

The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions with Influencer Marketing as a Moderating Variable on the Tiktok Platform

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness on Purchase Decision, as well as examine the role of Influencer Marketing as a moderating variable among TikTok users in the city of Semarang. The rapid development of social media, particularly TikTok, has opened new opportunities in digital marketing strategies, where the interaction between brands, consumers, and influencers plays a crucial role in the purchasing decision process. This research adopts a quantitative approach using a survey method. Data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to 120 active TikTok users in Semarang who had made purchases after being exposed to promotions on the platform. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. The results indicate that Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision, as well as a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness. Brand Awareness also has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision. Furthermore, Influencer Marketing positively moderates the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decision, thereby strengthening the influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision when supported by effective Influencer Marketing. These findings emphasize that the combination of social media marketing strategies, brand image reinforcement, and the use of relevant influencers can effectively encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions on the TikTok platform in Semarang City.*

Keywords: *Influencer; Marketing; Purchase; Social.*

1. Introduction

Advances in information and communication technology have transformed the way companies market their products. Digitalization has become a major catalyst in transforming marketing strategies, with social media playing a central role in reaching consumers. Social media enables two-way communication, high engagement, and massive information dissemination at a relatively efficient cost. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are

now not only entertainment channels but also key platforms for promotional activities and consumer persuasion.

TikTok, in particular, has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. The platform has captured the attention of millions of users worldwide with its entertaining and interactive short-form video format. According to a 2024 report by Datareportal, TikTok has over 1.2 billion monthly active users globally, with Indonesia being one of the countries with the highest number of users. TikTok has become a very popular platform among younger generations, especially Gen Z and millennials, who tend to be more responsive to visual content and an informal approach.

Amidst this development, a marketing strategy known as influencer marketing has emerged. This strategy involves individuals with significant influence on social media promoting products or services to their audiences. Influencers are considered more authentic and able to create emotional connections with their followers. According to De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), the presence of influencers can increase positive brand perceptions and drive purchase intentions, especially if the influencers are credible and relevant to the product being promoted.

Influencer marketing is becoming an increasingly popular strategy among marketers due to its effectiveness in building consumer trust. Consumers tend to trust recommendations from people they follow and admire on social media more than traditional advertising. Lou and Yuan (2019) stated that the message value and credibility of influencers significantly influence consumer trust and purchase intentions. Therefore, selecting the right influencer is key to successfully influencing purchasing decisions.

Consumer purchasing decisions have undergone a paradigm shift. Previously, these decisions were primarily influenced by formal promotions and direct interaction with products. Now, many consumers base their decisions on reviews, testimonials, and promotional content from influencers. According to Hutter et al. (2013), social media consumers are more susceptible to electronic word of mouth (eWOM), making influencers key players in creating positive perceptions of a product.

However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Semarang has not been extensively scientifically studied. The characteristics of consumers in this city, with their unique cultural backgrounds and lifestyles, may influence how they respond to influencer content. Therefore, studies examining the influence of influencer marketing on local consumers' purchasing decisions are crucial to determine whether this strategy is truly effective in this context.

On the other hand, not all companies in Semarang understand the basic principles of influencer marketing. Many still select influencers solely based on follower count, without considering engagement, brand alignment, and credibility. However, according to Casaló et al. (2020), factors such as authenticity and parasocial relationships between influencers and their followers are key determinants in influencing purchasing decisions.

Considering these practical and academic imperatives, this study aims to empirically examine the influence of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing decisions among TikTok users in Semarang City. This research will not only fill a gap in the literature in the local context but also provide strategic recommendations for marketers and businesses in the region.

2. Research Methods

The type of research used in this study is explanatory research. Explanatory research is a method that aims to explain the relationships between the variables studied and explore the influences between them (Creswell, 2014). This method is suitable for testing the proposed hypothesis, where this research is expected to explain how the independent and dependent variables influence each other, as stated in the hypothesis. With this approach, researchers can provide an in-depth explanation of the dynamics between variables. In the context of this research, the primary focus is on the role of influencer marketing. This study aims to investigate how influencer marketing moderates the influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions on the TikTok platform. In doing so, the researcher hopes to clearly demonstrate the role influencers play in influencing consumers and their decisions on social media, given that TikTok is a platform increasingly popular among young users. The method applied in this research is quantitative, which relies on data presented in numerical form. This quantitative approach allows for statistical analysis to be performed to analyze the data and test the formulated hypotheses. According to Hair et al. (2010), quantitative data is numerically based and is very useful for further analysis, including hypothesis testing and drawing conclusions. This method allows research to produce more objective and measurable results.

3. Results and Discussion

The subjects of this study were TikTok users in Semarang City. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire distributed using Google Forms from July 16 to August 1, 2025. The researchers distributed questionnaires to 140 respondents, and 120 of them returned them. Therefore, the data used in this study came from the responses of 120 respondents.

Table Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Amount	Percentage
Gender:		
Man	47	39.17%
Woman	73	60.83%
Total	100	100%
Age:		
18 – 25 years old	30	25%
26 – 35 years old	69	57.50%
36 – 45 years old	18	15%
36 – 40 years old	3	2.50%
Total	120	100%

Based on Table 60.83% of TikTok users in this study were female, indicating that females tend to prefer the platform. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (57.50%) were between 26 and 35 years old, which is considered a young and productive adult age group.

This study consists of four main variables: Social Media Marketing, Brand Awareness, Influencer Marketing, and Purchase Decisions. Each variable is measured through several indicators outlined in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to provide answers using a Likert scale of 1–10, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 10 indicates strongly agree. To interpret the scores obtained, the following categorization criteria were used:

- 1) High Score → if the total value of the respondent reaches $\geq 80\%$ of the maximum score.
- 2) Medium Score → if the total value is in the range of 60% – 79.99% of the maximum score.
- 3) Low Score → if the total value is $< 60\%$ of the maximum score.

Table Description of Social Media Marketing

Statement	Response Frequency										Index Value	Category
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
I often see a brand's presence on TikTok through regularly published content.						2	25	22	39	32	86.17	Tall
I often come across promotional content being reshared by other users on TikTok.						1	13	29	48	29	87.58	Tall
I've read or participated in discussions in the comments section about a brand on TikTok.						1	13	33	42	31	87.42	Tall
I feel like I'm part of a community of TikTok users who follow a particular brand.						1	16	19	51	33	88.25	Tall
I believe a brand's reputation is influenced by positive reviews and comments on TikTok.							22	19	51	33	87.60	Tall
Average											87.4	Tall

Based on Table it can be seen that respondents' responses to social media marketing on the TikTok platform obtained an average index value of 87.4, indicating that TikTok has a relatively high level of social media marketing strategy implementation. The indicator with the highest value is community, with an index value of 88.25. This finding indicates that interaction and engagement between TikTok users, both among users and between users and creators/brands, is going very well. This high value reflects TikTok's ability to build and maintain close relationships through features such as comments, likes, shares, and challenges that encourage active community participation. This aligns with the characteristics of social media that prioritize engagement and a sense of belonging among its users.

Conversely, the indicator with the lowest score was presence, with an index value of 86.17. This suggests that while TikTok has a fairly strong digital presence, there is still room to improve the intensity and consistency of brand and content exposure on the platform. This relatively low score could be due to suboptimal upload frequency, content variety, or message coherence, thus not fully maximizing audience visibility. Therefore, strategies to increase presence can focus on optimizing viewing algorithms, quickly capitalizing on viral trends, and more intensive collaboration with creators or influencers relevant to the target market.

Reliability testing in PLS is conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the indicators in measuring their constructs. This reliability can be assessed using two main measures: Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA). High CR and CA values indicate that the indicators have good consistency in representing the latent variables. The results of the Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha tests in this study are presented in the following table:

Table Composite Reliability and Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	Information
<i>Social Media Marketing</i>	0.813	0.813	Reliable
<i>Brand Awareness</i>	0.853	0.853	Reliable
<i>Influence Marketing</i>	0.823	0.821	Reliable
<i>Purchase Decision</i>	0.756	0.813	Reliable

Based on the table above, the Composite Reliability value for each latent variable is ≥ 0.70 , indicating a high level of reliability for the model. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha value is also ≥ 0.60 , indicating that all indicators in these variables have good internal consistency and can be considered reliable.

The structural model (inner model) in PLS is evaluated using the R^2 value for the endogenous variables and the path coefficient value, which indicates the extent of the influence of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables. Furthermore, the significance of this

influence is assessed based on the t-statistic value for each path. The structural model in this study can be seen in the following figure:

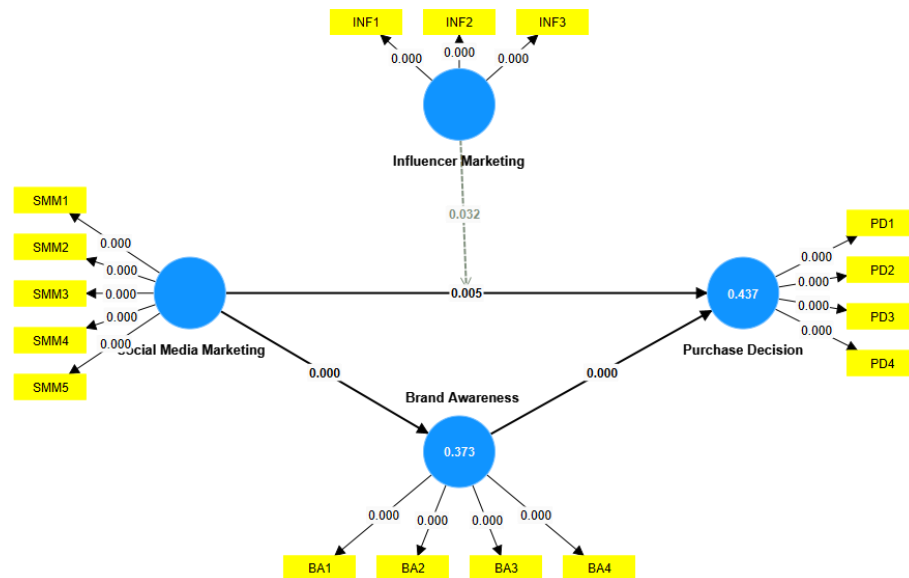


Figure Full Structural Model Partial Least Square (Inner Model)

Based on the image above, it can be explained regarding the results of Rsquare (R^2), f-square (F^2), goodness of fit test, hypothesis test (path coefficient and Specific Indirect Effect).

1) *R-square*(R^2)

The analysis results using SmartPLS 4 show that all variations in the endogenous constructs can be explained by the model through the R-Square (R^2) value. The R^2 value represents the proportion of the endogenous variable variance that can be explained by the exogenous variables in the research model. The higher the R^2 value, the greater the model's ability to explain the phenomenon under study. The R-Square value output for each endogenous variable in this study is presented as follows:

Table R-Square Value

No	Variables	R-Squares
1	Brand Awareness	0.373
2	Purchase Decision	0.437

The table above shows that the brand awareness variable has an R-square value of 0.373. This means that 37.3% of the variation in brand awareness can be explained by social media marketing, while the remaining 62.7% is influenced by factors outside this research model.

Meanwhile, the R-Square value for the purchase decision variable was 0.437. This means that social media marketing, brand awareness, and influencer marketing together explain 43.7% of the variation in purchase decisions, while the remaining 56.3% is influenced by other variables not included in the model.

2) *F-Square*(F^2)

The f^2 value criteria are divided into three categories: 0.02, indicating a small or low influence, 0.15, indicating a moderate or sufficient influence, and 0.35, indicating a large or strong influence (Setiaman, 2023). Based on the f^2 calculation results in this study, an overview of the contribution of each exogenous variable to the endogenous variable being measured is obtained. The f^2 values can be seen in the following table:

Table F-Square Value

Variable Relationship	<i>f-Squares</i>	Substantive influence
<i>Brand Awareness -> Purchase Decision</i>	0.182	Enough
<i>Social Media Marketing -> Brand Awareness</i>	0.594	Big
<i>Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decision</i>	0.099	Small
<i>Influencer Marketing x Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decision</i>	0.044	Small

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the social media marketing variable has a large substantive influence on brand awareness (0.594). Meanwhile, the social media marketing variable has a fairly large substantive influence on purchase decisions (0.182). Furthermore, the social media marketing variable has a small substantive influence on purchase decisions (0.099) and the influence of the social media marketing variable on purchase decisions (0.182). *Influencer Marketing x Social Media Marketing* on Purchase Decision (0.044).

Hypothesis Testing:

1) Direct Influence (Path Coefficient)

Based on the data processing results, these findings were used to test the research hypotheses. Hypothesis testing was conducted by considering the T-statistics and P-values generated from the PLS analysis.

The decision making criteria are as follows:

- The hypothesis is accepted if the T-Statistics value ≥ 1.96 and the P-Values value ≤ 0.05 at a significance level of 5%.
- The hypothesis is rejected if the T-Statistics value is < 1.96 or the P-Values value is > 0.05 .

The complete results of the hypothesis testing can be seen in the following table:

Table Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P values	Decision
H1 <i>Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decision</i>	0.308	2,831	0.005	H1 accepted
H2 <i>Social Media Marketing -> Brand Awareness</i>	0.610	8,472	0,000	H2 accepted
H3 <i>Brand Awareness -> Purchase</i>	0.410	3,617	0,000	H3 is accepted

	<i>Decision</i>					
H4	<i>Influencer Marketing x Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decision</i>	0.124	2,141	0.032		H4 accepted

Based on the data in Table above, it can be explained that of the three hypotheses proposed in this study, the results are as follows:

a. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions

Test results show that social media marketing significantly influences purchase decisions. This means that the more effective the marketing strategy through TikTok, for example through engaging content, responsive interactions, and consistent information, the greater the likelihood of users making a purchase. These findings demonstrate that TikTok is a marketing medium capable of driving consumer purchasing decisions in Semarang.

b. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness

Hypothesis testing proves that social media marketing has a significant impact on brand awareness. This suggests that the better managed social media marketing on TikTok, the higher the level of brand awareness in consumers' minds. A well-planned, creative, and relevant marketing strategy on TikTok can strengthen brand recognition and increase the likelihood of future purchases.

c. The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions

Test results show that brand awareness significantly influences purchase decisions. The higher a consumer's brand awareness, the greater their likelihood of making a purchase. Strong brand recognition can build trust, minimize doubt, and expedite the purchasing decision-making process.

d. The Moderating Effect of Influence Marketing on the Influence of Social Media Marketing Variables on Purchase Decisions

To assess the moderating effect, the results of path analysis in SmartPLS output were used, which showed the magnitude of the indirect influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables through interactions with moderator variables. Based on the data in the table above, it can be explained that the moderation hypothesis proposed in this study shows that influencer marketing is able to significantly moderate the influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions. This finding indicates that marketing strategies on TikTok will be more effective in driving purchase decisions if they involve influencers who have product relevance, high credibility, and emotional closeness with the audience. The presence of influencers strengthens the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions, both by increasing the appeal of content, expanding the reach of messages, and increasing consumer trust in the promoted products.

Discussion:**1) The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Decisions**

The research results show that social media marketing has a significant influence on purchase decisions among TikTok users in Semarang City. This indicates that the more effective the social media marketing strategy implemented, the higher the consumer's likelihood of making a purchase. This effectiveness includes content quality, message consistency, audience interaction, and the relevance of promotional materials. TikTok, with its short video format and adaptive algorithm, is a powerful medium capable of capturing attention and influencing consumer purchasing behavior.

These findings align with the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model, where marketing that captures attention and fosters interest will trigger a desire to buy, ultimately leading to a purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016). TikTok, as a short-form video platform, allows brands to create powerful visual stimuli, thereby streamlining the consumer decision-making process.

The link between social media marketing and purchasing decisions is further strengthened by previous research showing that engaging interactions and visual content can influence consumer preferences and behavior (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). With interactive features like comments, likes, and sharing, TikTok creates a two-way marketing environment that strengthens emotional connections between brands and consumers.

Research by Putra (2022) also revealed that creatively managed social media can increase engagement and build trust, significantly influencing purchasing decisions. This phenomenon is reflected in the use of TikTok as a promotional tool, where creative content strategies and personalized messaging have proven effective in attracting purchase interest. TikTok's advantage lies in its For You Page (FYP) algorithm, which personalizes content according to user preferences. This makes social media marketing strategies more targeted by reaching relevant audiences, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchases (Liu et al., 2021).

The practical implication of these findings is that businesses need to optimize marketing content on TikTok by leveraging trends, popular music, and communication styles that resonate with their target market. Furthermore, a clear and persuasive call to action is crucial for guiding users from the interest stage to purchase. Thus, these findings emphasize that social media marketing serves not only as a communication tool but also as a strategic instrument capable of significantly influencing purchasing decisions in the digital age, particularly through video-based platforms like TikTok.

2) The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness

The research results show that social media marketing has a significant impact on brand awareness. This means that the more effective the marketing strategy through TikTok, the higher the level of brand awareness in consumers' minds. Repeated exposure through

creative content, interactive campaigns, and influencer collaborations encourages consumers to recognize and remember the brand better.

According to Keller (2013), brand awareness encompasses two main dimensions: brand recognition and brand recall. TikTok, as a digital marketing medium, provides ample space to consistently display brand elements such as logos, slogans, and visual styles, thereby strengthening brand recognition and recall.

This finding aligns with research by Hanaysha (2022), which found that social media can significantly increase brand awareness through consistent messaging strategies and ongoing engagement with audiences. On TikTok, the use of engaging short video formats effectively conveys brand messages in a short time.

TikTok's strength also lies in its ability to create trends (trend-based marketing). Brand participation in popular trends like hashtag challenges or the use of viral music can quickly increase brand visibility, which in turn strengthens brand awareness among users (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

From a consumer behavior perspective, high brand awareness contributes to easier purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to choose familiar brands because they are perceived as more trustworthy, reduce risk, and shorten the alternative evaluation process (Aaker, 1996).

For businesses, these results demonstrate the importance of consistency in brand identity on TikTok. Everything from visual branding and messaging to communication style must be consistent to build strong and sustainable brand awareness.

Overall, the results of this study underscore that effective social media marketing on TikTok can be a key catalyst in building and maintaining brand awareness, which will ultimately support long-term marketing and sales goals.

3) The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchasing Decisions

This study found that brand awareness significantly influences purchase decisions. High levels of brand awareness make consumers more confident in choosing a product because they recognize the brand's identity, reputation, and quality.

Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that brand awareness influences the alternative evaluation stage, where consumers are more likely to choose a familiar brand over an unfamiliar one. This familiarity reduces uncertainty and risk in the purchasing process. These results align with research by Ebrahim (2020), which shows that brand awareness directly increases purchase intention, which in turn positively impacts purchasing decisions. High brand awareness builds trust and emotional attachment in consumers to the brand.

On TikTok, brand awareness can be strengthened through a combination of organic and paid strategies. Organic strategies, such as participating in popular trends, help build engagement

with your audience, while paid advertising ensures broader and more measurable message reach.

Consumers with high brand awareness are also more responsive to promotional campaigns and discounts. They tend to perceive these offers as more attractive because they come from a trusted brand (Aaker, 1996). The practical implication is that companies need to invest in ongoing branding activities on TikTok. Everything from visual design and message consistency to collaboration with relevant influencers must be designed to strengthen long-term brand awareness. Thus, the results of this study confirm that high brand awareness not only serves as an indicator of brand popularity but also a determining factor in driving consumer purchasing decisions in the digital marketing era.

4) The Role of Influencer Marketing Moderation

The results of the moderation analysis indicate that influencer marketing strengthens the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. This means that marketing strategies on TikTok will be more effective in driving purchase decisions if they involve relevant and credible influencers.

Influencers act as third-party recommendations, and these recommendations tend to be perceived as more authentic than traditional advertising (Freberg et al., 2011). The credibility and closeness of influencers to their audiences make marketing messages more persuasive. Lou and Yuan (2019) explain that the authenticity of influencer content can increase consumer engagement and purchase intention. In the context of TikTok, influencers relaxed and creative communication style makes marketing messages more easily accepted by audiences.

This moderating effect is particularly significant among younger consumers, who tend to trust influencer reviews and recommendations more than direct promotional messages from brands. This aligns with the behavior of digital natives, who are more responsive to the opinions of online influencers they follow (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

In addition to strengthening the appeal of marketing campaigns, influencers also help build consumer trust in the promoted products. This trust is often a key factor in the difference between purchase intention and actual purchase decisions (Belanche et al., 2021). Thus, the moderating role of influencer marketing in this study underscores the importance of strategic collaboration between brands and influencers on TikTok. The synergy between social media marketing strategies and the right influencer support can significantly enhance campaign effectiveness and drive purchase decisions.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing and brand awareness on purchasing decisions and examine the role of influencer marketing as a moderating variable among TikTok users in Semarang. Based on data analysis of 125 respondents using a

quantitative approach and SEM-PLS techniques with SmartPLS 4.0, the following conclusions were obtained: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Purchasing Decisions Promotions through TikTok, which are visual, interactive, and informative, have been proven to encourage consumers to make purchases. This demonstrates that well-designed social media marketing can directly influence the decision-making process. Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Brand Awareness A consistent brand presence on TikTok through various types of content (tutorials, reviews, storytelling) can increase consumer awareness of a brand. This strategy is effective in building a strong brand perception. Brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. Consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands they know and recognize. The higher the level of brand awareness, the more likely it is to be chosen in the purchasing process. Influencer marketing has been shown to moderate the relationship between social media marketing and purchasing decisions. The presence of influencers with credibility and an emotional connection with their followers strengthens the influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions. Consumers are more likely to trust and be motivated to buy when recommendations come from figures they admire. Overall, this study confirms that marketing strategies through social media, especially TikTok, are very effective in building brand awareness and driving purchases, especially when supported by the role of influencer marketing.

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