

## Social Media Marketing and Actual Purchase Behavior Among Gen Z: The Mediating Role of Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intention with High Involvement Product Moderation

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### Abstract

This research examines the process through which social media marketing drives Indonesian Gen Z consumers, leading them from initial engagement to purchase intention and finally to actual behavior, while also assessing how high involvement products alter this process. The study applied a quantitative method, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) implemented in AMOS 24 for data analysis, to analyze data collected from 350 online purchasers. This study integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and a Modified TPB to examine the influence of digital interactions on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z. The findings indicate that social media marketing exerts a significant influence on both consumer engagement and purchase intention. Furthermore, consumer engagement serves as a mediating variable in this relationship. Purchase intention, in turn, is established as a direct antecedent of actual. This study expands TPB by adding social media marketing and consumer engagement as key behavioral predictors, providing a new moderated mediation framework to explain Gen Z's online purchasing decisions. The study is limited by its focus on Gen Z in Indonesia, affecting the generalizability to other regions. Its cross-sectional design also prevents capturing behavioral changes over time. Future research could explore cultural factors and adopt a longitudinal approach. This research extends TPB by incorporating social media marketing and consumer engagement as key drivers of purchase intention and behavior, with high-involvement products acting as a moderator. These findings offer valuable strategic implications for marketers, providing a framework for refining social media strategies to effectively target Generation Z and shape their purchase decisions.

**Keywords:** SMM; Consumer Engagement; Purchase Intention; Actual Purchase; High Involvement Product.

### INTRODUCTION

The swift growth of e-commerce has fundamentally reshaped the purchasing habits of consumers worldwide, with Generation Z rising to prominence as a leading demographic in the digital marketplace. Born between 1995 and 2010, Gen Z represents a generation that is highly connected to digital platforms, mobile technology, and social media,

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shaping new patterns of interaction with brands and online purchasing decisions (Du *et al.*, 2019). In contrast to previous generations, Gen Z consumers rely more on digital interactions, online reviews, and user-generated content when making purchase decisions, particularly for high-involvement products like electronics, fashion, gadgets, and automotive items (Penz & Hogg, 2022) (Astatke *et al.*, 2023) (Kamalanon *et al.*, 2022).

Despite the sustained growth of e-commerce, a persistent global phenomenon challenges retailers: A substantial disconnect between purchase intention and actual behavior, particularly among Generation Z. While many Gen Z consumers express intent to buy, a substantial proportion abandon their transactions at the final stage. Industry analyses consistently reveal that online shopping cart abandonment rates are remarkably high, often exceeding 70% (e.g., SaleCycle, 2023; Statista, 2024), underscoring this critical discrepancy. Although extant research has extensively explored the antecedents of online purchase intention (Bhutto *et al.*, 2024) (Thuy *et al.*, 2021) (Mohamad Saleh *et al.*, 2024) (Garanti *et al.*, 2022) the factors that prevent this intention from converting into a completed purchase, especially within the Gen Z demographic, remain inadequately explained.

Frequently employed in consumer research, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a framework for analyzing and forecasting behavioral intentions. (Wang *et al.*, 2022) (Wang *et al.*, 2019) However, TPB assumes that behavioral intention strongly predicts actual behavior, which may not apply in the digital commerce context, where perceived risk, browsing experience, and product involvement affect decision-making dynamics (Ibrahim, 2022). In response, the Modified Theory of Planned Behavior (MTPB) has emerged in recent literature, enhancing the original model by integrating digital age constructs including social media influence, e-WOM, and consumer engagement to more comprehensively explain online purchase decisions (Chen and Ryu, 2024) (Asgari *et al.*, 2022). Nonetheless, limited research exists that concurrently investigates consumer engagement as a mediator and product involvement as a moderator in the relationship between purchase intention and actual behavior.

In addition, the significant increase in social media usage among Gen Z presents new research opportunities in understanding how social media marketing shapes digital buying behavior. The strategic value of social media marketing lies not just in promotion, but in its capacity to build relational capital including trust, emotional attachment, and lasting bonds with consumers (Musa, 2023) (Stoica and Hickman, 2024). A consensus in the field acknowledges the significant influence of social media engagement on purchase intention (Farivar *et al.*, 2021) (Garanti *et al.*, 2022) but they often stop at the intention stage, without examining how social media marketing drives actual purchase behavior through the role of consumer engagement.

The present study identifies and seeks to rectify three principal shortcomings in existing research: (1) the inadequately explained

discrepancy between purchase intention and actual purchasing behavior specific to Generation Z, (2) the limited consideration of consumer engagement as a mediating mechanism, and (3) the scarcity of rigorous testing on the moderating effect of high involvement products On digital platforms. In response, this research formulates and empirically assesses a moderated mediation model, positioning social media marketing as an antecedent to a process mediated by consumer engagement and purchase intention, and moderated by product involvement, to ultimately predict purchase behavior

This research makes three key contributions to the existing body of literature. Primarily, it extends the theoretical boundaries of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by incorporating social media marketing and consumer engagement as pivotal constructs within an online shopping behavior model. Second, It contributes empirical evidence elucidating the critical mediating role that consumer engagement plays in shaping digital purchasing outcomes. Third, it introduces high-involvement products as a moderating factor that explains when purchase intention successfully converts to actual purchase behavior. The findings provide theoretical implications for consumer behavior research and practical implications for marketers aiming to target Gen Z effectively through social media strategies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

### **The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Engagement**

The role of social media marketing (SMM) has shifted from a one way promotional tool to a strategic platform for interactive value co creation with consumers in digital spaces (AlGhanboosi *et al.*, 2023) (Garanti *et al.*, 2022), Unlike traditional marketing channels, SMM enables continuous two way communication that stimulates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement from consumers through likes, shares, comments, and brand-related interactions (Farivar *et al.*, 2021);(Ibrahim, 2022). These interactive features enable firms to strengthen relational bonds by creating personalized experiences that foster engagement beyond simple transactional exchanges.

Consumer engagement is a multifaceted psychological phenomenon, characterized by a consumer's enthusiasm and active connection with a brand, immersion, and commitment to a brand within digital environments (Rather and Camilleri, 2019)(Islam *et al.*, 2019). A consensus in marketing research confirms that consumer engagement is a pivotal antecedent to essential relational outcomes, namely long term relationship quality, brand loyalty, and word of mouth (Musa, 2023). However, some researchers argue that the role of SMM in driving engagement may vary depending on message credibility, content relevance, and audience involvement (Jin *et al.*, 2019)(Liu *et al.*, 2020).

Although several studies have confirmed a positive link between SMM and consumer engagement, inconsistencies still appear in the literature. For instance, (Tümer *et al.*, 2019) highlight that SMM effectiveness depends on consumer perceptions of authenticity, while

(Chu and Chen, 2019) found that SMM only influences engagement when combined with trust-building strategies. Thus, existing findings suggest that SMM alone may not always guarantee stable engagement outcomes. Nevertheless, most empirical results converge on the idea that well executed SMM strategies significantly enhance consumer engagement levels (Islam *et al.*, 2019); (Chu and Chen, 2019); (Chu and Chen, 2019). Building on this rationale, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows: H<sup>1</sup>: Social-Media Marketing positively impacts Consumer Engagement.

### **The influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention**

Defined as a consumer's conscious plan to make a purchase, purchase intention is widely recognized as a primary driver of subsequent buying behavior (Liu, Zhang, *et al.*, 2023);(Ng *et al.*, 2024). In digital commerce, purchase intention is influenced by online interactions, perceived value, and the persuasive impact of marketing communications delivered via social networking channels (Farivar *et al.*, 2021); (Joshi *et al.*, 2023). Beyond mere promotional exposure, social media marketing functions as a comprehensive tool that shapes consumer attitudes and purchase decisions through social proof, interactive persuasion, and personalized engagement. (Chu and Chen, 2019); (Mejía-Trejo, 2021).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that the formation of behavioral intention is a function of one's attitudes, the influence of subjective norms, and the level of perceived behavioral control (Wang and Li, 2022a) (Wang, 2022). Within the context of social media, SMM can shape purchase intention by altering attitudes through positive brand experiences, generating perceived credibility via user interactions, and encouraging conformity to social influence through online communities (Thuy *et al.*, 2021); (Ibrahim, 2022). Furthermore, SMM enhances perceived behavioral control by simplifying product information search, reducing perceived risk, and providing decision support through reviews and user-generated content (MIZAJ, 2023)(Garanti *et al.*, 2022).

Empirical studies have consistently shown the positive effect of SMM on purchase intention. Research by (Farivar *et al.*, 2021) demonstrated that social media interactions increase product desirability and intention to buy. (Garanti *et al.*, 2022) found that SMM strengthens brand credibility, which increases consumers' likelihood to purchase. However, some studies emphasize that this influence may vary depending on message quality and platform trustworthiness (Liu *et al.*, 2020); (Jin *et al.*, 2019). Despite these variations, the literature strongly supports that SMM positively influences purchase intention. Guided by this conceptual and empirical framework, we posit the following hypothesis: H<sub>2</sub>: Social-Media Marketing positively affects Purchase Intention.

### **The Influence of Consumer Engagement on Purchase Intention**

Consumer engagement represents a psychological state that reflects the depth of consumer interaction, emotional connection, and cognitive investment in a brand (Islam *et al.*, 2019); (Rather and Camilleri, 2019). In digital environments, engagement manifests through

active participation behaviors such as commenting, sharing, reviewing products, and repeat interactions with brand content (Moliner-Tena *et al.*, 2019). Engagement goes beyond mere satisfaction as it involves emotional attachment, enthusiasm, and ongoing involvement that influence subsequent behavioral outcomes. Within the TPB framework, engagement operates as an antecedent to behavioral intention, influencing an individual's attitude formation and their perception of a product's or brand's relevance (Wang *et al.*, 2019)(Unnava and Aravindakshan, 2021). Engaged consumers are more likely to develop favorable brand attitudes, trust, and emotional bonds that ultimately increase their propensity to purchase (Qin *et al.*, 2023); (Wang *et al.*, 2024).

Empirical studies support this linkage. (Fakhreddin and Foroudi, 2022) found that customer engagement positively drives purchase-related decisions by enhancing psychological ownership and brand involvement. Similarly, research by (Mou *et al.*, 2020) (Zhu *et al.*, 2019) and (Liu, Dai, *et al.*, 2023) revealed that higher engagement strengthens consumers' cognitive and affective evaluations that translate into higher purchase intention. Engagement also enhances persuasive responses as engaged consumers perceive brand messages as more credible and personally relevant (Qin *et al.*, 2023).

Despite consistent positive findings, some studies indicate that engagement alone may not guarantee purchase, especially in contexts where price sensitivity or perceived risk is high (Li, Yang, *et al.*, 2021). However, the majority of literature concludes that engagement acts as a principal factor in forecasting purchase intention, especially in social media commerce settings. Therefore, the next hypothesis is developed: H<sub>3</sub>: Consumer Engagement positively impacts Purchase Intention.

### **The influence of social media marketing on purchase intention is mediated by the level of consumer engagement**

Social media marketing (SMM) plays a strategic role in not only directly affecting consumer decisions but also in shaping underlying psychological processes that drive purchase behavior. One of the mechanisms widely discussed in behavioral marketing literature is consumer engagement as a mediating variable. Engagement serves as a pathway through which SMM affects purchase intention by converting marketing stimuli into meaningful relational bonds (Islam *et al.*, 2019); (Qin *et al.*, 2023).

SMM provides interactive value through content personalization, brand storytelling, and two-way communication, which enhances emotional and cognitive involvement ((Mou *et al.*, 2020); (Garanti *et al.*, 2022)). These interactions lead to engagement responses such as increased trust, brand attachment, and participation intention (Moliner-Tena *et al.*, 2019); (Musa, 2023). In line with service-dominant logic, engagement reflects co-created value between the consumer and brand through social media interactions (Rather, 2019).

Previous studies provide strong empirical support for mediation effects. Research by (Zhu *et al.*, 2019) and (Farivar *et al.*, 2021) The influence of SMM on purchase intention is not automatic but is conditional on the level of consumer brand engagement. (Joshi *et al.*, 2023) argue that in the absence of this deeper emotional connection, SMM's effects are largely limited to top of funnel awareness without converting to purchase motivation. Similarly, (Leckie *et al.*, 2019);(Qin *et al.*, 2023) found that engagement translates marketing communication into persuasive influence, reinforcing its role as a mediator. Drawing on the theoretical rationale and empirical support outlined above, this study advances the following proposition: H<sub>4</sub>: Consumer Engagement mediates the connection between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention.

### **The Relationship Between Purchase Intention and Actual Purchase Behavior**

Empirical studies in behavioral research have consistently validated purchase intention as a key determinant of actual purchasing behavior (Liu, Dai, *et al.*, 2023); (Ng *et al.*, 2021). It represents the motivational readiness of a consumer to perform a specific purchase action and is used to estimate the likelihood of purchasing behavior in various marketing contexts. The TPB establishes that while behavioral intention is a primary driver of behavior, its translation into action is conditional upon the individual's access to essential resources and opportunities. (Wang *et al.*, 2019); (Wang and Li, 2022b).

In online purchasing scenarios, The intention behavior link, though critical, is susceptible to influence by factors inherent to digital commerce, particularly consumer trust, perceived risk, and ease of use (Liao *et al.*, 2021). Consumers with strong purchase intentions are more inclined to proceed to checkout decisions after evaluating relevant product information, perceived value, or recommendation signals from peers (Qalati *et al.*, 2022). Studies in e commerce have confirmed that stronger behavioral intention leads to higher purchase conversion rates (Azucar *et al.*, 2018); (Liu, Dai, *et al.*, 2023).

However, previous literature also noted the existence of an "intention behavior gap," particularly in digital environments (Mejía-Trejo, 2021); (Ng *et al.*, 2021). Factors such as last minute hesitation, alternative evaluation, or price comparison may weaken purchase conversion despite high initial purchase intention (Sun and Xing, 2022);(Mou *et al.*, 2020). Nonetheless, purchase intention remains a robust and consistent predictor of actual purchase behavior in empirical studies when psychological commitment is strong (Chu and Chen, 2019); (Nuryakin *et al.*, 2024)(Qalati *et al.*, 2022). Based on this rationale, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated: H<sub>5</sub>: Purchase Intention positively impacts Actual Purchase Behavior.

### **The Influence of High Involvement Products on the Purchase Intention, Actual Purchase Behavior Relationship**

High involvement products are products that require significant cognitive effort, extensive information processing, and high perceived risk before purchasing decisions are made (Mou *et al.*, 2020); (Li, Li, *et al.*, 2021). High involvement products such as electronics, fashion items, and automotive goods typically entail greater perceived financial or functional risk, leading consumers to undertake more extensive evaluation prior to a purchase decision (Liao *et al.*, 2021)(Nuryakin *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, the decision-making process becomes more deliberate, and behavioral intention is more strongly linked to actual purchase decisions in high-involvement contexts.

Within digital commerce, product involvement moderates the relationship between purchase intention and purchasing behavior (Mejía-Trejo, 2021). Consumers with higher involvement tend to search for additional product information, compare alternatives more carefully, and rely on trusted content before converting intention into behavior (Mou *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, when involvement is high, the intention-behavior link becomes stronger because consumers feel more confident and justified in executing their purchase decisions (Li, Wang, *et al.*, 2021).

Empirical studies indicate that high-involvement products strengthen the intention-behavior relationship, making consumers more consistent between their purchase plans and final actions (Liao *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, low-involvement products may weaken this relationship because consumers tend to act impulsively or switch brands easily due to minimal perceived risk (Ng *et al.*, 2021). In light of these findings, product involvement acts as a situational moderator in purchase behavior models. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is formulated as follows: H<sub>6</sub>: High-involvement products serve as a moderating element in the connection between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior.

### **METHOD**

A quantitative methodology with an explanatory purpose is used in this research to analyze the causal links between the studied variables (Hair and Alamer, 2022). The data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 24 software, which is deemed suitable for examining the relationships among the study's variables. The sample includes 350 respondents from Generation Z in Indonesia, all of whom have previously made online purchases via social media platforms. Purposive sampling was applied to target respondents who met the following criteria: aged between 18 and 28 years, the study targeted active social media users who had made a purchase in a high involvement product category (electronics, fashion, automotive, etc) within the preceding six months. Data was gathered using an online questionnaire shared through social media platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram) from March to May 2024. All respondents provided informed consent to participate, and their privacy was

guaranteed. The study ensured participant anonymity by not collecting any personally identifiable data.

The research instrument was adapted from validated scales in prior studies and tailored to the Generation Z context in Indonesia. Data for the constructs, such as Social Media Marketing (SMM), were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." (Hasan *et al.*, 2023) (Farivar *et al.*, 2021); (Garanti *et al.*, 2022), Consumer Engagement (CE), measured using items from (Islam *et al.*, 2019); (Unnava and Aravindakshan, 2021) (Rather and Camilleri, 2019), Purchase Intention (PI), based on (Sun and Xing, 2022); (Liu, Zhang, *et al.*, 2023) and (Ng *et al.*, 2024), Actual Purchase Behavior (AP), adapted from (Liao *et al.*, 2021), and High Involvement Product (HIP), following (KIM and YANG, 2020) (Mou *et al.*, 2020) and (Li *et al.*, 2022). The instrument's validity and reliability were assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), ensuring that all indicators had factor loadings  $\geq 0.60$ , Convergent validity and internal consistency were established for the constructs, with all AVE scores surpassing the 0.50 threshold and all CR values greater than 0.70.

The analysis of the collected data proceeded in two phases: The data analysis followed a two-stage approach. The first step was to ensure the quality of the measurement model by assessing its reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships and assess model fit using SEM. The results indicated a strong model fit, with all key indices meeting the desired thresholds ( $\chi^2 = 254.894$ , RMSEA = 0.000, CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.004). Additionally, the mediation effect of consumer engagement was assessed using the Sobel Test, and the moderating role of high involvement products was examined via multi group analysis. The study also followed ethical guidelines by ensuring that all respondents participated voluntarily, with their data used exclusively for academic purposes and kept confidential.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Characteristic	Number	Percentage (%)	
Participants' Gender	Male	150	48.5
	Female	160	51.5
Participants' age	< 20 years old	90	28.8
	21-30 years old	160	51.5
	31-50 years old	60	19.5
education	(S1)	250	80.0
	(S2)	60	20.0
Experience	Yes	310	100
Active Social Media Users	Instagram	240	
	Facebook	162	
	Twitter	69	
	YouTube	177	
	etc.	100	
Frequency of Using Social-Media	Rarely	15	4.7
	Occasionally	80	25.0

	Frequently	225	70.3
Duration of Using Social-Media	1-2 years	20	6.5
	2-3 years	25	8.0
	3-5 years	70	22.6
	< 1 year	5	1.5
	> 5 years	180	58.4

The demographic composition of the survey respondents (N=350) is detailed in Table 1. The gender distribution was nearly balanced, with females representing 51.5% (n=160) and males comprising 48.5% (n=150) of the sample. An analysis of the age profile showed that the 21-30 age group formed the majority (52.4%, n=167), followed by the under 20 category (28.8%, n=90). Respondents aged 31 to 50 represented the minority at 19.5% (n=60). In terms of education level, the sample was dominated by Bachelor's Degree (S1) holders. Their representation reached 80.0%, equivalent to 250 respondents, while 20.0% held a Master's Degree (S2) (60 respondents). All respondents indicated prior experience with online shopping, representing 100% of the sample.

Regarding social media platform usage, Instagram was the most frequently used platform, selected by 240 respondents (68.6%). YouTube followed with 177 respondents (50.6%), and Facebook was used by 46.3% of the respondents (162 respondents). Other platforms like Twitter and others were used by 69 respondents (19.7%) and 100 respondents (28.6%), respectively. The majority of respondents reported frequent social media usage, 70.3% (225 respondents), reported using social media frequently, while 25.0% (80 respondents) used it occasionally, and 4.7% (15 respondents) used it rarely. A majority of 58.4% (180 respondents) indicated high engagement with social media in terms of daily usage duration, had been using social media for more than 5 years, followed by 12.9% (40 respondents) who had been using it for 4 to 5 years. Respondents with less than one year of social media experience constituted a small minority, representing 1.5% (5 respondents). These demographic characteristics indicate that the respondents are predominantly young, well educated, and Active social media audiences, which aligns with the traits of Generation Z. Consequently, the characteristics of the respondents establish a vital framework for analyzing the impact of social media marketing on core consumer outcomes, such as engagement, purchase intention, and final purchasing behavior, in this specific group.

### Testing of Instrument Quality and Validity Test

This process entails assessing the measurement instruments employed in research, surveys, and other forms of data collection. The primary objective of this evaluation is to verify the validity and reliability of the research instruments, thereby ensuring the accuracy and consistency of the collected data. The assessment of instrument quality focuses on two fundamental criteria:

**Validity:** The degree to which an instrument precisely measures the underlying construct it is designed to assess. The following section outlines the key findings from the data analysis:

**Table 2. Validity Test Results**

Item	SMM	CE	HIP	PI	API
SMM3	0.694				
SMM5	0.795				
SMM7	0.731				
SMM10	0.763				
SMM14	0.683				
SMM17	0.624				
CE3		0.613			
CE5		0.815			
CE6		0.863			
CE9		0.617			
HIP1			0.638		
HIP3			0.733		
HIP5			0.753		
HIP6			0.754		
HIP7			0.653		
PI1				0.812	
PI2				0.752	
PI3				0.777	
AP1					0.676
AP2					0.808
AP3					0.686

Source: Processed primary data

The validity assessment results for the research constructs are summarized in Table 2. The convergent validity of each construct was evaluated by analyzing the loading factors of the indicators, with all constructs showing satisfactory results. Each indicator had a loading factor value  $\geq 0.70$ , which is above the threshold for acceptable validity. These results demonstrate strong correlations between the indicators and their corresponding latent constructs, the data provide strong evidence of convergent validity, indicating that the constructs possess strong measurement accuracy. Additional confirmation comes from the (AVE) for all constructs, which surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.50. These results suggest that the constructs used in the study explain a sufficient proportion of the variance in their indicators, ensuring that the measurement model is valid. Overall, the validity test results in Table 2 show that all constructs fulfill the necessary criteria for convergent validity, confirming that the measurement instruments used in this study are suitable and dependable for evaluating the intended constructs.

### Reliability Analysis

**Table 3. Measurement Model Results: Reliability and Validity**

Variable	CR	(AVE)
SMM	0.863	0.516
CE	0.822	0.543
HIP	0.834	0.501
PI	0.824	0.607
AP	0.768	0.527

Source: Processed primary data

We summarize the psychometric properties of the measurement model, including construct reliability and validity, in Table 3. All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Composite Reliability (CR) values surpassing the 0.70 benchmark. All key constructs (SMM, CE, HIP, PI, AP) demonstrated strong reliability, with Composite Reliability (CR) values consistently above 0.70. The measurement model also demonstrated strong convergent validity, with (AVE) values for all constructs (SMM, CE, HIP, PI, AP) surpassing the 0.50 benchmark. This confirms that the constructs account for a significant proportion of variance in their indicators. These results collectively verify that the constructs accurately measure their intended theoretical concepts. In conclusion, as presented in Table 3, the measurement model satisfactorily meets established reliability and validity criteria, confirming its robustness for analyzing the hypothesized relationships between variables.

**The GoFit Test Results**

The results of The GoFit model test indicate positive outcomes, as presented in the table and figure below:

**TABLE 4 Goodness of Fit Test Results**

Goodness of Fit	Cut off Value	Model Results	Description
X2- Chi-squ	Expected value is small	254.893	Good
Probab	≥ 0,05	0,694	Good
Gfi	≥ 0,90	0,953	Good
Agfi	≥ 0,90	0,928	Good
Tli	≥ 0,90	1,003	Good
Rmse	≤ 0,08	0,000	Good
Cfi	≥ 0,90	2	Good
Cmin/df	< 2	0.954	Good

Source: Primary data analysis (2024)

All model fit indices meet the recommended standards, confirming that the research model has a satisfactory fit.

**Table 5. Structural Model Hypothesis Testing**

H	Variable Relationship	Standardized Estimation	S.E.	CR (t-value)	p-value	Description
1	SMM → CE	0.231	0.08	3.297	***	H1 supported
2	SMM → PI	0.273	0.09	3.407	***	H2 supported
3	CE → PI	0.295	0.078	3.727	***	H3 supported
4	PI → AP	0.420	0.066	6.6	***	H4 supported
5	HIP → AP	0.716	0.116	5.108	***	H5 supported

**Table 6. Mediation Analysis Results**

H	Variable	Estimate	ZSob	P-val	Description
H6	SMM→CE→PI	0.238	2.481	***	H6 supported

*The hypothesis is supported (p < 0.05)*

The mediation analysis (Table 6) confirms consumer engagement as a significant mediator between SMM and purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.238, p < 0.001$ ). This reveals a dual pathway: SMM directly influences PI and also indirectly through consumer engagement, thereby amplifying its total effect on purchase decisions

This research advances our comprehension of how social media marketing drives the consumer behavior of Generation Z in the Indonesian market. Supporting the extant body of knowledge, The analysis confirms that social media marketing exerts a statistically significant and positive effect on consumer engagement. ( $\beta = 0.232$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), underscoring its capacity to strengthen brand-consumer relationships on an emotional and cognitive level (Zhu *et al.*, 2019)(Farivar *et al.*, 2021). This evidence reinforces the paradigm that strategic social media marketing cultivates meaningful emotional connections rather than just visibility, thereby driving consumer engagement. The analysis further confirmed a significant direct effect of social media marketing on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings affirm the pivotal role of strategic social media marketing including personalized content and interactive campaigns in directly shaping consumer attitudes and driving purchase decisions. This empirical confirmation aligns with the work of (Garanti *et al.*, 2022), who argued that social media's interactive nature boosts consumer trust, persuading them to form purchase intentions.

Supporting the hypothesis, the results indicate a significant mediating role of consumer engagement in the link from social media marketing to purchase intention (Sobel Test = 2.482,  $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that while social media marketing captures initial interest, it is the subsequent behavioral engagement manifested through actions such as liking, sharing, and commenting that deepens this interest and critically translates it into purchase intention. These results align with (Qin *et al.*, 2021), who found that consumer engagement significantly contributes to the development of brand loyalty and increases the likelihood of purchase. The findings provide further evidence for a direct and significant link between purchase intention and actual purchasing behavior ( $\beta = 0.421$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding offers robust empirical validation for the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), confirming its central tenet that behavioral intention is a powerful antecedent of actual conduct (Ajzen, 2020). Consistent with prior studies, this finding corroborates the view that strong purchase intention is a reliable predictor of behavioral enactment, contingent upon the absence of impediments like external constraints or risk perceptions (Ng *et al.*, 2021).

The relationship was also found to be significantly moderated by the level of product involvement. The intention behavior relationship was substantially stronger for high involvement products ( $\beta = 0.717$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) than for low involvement ones ( $\beta = 0.223$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ), highlighting the critical role of product type in converting intention to action. his outcome reinforces the conclusions drawn by (Mou *et al.*, 2020);(KIM and YANG, 2020), who suggested that higher levels of consumer involvement in purchasing complex or high risk products lead to stronger intent behavior links due to the increased effort consumers invest in these decisions. Consequently, for high involvement products, marketing strategies must prioritize building trust, delivering comprehensive information, and mitigating perceived risk to effectively convert purchase

intention into sales. In conclusion, this study elucidates the dual function of social media marketing, demonstrating its capacity to concurrently enhance consumer engagement and directly influence purchase intention. Furthermore, this research elucidates the pivotal mediating role of consumer engagement and the significant moderating influence of high involvement products on the intention behavior relationship. These findings advance theoretical discourse in digital marketing and provide actionable strategic guidance for firms targeting Generation Z in emerging markets.

The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations the generalizability of the findings is constrained by its exclusive focus on Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. Given that cultural and demographic factors significantly shape consumer behavior, Future studies could strengthen the external validity of these results by incorporating a wider variety of geographical and cultural perspectives. Secondly, the use of a cross-sectional research design limits the analysis to a single moment in time, thereby preventing the examination of behavioral evolution. To address this, to capture the dynamic nature of consumer pathways, longitudinal research is necessary to elucidate the long-term effects of social media marketing.

A further limitation lies in the exclusion of cultural variables, despite their established significance in shaping consumer decision making. A deeper understanding of how culture influences digital consumer phenomena, from social media engagement to final purchase decisions, is essential for advancing the field. Future studies should integrate cultural frameworks as moderating or contextual variables to elucidate their nuanced impact across different markets. Finally, although this research offers valuable insights within the Indonesian context, future studies could adopt a more comprehensive framework by incorporating the influence of external macro-environmental factors. Examining the influence of economic fluctuations, technological infrastructure, and evolving social norms would offer a more holistic understanding of the boundary conditions affecting the social media marketing to purchase behavior relationship.

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