

The Influence of Influencer Marketing and Online Customer Reviews on Purchase Decisions with Mediator Brand Image

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Abstract.

This study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions by examining the mediating role of brand image in the context of the TikTok social commerce platform. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of these three variables into a single relationship model on TikTok Shop, which is characterized by video content. This study used a quantitative approach with a purposive sampling method, involving 126 respondents in the Greater Jakarta area who were active users and had made purchases on TikTok Shop. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The results show that influencer marketing and online customer reviews have a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions and brand image. Furthermore, brand image also significantly influences purchase decisions and mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and online customer reviews. These findings indicate that marketing strategies through influencers and customer reviews not only have a direct influence on purchase decisions but also an indirect influence through brand image formation. A strong brand image plays a crucial role in encouraging consumers to make purchase decisions on TikTok Shop.

Keywords: Brand Image, Influencer Marketing, Online Customer Reviews, Purchase Decision, TikTok Shop.

I. INTRODUCTION

Technological developments in the era of globalization have driven significant changes in marketing activities, from conventional to digital marketing[1] Social media facilitates communication between businesses and consumers and serves as a marketing tool for business development. TikTok currently holds the position of one of the most popular social media platforms in various countries, including Indonesia[2]. By combining social media and e-commerce through short videos, TikTok Shop provides an engaging, personalized, and interactive shopping experience for its users[3].

The purchase decision-making process involves combining information and knowledge to evaluate various alternative options before ultimately deciding on a product[4]. To understand how consumers make purchase decisions, it is important to understand how they connect and how much attention they pay to a product or service[5]. Influencers can build emotional connections with their followers, and their success is influenced by credibility, expertise, and attractiveness. Furthermore, online customer reviews, as a form of e-WOM, also play a crucial role, with the quality and credibility of reviewers being a key consideration for consumers. Brand image also represents consumer perceptions of a brand[6].

Previous research has shown that influencer marketing and online customer reviews have a positive influence on purchase decisions[7]. However, most studies only examine direct relationships without considering brand image as a mediator. Study found that purchase decisions are influenced by influencer marketing and online customer reviews on Shopee, while showed that brand image can mediate the influence of e-WOM on purchase decisions[8].

Brand image is a key factor because without positive perceptions, exposure to influencers and reviews does not necessarily drive purchase decisions[9]. Brand image is a key factor that bridges the influence of influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions[10], without a positive brand image, consumer exposure to influencer promotions and user reviews does not

necessarily directly drive purchase decisions, as brand perception first determines the level of trust[11].

Based on the results of previous studies, several research gaps can be identified. First, there is still a lack of research that simultaneously analyzes the variables of influencer marketing, online customer reviews, and brand image in influencing purchase decisions. Second, most previous research focuses on conventional e-commerce platforms like Shopee, while research on social commerce platforms like TikTok Shop, which are based on social media, is still rare. Several previous studies have examined the role of brand image and online customer reviews on purchase decisions using customer trust as a mediator.

However, research specifically examining the role of brand image as a mediator in the relationship between influencer marketing, online customer reviews, and purchase decisions on the TikTok Shop platform is still limited, making it relevant for further investigation[12].

This study aims to comprehensively evaluate the relationship between influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions by considering the mediating role of brand image[13]. This research gap is evident in the limited number of studies analyzing influencer marketing, online customer reviews, and brand image simultaneously, particularly on social commerce platforms like TikTok Shop.

Some studies highlight the role of trust as a mediator [14], but studies of brand image as a mediator in the context of TikTok Shop are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions by considering the role of brand image as a mediator[15].

II. METHODS

This research used a quantitative approach with a descriptive and causal design. The variables studied included Influencer Marketing and Online Customer Reviews as independent variables, Brand Image as a mediator, and Purchase Decision as a dependent variable[16].

Data collection was conducted online via a Google Form questionnaire. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (STS) to Strongly Agree (SS).

The study population was TikTok users aged 18–34 who had shopped at TikTok Shop. The sample was selected using purposive sampling in the Greater Jakarta area. According to Hair et al. (2017), a minimum sample size of 5–10 times the number of questions was used, resulting in 126 respondents.

A pre-test was conducted on 30 respondents, with validity tested using KMO and $MSA \geq 0.5$ and reliability based on Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). The pre-test results showed all constructs were valid and reliable, as indicated by KMO/MSA values above 0.50 and Cronbach's Alpha above 0.50.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0. The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated using outer loadings >0.7 , AVE >0.5 , Cross Loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha >0.7 . The structural model (inner model) was assessed using R-Square and SRMR (<0.10). Hypothesis testing was conducted using path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values through bootstrapping. The hypothesis was accepted if the t-statistic was >1.96 and the p-value <0.05 . The analysis included the direct influence between variables and the mediating role of Brand Image[17].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 126 respondents with diverse demographic characteristics. Based on gender, 61.1% of respondents were female and 38.9% were male. In terms of age, most respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (73.8%), followed by those aged 24 and 34 (26.2%). Based on occupation, most respondents were students (61.1%), followed by private sector employees (26%), entrepreneurs (7.9%), and others (0.5%).

In terms of monthly income, 10.3% had an income of $< 500,000$ IDR (Indonesia Rupiah), 23% had an income of 500,001–Rp 1,000,000 IDR, 19% had an income of IDR 1,000,001– 3,000,000 IDR,

16.7% had an income of Rp 3,000,001–Rp 5,000,000 IDR, and 31% had an income of > 5,000,000 IDR.

Based on the time of the last purchase on TikTok Shop, most respondents (75.4%) did so in the last 1 month, 7.1% in the last 2 months, and 11.9% in the last 3 months. Meanwhile, based on domicile in Indonesia, many respondents came from Jakarta (44.4%), followed by Tangerang (39.7%), Bekasi (9.5%), Bogor (4.8%), and Depok (1.6%).

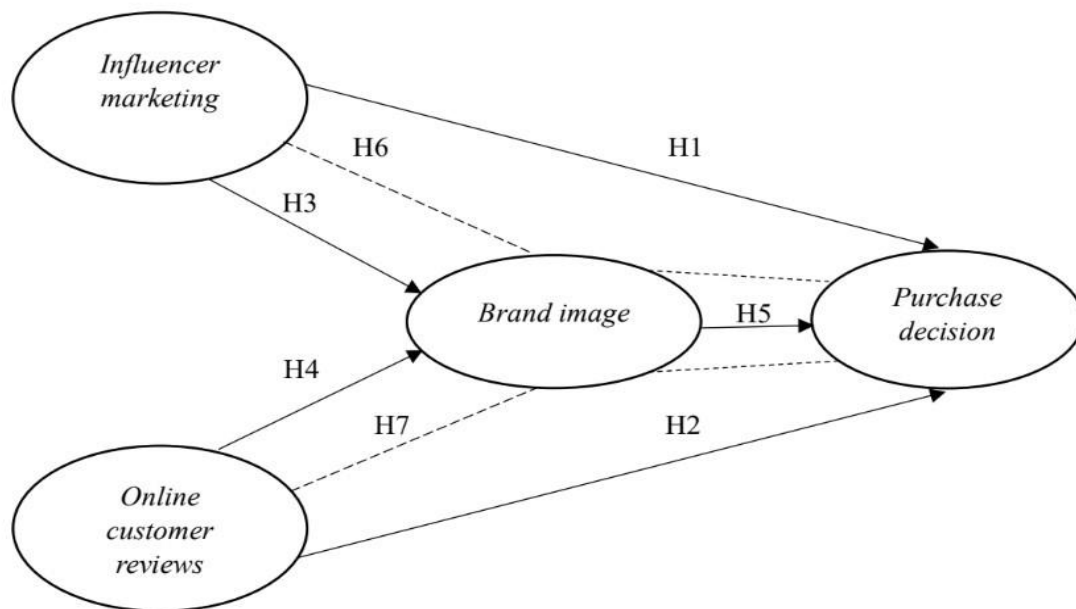


Fig. 1. Model Modification

Variabel	Item	Loading	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability
INFLUENCER MARKETING	IM1	0.881	0.782	0.915
	IM2	0.880		
	IM3	0.892		
ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS	OCR1	0.848	0.695	0.919
	OCR2	0.876		
	OCR3	0.799		
	OCR4	0.805		
	OCR5	0.840		
BRAND IMAGE	BI1	0.793	0.680	0.914
	BI2	0.796		
	BI3	0.847		
	BI4	0.851		
	BI5	0.834		
PURCHASE DECISION	PD1	0.824	0.699	0.921
	PD2	0.859		
	PD3	0.796		
	PD4	0.857		
	PD5	0.844		

Fig. 2. Results of Measurement Model Evaluation

Furthermore, the results of the discriminant validity analysis were conducted by referring to cross-loading. These findings indicate that each construct in this study has met the requirements for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Thus, these constructs are considered suitable for integration into the analyzed structural model.

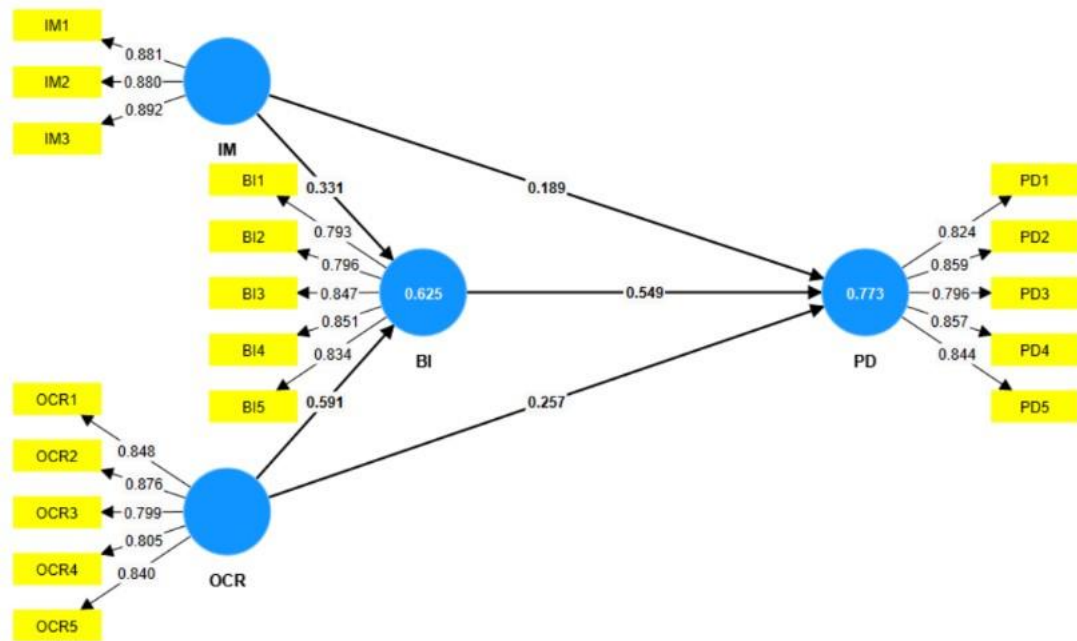


Fig. 3. Path Diagram T-Value

The path diagram analysis yielded an R-squared value of 0.625 for the brand image variable. This indicates that the combination of influencer marketing and online customer reviews explains 62.5% of the variation in brand image, while the remaining 37.5% is influenced by factors outside the model being tested. For the purchase decision variable, the R-squared value was recorded at 0.773. In other words, brand image explains 77.3% of the purchase decision, while the remaining 22.7% is influenced by other variables not included in this analysis. In the hypothesis testing step, a proposition is considered accepted if the T-statistic exceeds the T-table value of 1.96.

The results showed that all hypotheses were significantly accepted, but the degree of influence of the variables varied. Online customer reviews (OCR) on brand image was the strongest pathway with a T-statistic of 9.538, confirming that consumers trust other users' real-life experiences more than influencer promotions. Conversely, the direct influence of influencer marketing on purchase decisions was the lowest (T-statistic of 2.687), thus optimizing influencer effectiveness through brand image building.

	R-square	R-square adjusted
BI	0,625	0,619
PD	0,773	0,767

Fig. 4. R-square

Based on the R-square test results, the R-square value for Brand Image (BI) is 0.625 with an adjusted R-square value of 0.619. This means that the Influencer Marketing and Online Customer Reviews variables together can explain 62.5% of the variation in Brand Image, while the remaining 37.5% is explained by other variables outside the research model.

Meanwhile, the R-square value for Purchase Decision (PD) is 0.773 (this value is seen in the previous discussion although it is not listed in the submitted image), which indicates that the Brand Image, Influencer Marketing, and Online Customer Reviews variables together are able to explain 77.3% of the variation in Purchase Decision, with the remaining 22.7% influenced by other factors outside the model.

	BI	IM	OCR	PD
BI				0,498
IM	0,240			0,104
OCR	0,766			0,135
PD				

Fig. 5. F-square

The f-square test results show that the OCR → BI path has the highest value, at 0.766 (strong category), indicating that online customer reviews have a dominant influence on brand image formation. The BI → PD path has a value of 0.498 (strong category), indicating that brand image is a very important factor in influencing purchase decisions.

Meanwhile, the IM → BI path obtained a value of 0.240 (moderate category), while the IM → PD and OCR → PD paths each had values of 0.135 (moderate category). These values indicate that although influencer marketing and online customer reviews have a direct influence on purchase decisions, their influence is not as strong as when these variables influence purchase decisions through brand image.

Thus, brand image plays a crucial psychological role in transforming digital recommendations into actual purchase decisions. Marketing strategies on TikTok Shop should prioritize building brand image through customer reviews and collaboration with authentic and credible influencers.

IV. CONCLUSION

Referring to the data analysis and previous discussion, this study yields several key conclusions. This study aims to examine the influence of influencer marketing and online customer reviews on purchase decisions, with brand image as a mediating variable among TikTok Shop users in the Greater Jakarta Indonesia area.

Based on the results of a PLS-SEM analysis of 126 respondents, it can be concluded that influencer marketing and online customer reviews have a direct, positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. Furthermore, both influencer marketing and online customer reviews have been shown to significantly improve brand image. A positive brand image also has a strong influence in driving consumer purchase decisions. Brand image significantly mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase decisions, as well as the relationship between online customer reviews and purchase decisions.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing and online customer reviews in driving sales on TikTok Shop is not only transactional but also strategic due to their ability to build and strengthen brand image. The resulting brand image serves as a crucial psychological bridge, transforming exposure to information and recommendations into actual purchases. Therefore, for practitioners, investing in building brand image through influencer strategies and careful review management is a fundamental step towards achieving a competitive advantage on social commerce platforms.

This study was limited to influencer marketing, online customer reviews, brand image, and purchase decision variables, and focused solely on the Greater Jakarta area. Future research is recommended to expand the research area to other areas. Furthermore, future research could replicate this model on different platforms or demographic contexts and consider other variables such as customer trust to deepen our understanding.

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