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THE MEDIATION IMPACT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS IN INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE INTENTION: A STUDY ON TOKOPEDIA INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The surge in social media users has instigated profound shifts in societal interactions. Brands are now compelled to prioritize customer engagement on social media to influence purchase intention, thereby boosting overall sales and revenue. This study specifically analyzed the mediating role of customer relationships in the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention. The research was centered on people in Indonesia who have seen Tokopedia's Instagram content. Employing a simple random sampling approach, a questionnaire was disseminated, and subsequently, the PLS-SEM method was applied to evaluate the responses from 119 valid participants. The results showed a notable impact of social media marketing activities on purchase intention and a significant correlation between customer relationships and purchase intention. Additionally, the findings suggest that customer relationships partially mediate the connection between social media marketing activities and purchase intention.

Keywords: Customer Relationships, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing Activities, Tokopedia Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Internet usage is becoming common in Indonesia. According to a survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association, Indonesia's internet users in 2021 increased by 51.75 percent since 2016, equivalent to 25,537,353 users (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2020). The internet acts as the medium for roaming on social media, sending messages, gaining information, banking, entertainment, trading, and marketing a product or service of a business. Research done in 2019 through 2020 suggested that among the sample of 7,000 internet users in Indonesia, social media ranked number one for internet usage (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2020).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explained social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Social media allows users to participate and communicate through various forms, such as wikis, blogs, forums, and social networks. Currently, there are various social media applications, such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube, each of which has different purposes and is used according to the needs of each user.

In addition to individuals, companies utilize social media as a platform for promoting products and services (Gronek, 2021). According to Potu et al. (2019), social media content served as a valuable resource for customers seeking information about various products and services. Moreover, corporations leverage social media content to cultivate customer relationships and enhance customers' intention to make purchases (Sayabek et al., 2019).

Gunelius (2011) mentioned social media marketing as an instrument to build relationship with consumers, shape brands, provide publicity, give promotions, and conduct market research. Social media marketing activities encompass five dimensions, namely informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, and word of mouth (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). According to Yadav and Rahman (2017), informativeness is about whether or not a brand's social media passes information

that is precise, helpful, and thorough. Interactivity is about a brand's ability to allow information sharing between the brand and its audiences, as well as between audiences through social media. Trendiness is the level to which a brand's social platform offers the latest and trendiest content. Personalization is about whether or not a company's social media provides personalized services to meet the customer's preferences, and last but not least, word of mouth is about consumers' willingness to share information about a brand's products or services with others on social media. These five elements of social media marketing activities are crucial for corporations' marketers to understand to reach a broader target market and increase purchase intention.

Many companies believe building and maintaining customer relationships is the key to long-term success (Liberatore, 2023). The relationship between the company and the customers is not only limited to buying and selling transactions, but it also includes customers' involvement in discussions with the company, their reviews, and their participation in the chats and comments (Zulyanti & Irawan, 2023). One of the ways to build customer relationships is through social media marketing activities. In the previous research done by Amani et al. (2022), Gautam and Sharma (2017), and Laksamana (2020), it has been proved that social media marketing activities are the factors that influence purchase intention. Moreover, Amani et al. (2022) and Gautam and Sharma (2017) elaborated that with customer relationships as the mediating variable, social media marketing activities would positively impact purchase intention since customers retrieved information from social media regarding products and services, where it could increase the customer relationships and purchase intention.

This study will focus on Tokopedia's social media marketing activities on Instagram. Tokopedia's Instagram engagement rate stood at 0.24 percent, beating its competitors, Shopee, which stood at 0.14 percent, and Bukalapak, which stood at 0.02 percent (*Instagram Engagement Calculator / Phlanx*, n.d.). Although Tokopedia has the highest engagement rate compared to the two other brands on Instagram, its position as the market leader in the e-commerce industry can still be taken by Shopee, whose engagement rate is relatively low compared to Tokopedia (Nurhadi, 2022). For example, in Q1 2021, Tokopedia recorded the highest market share at 33.07 percent, while Shopee came in second at 29.73 percent (Iqbal, 2021). However, in Q4 2021, Shopee came in first at 54 percent, beating Tokopedia's 30 percent market share (Kurniawan, 2022). Despite pioneering in the e-commerce industry in Indonesia and being a leading e-commerce enterprise in terms of having the highest engagement rate, Tokopedia still needs to maintain its position in the current ongoing competition, as Tokopedia is still having a head-to-head competition with Shopee for the market leader position in the e-commerce industry.

Despite the previous findings stating that social media marketing activities impact customer relationships and purchase intention, few analyze the mediating impact of customer relationships in digital businesses, especially the e-commerce industry. With the constantly growing online market trade, customer relationship management becomes a very important tool to convert first-time online purchasers into loyal customers, especially when the research by Boston Consulting Group showed that 65% of online customers never repurchased from the same website (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020). Consequently, the researchers are interested in exploring the mediating effect of customer relationships in the context of Tokopedia Indonesia, one of Indonesia's most prominent e-commerce players. Understanding the relationship among social media marketing activities, customer relationships, and purchase intention is important as it will provide valuable insights into how Tokopedia's social media marketing activities might improve customer relationships and sales.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Intention

Saidani and Samsul (2012) considered purchase intention as the customers' likelihood to buy before making a purchase decision. Similarly, customers' decision-making process before purchasing a needed item was known as their purchase intention (Anoraga, 2000). Moreover, purchase intention was the mix of customer interest and the probability of purchasing products or services (Kim & Ko, 2012). Based on the research of Gautam and Sharma (2017), purchase intention could be described as the likelihood that consumers will make purchases in the near future. In addition, Komalasari et al. (2021) explained purchase intention as the individuals' initiative and intention to make a purchase. Furthermore, according to Pavlou (2003), purchase intention in e-commerce was the customer's willingness to have an online exchange relationship with a web retailer. Thus, purchase intention can be defined as the customers' desire to purchase any product or service of a brand.

From the definitions stated, the researchers used four dimensions for purchase intention from the research of Komalasari et al. (2021), which were adopted from Ferdinand (2006). The dimensions can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of Purchase Intention

Dimensions	Description
Transactional interest	The customer's likelihood to make a purchase
Referential interest	The customer's likelihood to promote or refer the product to others
Preferential interest	The customer's top choice of a particular product
Exploratory interest	The likelihood for a consumer to look up information on a product regularly to support the good features of a product

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Social Media Marketing Activities

Social media marketing is a marketing strategy that aims to increase awareness, recognition, and action-taking on a brand, business, product, or people using social media tools like blogging and content sharing (Gunelius, 2011). In addition, social media marketing has become more popular due to its function as a marketing tool to increase customer relationships and influence purchasing behavior (Ruane & Wallace, 2013). Moreover, a successful way to build brand communities is through social media marketing activities, where consumers can share experiences, information, and ideas about the brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Tuten and Solomon (2017) defined the utilization of social media platforms, tools, and technology for creating, producing, and exchanging products and services as social media marketing activities. Yadav and Rahman (2017) described social media marketing activities as "a process by which companies create, communicate, and deliver online marketing offerings via social media platforms to build and maintain stakeholder relationships that enhance stakeholders' value by facilitating interaction, information sharing, offering personalized purchase recommendations, and word of mouth creation among stakeholders about existing and trending products and services." Therefore, social media marketing activities can be characterized as a marketing strategy that facilitates a two-way dialogue with users on social media platforms, involving information sharing and recommendations, and ultimately fostering customers' inclination to share such information with others.

Furthermore, according to Yacobi and Rahman (2017), there are five dimensions to measure social media marketing activities, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Dimensions of Social Media Marketing Activities

Dimensions	Description
Informativeness	A brand's social media passes precise, helpful, and thorough information

Interactivity	A brand's ability to allow information sharing between the brand and its audience, as well as between audiences through social media
Trendiness	The level to which a brand's social media offers the latest and trendiest content
Personalization	A brand's social media offers personalized services to meet the customers' preferences
Word of mouth	The consumers' willingness to share information with others on social media about a brand's products or services

Research from Kim and Ko (2012) has discovered a favorable association between social media marketing activities and purchase intention, as brands could build up friendly attention, even affection, with customers via social media sites and stimulate customers' desire to purchase. Moreover, a study by Gautam and Sharma (2017) also supported the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention, stating that consumers exposed to social media marketing campaigns could develop stronger brand sentiments and greater possibilities of purchases. Yadav and Rahman (2017) stated that if the social media content were informative, interactive, trendy, personalized, and shareable, it would influence the customers' intention to buy the products or services. Additionally, social media marketing activities favorably impacted consumer spending and cross-purchasing, which in turn influenced a business' profitability and a customer's purchase intention (Naylor et al., 2012). A study by Meliawati et al. (2023) also found that social media marketing using TikTok influenced customers' purchase intention. Thereby, it can be said that the activities of social media marketing will have a positive impact on purchase intention and the following hypothesis could be formulated:

H₁: Social media marketing activities have a significant influence on purchase intention.

Customer Relationships

Kim and Ko (2010) argued that depending on the brand only would not guarantee a company's success in ongoing intense competition in the market, and thus, customer relationships were needed to maintain engagement and improve customer experience. According to Crosby et al. (1990), customer relationships that could last long would have to depend on customers' prior experiences, expectations, objectives, desires, and projections of a brand. On top of that, customer relationships are long-term relationships that involve intimacy and trust (Gautam & Sharma, 2017). Hence, customer relationships can be understood as a brand's effort to maintain long-term customer relationships by emphasizing intimacy and trust.

Intimacy could be defined as the feeling of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness (Sternberg, 1997). Intimacy is locking up the connections between a brand and a consumer through a firm's understanding of customers' perspectives and interests, pleasant brand engagement, and long-term commitment (Roberts, 2005). Trust was defined as consumer reliance on a brand's capability to complete its initial purpose (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In addition, Eid (2011) defined trust, in the context of e-commerce, as the willingness to rely on another party.

Amani et al. (2022) stated that the higher the intimacy and trust in customer relationships, the stronger the customer's desire to purchase the product or service. As customer relationships improve, interactions will grow, followed by more intimate and better emotional connections, eventually making customers not hesitate to buy (Yim et al., 2008). Consequently, social media marketers must create powerful marketing communication programs to increase the intimacy and trust of customer relationships, which encourages customers to make purchases.

Amani et al.'s (2022) research has shown that customer relationships also mediate the effect of social media marketing activities on purchase intention. While Laksamana (2020) proved a positive direct link between social media marketing activities and purchase intention, Gautam and Sharma (2017) argued that the impact was bigger when mediated by customer relationships. Engagement

48 in social media marketing activities fostered customer intimacy and trust, resulting in strengthened customer relationships (Kim & Ko, 2010). This enhanced connection led to better retention, brand information and, consequently, increased purchase intention (Schuman & Kanuk, 2010). Based on the results of the previous research, the researchers hypothesize the following hypothesis:

H₂: Customer relationships mediate the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention.

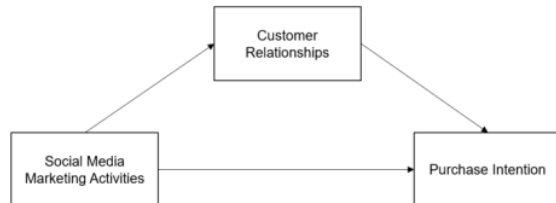


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected using questionnaires in the year 2023. The questionnaire was distributed to people with a minimum age of 21 years old who live in Indonesia and have seen Tokopedia's Instagram account content. 119 responses were collected and analyzed using SmartPLS.

Table 3. Respondents' Age

Age Group (Years Old)	Frequency	Percentage
21-28	60	63.8
29-36	6	6.4
37-44	2	2.1
Above 44	26	27.7

33 Referring to Table 3, the majority of respondents belonged to the age group of 21-28 years old, with the second-largest proportion being the age group above 44 years old. The remaining respondents were distributed among the age groups of 29-36 years old and 37-44 years old.

Measures

3 The measurement items of social media marketing activities, customer relationships, and purchase intention were adopted from several authors, as mentioned in Table 4.

Table 4. Measurement Items

Variable	Code	Dimensions	Measurement items	Source
Purchase Intention	PI 1	Transactional Interest	I will buy a product from Tokopedia	Komalasari et al. (2021)
	PI 2	Referential Interest	I will refer/recommend Tokopedia's products or services to other people	
	PI 3	Preferential Interest	I have a primary preference for a particular product in Tokopedia	
	PI 4	Exploratory Interest	I constantly look for product-related information on Tokopedia to support a product's positive characteristics	

Social Media Marketing Activities	SMM 1	Informativeness	Tokopedia's Instagram content offers accurate information on products	Kim & Ko (2012); Yadav & Rahman (2017)
	SMM 2		Tokopedia's Instagram content provides helpful information	
	SMM 3		The information offered by Tokopedia's Instagram content is comprehensive	
	SMM 4	Interactivity	Tokopedia's Instagram lets me share the existing content	
	SMM 5		Tokopedia engages regularly with its followers and fans on Instagram	
	SMM 6		Tokopedia's Instagram enables two-way interaction with family and friends	
	SMM 7	Trendiness	Contents displayed on Tokopedia's Instagram are the latest trend	
	SMM 8		Anything trendy is available on Tokopedia's Instagram	
	SMM 9	Personalization	Tokopedia's Instagram makes purchase recommendations as per my requirements	
	SMM 10		I believe that my needs are met by using Tokopedia's Instagram	
	SMM 11		Tokopedia's Instagram facilitates personalized information search	
	SMM 12	Word of Mouth	I would like to share details on brand, product, or services from Tokopedia's Instagram to my friends	
	SMM 13		I would like to share content from Tokopedia's Instagram on my personal social media account	
Customer Relationships	CR 1	Intimacy	I strongly desire to promote the well-being of Tokopedia	Sternberg (1997)
	CR 2		I can count on Tokopedia in times of need	
	CR 3		I value Tokopedia greatly in my life	
	CR 4		I am willing to share my information with Tokopedia (By agreeing to share my consumer data to Tokopedia – address, phone number, etc.)	
	CR 5		I experience great happiness with Tokopedia	
	CR 6	Trust	Tokopedia is trustworthy	Eid (2011)
	CR 7		Tokopedia is honest	
	CR 8		Tokopedia instills the confidence in his customers	
	CR 9		Tokopedia fulfill their promises and commitments	
	CR 10		Tokopedia does not behave opportunistically	

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis

Reliability and Validity

Some measurement items that were not reliable and invalid were deleted. After 17^e deletion, the items to measure the three variables were valid and reliable. The outer loadings, composite reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha were above 0.7, meaning there was no problem with the reliability of the items. The AVE was also above 0.5 and the HTMT results were less than 0.9, meaning there was no problem with the validity of the items. The cross loadings in Table 5 also showed that all items had the highest correlation with the corresponding variable and no high correlation with other variables.

Table 5. Cross Loadings

	CR	PI	SMM
CR 10	0.774	0.542	0.579
CR 2	0.765	0.525	0.518
CR 3	0.704	0.616	0.606
CR 5	0.804	0.532	0.513
CR 6	0.848	0.571	0.569
CR 7	0.784	0.406	0.597
CR 8	0.856	0.580	0.554
CR 9	0.844	0.525	0.586
PI 1	0.643	0.846	0.443
PI 2	0.517	0.812	0.448
PI 3	0.572	0.852	0.552
PI 4	0.502	0.797	0.596
SMM 10	0.674	0.512	0.791
SMM 11	0.452	0.411	0.694
SMM 12	0.413	0.394	0.700
SMM 13	0.307	0.292	0.590
SMM 2	0.208	0.278	0.552
SMM 3	0.455	0.451	0.702
SMM 4	0.552	0.477	0.711
SMM 5	0.667	0.596	0.795
SMM 6	0.595	0.470	0.827
SMM 7	0.512	0.456	0.722
SMM 8	0.544	0.474	0.862
SMM 9	0.618	0.488	0.802

Collinearity

Table 3. Collinearity Values

VIF Values	PI	CR
SMMA	2.022	1.000
CR	2.022	

The VIF values are below 5, meaning the model has no collinearity problem.

Path Coefficient

Table 4. Path Coefficient

	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value
SMMA → PI	0.273	2.728	0.006
SMMA → CR → PI	0.344	4.130	0.000

According to the path coefficient findings outlined in Table 4, it is evident that there were positive relationships among the three variables. Social media marketing activities significantly influence purchase intention, and social media marketing activities partially mediate the impact of social media marketing on purchase intention.

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Coefficient of Determination (R^2 Value), Effect Size (f^2), and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Table 5. R^2 and Q^2

	R^2	Q^2
CR	0.505	0.483
PI	0.496	0.353

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After checking the significance of the relationship between variables, the researchers will also assess the structural model by measuring the predictive accuracy (R^2) value and the predictive relevance (Q^2). The result of the R^2 measurement showed that social media had moderate predictive accuracy on customer relationships. Similarly, social media marketing activities and customer relationships have moderate predictive accuracy on purchase intention. Furthermore, the Q^2 result shows that social media marketing activities and customer relationships have predictive relevance on purchase intention.

Table 6. Effect Size (f^2)

	CR	PI
SMMA	1.022	0.073
CR		0.229

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Regarding the effect size, social media marketing activities have large impact on customer relationships and a small impact on purchase intention. In contrast, customer relationships have a medium impact on purchase intention.

Discussion

Aligning with the findings from the previous research (Chafidon et al., 2022; Gautam & Sharma, 2017; Kim & Ko, 2012; Laksamana, 2020; Meliawati et al., 2023; Yadav & Rahman, 2017), the result shows that social media marketing activities significantly impact purchase intention. Social media allows businesses to exchange information with customers and make personalized

purchasing suggestions, resulting in customer engagement and higher purchase intention (Meliawati et al., 2023; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Comprehensive information about the companies on social media platforms will help customers know more about the companies, leading to higher purchase intention for the companies' products. The better the companies promote their products through social media, the higher the customers' interest in buying the products (Wijayanto et al., 2023).

The finding indicates an association between Tokopedia's **social media marketing activities and customer's intention** to purchase from Tokopedia. Complete information about Tokopedia's products or promotions on Tokopedia's Instagram will increase customers' interest in Tokopedia and trigger them to buy the products in Tokopedia. Furthermore, the interaction between Tokopedia and its customers in social media as well as the ability to share Tokopedia's content to others facilitate information sharing that will lead to higher interest in buying the products in Tokopedia.

In addition to the direct impact, **social media marketing activities** significantly impact purchase intention through customer relationships. Different from the results of the study by Gautam and Sharma (2017), which showed the full mediation of customer relationships, the result of this study indicates that customer relationships partially mediate the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention. Despite the differences, both studies showed that when mediated by customer relationships, **social media marketing activities have a higher influence on purchase intention** than their direct effect without customer relationships. This means that customer relationships hold an important role in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention. When the content in a brand's social media platform fosters a stronger relationship between the brand and its customers, **the impact of social media marketing activities on purchase intention will be more profound.**

Tokopedia's Instagram campaigns can help to connect with customers and share information about Tokopedia's products and services. This interaction develops intimacy and trust between Tokopedia and its customers, thus strengthening customer relationships. Subsequently, after strong customer relationships are established, the likelihood that customers will recall the details about Tokopedia will improve and, as a result, customers will be more inclined to make a purchase. It is important to note that integrating an e-commerce brand's social media marketing efforts focusing on customer relationships (intimacy and trust) will help an e-commerce brand pinpoint its consumers' purchase intention (Gautam & Sharma, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of Tokopedia Indonesia, this study assesses how customer relationships mediate the influence of social media marketing activities on purchase intention. The findings indicate that social media marketing activities directly and indirectly impact purchase intention via customer relationships. Notably, **the impact of social media marketing activities on purchase intention** is stronger when customer relationships serve as a mediator, exceeding the observed direct impact.

The finding of this research implies that the e-commerce sector should utilize social media platforms to build relationships with its customers. Companies should provide comprehensive and up-to-date information about their products and interact with their customers through likes and comments. When customers feel they get the information they need from the companies' social media platforms, they will build trust and feel intimate with the companies. As a result, when they need to buy something, they will remember the companies and the probability of buying from them will be bigger.

Despite the significant relationship found in this research, there is room for further improvements.

First, further research can try to analyze the impact of each dimension of social media marketing activities on purchase intention, since this research only focused on social media marketing as a whole. Second, future research could consider replicating a similar research model in other countries with cultures and behaviors different from those in Indonesia. This is because cultural differences have been proven to influence the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies (Khan, Dongping, & Wahab, 2016).

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