Role of Consumer Engagement as Mediator Between Social Network Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intention

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the relationship between social network marketing, consumer engagement, and purchase intention from the perspective of mobile users in Indonesia. Furthermore, this research also aims to determine whether consumer engagement plays a mediating role between social network marketing and purchase intention. The population is consumers from the largest mobile operator brand in Indonesia, with a total of 210 samples using purposive sampling techniques. This study employs a quantitative approach by distributing a five-point questionnaire on a Likert scale and using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to test the hypothesis. Based on the data processing results, social network marketing significantly impacts consumer purchase intention. Social network marketing has a significant impact on consumer engagement. Consumer engagement has a significant impact on consumer purchase intention. Consumer engagement plays a role as a mediating variable between social network marketing and purchase intention. This research provides empirical evidence of the practical use of social network marketing, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions in developing countries' mobile service operator industry. Additional discussions are addressed in the paper.

Keywords: Consumer Engagement · Social Network Marketing · Purchase Intention · SEM

1 Introduction

Mobile phone users in Indonesia are growing rapidly based on the number of active SIM card users, but the value of revenue in the mobile operator industry does not show an increase in revenue [1]. This reflects a problem of user retention and a poor ability to attract new consumers to the industry. The intense competition between mobile network operators in Indonesia is also causing unhealthy competition with the emergence of price wars [1]. Another problem facing the industry is the establishment of Indonesian government regulations to register every new user of mobile operator services had caused

a decrease in the number of users in 2018 [2]. Saturated market conditions and declining numbers of users provide an incentive for mobile operators to pursue business strategies to increase consumer interest. Mobile operators strive to increase corporate margins by increasing advertising on digital and social media [3]. However, with awareness of taking advantage of social medicine increasing, in fact, the impact of this activity is still difficult to know the results for the external party of the company. [4] wrote that companies failed to use social media as an effective marketing tool.

In many fields known as social media, a social network is broad in scope and can better serve consumers. Social media marketing is more cost-effective in promoting a business [5]. Consumers who interact with brands through social media fan pages are more satisfied and conduct themselves more loyal [6]. Social Network Marketing (SNM) is useful in elevating purchase intention, maximizing buying decisions, and building brand loyalty [7–9]. [10] research also indicates that social networking is a powerful corporate identity and advertising tool.

Social media marketing has the benefit of being interactive. Consumers see themselves as having an essential role in interacting directly with brands on social media [11]. The relationship between social marketing efforts and consumer engagement has been extensively explored worldwide. Based on the research results, consumer engagement is a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between social media marketing efforts and establishes brand loyalty [12, 13]. [14] found that social network marketing affects purchase intention. [15] reported that the more consumers respond to social media marketing, the more they get involved with the brand. Despite its advantages, social media may also cause discomfort to consumers. Research findings confirm that consumers are frequently uncomfortable with social media marketing practices due to privacy concerns [16, 17]. A consumer's discomfort can lead to a negative attitude affecting their intention to buy and confidence in the brand [18].

The telecommunications industry in Indonesia, controlled by five large companies, has social media accounts and is very active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and even YouTube, with millions of followers. One of the mobile service providers, with the majority of users in Indonesia, uses social media mainly for marketing campaigns to increase awareness, traffic, and sales [19]. The use of social media to promote products and services has also been carried out by 3 other major mobile providers in Indonesia to compete in this industry through digital marketing and engagement strategies [20]. However, there is still an unrestricted awareness of the impact of this change in marketing strategy to purchase from the consumer's perspective.

Research that examines the function of social media as one of the tools for promotion and increasing buying interest has been done quite a lot in Indonesia, but the issue of the influence of consumer engagement variables is still small. There is evidence that social media marketing and consumer engagement encourage consumers to purchase, but this needs to be proven in this sector. Studies using consumer engagement as a moderator variable are even less conducted in the telecommunications industries in Indonesia than in other variables. This research will contribute to discovering knowledge about the influence of marketing on social media to buy mediated by consumer engagement in the Indonesian telecommunications industry.

1.1 Social Network Marketing

This paper uses the term "social network marketing" and "social media marketing" because they refer to the same concept. Research indicates that the impact of social media marketing on consumer engagement has become a priority for researchers and marketers [4]. Social Network Marketing is considered to be very beneficial for businesses as it has the power to quickly deliver marketing messages via the Internet [21]. The social network marketing practice has started to evolve and is being used as a product marketing tool to enhance brand awareness and increase sales [22].

Social network marketing is defined as a marketing activity based on its dimensions: interactivity, informativeness, EWOM, personalization, and trendiness [23]. According to [24], social network marketing refers to using social media technology in the form of channels and software intended to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange special value for stakeholders. The other concept described social media marketing as online activities and programs designed to engage customers or potential customers directly or indirectly by raising awareness, enhancing image, or generating sales of products and services [25].

Social network marketing as an independent variable has been used as a variable that influences consumer behavior in the formation of purchase intention, brand equity, brand loyalty, and customer satisfaction [23, 26, 27]. Research conducted by [28] also found that social media marketing activities conducted as part of a company's marketing campaign have a positive impact on social CRM capabilities on firm performance.

1.2 Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intention

Consumer engagement in the social media environment is described as the interaction between consumers and businesses through business-related social media messages [29]. This concept bears a resemblance to the concept of consumer engagement proposed by [30], which states that consumer engagement is the intensity of participation in both initiatives led by businesses and consumers. Consumer engagement studies how consumer attention and active participation in communication reflect a response to business value creation [25]. Consumer engagement from the previous study reveals that engagement leads to the formation of brand loyalty [31], firm performance [32], purchase intention [33], and brand equity through brand trust mediation [34].

It has become a common agreement among marketing practitioners that social media is bringing a new chapter to marketing activities in the digital age. Studies conducted to measure the effectiveness of social media in 24 marketing programs showed that 92% of marketing programs declared social media effective in the success of marketing programs [35]. Research by [36] has clearly stated the role of social media as a new tool in marketing in promoting products/services through the formation of relationships between brands and their consumers. This makes social media a tool that changes the interaction between consumers and organizations [35]. Social media is becoming a valuable and inexpensive communication channel for marketers to interact and engage with potential consumers in large numbers [24].

The existence of social media has enabled new interaction opportunities that allow marketers to nurture engagement and build strong relationships [37, 38]. Lately, marketers have become dependent on social media to engage with their target audience [39].

The effectiveness of social media is more often measured from metrics assessed by traffic indicators, clicks, number of new follower additions, repeat visits, number of content searches, number of mentions between social media platforms, and also peer-to-peer recommendations that occur in the unit of time count [40].

With the importance of engagement for a company's social media marketing activities, marketers are still often confused by the factors that drive the creation of engagement in consumers. To measure engagement that occurs after consumers consume social media content, some research results have suggested the level of engagement. [38] divides engagement on social media into 7 different levels: connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement. Different levels of engagement provide different benefits for organizations, and different understandings are needed for marketers to determine the communication activities they engage in on social media, according to the cool hail [35].

Dimensions of consumer engagement in social media were driven by brand experience [31, 41] content type, media type, and posting time [42]. Consumer engagement with social media is usually measured by the total number of likes, shares, and comments on content shared on the company's brand page [41–44]. [45] added that in addition to liking, shares, and comments, the form of engagement in social media is also seen in replying to messages and retweeting on social media Twitter. Based on research by [46], social media engagement behavior is measured based on 2 types of engagement: creating and contributing activities as a form of active engagement and consuming activities as a form of passive engagement. According to [47], consumer engagement with brands following the consumption of content on corporate social media involves consumers' cognitive, emotional, and intentional engagement within the brand.

It is essential to have information on consumer buying interests since buying intentions can estimate buying behavior. In the context of social commerce, social capital is one of the principal sources that can show the desires and needs of consumers' buying intentions. Purchase intentions require unforeseen support factors to encourage customers to spend their needs. This is driven by a statement issued by [48], which states that the purchase intention of consumers is formed based on several factors, including the internal stimuli from the consumer himself, expectations on the price offered, and the benefits that the purchase can generate. In this regard, social media content is considered very important to motivate consumers to take the next step of buying after consuming branded content. Social media marketing and consumer engagement activities on brand social media pages proved to be positive indicators for buying interest and positive WOM, in addition, to also proven to affect the 3 stages of purchasing decisions, namely the cognitive stage, affective stage, and conative stage [49].

1.3 Relationship between Social Network Marketing, Consumer Engagement, and Consumer Purchase Intention

[37, 50], and [33] have shown the impact of social media marketing on consumer engagement. A study conducted by [51] found that the information received by consumers about products or services in the digital world positively impacts purchase intention. Consumers will be affected by other consumers' preferences through electronic word of
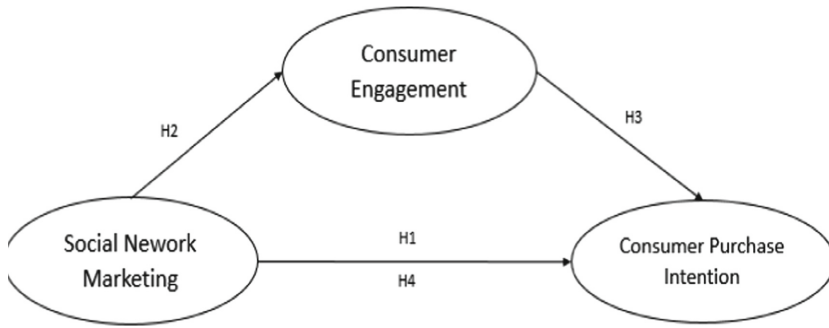
Fig. 1. Research Framework

mouth [51]. [52] report that social media marketing has a far lower impact on marketing costs because it attracts attention and rapidly increases consumer interest.

The relationship between consumer engagement and consumer purchase intentions was surveyed by [53]. They found that companies that use persuasive messaging strategies constantly entice consumers to feel connected to the brand. In the long term, consumers will continue to use products or services [53]. [54] also indicate that social media marketing and consumer engagement lead to purchase intention. Other findings [14] presented to prove that consumer engagement increases consumer interest in social commerce users in Korea. [55] also demonstrate the influence of marketing on social networks on consumer purchase intention. The framework described in this study aims to demonstrate the impact of social media marketing and consumer engagement on consumer purchase intent among mobile telecom users. Figure 1 shows one framework that the researchers addressed.

Research by [33, 54], and [55] found that social media marketing has an impact on consumer purchase intention through consumer engagement mediation. According to earlier studies, the proposed assumptions are as follows:

H1 Social network marketing positively affects consumer purchase intention.
H2 Social network marketing positively affects consumer engagement.
H3 Consumer engagement positively affects consumer purchase intention.
H4 Consumer engagement plays a mediating role between social network marketing and consumer purchase intention.

2   Methods

The population covered by this study is users from the largest users basis mobile operator in Indonesia. This study uses non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique. Respondents in this study were consumers of mobile telecommunications and had previously accessed the social media accounts of the telecommunications providers they used at least once. The determination of the minimum number of samples is derived from [56] which stated that the number of SEM samples is determined by 5 to 10 times the number of variables that have been used in the analysis design. A minimum sample

size is 200 respondents. Research data collection is done by distributing online questionnaires with a direct message. Direct messaging was sent to 350 accounts during the survey. Up to 210 surveys provide a complete response. The response rate is 60%.

Among all respondents, 42,6% were men, while 57,4% were women. The average age of all respondents is 77,3%, of whom are 18–25 years old, 10,2% are 26–35 years old, 7,1% are 36–45 years old, and 5,7% are 46–55 years old. Of the average respondent occupation, 43,5% are workers/employees, 7,4% are entrepreneurs, and 49,1% are university students. Meanwhile, from the information about social media that they have and often use daily, 59,7% use Instagram, 19% use WhatsApp, 12,5% use Twitter, and the rest use Facebook and Line (8,8%).

3   Results and Discussion

The analysis derived from the structural model showed results in CMIN/DF $= 2.233$ with cut of value of ≤ 3, AGFI 0.865, GFI $= 0.897$, CFI $= 0.948$, RMSEA $= 0.07$, and RMR $= 0.05$. These results indicate that the data in this study fit the model very well to answer the research hypothesis. The results of the hypotheses testing are presented in Table 1. The examination of the hypotheses was based on the t-value, with a value greater than 1.96, which represents a significant path.

From the data presented in Table 1, the result represents the answer to the research objective of this research. The first hypothesis, the correlation between social network marketing and consumer purchase intention, has a CR-value of 6,698, exceeding CR-Table 1,96. Thus the result is that social network marketing has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention, H1 accepted. The second hypothesis, the correlation between social network marketing and consumer engagement, has a CR-Value of 10,598, exceeding CR-Table 1.96. Thus there is a positive influence on social network marketing to consumer engagement, H1 accepted.

The third hypothesis, the correlation between consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention, has a CR-Value of 5.340, exceeding CR-Table 1.96. Thus there is a positive influence of consumer engagement on consumer purchase intention. The fourth hypothesis proposes a statement on the role of consumer engagement as a mediating variable between social network marketing and consumer purchase intention. Additionally, the Sobel test was conducted online using the Daniel Soper calculator. From the

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing

	CR Value	CR Table	Hypothesis
H1: Social Network Marketing – Consumer Purchase Intention	6.698***	1.96	H1 accepted
H2: Social Network Marketing – Consumer Engagement	10.598***	1.96	H2 accepted
H3: Consumer Engagement – Consumer Purchase Intention	5.340***	1.96	H3 accepted

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$

results of the Sobel calculation, it is known that the T-value of the mediation effect test was 3.379, using a = 0.05, then t table = 1.96, the results show that hypothesis H4 is accepted. This indicated that the relationship between social media marketing and consumer intention to purchase is mediated by consumer engagement.

This study explores the relationship between social network marketing, consumer engagement, and purchase intention. From research findings, social network marketing had a positive effect on consumer engagement. This can be interpreted that positive social network marketing pursued by mobile operator companies in Indonesia can influence consumer purchase intention on the brand. The results of the study regarding the relationship of social network marketing to consumer purchase intention also reinforce the results of previous studies.

[33] found that social network marketing influenced consumer purchase intention. Based on these results, the results of this study strengthen the evidence of the influence of social network marketing on consumer purchase intention in mobile operator users in Indonesia. This confirms the role of social network marketing in building consumer purchase intention that is expected to encourage consumers further to have an interest in using services from the company. Social network marketing is an area of study which is developed with the growth of Internet technology today. The existence of social media as part of marketing activities promotes a relationship that develops through the interaction between consumers and consumers and consumers with brands.

Relationships in social media reinforce consumer attitudes about brands. It is important that brands strive for positive attitudes toward the brand through their social networking activities. In the Indonesian mobile telecommunications industry, it has been shown that social media marketing has a positive impact on the intention of consumers to purchase, with a relationship that is directly proportional. This means that the greater the social network marketing, the more interested the consumer is in purchasing the product or services from the brand.

A positive relationship occurs between social network marketing to consumer engagement. The finding of this research has proven the use of social network marketing that influences consumer engagement among mobile telecommunication consumers. The results of this research also reinforce previous studies conducted by [33, 54]; and [55], which state that the application of social network marketing positively influences consumer engagement. Based on these results, it is proven that marketing through social media can foster consumer engagement. Although consumer engagement is considered to have no impact on the company's sales, the impact will be felt when consumers do brand preferences when going to buy a product or service. Consumer engagement is an interesting study in the current technology era because of its direct and indirect impact on the brand. [57] also mention that the participation and promotional behavior of individuals on social networking is an impact on engagement.

Other findings from this study prove that consumer engagement has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. [58] found that consumer engagement affects purchase intentions in college students. The results of this study found similar results to research conducted by [58] and other research conducted by [33] in Malaysia, as well as research conducted by [55] in Pakistan. [53, 54], and [14] found that consumer engagement was the driving factor in growing buying interest. Based on these findings, it can also be

proven that the same theory applies to consumers who use mobile operator services in Indonesia. Consumer engagement across industries is proven to have an influence on their buying interests for the products and services the company offers. Consumer engagement in other research has proven to have an impact on consumer trust and on brand loyalty. It will be interesting to research more about the impact of consumer engagement after it generates consumer buying intention. The behavior of consumers who make purchases due to their engagement in social media has also become one of the study materials in other studies.

Consumer engagement proved to be a variable that moderates the relationship between social network marketing and consumer purchase intention from the results of this study. The findings can be interpreted that social media marketing, which is the reason for the formation of consumer engagement, is proven to strengthen the impact of marketing on social media on consumer purchase intention. These findings are one of the important core of the research conducted in this study. With these results, this study contributes to the field of consumer engagement studies, especially in social media, which is a factor that strengthens the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention.

These findings are in accordance with the results of research conducted by [33, 58], and [55], which have the same research objectives, namely to prove the influence of consumer engagement as a moderation variable. This is a clear demonstration of the importance of engaging consumers before a brand expects consumers to be interested in the products or services it provides. The buying interest is much stronger if it is due to consumer engagement. It is important that brands continuously review and evaluate their social media marketing efforts for maximum impact.

4   Conclusion

The findings from this study demonstrate that the four proposed hypotheses are proven and accepted. Social media marketing has a positive impact on consumer engagement and purchase intention. Consumer engagement has a positive impact on purchase intention and becomes a variable that influences the relationship between social network marketing and purchase intention. The findings of this study can be used by the mobile operator's management to evaluate their marketing on social networks. Social media, which proves to be a more effective medium in targeting consumers to be more involved in the company's marketing activities, is the main reason the company's brand, services, and products spread more widely than other marketing tools.

The results of this study indicate that social media marketing effectively fosters the intention to buy. In general, the results show that respondents are interested in and purchasing branded goods and services after referring to social media. However, several factors must be considered to make social media marketing and consumer engagement more influential on the purchase of interest. Consumers with the following characteristic, namely: women, employees, and/or entrepreneurs, 18 to 25 years old, and using Instagram social media, are the potential consumer to be adapted to this approach. Consumers with these features are more likely to be potential targets of social media marketing and consumer engagement.

This research investigates mobile operator users. This study has comprehensively targeted the research object of mobile operator users in Indonesia. Further research can use the same object but with different variables from this research, such as adding trust variables and brand loyalty to measure the impact of social network marketing and consumer engagement on the formation of consumer loyalty, trust, and brand. However, it does not close the possibility that these results could be different if done for other consumers in various companies and industries that use social media as their marketing medium. Therefore, the researchers suggest that other research could extend the reach of the industry to industries other than those used in the present study.

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