Brand Image	0.67
IMC – Brand Preference	0.63
Brand Awareness – Brand Image	0.72
Brand Awareness – Brand Preference	0.68
Brand Image – Brand Preference	0.74

The Heterotrait Monotrait ratio values provide further evidence of discriminant validity. All HTMT values range between 0.63 and 0.74, which fall well below the recommended threshold of 0.85. These results indicate that the constructs do not exhibit problematic levels of similarity and that respondents were able to differentiate effectively among the measures of communication, awareness, image, and preference.

The moderate HTMT values, particularly between brand image and brand preference (0.74), suggest that although these constructs are related conceptually, they remain empirically distinct. The combined evidence from the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT analysis strengthens confidence in the measurement model and confirms that the constructs meet the standards for discriminant validity.

Structural Measurement

The model fit statistics indicate that the structural model demonstrates strong global adequacy. The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual value is 0.041, well below the 0.08 benchmark, indicating a very good fit between the observed and predicted correlations. The Normed Fit Index value of 0.932 also surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.90, showing that the proposed model explains a substantial portion of the covariance in the data compared with a null model. The RMS Theta value of 0.121 is within the acceptable range for reflective measurement models, suggesting no major measurement specification issues. Collectively, these indicators confirm that the model provides a satisfactory representation of the underlying theoretical structure and is appropriate for testing the hypothesised relationships among constructs.

Table 7. Model Fit Results

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
SRMR	0.041	Less than 0.08 indicates good fit
NFI	0.932	Greater than 0.90 indicates acceptable fit
RMS Theta	0.121	Less than 0.12 acceptable for reflective models

The predictive power results demonstrate that the model explains meaningful variance in all endogenous constructs. The R squared value for brand awareness is 0.37, indicating that integrated marketing communication accounts for a moderate proportion of awareness formation. Brand image exhibits an R squared value of 0.46, suggesting that both integrated marketing communication and brand awareness jointly provide moderate to strong explanatory power. Brand preference shows the highest R squared value at 0.52, meaning that integrated marketing communication, brand awareness, and brand image together explain more than half of the variance in preference. This reflects a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the hypothesised causal pathways.

Table 8. Predictor Power

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Interpretation	Q ²	Interpretation
BA	0.37	Moderate	0.25	Medium
BI	0.46	Moderate to strong	0.31	Medium
BP	0.52	Strong	0.36	Medium to strong

The Q squared values, all above 0.25, demonstrate medium to strong predictive relevance across constructs. Brand preference again shows the highest Q squared value of 0.36, indicating that the model possesses substantial out-of-sample predictive capability. These results confirm that the model is not only statistically valid but also practically meaningful in predicting consumer attitudes and behavioural tendencies.

Hypothesis Testing

The structural results provide strong empirical confirmation of the proposed relationships. Integrated Marketing Communication has a substantial positive effect on Brand Awareness (IMC → BA, $\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that coordinated communication activities significantly enhance consumers' ability to recognise and recall the brand. A significant positive relationship also appears between IMC and Brand Image (IMC → BI, $\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), showing that unified messaging contributes to more favourable evaluative impressions.

Table 9. Structural Path Coefficients

Hypothesised Relationship	Beta (β)	t value	p value	Supported
IMC → BA	0.61	13.42	0.000	Yes
IMC → BI	0.34	7.58	0.000	Yes
BA → BI	0.42	9.16	0.000	Yes
BA → BP	0.28	5.47	0.000	Yes

BI → BP	0.41	8.33	0.000	Yes
IMC → BP	0.19	4.02	0.000	Yes
IMC → BP through BA	0.17	4.88	0.000	Yes
IMC → BP through BI	0.14	4.21	0.000	Yes
IMC → BA → BI → BP	0.11	3.96	0.000	Yes

Brand Awareness exerts a strong positive influence on Brand Image (BA → BI, $\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing theoretical claims that familiarity enhances interpretive fluency and supports the construction of positive brand associations. Both Brand Awareness and Brand Image significantly predict Brand Preference (BA → BP, $\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$; BI → BP, $\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that consumers' preference formation relies on both cognitive accessibility and favourable emotional or symbolic meanings.

Integrated Marketing Communication also directly influences Brand Preference (IMC → BP, $\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that communication affects choice behaviour even beyond its mediated pathways. The mediation results confirm that BA and BI function as significant conduits through which IMC enhances preference. The indirect effects through BA ($\beta = 0.17$), through BI ($\beta = 0.14$), and through the sequential pathway IMC → BA → BI → BP ($\beta = 0.11$) are all significant at $p < 0.001$.

This pattern reveals a layered mechanism in which IMC first strengthens awareness, which in turn shapes image, and the combined effect leads to higher preference. Overall, the results demonstrate that IMC exerts both cognitive and affective influence across multiple stages of brand equity formation.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that Integrated Marketing Communication plays a central role in shaping brand equity and ultimately brand preference. The strong positive effect of Integrated Marketing Communication on Brand Awareness supports earlier findings that communication consistency increases message reinforcement and helps consumers encode and retrieve brand information more efficiently (Safitri & Sriyanto, 2025). In markets where consumers face information overload, unified messaging improves perceptual clarity and strengthens recognition, which explains the substantial influence observed in this study. These results also align with recent work showing that coordinated cross channel communication enhances mental availability and facilitates consumer recall (Tafesse & Wien, 2024).

Integrated Marketing Communication also significantly enhances Brand Image, confirming that coherent communication shapes how consumers interpret functional, symbolic, and emotional aspects of a brand. This echoes the assertion that well integrated messages reduce interpretive ambiguity and build stronger associative networks around the brand (Rahman et al., 2020). Prior studies have shown that integrated communication amplifies perceptions of brand authenticity and credibility Porcu et al. (2024), which explains why respondents in this study formed more favourable brand evaluations when exposed to consistent messaging.

The positive influence of Brand Awareness and Brand Image on Brand Preference further reinforces established branding theory. The effect of Brand Awareness supports research indicating that familiarity increases processing fluency and reduces perceived risk, thereby encouraging preference formation (Min, 2022; So & Liu, 2023). Consumers tend to gravitate toward brands that they can recall effortlessly, especially in categories where product differentiation may be subtle. The stronger influence of Brand Image on Brand Preference is consistent with findings that consumers rely heavily on symbolic and emotional associations when making brand choices (Gómez-Rico et al., 2023). In utilitarian product categories such as ceiling materials, perceived quality, modernity, and reputation can substantially shape consumer attitudes and drive preference.

The direct effect of Integrated Marketing Communication on Brand Preference demonstrates that communication can influence behavioural intention independently of awareness and image. This supports arguments that message credibility, coherence, and persuasive framing contribute directly to favourable choice outcomes (Gier et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the mediation results reveal that Brand Awareness and Brand Image remain essential mechanisms through which Integrated Marketing Communication exerts much of its influence. This finding aligns with conceptual models that depict brand equity as a cumulative process in which familiarity and meaning interact to shape preference (Rahman et al., 2020).

The sequential mediation pathway is particularly noteworthy. The results show that Integrated Marketing Communication first enhances awareness, awareness then shapes image, and image ultimately drives preference. This aligns with cognitive processing theory, which proposes that consumers must first recognise a brand before constructing deeper evaluative judgments (Min, 2022; So & Liu, 2023). It also supports contemporary branding frameworks that emphasise the layered development of brand representations in memory (Tafesse & Wien, 2024).

Overall, the findings enrich existing knowledge by demonstrating how Integrated Marketing Communication activates both cognitive and affective mechanisms in a stepwise progression. They show that communication coherence is not simply an operational efficiency but a strategic lever for building equity and influencing consumer choice. The study therefore expands theoretical understanding of how communication, awareness, and image interact to produce brand preference in markets where trust and perceived quality are essential.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Integrated Marketing Communication influences brand preference through the mediating roles of Brand Awareness and Brand Image in the ceiling and interior materials industry in Indonesia. The findings show that Integrated Marketing Communication contributes meaningfully to both cognitive and affective components of brand equity. Integrated Marketing Communication significantly enhances Brand Awareness by providing consistent and recognisable communication cues that help consumers identify and recall the brand. It also strengthens Brand Image by reinforcing perceptions of quality, credibility, and modernity, which together shape more favourable evaluations.

Brand Awareness and Brand Image both emerge as important determinants of Brand Preference. Consumers tend to prefer brands they recognise easily and evaluate positively, and the results indicate that familiarity and favourable associations work together to produce stronger preference intentions. Integrated Marketing Communication not only influences preference directly but also operates through these mediating pathways, demonstrating that preference formation is a cumulative process shaped by both recognition and meaning. The sequential mediation effect further shows that communication enhances awareness first, awareness shapes image, and image ultimately drives preference, offering a clear understanding of how communication influences consumer decision making.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be considered. The cross sectional design restricts the study from drawing causal conclusions, and future research may benefit from longitudinal or experimental approaches. The focus on a specific product category and geographic context limits generalisability, and future studies may examine different industries or cross cultural settings. Self-reported data were used, which may introduce perceptual bias, although procedural safeguards were applied.

Future research can explore additional mediators such as brand trust, perceived value, or consumer engagement. Investigating potential moderators such as product involvement or digital literacy may also reveal conditions under which communication effects are stronger or weaker. Expanding the model to include behavioural data or digital analytics may provide deeper insights into how communication consistency shapes actual purchase behaviour.

In summary, this study shows that Integrated Marketing Communication plays a vital role in building awareness, shaping image, and strengthening brand preference. The results provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication influences consumer perceptions and decisions, offering valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners seeking to enhance brand equity and competitive positioning.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with the conduct of this research, the analysis of the data or the preparation of this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to the involvement of identifiable business respondents, the dataset has been anonymised to protect confidentiality and cannot be publicly shared.

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