The Triple Play: Social Media Marketing, Brand Trust, and Smartphone Purchase Decisions in Emerging Market

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the influence of four key dimensions of social media marketing—informative content, entertainment, interactivity, and perceived relevance—on brand trust and their subsequent impact on consumer purchase decisions within the smartphone market. Focusing on emerging markets, this research addresses a critical gap in the literature by exploring these dynamics in the context of Indonesia, a region that has been underrepresented in existing studies. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing survey-based data collected from 251 smartphone consumers in Indonesia. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS) to assess the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that Informativeness is the strongest driver of brand trust, while entertainment, informativeness, and interactivity directly influence purchase decisions. Although brand trust significantly impacts purchase decisions, it does not mediate most social media marketing factors, except for perceived relevance, which affects purchase behavior indirectly through trust. These results offer valuable insights for marketers and practitioners, emphasizing the importance of leveraging engaging and interactive social media strategies to foster brand trust and drive consumer decisions in emerging markets.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Purchase Decision, Brand Trust, Smart Phone Customer
JEL Classifications: M31, M37

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of information and communication technologies has transformed the marketing landscape, with social media emerging as a dominant force in shaping consumer behavior. These platforms have revolutionized how businesses connect with their target audience, serving as indispensable tools for building brand awareness, engaging customers, and driving sales (Aswani et al., 2018; Mandagi and Aseng, 2021; Sijabat et al., 2022). The proliferation of smartphones and wireless devices has further amplified the role of social media, making it a primary channel for consumers to research brands and gather information before making purchase decisions (Kar and Kushwaha, 2021). Unlike traditional marketing, social media fosters authentic and lasting connections by enabling direct communication, collaboration, and interaction between businesses and consumers (McClure

and Seock, 2020; Pandey et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). This dynamic engagement not only strengthens customer loyalty but also enhances brand visibility through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), where users share recommendations and experiences. Additionally, social media marketing (SMM) goes beyond tracking direct purchases by capturing customer value through referrals and product advocacy (Warbung et al., 2023. Given its deep integration into the modern customer journey, social media is no longer just an option but a necessity for businesses striving to thrive in the digital age.

Despite the extensive research on SMM and its influence on consumer behavior, the empirical exploration of the interplay between SMM, brand trust, and smartphone purchase decisions remains limited, particularly in emerging markets. Existing literature has extensively analyzed SMM's role in enhancing brand

awareness, fostering customer engagement, and driving sales (Aswani et al., 2018; Mandagi and Aseng, 2021; Sijabat et al., 2022). Studies have also emphasized key SMM dimensions—such as informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, and perceived relevance—as critical drivers of consumer trust and loyalty (Wang et al., 2019; Zuhdi et al., 2019). However, despite these insights, little empirical research has been conducted on how these SMM dimensions specifically contribute to building brand trust and influencing smartphone purchase decisions, particularly in emerging markets where digital adoption is accelerating.

In today's competitive market, brand trust serves as a crucial differentiator that significantly influences consumer behavior and business success. It fosters marketing receptiveness, making customers more open to engaging with a brand's messaging and offerings (Cardoso et al., 2022). Moreover, trust cultivates loyalty, transforming one-time buyers into repeat customers who advocate for the brand, thereby creating a resilient customer base that helps businesses navigate challenging market conditions (Aslan and Güllüpunar, 2016; Heim et al., 2025). In an environment where consumers are inundated with choices, brand trust often becomes the deciding factor that influences their purchase decisions (Cardoso et al., 2022). It is built on reliability, consistency, and the ability to meet or exceed customer expectations, all of which are essential for establishing long-term relationships (Heim et al., 2025). By consistently delivering on promises and maintaining transparency, brands can enhance their perceived value and credibility, ultimately contributing to higher brand equity and a sustainable competitive advantage (Aslan and Güllüpunar, 2016; Heim et al., 2025). Therefore, brand trust is not merely an abstract concept but a strategic imperative that drives customer loyalty, advocacy, and long-term profitability in an increasingly saturated marketplace.

Understanding consumer purchasing behavior is a crucial part of running a successful business. Salem (2018) conceptualized the purchasing process as a sequence of steps, where consumers identify a need, evaluate alternatives, and ultimately decide on a product or service. This process is influenced by various factors, including product preferences, timing, location, brand perception, payment methods, and budget considerations. Notably, consumers' perceptions of a product and their prior experiences with a brand significantly shape their purchasing decisions. Marketers, in turn, leverage advertising and promotional strategies to influence these decisions, often through engaging campaigns that resonate with target audiences.

Unlike established markets, where brand perceptions are relatively stable, emerging markets exhibit dynamic consumer preferences driven by rapid technological shifts and evolving digital behaviors (Kar and Kushwaha, 2021). This creates a crucial need to understand whether and how SMM strategies effectively build trust and influence smartphone purchase decisions in these fast-growing economies. The importance of this research gap is further underscored by the proliferation of smartphones and wireless devices, which have transformed social media into a primary channel for consumers to gather product information and make informed purchase decisions (McClure and Seock, 2020). Given that smartphone brands in emerging markets face intense competition and shifting consumer loyalties, understanding the role of SMM in fostering trust and guiding purchase intent is critical for business success (Pandey et al., 2018; Warbung et al., 2023). Additionally, the indirect value of SMM—such as consumer referrals and peer recommendations—adds another layer of complexity that requires deeper empirical investigation (Oliveira et al., 2020).

Addressing this gap will not only enrich existing literature but also provide actionable insights for marketers and businesses operating in emerging markets. A clearer understanding of how SMM influences brand trust and smartphone purchasing behavior will help companies design more effective digital marketing strategies, optimize customer engagement, and enhance brand credibility. Future research should focus on quantifying the relationship between SMM dimensions, trust-building mechanisms, and their subsequent impact on smartphone purchase decisions in emerging markets, thereby contributing to both academic discourse and practical business applications.

The primary objective of this study is to explore how the dimensions of social media marketing influence brand trust and, subsequently, consumer purchasing decisions. Specifically, the research aims to achieve three key goals: First, to examine the impact of four social media marketing dimensions—informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, and perceived relevance—on brand trust and purchase decisions; second, to assess the influence of brand trust on purchasing decisions; and third, to investigate the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchasing behavior. By addressing these objectives, this study not only contributes to the theoretical discourse on social media marketing but also provides actionable insights for practitioners seeking to leverage digital platforms to build brand trust and enhance consumer engagement, particularly in emerging markets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Social Media Marketing

SMM refers to the strategic use of social media platforms to promote products, services, or brands, engage with consumers, and drive purchasing decisions. It encompasses a range of activities, including running advertisements, publishing content, interacting with followers, analyzing performance metrics, and responding to customer feedback (Zuhdi et al., 2019; Mandagi and Aseng, 2021). In today's digital age, SMM has become a cornerstone of modern business strategies due to its ability to reach vast audiences, foster real-time interactions, and influence consumer behavior.

The importance of SMM can be understood through three key aspects. First, it enhances visibility and brand building. SMM is crucial for increasing brand awareness and creating a buzz around products or services, as it allows businesses to reach a broad audience and share engaging content (Trivedi and Malik, 2022). Social media platforms enable companies to foster connections with users, which are essential for building brand trust and loyalty (Milović, 2018). For instance, Mandagi and Aseng (2021)

highlight how SMM effectively shapes brand perception among Millennials and Gen Z, emphasizing its role in creating a cohesive brand identity. Similarly, Warbung et al. (2023) demonstrate how SMM enhances brand equity for beauty clinics by leveraging engaging content and influencer collaborations.

Second, SMM facilitates customer engagement and relationship management. It provides a direct communication channel between businesses and customers, enabling immediate responses to queries and fostering strong relationships (Mazeed and Kodumagulla, 2019). Engaging content and prompt interactions on social media can significantly influence customer behavior and purchasing decisions (Mazeed and Kodumagulla, 2019). For example, Sijabat et al. (2022) emphasize the role of social media influencers in shaping customer brand engagement and perception, highlighting how authentic interactions on these platforms can drive consumer loyalty. Additionally, Waworuntu et al. (2022) found that SMM plays a pivotal role in shaping Gen Z's intention to purchase local products by creating relatable and visually appealing content.

Third, SMM is a cost-effective marketing solution. Compared to traditional methods, it allows businesses to target specific demographics, measure campaign effectiveness in real-time, and optimize strategies for maximum impact (Oliveira et al., 2020). Oliveira et al. (2020) further emphasize the role of influencers in SMM, noting how their ability to connect with niche audiences can amplify marketing efforts at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising. Pasuhuk and Mandagi (2023) also highlight the integration of SMM and brand gestalt in educational institutions, demonstrating how cost-efficient social media strategies can enhance institutional branding and engagement.

Previous research has extensively explored the role of social media marketing in shaping consumer behavior. Studies have examined various dimensions of SMM, such as entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, and perceived relevance, to understand their impact on consumer purchasing patterns (Alalwan, 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Additionally, trust has been identified as a critical factor in consumer decision-making. Research shows that consumers who trust brands leveraging social media for marketing are more likely to feel confident in their purchasing decisions (Liu et al., 2022; Thaker et al., 2020). Despite these advancements, there remains a gap in the literature, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia, where empirical studies on the interplay between SMM dimensions, brand trust, and purchasing decisions are scarce.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining how entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, and perceived relevance influence brand trust and consumer purchasing behavior. By exploring these relationships, the research aims to provide new insights into the role of SMM in driving consumer decisions in emerging markets.

2.1.1. Entertainment
Entertainment is a critical dimension of social media marketing, as it involves creating enjoyable, engaging, and memorable content that resonates with consumers. Sharma et al. (2022)

emphasize that entertaining content captures users' attention and fulfills their desire for fun and relaxation. Cheung et al. (2020) found that social media platforms captivate users by delivering content that aligns with their preferences, thereby enhancing their overall experience. Park et al. (2009) further noted that consumer engagement increases when brands share content that is both attractive and relatable. For instance, Waworuntu et al. (2022) highlight how visually appealing and entertaining content on social media significantly influences Gen Z's purchasing decisions, particularly for local products.

Entertainment also plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making. Mustafi and Hosain (2020) revealed that entertaining content positively influences consumers' attitudes and purchasing decisions. Similarly, Van Noort and Van Reijmersdal (2019) found that engaging and entertaining marketing campaigns encourage consumers to seek detailed information about a brand, leading to informed purchasing choices. Furthermore, Warbung et al. (2023) demonstrate how beauty clinics leverage entertaining content and influencer collaborations to enhance brand equity, suggesting that entertainment-driven strategies can significantly impact consumer trust and loyalty.

2.1.2. Informativeness
Informativeness refers to the ability of advertisements to effectively communicate essential information and messages to consumers, thereby enhancing their perception of a brand (Rotzoll and Haefner, 1990). Lee and Hong (2016) suggest that informative and creative advertisements can increase audience engagement and influence consumer behavior. Social media platforms provide businesses with a convenient avenue to share updates, product details, and other relevant information, enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions (Naaman et al., 2011).

Kitsios et al. (2022) highlighted the role of social media as a space for consumers to share their brand experiences, which serves as a valuable resource for others seeking information. Blanco et al. (2010) found a strong correlation between the credibility of social media content and its impact on purchasing decisions. Additionally, Chen and Lin (2019) noted that consumers increasingly rely on social media over traditional media for making purchasing choices. Bilgin and Kethüda (2022) further emphasized that sharing informative content can significantly enhance brand trust.

Devereux et al. (2020) also demonstrated that promoting brands on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube can increase brand legitimacy and influence consumer decisions. These findings underscore the importance of informativeness in shaping consumer behavior and building brand trust. For instance, Pasuhuk and Mandagi (2023) highlight how educational institutions use informative content on social media to enhance their brand image and engage with stakeholders, demonstrating the practical application of informativeness in diverse contexts.

2.1.3. Interactivity
Interactivity is a key dimension of social media marketing, defined as the ability of a brand to facilitate two-way communication and information exchange with consumers (Jensen, 1998). Social

media platforms provide businesses with tools to engage with customers through comments, messages, and interactive content, fostering stronger relationships and influencing purchasing decisions (Kiousis, 2002). Arjun et al. (2021) noted that marketers can effectively engage with consumers using mobile apps, emails, and other online tools.

Research has shown that interactivity significantly impacts consumer behavior and brand trust. Zafar et al. (2021) found that interactive engagement plays a vital role in shaping consumers' spontaneous purchasing decisions. Similarly, De Vries et al. (2012) and Yeon et al. (2019) highlighted the influence of social media interactions on purchasing behavior. Sohail et al. (2020) further demonstrated that active engagement on social media platforms enhances brand trust. Additionally, Sijabat et al. (2022) emphasize the role of social media influencers in fostering interactive engagement, which strengthens brand perception and customer loyalty. This suggests that interactive strategies can be a powerful tool for building trust and driving consumer behavior.

2.1.4. Perceived relevance

Perceived relevance refers to the extent to which consumers view marketing messages as personally meaningful or aligned with their goals and values (Zhu and Chang, 2016). Tailored messages that resonate with individual preferences can create a sense of connection and relevance, enhancing consumer engagement and trust. Zhu and Chen (2015) suggested that businesses can categorize social media posts into personalized messages for individuals or broadcast messages for larger audiences. Luxury brands like Louis Vuitton and Hermes exemplify this approach by customizing their marketing content to meet individual customer preferences (Sangar, 2012).

Previous studies have shown that perceived relevance positively influences consumer behavior. Pechmann and Stewart (1990) found that consumers are more likely to respond positively to marketing messages that reflect their preferences. Zhu and Chang (2016) further emphasized that perceived relevance impacts consumers' propensity to purchase. Gautam and Sharma (2017) highlighted the importance of timely and relevant responses to customer inquiries in building brand trust. Hafez (2021) also noted that brand trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand equity. These findings suggest that personalized and relevant marketing content can significantly enhance brand credibility and influence purchasing decisions. For instance, Mandagi and Aseng (2021) highlight how perceived relevance in social media marketing shapes brand perception among Millennials and Gen Z, demonstrating its importance in creating a cohesive brand identity.

2.2. Brand Trust

Brand trust represents the extent to which consumers believe in a brand's ability to fulfill both its explicit and implicit commitments (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Through prioritizing the well-being of consumers with compassion, a company can enhance its relationships with them, leading to strong and thriving connections in the long run. Based on the perspectives shared by Morgan and Hunt (1994), brand trust fundamentally involves consumers

feeling confident in the trustworthiness and honesty of the service provider. The way consumers react to various brand interactions online depends on how much they trust and are familiar with the brand. Calefato et al., (2015) stressed the significance of using social media to build credibility for a brand. The authors emphasized the significance of building these connections through active content creation within a company or by incorporating insights from online feedback and social media analysis.

Brand trust is a vital differentiator in competitive and challenging market conditions, as it enhances marketing receptiveness, fosters loyalty, and builds client and customer advocacy. Loyal customers, along with their advocacy and goodwill, can help a business weather any storm, making brand trust a critical factor in influencing consumers to choose one brand over another. Trust is the foundation upon which lasting customer relationships are built, playing a pivotal role in driving business growth, customer loyalty, and long-term profitability. It is rooted in reliability, consistency, and the ability to meet or exceed expectations. In a business context, customer trust refers to the confidence that customers have in a company's products, services, and overall brand promise—the belief that a company will deliver on its commitments, act in the customer's best interests, and operate with integrity and transparency. Building customer trust is not a one-time effort but an ongoing process that requires consistent dedication across all touchpoints of the customer journey, from marketing messages and product quality to customer service interactions and data privacy practices.

In the intricate ecosystem of commerce, brands that invest in building trust stand out and secure long-term success. Trust is not just a feel-good factor; it is a business imperative that underpins strong customer-brand relationships and is crucial for developing brand equity. Trust significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions, as consumers are more likely to choose and remain loyal to brands they trust, even willing to pay a premium for trusted brands over others (Cardoso et al., 2022; Aslan and Güllüpunar, 2016). Trust also contributes to brand equity by enhancing the perceived value and reliability of the brand, which is a relational market-based asset essential for achieving competitive and economic advantages (Heim et al., 2025).

Brand trust is a precursor to brand loyalty, as it fosters repeated purchases and a consistent preference for the brand, which is essential for maintaining a stable customer base (Kim et al., 2015). It also influences purchase decisions by reducing perceived risk and uncertainty, making consumers more likely to buy from trusted brands (Zhihan et al., 2022). Furthermore, trust fosters strong emotional connections between consumers and brands, enhancing satisfaction and commitment, which are vital for long-term relationships (Khandai et al., 2023). Trust also supports effective marketing strategies, particularly in areas like green marketing and sustainable practices, as trusted brands can leverage this trust to implement impactful campaigns (Jamal et al., 2022). Additionally, consumers who trust a brand are more likely to recommend it to others, facilitating positive word-of-mouth and organic growth, which is especially important in the digital age where consumer reviews and recommendations significantly impact brand perception (Buzgău and Cosma, 2022).

2.3. Purchase Decision

Purchase decisions refer to the process through which consumers evaluate alternatives and make choices about which products or services to buy. This process involves several stages, including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and the final purchase decision. It is influenced by various factors, such as personal preferences, brand perception, pricing, product quality, and external influences like marketing campaigns and social media interactions. Purchase decisions are not just transactional; they reflect the culmination of cognitive and emotional processes that shape consumer behavior.

Purchase decisions directly impact a company's revenue and profitability. When consumers choose a brand's product or service over competitors, it translates into sales and market share growth. Understanding the factors that influence purchase decisions enables businesses to tailor their strategies to attract and retain customers (Chen, 2024). These decisions also reflect how consumers perceive a brand. Trust, loyalty, and satisfaction play a significant role in shaping these choices. Consumers are more likely to choose brands they trust, as trust reduces perceived risks and enhances confidence in the product or service (Walewangko et al., 2024). In competitive markets, understanding purchase decisions is crucial for differentiation. Brands that effectively address consumer needs and preferences through targeted marketing, quality products, and positive experiences are more likely to win customer loyalty and outperform competitors (Rantung et al., 2023).

Insights into purchase decisions help businesses design effective marketing strategies. Social media marketing, personalized advertising, and influencer collaborations can significantly influence consumer choices by addressing their preferences and pain points (Waworuntu et al., 2022). Positive purchase decisions contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty, which are essential for long-term business success. Satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend the brand to others, fostering organic growth and brand advocacy (Rantung et al., 2023). Furthermore, in today's dynamic market, consumer preferences and behaviors are constantly evolving. Understanding purchase decisions allows businesses to adapt to these changes, whether through innovative product offerings, sustainable practices, or digital transformation (Chen, 2024).

Previous research has shown that consumers tend to favor a company's products or services over competitors based on multiple factors (Kim and Sung, 2009). Internal influences include beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, personality traits, perceptions, lifestyle choices, roles, and social standing, while external influences encompass culture, social class, and peer groups (Salem, 2018). Social media has become a crucial platform for consumer engagement, with marketing experts noting the increasing casual interactions between customers online (Hutter et al., 2013). Consumers often conduct extensive online research before making purchase decisions, comparing brands and their offerings (Sharma et al., 2021). Leveraging social media effectively allows businesses to enhance customer engagement and brand reputation (Gkikas et al., 2022). Online reviews and word-of-mouth marketing play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions, as highlighted by Liu et al. (2021).

2.4. Hypothesis Development

2.4.1. Social media marketing and brand trust

Social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a vital component of modern business strategies, providing brands with an effective means to connect with consumers, enhance brand visibility, and influence purchasing decisions (Zuhdi et al., 2019; Mandagi and Aseng, 2021). Among the various dimensions of SMM, entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, and perceived relevance have been identified as critical factors that shape consumer engagement and brand perception (Alalwan, 2018; Wang et al., 2019). These dimensions contribute to the overall effectiveness of social media marketing in building trust, which is a fundamental determinant of consumer behavior and loyalty (Liu et al., 2022; Thaker et al., 2020).

Entertainment is a key component of social media marketing that enhances consumer engagement by delivering enjoyable and engaging content (Sharma et al., 2022). Entertaining content captivates audiences, increases their time spent on a brand's social media pages, and fosters positive emotional connections (Cheung et al., 2020). When consumers perceive a brand's social media presence as enjoyable and engaging, they are more likely to develop a sense of familiarity and trust toward the brand (Mustafi and Hosain, 2020). Prior research suggests that brands incorporating entertaining elements in their SMM strategies can strengthen consumer trust and loyalty (Van Noort and Van Reijmersdal, 2019; Warbung et al., 2023). Therefore, we hypothesize:

- H_{1a}: The entertainment dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

Informativeness is a crucial aspect of SMM, referring to the extent to which a brand provides valuable, accurate, and relevant information to its consumers (Rotzoll and Haefner, 1990; Lee and Hong, 2016). Informative content helps consumers make informed purchasing decisions, reducing uncertainty and enhancing brand credibility (Bilgin and Kethüa, 2022). When brands share transparent and useful information via social media, they foster consumer trust by demonstrating reliability and expertise (Devereux et al., 2020). Empirical studies have shown that informativeness is positively associated with brand trust, as it reinforces consumer confidence in a brand's offerings (Chen and Lin, 2019; Pasuhuk and Mandagi, 2023). Based on these findings, we propose:

- H_{1b}: The informativeness dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

Interactivity in social media marketing refers to the two-way communication between brands and consumers, allowing for active engagement and real-time interactions (Jensen, 1998; Kiousis, 2002). Social media platforms provide businesses with the ability to respond to customer inquiries, address concerns, and personalize interactions, thereby fostering stronger relationships (Zafar et al., 2021). Research indicates that interactive engagement positively impacts consumer perceptions, leading to higher trust in brands (Sohail et al., 2020). By facilitating meaningful dialogues

and encouraging participation, interactive social media strategies can enhance consumer trust and brand loyalty (De Vries et al., 2012; Yeon et al., 2019). Therefore, we hypothesize:

- H_{1c}: The interactivity dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

Perceived relevance pertains to the extent to which consumers find social media content meaningful, useful, and aligned with their personal interests and values (Zhu and Chang, 2016). Tailored content that resonates with consumer preferences fosters a sense of connection and enhances trust (Zhu and Chen, 2015). Research suggests that marketing messages that align with consumer expectations are more likely to generate positive responses and reinforce brand credibility (Pechmann and Stewart, 1990; Gautam and Sharma, 2017). Furthermore, personalized and relevant brand interactions contribute to building long-term trust by demonstrating attentiveness to consumer needs (Hafez, 2021; Mandagi and Aseng, 2021). Based on this, we propose:

- H_{1d}: The perceived relevance dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

2.4.2. Social media marketing and purchase decision
Entertainment is a key factor in SMM that enhances user engagement and brand recall by providing enjoyable and immersive content (Sharma et al., 2022). Studies suggest that entertaining content captures consumer attention, creates positive emotions, and increases the likelihood of making a purchase (Cheung et al., 2020; Mustafi and Hosain, 2020). Engaging visuals, interactive videos, and humor-infused posts contribute to an enhanced brand experience, leading to favorable consumer attitudes and higher purchase intentions (Park et al., 2009; Waworuntu et al., 2022). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

- H_{2a}: The entertainment dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

Informative content helps consumers make informed purchasing decisions by offering details about products, features, and benefits (Rotzoll and Haefner, 1990; Lee and Hong, 2016). Research highlights that informative advertisements improve consumer trust and engagement, ultimately influencing purchase behavior (Chen and Lin, 2019; Kitsios et al., 2022). When brands consistently share educational and transparent content, they enhance their credibility and strengthen consumer confidence (Blanco et al., 2010; Bilgin and Kethüda, 2022). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H_{2b}: The informativeness dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

Interactive marketing strategies allow businesses to foster relationships with their audiences through two-way communication, personalized responses, and community-driven content (Arjun et al., 2021; Zafar et al., 2021). Research indicates that high interactivity enhances consumer trust, strengthens brand relationships, and leads to increased purchase intention (De Vries

et al., 2012; Sohail et al., 2020). The ability of brands to facilitate real-time engagement significantly impacts consumer decisions, leading to the hypothesis:

- H_{2c}: The interactivity dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

Perceived relevance is another critical factor influencing consumer behavior in SMM. It refers to the degree to which marketing content aligns with consumer preferences, needs, and values (Zhu and Chang, 2016). Personalized and targeted content fosters consumer engagement, enhances brand trust, and increases the likelihood of a purchase (Pechmann and Stewart, 1990; Zhu and Chen, 2015). Studies have shown that when consumers find marketing messages relevant, they are more likely to develop positive perceptions of the brand and engage in purchasing behavior (Gautam and Sharma, 2017; Hafez, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H_{2d}: The perceived relevance dimension of SMM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

2.4.3. Brand trust and purchase decision
Brand trust plays a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase decisions, as it reflects the confidence consumers have in a brand's reliability, integrity, and ability to meet their expectations. Trust is built through consistent brand messaging, positive customer experiences, and transparent business practices. In the digital era, social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a key tool for enhancing brand trust by fostering direct interactions, providing valuable content, and creating engaging consumer experiences (Liu et al., 2022; Thaker et al., 2020).

- H_3: Brand trust has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision.

Consumers are more likely to make purchase decisions when they trust a brand, as trust reduces perceived risks and enhances confidence in the product or service (Walewangko et al., 2024). Trust has been identified as a critical determinant of purchase decisions, as it directly influences consumer attitudes and their willingness to engage in transactions (Chen, 2024). Moreover, social media interactions contribute to trust-building by allowing brands to communicate authenticity, respond to customer inquiries promptly, and establish credibility through customer reviews and testimonials (Rantung et al., 2023).

- H_{4a}: Brand trust mediates the relationship between entertainment dimension of SMM and purchase decision.

Entertaining content, such as videos, memes, and interactive campaigns, can create a positive association with the brand, ultimately influencing purchase decisions (Sharma et al., 2022). Prior studies indicate that when consumers find a brand's content enjoyable, they are more likely to develop trust in the brand, which in turn increases the likelihood of purchasing its products or services (Mustafi and Hosain, 2020; Van Noort and Van Reijmersdal, 2019). The mediating role of brand trust suggests

that engaging content not only attracts consumers but also fosters trust, making them more inclined to complete a purchase.

- H_{4b}: Brand trust mediates the relationship between informativeness dimension of SMM and purchase decision.

Informative content enables consumers to make informed decisions by reducing uncertainty and enhancing their perception of a brand's credibility (Rotzoll and Haefner, 1990; Lee and Hong, 2016). Social media serves as an effective channel for disseminating information about products, promotions, and brand values, fostering trust among consumers (Bilgin and Kethüda, 2022). Research suggests that when consumers perceive social media content as informative, they are more likely to trust the brand, which positively influences their purchase decisions (Chen and Lin, 2019; Devereux et al., 2020).

- H_{4c}: Brand trust mediates the relationship between interactivity dimension of SMM and purchase decision.

High levels of interactivity, such as responding to customer comments, conducting live Q&A sessions, and providing personalized recommendations, contribute to a sense of connection and trust between the brand and consumers (Sohail et al., 2020). Prior research highlights that interactive engagement on social media strengthens consumer trust, which in turn increases the likelihood of making a purchase (Zafar et al., 2021; De Vries et al., 2012). Thus, interactivity-driven trust serves as a crucial mediator in the relationship between social media engagement and purchase behavior.

- H_{4d}: Brand trust mediates the relationship between perceived relevance dimension of SMM and purchase decision.

Figure 1 summarizes the hypothesized relationships among all variables in this study. It visually represents the connections between social media marketing dimensions, brand trust, and purchase decision, illustrating the direct and mediating effects proposed in the research framework. By mapping these relationships, the figure serves as a conceptual guide, highlighting the theoretical foundations and expected interactions among key constructs in the study.

3. METHODOLOGY

In alignment with the study's objective to explore and analyze the relationships among social media marketing (SMM), brand trust, and purchase decisions, this research adopted a quantitative descriptive and correlational design. Data were collected through an online survey targeting the study population, which comprised customers and regular users of iPhones in Indonesia. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via SmartPLS software. Apple iPhone was selected as the focal brand due to its dominant market position within the Indonesian smartphone industry. A convenience sampling method was employed to obtain the required data, as it is a pragmatic and cost-efficient technique, particularly in the absence of a defined sampling frame. This approach facilitated efficient participant recruitment and survey distribution. The data collection process was conducted with rigor, strictly adhering to ethical guidelines and protocols to ensure informed consent from all respondents. As recommended by Hair et al. (2019), a minimum sample size of 200 is advisable for SEM-based analyses. In this study, a total of 251 valid responses were obtained for data analysis. The demographic characteristics of the participants are detailed below.

The demographic profile of Indonesian smartphone users in this study reveals that the majority are female (63%) and working professionals (75.30%), with the largest age group being 31–35 years old (45.82%). Younger users aged 26–30 (22.71%) and 20–25 (13.94%) are also present, while those above 41 make up a smaller portion (13.55%). Students account for 21.12% of respondents, and a minor 3.59% fall into other occupations. These insights suggest that smartphones are primarily used by working adults, especially women, for both professional and personal purposes, making them a key target group for businesses and marketers.

Measurement items from previous studies were utilized to ensure data reliability and validity. The questionnaire was structured into two main sections: the first section gathered demographic information from respondents, while the second section consists of 30 item indicator measuring research variables. These variables

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
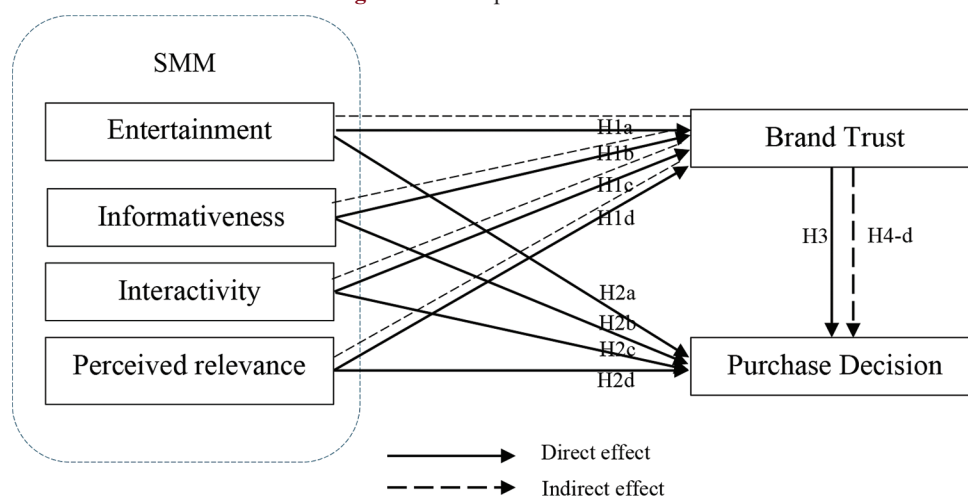
were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), covering all necessary measurement points. To evaluate brand trust, six items were adapted from previous studies (Ibrahim and Aljarah, 2018; Aslan and Güllüpunar, 2016; Cardoso et al., 2022), ensuring alignment with the research context. Similarly, purchase decisions were measured using six items derived from Hanaysha (2018), as well as previous studies by O'Cass (2000) and Enneking et al. (2007), ensuring a comprehensive assessment. The measurement of social media marketing effectiveness was operationalized using four key dimensions: informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, and relevance to the intended audience. These dimensions were evaluated using a total of 19 items drawn from prior studies (Lima et al., 2024; Prasanna and Parida (2021; Kim and Ko, 2012). Specifically, the informativeness dimension was assessed with six items, entertainment with five items, interactivity with four items, and perceived relevance with four items.

The data collection process was conducted through an online survey, targeting smartphone users in Indonesia, specifically Apple users. Respondents were recruited via social media platforms and Apple brand community groups, ensuring that the study reached individuals who actively engage with the brand. To maintain ethical research standards, participants were first asked screening questions to confirm their eligibility. Once they agreed to participate, they received a survey link directing them to the questionnaire. To address ethical concerns, all responses were collected anonymously, and participants were informed that their data would remain strictly confidential and used solely for academic research purposes. The survey resulted in a total of 255 responses, but after careful screening, only 251 responses were deemed complete and valid for analysis. After data collection, the responses underwent rigorous coding and preprocessing to ensure data quality. A meticulous data-cleaning process was conducted to detect and handle missing values. Any incomplete or inconsistent responses were carefully examined and, if necessary, replaced using appropriate methods to ensure the integrity of the dataset. This thorough approach ensured that the data was accurate, reliable, and ready for further statistical analysis in the next stage of the study

The study employed a two-stage analytical approach, incorporating both descriptive analysis and hypothesis testing to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the data. Descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS software, allowing for a detailed examination of respondent demographics and variable distributions. This initial step provided insights into the data's general trends and patterns before proceeding to hypothesis testing.

Table 1: Respondent profile

Variable	Level	n	%
Sex	Female	158	63
	Male	93	37
Age	20-25 YO	35	13.94
	26-30 YO	57	22.71
	31-35 YO	115	45.82
	Above 41 YO	34	13.55
Occupation	Student	53	21.12
	Working	189	75.30
	Others	9	3.59

For hypothesis testing, SmartPLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling - PLS-SEM) was utilized, following a two-step SEM procedure: the measurement model assessment and the structural model assessment. The measurement model was used to validate the accuracy and reliability of the measurement scales. This process involved assessing validity and reliability using various statistical criteria. Validity was evaluated through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was determined by examining factor loadings, ensuring that all indicators meaningfully contributed to their respective constructs. Meanwhile, discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with inter-construct correlations to ensure each construct is distinct.

To confirm reliability, multiple measures were applied. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency, while rho_A, an adjusted reliability coefficient, accounted for construct correlations. Composite Reliability (CR) ensured overall reliability, verifying the consistency of responses, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) confirmed that each construct explained a sufficient proportion of variance in its indicators, with a threshold greater than 0.50.

Once the measurement model met the required reliability and validity thresholds, the structural model was developed to test the proposed hypotheses and assess the relationships between key variables. This stage focused on examining model fit, effect sizes, and predictive power through key indicators. Goodness of Fit (GoF) was analyzed to determine how well the model explained the data. Additionally, F-Square Values (f^2) were calculated to evaluate the effect size of independent variables on dependent variables, indicating the relative impact of each predictor. The R-Square Values (R^2) measured the model's explanatory power by showing the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables.

Finally, path coefficients and p-values were analyzed to determine the strength and significance of the hypothesized relationships. The final structural model was only established after achieving satisfactory validity and reliability metrics, ensuring that the findings were statistically sound and contributed meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge on social media marketing, brand trust, and purchase decisions.

3.1. Measurement Model
3.1.1. Convergent validity
Figure 2 presents the results of the measurement model, while Table 2 provides a detailed summary of factor loadings for all indicators across each variable. The convergent validity of the measurement model was confirmed, as all factor loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold, ensuring the reliability of each construct. Brand Trust (0.871–0.937), Entertainment (0.848–0.933), Informative (0.872–0.941), Interactive (0.829–0.938), Perceived Relevance (0.916–0.950), and Purchase Decision (0.879–0.930) demonstrated strong internal consistency. These consistently high loadings validate the measurement model, confirming its reliability and accuracy in capturing the intended constructs within the study's framework.

Figure 2: Measurement Model
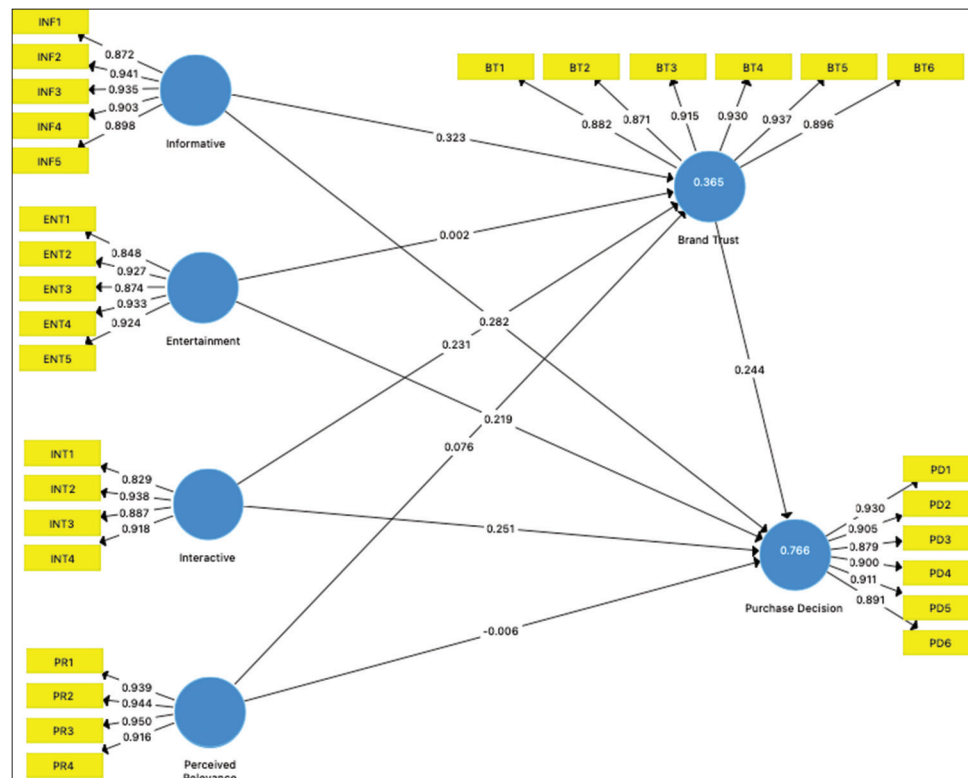
Table 2: Measurement Model Test Result (Factor Loading)

Construct	Indicators	Loading	Construct	Indicators	Loading
Brand Trust	BT1	0,882	Interactive	INT1	0.829
	BT2	0,871		INT2	0.938
	BT3	0,915		INT3	0.887
	BT4	0,930		INT4	0.918
	BT5	0,937	Perceived Relevance	PR1	0.939
	BT6	0,896		PR2	0.944
Entertainment	ENT1	0,848		PR3	0.950
	ENT2	0,927		PR4	0.916
	ENT3	0,874	Purchased Decision	PD1	0.930
	ENT4	0,933		PD2	0.905
	ENT5	0,924		PD3	0.879
Informative	INF1	0,872		PD4	0.900
	INF2	0,941		PD5	0.911
	INF3	0,935		PD6	0.891
	INF4	0,903			
	INF5	0,898			

3.2. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the measurement model was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, which assesses whether each construct is distinct from the others by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlations between constructs. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs.

Table 3 presents the Fornell-Larcker Criterion results, demonstrating that each construct exhibits a higher correlation with itself than with any other variable. Brand Trust (0.906),

Entertainment (0.902), Informative (0.910), Interactive (0.894), Perceived Relevance (0.937), and Purchase Decision (0.903) all have their diagonal values exceeding the corresponding correlation values in their respective rows and columns. This confirms that each construct shares more variance with its designated indicators than with other constructs, reinforcing their uniqueness.

Specifically, Brand Trust exhibits a strong correlation with itself (0.906) while showing lower correlations with other variables, supporting discriminant validity. Entertainment holds a notable diagonal value of 0.902, demonstrating clear construct distinction. Informative possesses a high diagonal value of 0.910, with its correlations to other constructs remaining below this threshold. Interactive also exhibits a strong discriminant validity with a diagonal value of 0.894, surpassing its correlations with other constructs. Perceived Relevance demonstrates the highest discriminant validity among all constructs, with a diagonal value of 0.937, while Purchase Decision follows closely at 0.903.

The results confirm that the model successfully meets the discriminant validity criteria, ensuring that each construct is conceptually distinct and does not overlap significantly with others. This finding reinforces the measurement model's robustness, validating the reliability and precision of the questionnaire in effectively capturing each variable independently.

3.3. Construct Reliability

To further assess the construct reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR) were evaluated, as presented in Table 4. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 is widely regarded as satisfactory, indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the items measuring each construct. The results show that all constructs

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	Brand Trust	Entertainment	Informative	Interactive	Perceived Relevance	Purchase Decision
Brand Trust	0.906					
Entertainment	0.541	0.902				
Informative	0.586	0.842	0.910			
Interactive	0.568	0.857	0.836	0.894		
Perceived Relevance	0.567	0.908	0.901	0.856	0.937	
Purchase Decision	0.667	0.799	0.814	0.808	0.801	0.903

exhibit excellent reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.916 to 0.956, confirming the robustness of the measurement scale. Composite Reliability (CR), which provides a more refined measure of internal consistency without assuming equal factor loadings, also surpassed the 0.70 threshold, with values ranging from 0.941 to 0.965, further reinforcing the reliability of the constructs.

3.4. Model Fit Assessment

The R-squared (R^2) value represents the proportion of variance in a dependent variable explained by the independent variables in the model. As shown in Table 5, the R^2 value for Brand Trust is 0.365, with an adjusted value of 0.354, indicating that 36.5% of the variance in Brand Trust is explained by the independent variables. Similarly, the R^2 value for Purchase Decision is 0.766, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.761, signifying that 76.6% of the variance in Purchase Decision is explained by the model's predictors. The close alignment between the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values suggests a well-fitted model where the explanatory power is derived from significant factors rather than merely the number of predictors.

The f^2 value assesses the effect size of each independent variable on the dependent variables. Typically, values of 0.02 indicate a small effect, 0.15 a moderate effect, and 0.35 a substantial effect. For Brand Trust, Entertainment has no impact (0.000). Informative has a small impact (0.038). Interactive also exhibits a small impact (0.018). Perceived Relevance has a negligible effect (0.001). For Purchase Decision, Brand Trust has a moderate yet substantial effect (0.162), highlighting its significance in shaping purchase decisions. Entertainment has a minor impact (0.031). Informative contributes a small effect (0.057). Interactive has a similar small effect (0.057). Perceived Relevance has no notable impact (0.000). Despite the low impact of most independent variables, the moderate effect of Brand Trust on Purchase Decision underscores its crucial role in influencing consumer behavior.

The model's overall fit is assessed using several statistical measures, as presented in Table 7. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.063 suggests an acceptable fit, though values below 0.08 are generally preferred for a strong model fit. The chi-square statistic (2674.435) is relatively high, which is expected in models with large sample sizes, potentially leading to rejection despite an otherwise good fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.767 falls below the ideal threshold of 0.90 but still indicates a moderate level of fit. The d_ULS and d_G discrepancy measures (1.845 and 2.199, respectively) suggest a reasonable level of consistency between the observed and estimated models. Overall, while the model does not perfectly meet all fit criteria, the SRMR and NFI values indicate a satisfactory fit, suggesting that the model adequately represents the data.

Table 4: Reliability Testing

Construct	Cronbach alpha	rho_A	Composite reliabilty	AVE
Brand Trust	0.956	0.963	0.965	0.820
Entertainment	0.942	0.943	0.956	0.813
Informative	0.948	0.948	0.960	0.828
Interactive	0.916	0.927	0.941	0.799
Perceived Relevance	0.955	0.956	0.964	0.815
Purchase Decision	0.955	0.956	0.964	0.815

Table 5: R square values

Construct	R square	R square adjusted
Brand Trust	0.365	0.354
Purchase Decision	0.766	0.761

Table 6: F square values

Construct	Brand Trust	Purchase Decision
Brand Trust		0.162
Entertainment	0.000	0.031
Informative	0.038	0.057
Interactive	0.018	0.057
Perceived Relevance	0.001	0.000
Purchase Decision		

Table 7: Goodness of fit model

Construct	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.063	0.063
d_ULS	1.845	1.845
d_G	2.199	2.199
Chi-Square	2674.435	2674.435
NFI	0.767	0.767

3.5. Structural Model

The results of the hypothesis testing in Table 8 reveal insightful relationships between the four dimensions of social media marketing (SMM)—interactivity, informativeness, entertainment, and perceived relevance—as well as brand trust and purchase decisions. The analysis for H_{1a} indicates that the entertainment dimension of SMM does not significantly influence brand trust ($\beta = 0.002$, $P = 0.989$). This contradicts previous research by Pelsmacker et al. (2002) and Wang et al. (2019), which suggests that entertaining content enhances brand relationships. The non-significant result implies that while entertainment may create a positive brand experience, it does not necessarily establish trust unless supplemented with authenticity and credibility.

However, informativeness positively and significantly impacts brand trust ($\beta = 0.323$, $P = 0.048$), confirming H_{1b}. This result aligns with previous findings that clear, transparent, and valuable information enhances consumer confidence in a brand (Ducoffe,

Table 8: Result of the hypothesis testing

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	T statistics (β)	P values	Hypothesis
Entertainment -> Brand Trust	0.002	0.172	0.014	0.989	H_{1a}
Informative -> Brand Trust	0.323	0.163	1.984	0.048*	H_{1b}
Interactive -> Brand Trust	0.231	0.136	1.695	0.091	H_{1c}
Perceived Relevance -> Brand Trust	0.076	0.191	0.398	0.691	H_{1d}
Entertainment -> Purchase Decision	0.219	0.109	2.006	0.045*	H_{2a}
Informative -> Purchase Decision	0.282	0.081	3.488	0.001**	H_{2b}
Interactive -> Purchase Decision	0.251	0.086	2.934	0.003**	H_{2c}
Perceived Relevance -> Purchase Decision	0.006	0.107	0.057	0.955	H_{2d}
Brand Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.244	0.058	4.198	0.000***	H_3

*P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001

1995; Bart et al., 2005). Consumers tend to trust brands that provide accurate and helpful content, as it reduces uncertainty and builds perceived reliability.

Regarding H_{1c}, this study finds that interactivity does not significantly influence brand trust (β = 0.231, P = 0.091). While prior studies suggest that interactive brand communication fosters engagement and trust (Zhu and Chen, 2015; Sijabat et al., 2022), the non-significant result in this study implies that interactivity alone may not be sufficient to build trust. This could be because trust requires consistent brand messaging, transparency, and credibility beyond mere interactivity (Busser and Shulga, 2019).

Similarly, perceived relevance is found to have no significant impact on brand trust (β = 0.076, P = 0.691), which does not support H_{1d}. This result diverges from the study by Walean et al. (2023), which found that message relevance strengthens consumer-brand connections. It suggests that relevance alone does not guarantee trust, as consumers may prioritize other factors such as social proof, third-party validation, and past brand experiences (Sijabat et al., 2022).

Regarding H_{2a}, the findings indicate that the entertainment dimension of SMM significantly impacts purchase decisions (β = 0.219, P = 0.045), supporting H_{2a}. This result aligns with studies by Liu et al. (2018) and Walean et al. (2023), which suggest that engaging and enjoyable brand content creates positive emotional connections, thereby increasing consumer willingness to purchase.

Informativeness also significantly affects purchase decisions (H_{2b}: β = 0.282, P = 0.001), reinforcing previous research that consumers prefer detailed and transparent product information before making a purchase (Chatterjee and Wang, 2020). These findings emphasize that well-structured, informative content reduces uncertainty and enhances purchase confidence.

Similarly, interactivity significantly influences purchase decisions (β = 0.251, P = 0.003), supporting H_{2c}. This result aligns with findings from Kim and Ko (2012) and Waworuntu et al. (2022), who observed that interactive digital marketing fosters consumer engagement and encourages purchasing behavior. This suggests that brands integrating interactive elements such as chatbots, real-time engagement, and personalized recommendations can positively influence purchase intent.

However, perceived relevance does not significantly affect purchase decisions (β = 0.006, P = 0.955), providing no support for H_{2d}. This result contradicts earlier research suggesting that highly relevant content strengthens consumer engagement and purchase behavior (Walean et al., 2023; Sijabat et al., 2022). This unexpected finding implies that while relevance may attract consumer attention, it does not necessarily translate into purchase action. Other factors, such as brand credibility and perceived value, might play a more critical role in influencing purchase decisions.

Finally, regarding H_3, brand trust significantly influences purchase decisions (β = 0.244, P = 0.000), strongly supporting existing literature on consumer-brand relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Gefen and Pavlou, 2004). Trust is a fundamental determinant of consumer decision-making, as it reduces perceived risk and enhances brand loyalty (Walean et al., 2023; Sijabat et al., 2022). When consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to make confident purchasing decisions, reinforcing the importance of trust-building strategies such as consistent brand messaging, transparency, and positive customer experiences.

3.6. Mediating Analysis

The results of the mediating analysis in Table 9 provide insights into the role of brand trust as a mediator between the four dimensions of social media marketing (SMM)—entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, and perceived relevance—and purchase decisions.

The direct effect of entertainment on purchase decisions is significant (β = 0.219, P = 0.045), confirming that entertaining content positively influences consumer purchasing behavior. However, the indirect effect of entertainment on purchase decisions through brand trust is not significant (β = 0.034, P = 0.863), providing no support for H_{4a}. This suggests that while entertainment enhances purchase intent, it does not necessarily build brand trust as a mechanism for driving purchase decisions. This finding contradicts prior studies (Lou and Xie, 2021; Wang et al., 2019), which suggest that entertaining brand content fosters trust and strengthens consumer-brand relationships.

Similarly, informativeness has a direct and significant effect on purchase decisions (β = 0.282, P = 0.001), indicating that well-structured and transparent product information enhances consumer confidence in making purchasing decisions. However, the mediation effect of brand trust in this relationship is not significant

Table 9: Results of the mediation analysis

Construct	T statistics (β)	P values	Hypothesis
Entertainment -> PD	2.006	0.045*	
Entertainment -> BT -> PD	0.034	0.863	H$_{4a}$
Informative -> PD	3.488	0.001**	
Informative -> BT-> PD	0.008	0.668	H$_{4b}$
Interactive -> PD	2.934	0.003**	
Interactive -> BT-> PD	0.074	0.533	H$_{4c}$
Perceived Relevance -> PD	0.057	0.955	
Perceived Relevance -> BT-> PD	2.106	0.037**	H$_{4d}$

PD: Purchase decision, BT: Brand trust. *P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001

($\beta = 0.008$, $P = 0.668$), rejecting H$_{4b}$. This finding implies that while informativeness directly influences consumer purchases, it does not necessarily enhance brand trust as an intermediary factor. This result contrasts with previous studies (Tseng, 2023; Chatterjee and Wang, 2020), which suggest that informativeness builds trust and credibility, leading to increased purchase likelihood.

Interactivity also significantly influences purchase decisions directly ($\beta = 0.251$, $P = 0.003$), supporting the idea that interactive digital marketing strategies, such as personalized recommendations and real-time engagement, foster consumer involvement and encourage purchasing behavior. However, the indirect effect of interactivity on purchase decisions through brand trust is not significant ($\beta = 0.074$, $P = 0.533$), rejecting H$_{4c}$. This suggests that while interactivity enhances purchase intent, it does not necessarily build trust as a mechanism for influencing purchase behavior. This finding challenges prior research (Kim and Ko, 2012; Carlson et al., 2019), which argues that interactive marketing strategies contribute to trust formation and subsequent purchase decisions.

Interestingly, perceived relevance does not have a significant direct effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.006$, $P = 0.955$), indicating that relevance alone is not a decisive factor in consumer purchase behavior. However, the mediation analysis reveals a significant indirect effect of perceived relevance on purchase decisions through brand trust ($\beta = 2.106$, $P = 0.037$), supporting H$_{4d}$. This suggests that while perceived relevance does not directly influence purchasing decisions, it plays an essential role in building brand trust, which, in turn, enhances purchase intent. This finding aligns with previous research (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Rantung et al., 2025), which emphasizes that relevant content strengthens consumer-brand relationships and fosters trust, leading to increased purchase behavior.

4. CONCLUSION

The study examined the relationships between the four dimensions of social media marketing, brand trust, and purchase decisions. The findings revealed that informativeness was the only dimension that significantly influenced brand trust, while entertainment, interactivity, and perceived relevance did not have a significant effect. These results suggest that clear, transparent, and valuable information plays a crucial role in building consumer trust in a brand, whereas entertainment and interactivity alone are not sufficient to establish trust. Regarding purchase decisions,

entertainment, informativeness, and interactivity significantly influenced consumer purchasing behavior, whereas perceived relevance had no direct impact. Additionally, brand trust was found to be a key determinant of purchase decisions, reinforcing its importance in consumer decision-making. The mediating analysis further revealed that brand trust did not significantly mediate the relationships between entertainment, informativeness, or interactivity and purchase decisions. However, brand trust served as a significant mediator between perceived relevance and purchase decisions, indicating that while perceived relevance may not directly drive purchase behavior, it can enhance consumer trust, which in turn influences purchase decisions.

This study contributes to the literature on social media marketing and consumer behavior by providing insights into the role of brand trust in influencing purchase decisions. While previous studies have suggested that entertainment strengthens consumer-brand relationships, the findings indicate that entertainment alone does not directly foster trust, highlighting the need for authenticity and credibility in brand communication. The study also reinforces the role of informativeness in trust formation and supports the notion that interactive digital marketing fosters purchase behavior. However, the lack of a mediating role of brand trust in these relationships suggests the need for further exploration of other potential mediators such as perceived value or brand credibility. The significant mediation of brand trust in the relationship between perceived relevance and purchase decisions supports previous theories that message relevance strengthens consumer-brand connections, indicating that while relevance alone may not drive immediate purchases, it enhances consumer trust, which increases purchase intent.

The findings offer several practical insights for marketers. Brands should prioritize informativeness in their social media marketing strategies, as it significantly enhances brand trust and influences purchase decisions. Providing clear, accurate, and transparent information can reduce consumer uncertainty and build long-term loyalty. While entertainment and interactivity drive purchase decisions, they do not necessarily build trust, emphasizing the need for credibility-building strategies such as user-generated reviews, third-party endorsements, and transparent communication. Perceived relevance alone does not directly lead to purchase decisions, but its impact on trust suggests that brands should ensure their content is not only relevant but also credible and reliable. Personalized recommendations and targeted marketing efforts can enhance perceived relevance, but trust-building mechanisms must be integrated to translate relevance into actual purchase behavior.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has some limitations. The research focused on a specific consumer segment, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across different markets and industries. Future research could explore these relationships in diverse contexts, such as luxury brands, B2B marketing, or emerging markets. The study primarily examined the direct and mediating effects of brand trust, and future research should consider other potential mediators, such as perceived value, brand credibility, or customer satisfaction, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms driving purchase decisions.

Additionally, the study relied on cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to establish causality. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how consumer perceptions of social media marketing evolve over time and influence long-term brand trust and purchasing behavior. Future studies could also incorporate qualitative methods, such as consumer interviews or focus groups, to explore the psychological and emotional factors that influence trust formation and purchase decisions in social media marketing.

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