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The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness

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ABSTRAK

Pertumbuhan pesat teknologi digital telah secara signifikan mengubah strategi pemasaran, khususnya melalui penggunaan platform media sosial. Pemasaran media sosial memungkinkan perusahaan untuk berinteraksi langsung dengan konsumen, meningkatkan visibilitas merek, dan memengaruhi perilaku pembelian. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti pengaruh pemasaran media sosial terhadap kesadaran merek dan keputusan pembelian, serta peran mediasi kesadaran merek dalam hubungan antara pemasaran media sosial dan keputusan pembelian. Studi ini berfokus pada konsumen Bittersweet by Najla yang telah membeli produk melalui platform Shopee. Pendekatan penelitian kuantitatif digunakan, dan data dikumpulkan dari 170 responden menggunakan metode pengambilan sampel purposif. Data dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) dengan perangkat lunak SmartPLS. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran media sosial memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kesadaran merek dan keputusan pembelian. Lebih lanjut, kesadaran merek juga memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian. Analisis mediasi menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran merek sebagian memediasi hubungan antara pemasaran media sosial dan keputusan pembelian. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya menerapkan strategi pemasaran media sosial yang efektif untuk memperkuat kesadaran merek dan mendorong keputusan pembelian konsumen di pasar digital.

Kata kunci: pemasaran media sosial, kesadaran merek, keputusan pembelian, pemasaran digital, perilaku konsumen

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technology has significantly transformed marketing strategies, particularly through the use of social media platforms. Social media marketing enables companies to interact directly with consumers, increase brand visibility, and influence purchasing behavior. This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions, as well as the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. The study focuses on consumers of Bittersweet by Najla who have purchased products through the Shopee platform. A quantitative research approach was employed, and data were collected from 170 respondents using a purposive sampling method. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The results show that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness and purchase decisions. Furthermore, brand awareness also has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. The mediation analysis indicates that brand awareness partially mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. These findings highlight the importance of implementing effective social media marketing strategies to strengthen brand awareness and encourage consumer purchase decisions in the digital marketplace.

Keywords: social media marketing, brand awareness, purchase decision, digital marketing, consumer behavior

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the way companies communicate with consumers and promote their products. The widespread use of the internet, social media platforms, and digital communication tools has created new opportunities for firms to reach broader audiences and

interact directly with customers. In the digital era, marketing strategies increasingly rely on online platforms that allow companies to disseminate information quickly, build brand visibility, and influence consumer behavior. Digital marketing has therefore become an essential component of modern business strategies, enabling firms to promote products and services through electronic channels and social media platforms (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Among various digital marketing approaches, social media marketing has emerged as one of the most influential strategies in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase behavior. Social media platforms enable companies to communicate with consumers in a more interactive and engaging manner compared to traditional marketing channels. Through social media marketing activities, companies can create online communities, share content, and facilitate interactions that strengthen relationships with consumers. According to As'ad and Alhadid (2014), social media marketing allows businesses to become part of online networks where consumers exchange information, opinions, and experiences about products or brands. Consequently, social media marketing has become a powerful tool for companies to promote products, increase brand recognition, and influence purchasing decisions.

The increasing use of social media in marketing is particularly evident in the food and beverage industry, where brand competition is highly intense. Businesses in this industry must continuously develop innovative promotional strategies to attract consumer attention and maintain market share. One example of a brand that actively utilizes social media marketing is Bittersweet by Najla, a dessert brand that gained popularity in Indonesia through its innovative dessert box products. Since its introduction in 2017, the brand has experienced rapid growth and widespread consumer recognition, partly due to its active use of digital marketing and social media platforms to promote its products. Through creative content and interactive communication with consumers, the brand has successfully built strong visibility and engagement among its target audience.

In addition to social media marketing, brand awareness is another important factor that influences consumer purchasing behavior. Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recognize or recall a brand as part of a specific product category (Aaker, 1991). When consumers are familiar with a brand, they are more likely to develop trust and confidence in the brand, which can influence their purchasing decisions. Previous research suggests that higher levels of brand awareness increase the likelihood that consumers will consider a particular brand when making purchasing decisions (Arianty & Andira, 2021). Therefore, building strong brand awareness is a crucial objective for companies seeking to influence consumer preferences and increase market competitiveness.

Furthermore, purchase decision represents a critical stage in the consumer decision-making process. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), purchase decision refers to the stage in which consumers evaluate alternatives and choose the product or brand they prefer. Consumer purchase decisions are often influenced by various factors, including marketing communication strategies, brand perceptions, and

information obtained through social media platforms. Previous studies have found that social media marketing activities can significantly influence purchase decisions by increasing consumer exposure to brand-related information and strengthening consumer attitudes toward products (Sanjaya & Budiono, 2021).

Although previous studies have examined the influence of social media marketing and brand awareness on purchase decisions, empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions remains limited, particularly in the context of the digital food industry. Several studies suggest that social media marketing can directly influence purchase decisions, while others indicate that brand awareness may act as an important mediating mechanism that strengthens this relationship (Simbolon et al., 2022). However, empirical studies examining this relationship in emerging markets and in the context of online marketplace platforms such as Shopee remain relatively scarce.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions, as well as the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. By focusing on consumers of Bittersweet by Najla products on Shopee, this study contributes to the marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on how digital marketing strategies influence consumer purchasing behavior in the competitive online food industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing refers to the use of social media platforms to promote products, services, or brands through interactive communication with consumers. Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media marketing enables firms to build direct relationships with consumers by facilitating two-way communication and encouraging user participation. According to As'ad and Alhadid (2014); Liao et al., (2025), social media marketing allows businesses to become part of online networks where information, opinions, and experiences related to brands are shared among users. Similarly, Gunelius (2011) defines social media marketing as a form of direct or indirect marketing that aims to build brand awareness, recognition, recall, and consumer action toward a brand.

Social media marketing activities typically include several elements, such as online communities, interaction, sharing of content, credibility, and accessibility (Singh, 2010 in As'ad & Alhadid, 2014). These elements enable firms to create engaging digital environments where consumers can access information, interact with brands, and share brand-related content with other users. Through these mechanisms, social media marketing can influence consumer perceptions and attitudes toward a brand.

Previous studies have shown that social media marketing plays a crucial role in strengthening brand visibility and consumer engagement. By providing relevant content and interactive experiences,

companies can enhance consumer familiarity with their brands and create stronger brand recognition in the marketplace (Stojanovic et al., 2018).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recognize or recall a brand as part of a particular product category (Aaker, 1991; Rimiyati & Rahman 2024; Rimiyati & Khoirul Azmi, 2022). It represents one of the most fundamental components of brand equity because consumers must first be aware of a brand before they can develop attitudes or preferences toward it. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), brand awareness reflects consumers' ability to identify a brand under different conditions and recognize it among competing brands.

Aaker (1991) identifies several levels of brand awareness, including brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness. These levels indicate the strength of a brand's presence in consumers' memory. When consumers have high brand awareness, they are more likely to consider the brand when making purchasing decisions. Consequently, companies invest significant resources in marketing activities that aim to increase brand awareness.

In digital environments, social media platforms provide an effective channel for increasing brand awareness. Through frequent exposure to brand-related content, consumers become more familiar with the brand and develop stronger brand recognition. As a result, social media marketing activities can contribute significantly to building brand awareness.

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision refers to the stage in the consumer decision-making process where consumers evaluate available alternatives and decide whether to purchase a product or service. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), purchase decision occurs after consumers evaluate different brands and develop preferences toward a particular brand. Similarly, Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) define purchase decision as the selection of one option among several alternatives based on consumer evaluation and preferences.

Consumer purchase decisions are influenced by various internal and external factors, including marketing communication, brand perception, product quality, and consumer experience. In the context of digital marketing, consumers are often exposed to product information through social media platforms, which can influence their perceptions and purchasing behavior. Previous studies suggest that effective marketing communication strategies, including social media marketing activities, can significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions by providing information and shaping positive attitudes toward brands (Hanaysha, 2022; Anwar & Andrean, 2021).

Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness

Social media marketing plays an important role in increasing brand awareness because it enables companies to continuously expose consumers to brand-related information. Through interactive content, brand storytelling, and online engagement, social media platforms allow brands to strengthen their

presence in consumers' minds. Several empirical studies have confirmed the positive relationship between social media marketing and brand awareness. Ardiansyah and Sarwoko (2020), Marie et al. (2023), Tjahyadi and Mahardhika (2022), and Stojanovic et al. (2018) found that social media marketing significantly enhances brand awareness by increasing consumer exposure to brand-related content. Similarly, Simbolon et al. (2022) reported that social media marketing activities significantly influence brand awareness in online marketplaces. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Social media marketing positively influences brand awareness.

Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decision

Social media marketing also plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchase decisions. Through social media platforms, companies can provide product information, promotional messages, and persuasive content that encourage consumers to consider purchasing their products. Previous studies indicate that social media marketing has a positive influence on purchase decisions. Research by Ardiansyah and Sarwoko (2020), Bonaldy et al. (2023), and Hanaysha (2022) found that social media marketing significantly affects consumers' purchasing behavior by increasing product visibility and influencing consumer perceptions. When consumers frequently encounter appealing brand content on social media, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand and eventually make purchase decisions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Social media marketing positively influences purchase decisions.

Brand Awareness and Purchase Decision

Brand awareness is an important factor that influences consumer purchasing behavior. When consumers are familiar with a brand, they tend to perceive it as more reliable and trustworthy, which increases the likelihood of purchase. Previous research suggests that consumers are more likely to choose brands that they recognize and recall easily. Studies by Marie et al. (2023), Apriliya (2018), and Rafiki et al. (2023) demonstrate that higher levels of brand awareness significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions. When a brand is strongly embedded in consumers' memory, it becomes one of the primary options considered during the decision-making process. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Brand awareness positively influences purchase decisions.

The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness

Brand awareness may also act as a mediating mechanism between social media marketing and purchase decisions. Social media marketing activities often aim to increase consumer familiarity with a brand before influencing purchasing behavior. By increasing brand awareness, social media marketing can indirectly encourage consumers to make purchase decisions.

Several studies have reported that brand awareness mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. Marie et al. (2023), Tjahyadi and Mahardhika (2022), and Bonaldy et

al. (2023) found that social media marketing improves brand awareness, which subsequently influences purchase decisions. Similarly, Simbolon et al. (2022) reported that brand awareness plays a mediating role in the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchasing behavior. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand awareness mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions.

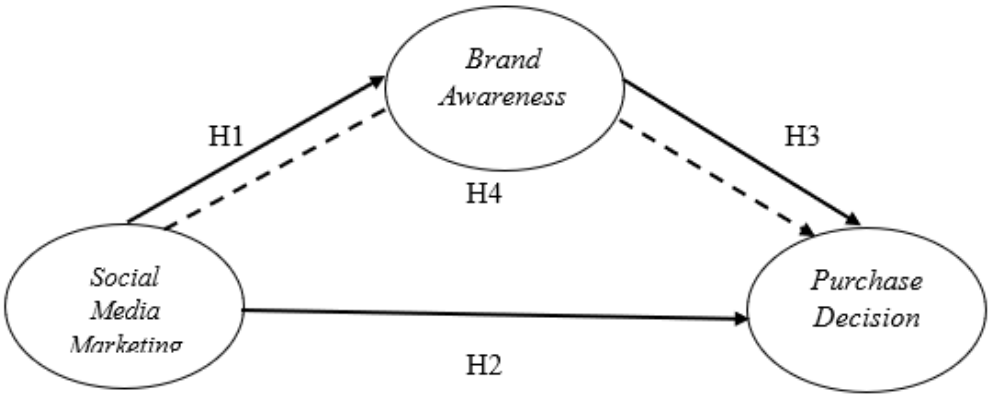


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Simbolon et al (2022)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between social media marketing, brand awareness, and purchase decisions. The research focuses on consumers of Bittersweet by Najla products who have made purchases through the Shopee platform. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to test causal relationships between variables using statistical analysis and structured measurement instruments.

The population of this study consists of consumers who have purchased Bittersweet by Najla products on Shopee. The sampling technique used in this study is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method. Respondents were selected based on several criteria: (1) individuals aged at least 17 years, (2) individuals who have seen Bittersweet by Najla content on Instagram, and (3) individuals who have purchased Bittersweet by Najla products on Shopee within the last year. Based on these criteria, a total of 170 respondents were collected and used as the research sample.

Primary data were collected through a survey method using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The measurement indicators for each construct were adapted from established literature. Social media marketing was measured using five indicators: online communities, interaction, sharing of content, credibility, and accessibility (Singh, 2010 in As'ad & Alhadid, 2014). Brand awareness was measured using

four indicators: unaware of brand, brand recognition, brand recall, and top of mind (Aaker, 1991). Meanwhile, purchase decision was measured using seven indicators including product type, product form, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase quantity, payment method choice, and purchase timing (Ambolau et al., 2015).

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the SmartPLS software. The analysis process consisted of two main stages: measurement model evaluation (outer model) and structural model evaluation (inner model). The outer model evaluation assessed convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability using loading factor values, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. The inner model evaluation assessed the relationships between variables using R-square, F-square, model fit indices, and path coefficient analysis to test the proposed hypotheses.

RESULT

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software to analyze the relationships among social media marketing, brand awareness, and purchase decision. The analysis consisted of two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and evaluation of the structural model (inner model), followed by hypothesis testing

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement model evaluation was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs used in this study. Convergent validity was evaluated using loading factor values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results show that all indicators have loading factor values greater than 0.70 and AVE values greater than 0.50, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its respective construct. These findings confirm that the measurement model satisfies the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Results

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	AVE
Social Media Marketing	SMM1	0.814	0.717
	SMM2	0.847	
	SMM3	0.855	
	SMM4	0.874	
	SMM5	0.842	
Brand Awareness	BA1	0.878	0.734
	BA2	0.829	
	BA3	0.853	

	BA4	0.868	
Purchase Decision	PD1	0.846	0.674
	PD2	0.825	
	PD3	0.813	
	PD4	0.810	
	PD5	0.802	
	PD6	0.813	
	PD7	0.836	

Discriminant validity was assessed using cross-loading values and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The results indicate that each indicator loads higher on its corresponding construct compared to other constructs, demonstrating that each construct is empirically distinct. Furthermore, the Fornell–Larcker test confirms that the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations with other constructs, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity.

Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. The results show that all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the measurement instruments have strong internal consistency. These findings (see Table 2) confirm that the measurement model demonstrates adequate reliability and validity for further analysis.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
Social Media Marketing	0.902	0.927	Reliable
Brand Awareness	0.879	0.917	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0.919	0.935	Reliable

Structural Model Evaluation

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the next step involved evaluating the structural model to examine the relationships among the variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the explanatory power of the model. The results indicate that the R-square value for brand awareness is 0.377, meaning that social media marketing explains 37.7% of the variance in brand awareness. Meanwhile, the R-square value for purchase decision is 0.549, indicating that social media marketing and brand awareness jointly explain 54.9% of the variance in purchase decision.

Table 3. R-Square Results

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Awareness	0.377	0.374

Purchase Decision	0.549	0.543

Furthermore, the effect size (F-square) was analyzed to determine the magnitude of influence between variables. The results indicate that social media marketing has a large effect on brand awareness (0.606), while brand awareness has a moderate to large effect on purchase decision (0.307). Social media marketing also shows a moderate effect on purchase decision (0.170).

Model fit was also assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The SRMR value obtained in this study is 0.053, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating that the model has a good fit and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in PLS-SEM to evaluate the significance of the relationships between variables.

Table 4. Direct Effect Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
H1	Social Media Marketing → Brand Awareness	0.614	8.985	0.000	Supported
H2	Social Media Marketing → Purchase Decision	0.351	3.986	0.000	Supported
H3	Brand Awareness → Purchase Decision	0.472	5.009	0.000	Supported

The results indicate that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness. Social media marketing also has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Furthermore, brand awareness significantly influences purchase decisions.

Table 5. Indirect Effect Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
H4	Social Media Marketing → Brand Awareness → Purchase Decision	0.290	4.801	0.000	Supported

The mediation analysis shows that brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decision. However, the mediation effect is partial, indicating that

social media marketing influences purchase decisions both directly and indirectly through brand awareness.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions, as well as the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. The findings provide several insights into how digital marketing strategies implemented through social media platforms influence consumer behavior in the online marketplace environment.

First, the results indicate that social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand awareness. This finding suggests that social media marketing activities carried out by Bittersweet by Najla through Instagram have successfully increased consumer awareness of the brand. Through interactive content, attractive visuals, and frequent exposure to promotional messages, consumers become more familiar with the brand and are able to recognize it among competing brands. This result supports previous studies that highlight the importance of social media marketing in increasing brand visibility and strengthening brand recognition in consumers' minds (Ardiansyah & Sarwoko, 2020; Marie et al., 2023; Stojanovic et al., 2018). The findings indicate that companies that actively utilize social media platforms for promotional purposes are more likely to create strong brand awareness among consumers.

Second, the results show that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision. This finding indicates that marketing activities conducted through social media platforms can directly influence consumers' purchasing behavior. When consumers are frequently exposed to attractive promotional content, product information, and consumer reviews on social media, they tend to develop positive perceptions of the brand and become more willing to purchase the product. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that social media marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and influencing purchasing behavior (Hanaysha, 2022; Bonaldy et al., 2023; Hannan et al., 2023). In the case of Bittersweet by Najla, the use of social media platforms such as Instagram appears to have successfully attracted consumer attention and encouraged consumers to make purchase decisions through the Shopee marketplace.

Third, the study finds that brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchase decision. This result suggests that consumers who are familiar with a brand are more likely to trust the brand and consider it when making purchasing decisions. When a brand has strong awareness among consumers, it becomes easier for consumers to recall the brand when evaluating alternative products. Consequently, brand awareness reduces consumer uncertainty and increases the likelihood of purchase. This finding supports previous studies indicating that brand awareness is an important determinant of consumer purchasing decisions (Apriliya, 2018; Rafiki et al., 2023).

Finally, the results indicate that brand awareness partially mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decision. This finding implies that social media marketing influences purchase decisions both directly and indirectly through brand awareness. Social media marketing activities help increase consumer familiarity with the brand, which subsequently strengthens consumers' willingness to purchase the product. However, the mediation effect is partial, indicating that social media marketing also directly affects purchase decisions without necessarily passing through brand awareness. This finding supports previous research that highlights the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between marketing communication and consumer purchasing behavior (Simbolon et al., 2022; Tjahyadi & Mahardhika, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions, as well as the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. Based on the results of the empirical analysis using PLS-SEM, several important conclusions can be drawn.

First, social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand awareness. This finding indicates that marketing activities conducted through social media platforms, such as Instagram, play an important role in increasing consumer awareness of the Bittersweet by Najla brand. The more effective and attractive the social media marketing activities are, the higher the level of brand awareness formed in consumers' minds.

Second, social media marketing also has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. This result suggests that promotional strategies implemented through social media platforms are capable of encouraging consumers to make purchasing decisions. Engaging content, product information, and promotional messages delivered through social media can influence consumers' perceptions and motivate them to purchase products through online marketplaces such as Shopee.

Third, brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchase decisions. This finding shows that when consumers are familiar with and able to recall a brand, they are more likely to consider the brand when making purchasing decisions. Higher brand awareness strengthens consumer confidence and increases the likelihood of choosing the brand among competing alternatives.

Finally, the results show that brand awareness partially mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. This indicates that social media marketing influences purchase decisions both directly and indirectly through brand awareness. In other words, social media marketing activities not only directly encourage consumers to purchase products but also strengthen brand awareness, which subsequently influences purchasing behavior.

Overall, the findings highlight the strategic importance of social media marketing in building brand awareness and influencing consumer purchasing behavior in the digital marketplace. Companies, particularly those operating in the highly competitive food and beverage industry, are encouraged to develop creative and engaging social media marketing strategies in order to strengthen brand awareness and increase consumers' purchase decisions.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research focuses only on consumers of Bittersweet by Najla who purchased products through Shopee, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries or platforms. Second, the study relies on self-reported data obtained through questionnaires, which may involve subjective bias. Future research is recommended to examine additional variables such as brand trust, brand image, or consumer experience to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing purchase decisions in digital marketing environments.

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