

## How Do Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity Drive Consumer Purchasing Decisions in the Food Industry?

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### ABSTRACT

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**Objectives:** To create a solid and well-liked brand in the minds of consumers, businesspeople use Social Media Marketing to convey their messages. However, few studies have examined the impact of social media marketing and brands on purchase decisions. Prior studies use brand trust as a mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. Meanwhile, Brand Equity as a way to express brand image and brand awareness has not received much attention as a determining factor in the relationship between social media marketing and purchasing decisions. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of social media marketing activities in influencing purchase decisions of the food industry (fried chicken) and the role of brand equity as a mediator in the relationship.

**Methodology:** This study adopted descriptive quantitative research methods. The population comprises customers who frequently buy fried chicken in Indonesia and are selected using nonprobability and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using an online survey of 301 respondents. The partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypotheses.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that social media marketing activities (entertainment, interaction, customization, trendiness, and e-WOM) have a positive and significant effect on brand equity. Brand equity, consisting of brand image and awareness, also positively and significantly affects purchase decisions. Moreover, the results suggest that brand equity positively and significantly mediates the effect of social media marketing activities on purchase decisions.

**Conclusion:** This study contributes to the marketing literature by using social media marketing activity variables to examine their effects on brand equity and purchase decisions in the fried chicken context. According to the study's findings, brands that engage in social media marketing activities can improve consumer purchasing decisions in Indonesia's food industry. The results of this study imply that fried chicken business owners increase the intensity of their content on social media to provide product information, tips and tricks, games or quizzes, and interactions with consumers to increase traffic, brand image, and brand awareness. Fried chicken business owners can also use social media to ask for feedback and reviews from customers who have purchased their branded products. Reviews and testimonials from previous customers influence the purchasing decisions of potential customers who buy the brand's products.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing Activities; Brand Equity; Purchase Decision, Food Industry

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Submitted: 26-04-2024

Revised: 26-02-2025

Accepted: 26-02-2025

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### Article Doi:

[http://dx.doi.org/10.22441/jurnal\\_mix.2025.v15i1.004](http://dx.doi.org/10.22441/jurnal_mix.2025.v15i1.004)

## INTRODUCTION

The study of purchasing decisions has been widely conducted because it helps businesses adapt marketing strategies, product offerings, and customer experiences to meet consumer needs and preferences effectively. Hanaysha (2022) revealed various aspects of buying decisions, including as the product purchased, the time and channel of purchased, the brand and model bought, the payment method, and the total amount paid. Consumers' perceptions of brands and products, their shopping experiences, and a product's ability to satisfy them influence their purchasing decisions. Even though purchase decisions are a determining factor in satisfying consumers, there are only a few studies on purchase decisions; most of the studies conducted are limited to purchase intentions.

Because brands are one of the main considerations for consumers when making purchasing decisions, studying the influence of brands on purchasing decisions is a major concern for entrepreneurs, especially marketing managers (Aaker, 1995; Adam, 2016; Godey et al., 2016; Masa'deh et al., 2021). Brand equity mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intentions, indicating its crucial role in the consumer decision-making process (Ahmed et al., 2023; Schivinski et al., 2022; Majeed et al., 2021;). To create a solid and well-liked brand in the minds of consumers, businesspeople use Social Media Marketing to convey their messages. However, few studies have examined the impact of social media marketing and brands on purchase decisions. Prior studies use brand trust as a mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions (Hanaysha, 2022). Meanwhile, Brand Equity as a way to express brand image and brand awareness has not received much attention as a determining factor in the relationship between social media marketing and purchasing decisions.

Social media plays a crucial role in online marketing because it is an important tool for introducing goods and communicating information about brands and products to consumers (Baum et al., 2019; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Businesses and entrepreneurs take advantage of this by setting up social media platforms for their business ventures (Seo et al., 2020). This may subsequently influence a product's brand image and brand awareness (Cheung et al., 2019). Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWoM), trends, entertainment, personalization, and interaction represent a few of the activities that compose social media marketing.

Social media and other Internet services have made it simple for people to connect and communicate with people worldwide. Of the 7,910 billion people on the planet, 4.62 billion use social media regularly, according to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2022). By 2022, 68.9% of Indonesia's population—or 191.4 million people—will be active social media users, with an average daily usage time of three hours and seventeen minutes. Based on social insiders (2022), compared to other industries, the food industry is at the top ranks in terms of social media engagement, with numbers perpetually increasing each year. Data from We Are Social and Hootsuite (2021) supported this finding; it was found that the food and self-care industry had quite significant growth in terms of revenue in 2020, amassing up to 41% growth in a single year. Globally, these two industries have earned an annual revenue of over 400 billion USD. (Kemp, Digital 2021: Global Overview Report, 2021).

Statistics for Indonesia also reflect global trends. In 2016, the revenue of the Food and Beverage market in Indonesia reached 10.43 billion USD, and this number then increased to 11.50 billion USD the next year, followed by a significant increase in 2018 to 59.9 billion USD (Barantum, 2019). Among the staple food products in Indonesia is chicken, which has proven to be a massive and lucrative market in the food industry. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (2020) showed that the level of chicken consumption in Indonesia reached 12.79 kilograms per capita by the end of the year, which included various kinds of chicken products available in the market. Nevertheless, there are no empirical studies on the social media marketing initiatives used by this sector, despite Indonesia's steadily rising chicken consumption and the chicken industry's perpetual growth. Therefore, our study aims to empirically investigate the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase decisions mediated by brand equity in Indonesian fried chicken consumption.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Purchase Decision.** Purchase decisions are the process or stage in which consumers decide to buy goods or services. Consumer purchase decisions can be interpreted as a process of social events and data management, where the selection and evaluation of the best options are carried out to make buying decisions that can answer the problem or consumer needs (Prasad & Jha, 2014). Consumers make decisions about buying by choosing from a variety of options available to them.

**Brand Equity.** One of the most essential elements of brand management, both academically and practically, is brand equity (Yang et al., 2015). Aaker (1995) states that brand equity is the primary asset that helps sustain the company or business. It is typically referred to as the entirety of the assets and liabilities connected to a brand, such as names and logos. According to Kim et al. (2008), brand equity is the personal and implicit opinion of a brand by consumers. Brand equity is the added value that comes with a product or service and represents the thoughts, feelings, and actions of customers who use a brand and are proud of it (Keller, 1993). Four components comprise brand equity: perceived brand quality, brand associations, brand awareness, and brand image. However, as part of brand equity, this study only focuses on brand awareness and brand image (Masa'deh et al., 2021).

**Brand Awareness.** As it is a vital and essential starting point for developing consumer loyalty through the introduction of a brand generated by consumers' brand awareness, brand awareness is frequently viewed as a fundamental concept for brand equity (Sen, 1999). Building brand equity begins with adding consumer awareness of the brand (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness is defined as consumers' capacity to identify and recall a brand. Additionally, when consumers develop brand awareness, the likelihood that they will choose and purchase the brand increases because they are aware of and remember it.

**Brand Image.** According to Keller (1993), a brand image is a collection of related memories associated with a brand in the minds of consumers; it illustrates how the brand is recognized in the minds of consumers. According to (Aaker, 1995) a brand possesses brand equity when consumers are aware of it, perceive it differently, and think highly of it. Brand image influences consumer decisions when selecting goods or brands (Cretu and Brodie, 2007). A brand's image influences the mindset and behavior of its customers (Song et al., 2019). Positive impressions

of the brand impact consumers' perceptions of quality and satisfaction. Thus, businesses must manage their brand image. Brand image can also be seen as a major factor in increasing consumer trust and commitment, which will increase consumer loyalty to the brand (Chen & Ching, 2007). Therefore, from the perspective of market competition, forming a brand with a strong image can increase brand competitiveness (Severi and Ling, 2013).

**Social Media.** Social networks are online groups of people who share ideas, opinions, comments, and interests. Richter and Koch (2007) further defined social networks as online application platforms, programs, or media that help with communication, teamwork, or sharing of content. In addition, social media refers to the Internet and mobile devices that facilitate information sharing and exchange, assist in producing content for users, or link users to online communities such as Wikipedia, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram (Dewing, 2012). Recently, social media has emerged as one of the most effective tools for business owners to establish relationships and earn the trust of their clients to create a unique brand identity (Münch et al., 2021; Yeshua-Katz & Hård af Segerstad, 2020). The identity of a brand gains value from consumer interaction on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter when used in marketing strategies.

**Entertainment.** According to Shao (2009) and Seo et al. (2020), entertainment is the main attraction of using social media and is characterized as the enjoyment and fulfillment derived from using it. Entertainment is a valuable tool for influencing consumer attitudes, particularly those related to social media engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). As such, it can be consistently utilized to positively influence positive brand perceptions. Simultaneously, content would draw consumers' attention, even though the reasons for using social media may be unique to one's preferences and identity (Manthiou et al., 2014). Previous studies have also illustrated that when consumers love entertaining content on social media platforms, positive experiences for consumers could be created, which may lead customers to recognize and remember certain brands all the more (Keller, 1993; Liu & Arnett, n.d.; Münch et al., 2021).

**Customization.** Customization is the process of social media connecting users' needs and views to improve a brand's bond with its audience. This strategy boosts customer loyalty and communicates the distinctiveness of branding (Martin & McManus, 2015; Martin & Todorov, 2010). According to previous research, social media customization refers to the extent to which services can be offered and modified to suit user preferences (Godey et al., 2016). According to Martin and Todorov (2010), customization enables businesses to offer exclusivity in their brands and enhance customer preferences. Furthermore, customization provides companies with a way to address customer issues on an individual basis and make use of tailored messages, services, and advertisements to add value to a specific group of people (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Zhu & Chen, 2015). For example, companies can build customer satisfaction by directly answering consumers' personal questions (Chan & Guillet, 2011).

**Interaction.** Social media relies substantially on interactions to allow users to share ideas and information. Customers will form a bond through the interaction, which will encourage them to continue searching for information (Colliander et al., 2015; Godey et al., 2016). Social media interaction occurs when users express their opinions on these platforms, connect with others who share those views, and trade viewpoints about particular brands or products. In other words, interaction can be defined as the forum for conversation, two-way communication, and

information sharing offered by social media platforms (Dessart et al., 2015; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). Consumer online interaction is a term used to describe the simple act of many businesses encouraging their customers to share their buying experiences on social media platforms (So et al., 2017). Social media overcomes the constraints of time and space by enabling companies to communicate with customers and deepen their relationships (Mersey et al., 2010).

**Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM).** Informal consumer communication, or EWOM, is an effective form of marketing that can greatly influence consumer brand choices (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; So et al., 2017). According to several recent research studies, consumer interest in a product or brand can be influenced by Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), and this has a big impact on brand equity. In addition, distinct scenarios show how EWOM generally influences the entire consumer decision-making process (Vahdat et al., 2020).

**Trendiness.** The rate at which information is current and relevant enough to be shared on social media platforms is referred to as trendiness'. According to Godey et al. (2016), trendiness also refers to having the most recent and updated information about a service or product. Trending information is the most recent information available regarding a brand or product, customer reviews, and creative ideas. It helps increase positive consumer awareness of the brand or product and fosters consumer brand trust (Godey et al., 2016; Manthiou et al., 2014). Based on earlier research, consumers are more likely to believe in information about products they find on social media compared to what they believe in the information they find on traditional media because social media is considered to have the most recent and useful information. Customers are more likely to trust brands when they are familiar with topics that are popular and in-vogue among their peers on social media platforms (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Chang et al., 2019; Hinz et al., 2011; Laroche et al., 2013).

## **Hypotheses Development**

### **Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Equity**

The primary feature of social media is that it can be used anywhere and at any time. This indicates that, in contrast to company-led one-sided communication, social media with active participation and aggressive consumers will have a greater impact on how consumers behave or think about the brand (Aaker, 1995; Keller, 1993). Brand equity occurs when a customer knows the brand, allowing them to maintain a favorable and unique impression of the brand. Given the significance of social media marketing, many business owners are beginning to use social media to communicate and make essential advertisements visible to establish a strong, likable brand image and raise consumer awareness of the brand. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant impact on Brand Equity

### **Brand Equity and Purchase Decision**

According to Aaker (1995), brand equity can raise or lower a product's value for customers. Consumers may discover, keep, and evaluate information about a product or brand with the help of brand equity. Consumer confidence in decisions to buy based on previous performance and trust in the brand and its attributes can also be influenced by brand equity. Researchers discovered that brand equity is an important factor in enhancing consumer purchasing

decisions, which is corroborated by research done by Kamatchi and Sukumaran (2015) regarding the impact of brand equity on consumer buying decisions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Brand Equity has a positive and significant impact on Purchase Decision

### **Purchase Decision and Social Media Marketing Activities**

The quick rise in social media's appeal among customers and companies is altering how people conduct business and the market (Nambisan & Baron, 2007). The degree of communication on social media increases in tandem with the amount of time and interaction that consumers spend on these platforms (Hutter et al., 2013; Islam et al., 2018; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). Customers have the power to shape the branding process (Hutter et al., 2013). As social media expands in popularity and power, businesses have begun to operate on these platforms (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). Individual lifestyles and businesses carrying out activities on digital platforms have been reshaped through social media (Ngai et al., 2015). Increased attendance, as well as the participation of consumers in social media, provides opportunities at the same time and challenges for businesses because of today's consumer buying decisions based on direct interactions on social media (Hutter et al., 2013). Supported by research conducted by (Handi et al., 2018; Haudi et al., 2022) related to the influence of social media on buying decisions consumers, researchers found that social media marketing is an important factor that influences consumers in terms of purchasing decisions which is due to the high level of use of social media. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Social Media Marketing Activities has a positive and significant impact on Purchase Decision

### **Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Equity, and Purchase Decision**

Researchers found that brand awareness has a positive and significant influence in mediating the effects of social media marketing on purchase decisions, based on research by Angelyn & Kodrat (2021) regarding the influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions with brand awareness as a mediation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand Equity has a positive and significant effect in mediating Social Media Marketing Activities and Purchase Decision

The research model is shown in Figure 1.

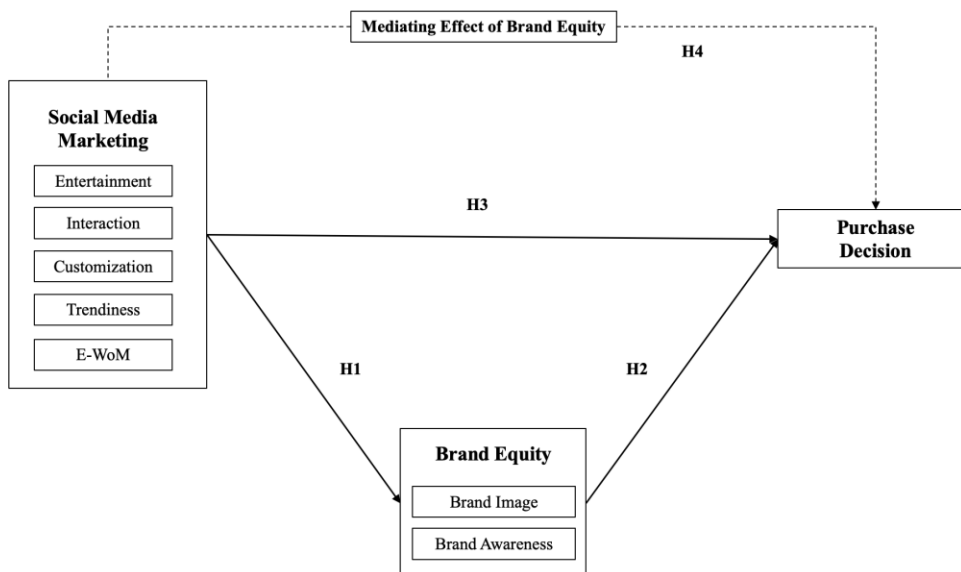


Figure 1: Research Model

## METHOD

The research methodology utilized in this study was quantitative research. One way to conceptualize quantitative research is as an approach that makes use of statistical analysis and data (Prabowo & Sriwidadi, 2024). This research was designed to investigate the relationship between the variables of social media marketing activities (entertainment, interaction, customization, trendiness, and E-WoM), brand equity (brand image and brand awareness), and purchase decisions using a descriptive-quantitative research method.

The population of this study comprises all customers who frequently buy fried chicken in Indonesia and are selected using non-probability and purposive sampling techniques. Referring to the theory of Hair et al. (2014), which explains that a minimum ratio of 5:1 to 10:1 is used for sample calculation, where  $N = 5$  to  $10$  multiplied by the number of indicators, then in this study the number of samples used is  $10 \times 30$  indicators (question items) so that a total sample of 301 is obtained and purposive sampling is applied in this study because the target sample has specific criteria. The respondents in this study were those who had bought fried chicken and were domiciled in Indonesia.

To test the hypotheses and analyze the complex relationship simultaneously, this research used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). It also uses causal-predictive analysis, as described by Hair et al. (2019). A structural model was used for testing the hypotheses, while a measurement model was used to confirm validity and reliability. This study uses a higher-order construct approach because the social media marketing and brand equity variables have sub-variables. We used SmartPLS 4.0, a statistical software package. We used

SmartPLS 4.0, a statistical analysis tool appropriate for PLS-SEM models, to test our hypotheses. PLS-SEM is a multivariate method that can be used to simultaneously describe latent variables and different measured variables in a set of equations to describe the structure of interrelationships between them.

### **Participants and Data Collection Tools**

A total of 301 respondents were assigned a link to the online survey. The survey was divided into eight sections totaling 30 questions on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagreed and 5 being strongly agreed), which applied to all variables. Seven questions in the first section of the questionnaire assessed personal information about respondents, which is useful in determining their demographic profiles. The second section comprises five questions, which measure entertainment, following Masa'deh et al. (2021) and Cheung et al. (2019). Three questions measuring interaction are presented in the third section, which is based on research by Cheung et al. (2019) and A. J. Kim & Ko, (2012). To evaluate trendiness, the fourth section includes three questions that are based on research by (Cheung et al., 2019; Godey et al., 2016; Masa'deh et al., 2021). Five questions make up the fifth section, which measures customization (Cheung et al., 2019; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). Four questions measuring EWOM are included in the sixth section, which is based on Cheung et al. (2019) and A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012; Masa'deh et al., 2021; Seo & Park, 2018). The seventh section comprises five questions that measure brand image (Masa'deh et al., 2021). The eighth section comprised four questions, which measured brand awareness (Masa'deh et al., 2021). Finally, six questions comprise the ninth section, which measures purchase decisions following the findings of (Aji et al. (2020) and Hong et al. (2013).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Table 1 displays the results of the online questionnaire regarding respondent profiles. This included information on age, gender, profession, place of residence, income, and amount of time spent on social media. Additionally, a filtering question was included in the questionnaire, asking respondents if they followed the fried chicken brand on social media. Of those who responded, 91.6% said they did so. This indicates that out of 301 respondents, only 275 were eligible to be included in our study.



**Table 1** Demographic Profile (n = 301)

Characteristics	Items	Total	Percentage (%)
Age	< 15 years old	19	6.3
	15 – 25 years old	169	56.1
	26 – 41 years old	47	15.6
	42 – 57 years old	38	12.6
	> 57 years old	28	9.3
Gender	Male	118	39.2
	Female	183	60.8
Occupation	Employee	137	45.5
	Entrepreneur	21	6.9
	Student/College student	124	41.2
	Housewife	19	6.3
Domicile	Java	142	47.1
	Sumatera	64	21.2
	Kalimantan	31	10.3
	Sulawesi	38	12.6
	Papua	26	8.6
Income	< Rp1,000,000	49	16.2
	Rp1,000,000 – Rp2,999,999	104	34.5
	Rp3,000,000 – Rp4,999,999	67	22.2
	> Rp5,000,000	81	26.9
Time to access social media	< 1 hour	22	7.3
	1 – 3 hours	61	20.2
	3 – 5 hours	121	40.2
	> 5 hours	97	32.2

Of the 301 respondents we had before the filtering process, 56.1% were between the ages of 15 and 25, 15.6% were between the ages of 26 and 41, 12.6% were between the ages of 42 and 57, 9.3% were older than the age of 57, and a small percentage (6.3%) were under the age of 15. Of the respondents, 39.2% were men and 60.8% were women. The respondents' occupations were dominated by employees (45.5%), followed by students or college students (41.2%). A significant majority of respondents lived in Java (47.1%). The majority of our respondents earned a monthly income of Rp 1.000.000–Rp 2.999.999 (34.5%), with time to access social media of around 3-5 hours (40.2%).

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics, Construct Validity and Reliability Results (Lower Order)

Variable	Item	Mean	LF	CA	CR	AVE
Customization	C1	4.209	0.852	0.795	0.795	0.709
	C2	4.319	0.828			
	C3	4.286	0.846			
Entertainment	E1	4.206	0.823	0.872	0.873	0.661
	E2	4.040	0.789			
	E3	4.153	0.845			
	E4	4.140	0.797			
	E5	3.904	0.811			
E-WoM	EW1	4.056	0.847	0.826	0.829	0.742
	EW2	4.389	0.851			
	EW3	4.173	0.886			
Interaction	I1	3.944	0.788	0.775	0.775	0.691
	I2	4.296	0.832			
	I3	4.166	0.872			
Trendiness	T1	4.385	0.860	0.791	0.792	0.706
	T2	4.216	0.843			
	T3	4.196	0.816			
Brand Awareness	BA1	3.977	0.818	0.754	0.759	0.670
	BA2	4.322	0.865			
	BA3	4.316	0.771			
Brand Image	BI1	4.186	0.762	0.857	0.861	0.637
	BI2	4.243	0.803			
	BI3	4.166	0.826			
	BI4	4.146	0.837			
	BI5	4.355	0.761			
Purchase Decision	PD1	4.153	0.717	0.833	0.843	0.600
	PD2	4.189	0.718			
	PD3	4.249	0.775			
	PD4	4.213	0.812			
	PD5	4.342	0.844			

To examine every variable item according to survey responses, this research used descriptive statistics, as shown in Table 2. Regarding the social media marketing activities variable, item C2 (social media provides the information I need) had the highest mean value of 4.3855. For the brand equity variable, both items BI5 (The brand has an image that is different from other brands) and BA2 (I have always been brand conscious) have the highest mean values of 4.4109. Furthermore, for the purchase decision variable, item PD5 (Interacting with social media helps me in making decisions to buy products) had the highest mean value of 4.3636. The respondents strongly agreed with the statements made in each variable by the preceding items, as indicated by these high mean numbers.

Based on Table 3, the higher-order construct is measured to check the validity and reliability of the Social Media Marketing and brand equity variables. As a result, each dimension of the Social Media Marketing and brand equity variables produces a convergent validity value of more than 0.70. Likewise, the AVE value for the Social Media Marketing and brand equity variables is greater than 0.50. In measuring reliability, the Social Media Marketing and brand equity variables produced Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values > 0.70. Therefore,

it can be concluded that the higher-order construct measurement model meets the requirements for validity and reliability.

**Table 3** Construct Validity and Reliability Results (Higher Order)

Higher Order	Lower Order	LF	CA	CR	AVE
Brand Equity	Brand Awareness	0.859	0.877	0.879	0.540
	Brand Image	0.945			
Social Media Marketing	Customization	0.840	0.942	0.942	0.518
	Entertainment	0.892			
	EWoM	0.851			
	Interaction	0.852			
	Trendiness	0.861			

**Table 4** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	BA	BI	CUS	EW	Ent	Int	PD	TR
BA	0.819							
BI	0.644	0.798						
Cus	0.617	0.557	0.842					
EW	0.489	0.658	0.636	0.862				
Ent	0.537	0.650	0.617	0.703	0.813			
Int	0.487	0.591	0.632	0.676	0.744	0.831		
PD	0.710	0.601	0.683	0.565	0.590	0.530	0.775	
TR	0.630	0.538	0.796	0.665	0.656	0.638	0.688	0.840

The latent construct was measured using measurement techniques in validity and reliability tests. A model is considered valid Hair et al. (2019) if the square root of the AVE value in the test indicates that the factor loading value in the concurrent validity test is greater than 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5. The highest correlation value was less than the discriminant validity. Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.7, and the composite reliability value can be used to assess test reliability. Table 2 shows that two items on the social media marketing activities variable and two items on the brand equity variable had factor loading values below the 0.7 thresholds, respectively, based on the validity and reliability tests that were conducted. Hair et al. (2019) state that sample size may have an impact on the factor loading significance level. For instance, if the sample of respondents is 50, a factor loading of 0.75 is considered significant; however, if the sample is 100, a factor loading exceeding 0.55 is considered significant. Because the sample size in this study was 275 people, and the significant factor loading level was greater than 0.35, all variables in this study can be considered valid and reliable. It is also supported by an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value greater than 0.5, indicating that all measurement items are valid. Table 2 shows the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7, indicating that the variables included in this study were reliable. This is also supported by the discriminant validity value, which is shown in Table 4 by examining the Fornell-Larcker Criteria value, demonstrating that the AVE root value for each variable is greater than the correlation between variables. As a result, discriminant validity was accepted, and the data could now be used to test the hypotheses using a structural model.

Through the results of testing the coefficient of determination (R-Square) and hypothesis (significance value), the structural model examines the latent variables and their relationship with the SEM model. According to Table 4, the coefficient of determination of social media

marketing activities on brand equity is 0.648, meaning that social media marketing activities can explain 64.8% of the brand equity variables, while the remaining 35.2% can be explained by variables outside of this study. Table 4 also shows that the coefficient of determination of social media marketing activities and brand equity on purchase decisions is 0.613, indicating that predetermined variables explain 61.3% of the purchase decision variables, and variables not included in the study explain the remaining 38.7%.

**Table 5** R-Square and F-Square Values of Brand Equity and Purchase Decision

	R <sup>2</sup>	Decision	F <sup>2</sup>	Decision
Brand Equity' -> Purchase Decision	0.576	Moderate	0.178	Moderate
Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decision			0.169	Moderate
Social Media Marketing -> Brand Equity'	0.554	Moderate	1.244	Lower

Hair et al. (2019) used a 95% confidence level, a t-value of 1.96, and a significant hypothesis if the t-statistic is greater than 1.96. According to the results of hypotheses testing in Table 5, four hypotheses were accepted.

**Table 6** Hypothesis Testing Results

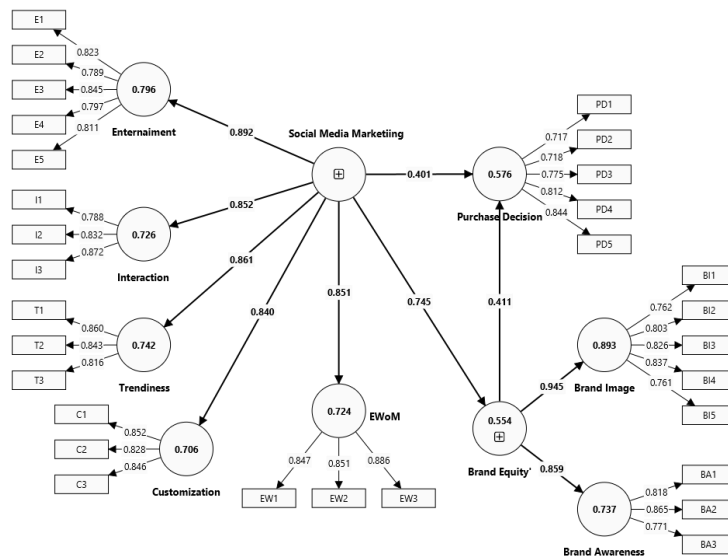
Path	STD	STDEV	VIF	T statistics	P values
Brand Equity -> Purchase Decision	0.411	0.059	2.244	6.994	0.000
Social Media Marketing -> Brand Equity	0.745	0.033	1.000	22.865	0.000
Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decision	0.401	0.060	2.244	6.711	0.000

Table 6 shows that the indirect influence of social media marketing activities and brand equity on purchase decisions has a higher path coefficient value than the direct influence of social media marketing activities on purchase decisions. Thus, brand equity serves as a bridge between social media marketing activities and purchase decisions, and its effect is greater when mediated.

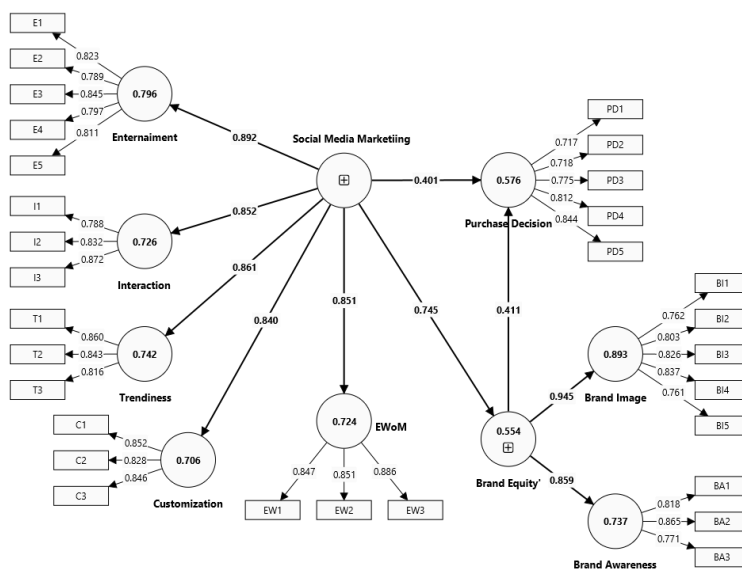
The final step of PLS-SEM testing was to test the strength of the predictive model from the empirical model. This study used a cross-validated predictive ability (CVPAT) approach to test the strength of the prediction model. In Table 7, it can be seen that the p-value for each construct and overall produces a value of <0.05, so it can be concluded that the model has a good predictive value.

**Tabel 7** The Cross-Validated Predictive Ability (CVPAT)

	PLS loss	IA loss	Average loss difference	p value
Brand Awareness	0.576	0.790	-0.214	0.000
Brand Image	0.485	0.701	-0.215	0.000
Customization	0.265	0.530	-0.265	0.000
EWoM	0.311	0.676	-0.365	0.000
Entertainment	0.325	0.679	-0.354	0.000
Interaction	0.333	0.668	-0.335	0.000
Purchase Decision	0.476	0.675	-0.199	0.000
Trendiness	0.267	0.558	-0.292	0.000
Overall	0.417	0.679	-0.262	0.000



**Figure 2:** Inner Model



**Figure 3:** Outer Model

## Discussion

Our hypothesis testing results show that there are significant relationships between the research variables used, specifically between social media marketing activities, brand equity, and purchase decisions. According to the outcome of the first hypothesis (H1), social media marketing activities have a positive and significant impact on brand equity. This test's results are consistent with previous research by Cheung et al., 2019; Godey et al., 2016; Masa'deh et al., 2021; and Seo & Park, 2018, which discovered a positive and significant relationship between social media marketing activities and brand equity. Based on the findings of the second hypothesis (H2), brand equity has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. The results of this test are consistent with those of previous studies conducted by (Kamatchi and Sukumaran (2015) and Keh et al. (2007), which found a positive and significant relationship between brand equity and purchase decisions. The outcomes of the third hypothesis (H3) show that social media marketing activities have a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions. The results of this test are consistent with those of previous research by Hasan and Sohail (2020), who found a positive and significant relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase decisions. The fourth hypothesis (H4) reveals that brand equity has a positive and significant influence as a mediator between social media marketing activities and purchase decisions. The results of this test are consistent with those of previous studies by Angelyn and Kodrat (2021), which indicated that brand awareness has a positive and significant influence as a mediator between social media marketing activities and purchasing decisions.

This study is useful in the development of scientific research for universities and businesses, particularly in terms of the relationship between social media marketing activities and consumer purchase decisions, with brand equity acting as a mediating factor. The findings of this study will provide future researchers with new knowledge and understanding. However, the findings of this study can be used to support and reinforce reference theory.

Some specific strategies about the influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions mediated by brand equity can be applied to fried chicken brands. (1) Building a consistent and engaging brand voice by creating a distinctive, fun, and relatable voice for the brand on social media. Whether the tone is humorous, warm, or bold, consistency across platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) will help reinforce brand identity and increase customer recall. A strong brand voice helps differentiate fried chicken brands from competitors. Consumers are more likely to remember and trust a brand with a clear, consistent message, which positively impacts brand equity. (2) Leverage User-Generated Content (UGC) to encourage customers to share photos, videos, and reviews of their meals, creating a branded hashtag (e.g., #FriedChickenLovers). Offer incentives, such as discounts or shout-outs, for content. UGC not only boosts engagement but also builds trust, as potential customers trust authentic peer reviews more than branded advertisements. UGC also fosters a sense of community and increases brand loyalty and equity.

The influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions mediated by brand equity aligns with many global practices, although it also emphasizes specific elements tailored to consumer behavior in the food industry. Companies like McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and Nike exemplify global best practices by maintaining a consistent, recognizable brand voice and

aesthetic across all channels. These brands ensure that their social media presence mirrors their brand's values and messaging, fostering a strong emotional connection with customers. Food (fried chicken) brands can benefit from maintaining consistency in tone, message, and visual elements across all platforms, just like global leaders, to enhance brand recognition and trust. Starbuck and Burger King use user-generated content (UGC) and collaborate with influencers regularly to expand their reach. Leveraging influencers and UGC is a universal best practice that fried chicken brands can adopt. Global brands such as Coca-Cola and Red Bull excel in creating interactive and engaging content that goes beyond traditional advertising. Food (fried chicken) brands should actively encourage two-way communication and create shareable, fun, or emotional experiences that resonate with their audiences. This could include challenges, limited-edition items, or playful campaigns.

The results of this study can be effectively generalized to other food industry segments and broader digital marketing strategies. For brands in premium, organic, or health-focused food sectors (e.g., organic snacks, plant-based foods, or gourmet products), building brand equity through social media requires emphasizing transparency, authenticity, and sustainability. Social media strategies that build trust, such as showcasing how ingredients are sourced or the environmental impact of products, are crucial for these segments. For larger grocery chains or health product brands, creating engaging, educational content that highlights product benefits (e.g., nutritional value, sourcing practices) or recipes will help build brand equity. Influencers can play a significant role in recommending products in ways that feel organic and relatable. Building brand equity through social media is critical in all sectors. Regardless of the specific category, consumers tend to trust brands they recognize and those that consistently deliver high-quality, authentic content. Brand consistency, emotional appeal, and clear value propositions are universally important.

## CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this research is to examine the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions in the fried chicken industry, as mediated by brand equity, using people who have purchased fried chicken products and followed the social media accounts of fried chicken brands as the study object. The respondents are dominated by employees aged 15-25 years who live in Java with a middle economic class and regularly access social media in their daily lives and follow the social media of fried chicken brand(s). According to the findings of this study, social media marketing activities have a positive and significant impact on brand equity. The findings indicate that if a brand is active in social media marketing, it can increase brand awareness and brand image in consumers' minds. Brand equity positively and significantly influences purchase decisions. The findings indicate that brand equity (brand awareness and brand image) can increase consumer purchasing decisions. Social media marketing activities also have a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions. According to this study's findings, brands that engage in social media marketing activities can improve consumer purchasing decisions, and brand equity has a positive and significant influence as a mediator in linking social media marketing activities and purchase decisions. The findings indicate that brands that engage in social media marketing activities can increase brand equity owned by the brand, thereby increasing consumer purchasing decisions. This study also discovered that brand equity has a marginally greater influence on purchase decisions than social media marketing.

Concerning the conclusions drawn from this study, social media marketing activities, brand equity, and purchase decisions play important roles and influence one another. This research is expected to bring benefits to food business owners, especially in the field of fried chicken, to start paying attention to marketing activities from their social media. We recommend that fried chicken food business owners increase their content intensity on social media to provide product information, tips and tricks, games or quizzes, and interactions with consumers to increase traffic, brand image, and brand awareness. Fried chicken restaurant owners can also use social media to solicit feedback and reviews from customers who have purchased their brand's products. Reviews and testimonials from previous customers will influence the purchasing decisions of potential customers who purchase the brand's products.

The findings offer valuable insights for fast-food marketers and brand managers. Some actionable recommendations based on these findings include enhancing brand equity through consistent and positive social media presence, leveraging influencers and user-generated content, developing and engaging content, creating social media campaigns that highlight unique value propositions, monitoring customer feedback and adapting accordingly, using social media ads to reinforce brand identity and loyalty, tracking the impact of social media on brand sentiment and sales, and focusing on transparency and authenticity.

Our study is limited to the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase decisions in the fried chicken industry, which is mediated by brand equity. As a result, we propose that future research should focus on the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing decisions mediated by brand equity in other industries and sub-sectors in Indonesia. We also recommend conducting research with a larger number of respondents or samples, as well as other variables influencing purchasing decisions besides the research variables listed above, to ensure that the resulting data are more valid and accurate. The results of the data survey are expected to be useful for business owners to take the right steps in developing their businesses and products, which will have a positive impact on social media marketing activities, brand equity, and purchase decisions from consumers.

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