

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY AND FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS OF START-UP COMPANIES IN WEST JAVA

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the influence of digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions on consumer purchasing decisions in start-ups in West Java, with consumer preferences as a moderating variable. Using a mix method approach with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis for quantitative data and thematic interviews for qualitative data, the results show that both strategies have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. Face-to-face interactions are shown to have a stronger influence in building trust and increasing purchase intentions, while digital marketing strategies are effective in creating initial awareness. Consumer preferences moderate the influence of face-to-face interactions, indicating that personalized experiences are preferred by most consumers. These findings support the Customer Engagement and Trust-Building theories, and highlight the importance of an omnichannel approach that integrates digital and face-to-face strategies to create a holistic consumer experience. This study recommends start-ups to adopt an integrated marketing strategy to increase loyalty and campaign effectiveness. Further research can explore the role of advanced technology in strengthening this integration and its impact on consumer behavior.

Keywords: Digital marketing, face-to-face interactions, consumer purchasing decisions, consumer preferences, start-ups.

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has become a key foundation for startups in West Java in building brands, increasing exposure, and reaching consumers widely. This change is driven by the growth of digital technology and the high adoption of social media in Indonesia, especially in West Java which has a large young population and high internet penetration rate.(Soedarsono et al., 2020). This makes digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok strategic channels for start-ups to deliver their marketing messages quickly and efficiently. Social media marketing in this context not only increases brand awareness but also allows companies to collect consumer behavior data through real-time analytics.(Rakhmadi & Junaidi, 2022).

In addition to its efficiency, digital marketing offers advantages in terms of cost and flexibility. For many start-ups in West Java, budget constraints are often the main obstacle in marketing their products effectively. Digital marketing provides a solution through cheaper methods compared to conventional advertising, such as social media ads, content marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), which are effective in attracting consumers without requiring large costs.(Kulikovskaja et al., 2023). In addition, digital marketing also allows companies to directly interact with consumers through chatbots, online customer service, and interactive posts, which increase engagement and strengthen relationships with the audience.(Hamid et al., 2013).

However, amidst digital dominance, face-to-face interactions still play an important role in building consumer trust and loyalty. Previous research has shown that face-to-face interactions are more effective in shaping consumer perceptions of product credibility and value than digital marketing alone.(Appel et al., 2020). This direct interaction allows companies to provide a more personal and authentic experience, which is often a key factor in the consumer decision-making process. This is supported by successful face-to-face marketing campaigns from major brands, which show how direct experiences can strengthen emotional connections with consumers, increase loyalty, and ultimately, drive purchasing decisions.(Safko & Brake, 2009).

The use of face-to-face marketing strategies in the start-up environment in West Java is evident in various local events such as exhibitions, brand activations, and live product demonstrations. This strategy, although more limited in reach, has a significant impact on purchasing decisions because consumers tend to have more trust in products that they can see and try directly. In addition, direct experience also gives companies the opportunity to directly respond to consumer questions or objections, which can increase trust and accelerate purchasing decisions.(Budiarto et al., 2021).

The following illustrates the trend of using various digital and face-to-face marketing elements in start-ups in West Java, showing that although social media marketing is the most widely used, face-to-face interactions have a higher level of effectiveness in increasing consumer purchasing decisions.

Table 1 Percentage of Start-Up Usage in West Java

Marketing strategy		Percentage of Use by Start-Ups in West Java (%)	Effectiveness in Increasing Purchasing Decisions (%)
Social Media Marketing		87	78
	Content Marketing	80	70
	Mobile Marketing	63	65
Face to Face Interaction		42	72

Source: Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019); SMG Creativos (2024); Goncalves et al. (2024).

This data shows that digital marketing through social media and content marketing dominates use by (Leendertse et al., 2021), but face-to-face interactions have higher effectiveness in increasing sales conversions. The combination of these two strategies in an omnichannel approach can create a more holistic customer journey and increase customer retention opportunities (Montgomery, 2018). This study aims to analyze how the integration of digital and face-to-face strategies can provide competitive advantages for start-ups in West Java, especially in building loyalty and strengthening emotional connections with consumers.

This research is motivated by the challenges faced by start-ups in West Java in optimizing digital marketing and face-to-face interactions to drive consumer purchasing decisions. Along with the development of technology and the increasing use of digital media, start-ups tend to adopt digital marketing strategies such as social media marketing and content marketing to reach a wider audience at a lower cost. (Rizvanović et al., 2023). However, this strategy is often not fully capable of building deep emotional connections with consumers, which are actually important for increasing consumer loyalty and trust in the product. (Griva et al., 2023).

On the other hand, face-to-face interactions allow consumers to experience the product and interact directly with the company, building trust through a personal and authentic experience. This strategy is more effective in increasing brand credibility and often has a long-term impact on purchasing decisions, but has limitations in terms of reach and higher implementation costs. (Lee, 2022). Thus, start-ups in West Java are faced with a dilemma between using digital marketing that has a wide reach but is limited in creating emotional attachment, or utilizing in-depth face-to-face interactions that are more expensive and difficult to reach.

In addition, the limitations in measuring the impact of each of these marketing strategies also pose a challenge. Digital marketing offers easily accessible analytical data, while the impact of face-to-face interactions is more difficult to measure quantitatively even though it produces a significant effect on loyalty and purchasing decisions. (Severi & Ling, 2013). This condition is complicated by the diversity of consumer preferences in West Java, where some consumers tend to respond more to interactive and instant digital campaigns, while others value direct experiences that allow them to see and try products directly before buying. (Naghavi et al., 2015).

Thus, this study aims to identify and explore how start-ups in West Java can utilize the integration between digital and face-to-face strategies in improving consumer purchasing decisions. This study is expected to provide effective recommendations for start-ups to manage marketing resources optimally, increase sales conversions, and build sustainable consumer loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing in the Context of Start-Ups

Digital marketing has become one of the main strategies for start-ups in building their presence in the market, with various methods such as social media marketing, content marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO) ((Naghavi et al., 2015). Social media, for example, provides a platform that allows direct interaction between companies and consumers, helping companies build stronger, more personal relationships with their audiences. (Drury, 2008).

Studies show that social media has a huge impact on increasing brand awareness and consumer loyalty.(Dwivedi et al., 2021). In addition, digital marketing through social media offers the advantage of in-depth analytics, where start-ups can track the effectiveness of their campaigns in real-time and make necessary adjustments to improve their marketing results.(Rizvanović et al., 2023). The use of content marketing strategies has also been proven to help build consumer trust, especially through the creation of relevant and informative content that can meet consumer needs and interests.(Dellaert et al., 2020).

The Role of Face-to-Face Interaction in Consumer Decision Making

While digital marketing provides convenience and reach, face-to-face interactions still play a significant role in building consumer trust and loyalty. Direct interactions, such as promotional events, product consultations, and brand activations, allow companies to provide more personal and immersive experiences to consumers.(Hamilton et al., 2019). Several studies have shown that face-to-face interactions have a positive impact on consumer purchasing decisions because they allow them to see and feel the product directly, which cannot be obtained from digital media.(Kusa et al., 2021). Face-to-face interaction strategy is also considered effective in building brand credibility, especially for start-ups that are still in the early stages of building their reputation in the market. When consumers can interact directly with company representatives and get immediate answers to their questions, consumer trust in the product and brand will increase ((Tobon et al., 2020). In the context of start-ups in West Java, this strategy is often used in the form of product demonstrations or live Q&A sessions that build emotional connections and influence purchasing decisions.

Consumer Purchasing Decisions

Consumer purchasing decisions are complex processes, influenced by a variety of factors, including media exposure, personal experiences, and direct interactions with companies.(Liu et al., 2022). In the context of digital marketing, purchasing decisions are often influenced by content marketing and social proof, where reviews from other consumers or recommendations from influencers can strengthen consumers' purchase intentions.(Santos & Gonçalves, 2021). On the other hand, face-to-face interaction also plays an important role, especially for consumers who prioritize direct experience and authenticity in interacting with products.(Durianto & Liana, 2004). Studies show that combining digital marketing with face-to-face interactions can strengthen consumer purchasing decisions, with digital marketing serving to build initial interest, while face-to-face interactions strengthen emotional connections and credibility.(Faulds et al., 2018). In Indonesia, especially West Java, where direct interaction and personal approach are highly valued, this combination of strategies provides a competitive advantage for start-ups in increasing consumer conversion and loyalty.(Harms & Schwery, 2020).

Integration of Digital Marketing and Relationship Strategy

An omnichannel marketing approach that combines digital and face-to-face marketing is increasingly important in today's business environment. Omnichannel marketing allows companies to create a consistent customer experience across multiple touchpoints, both digital and physical, which can strengthen loyalty and increase customer retention.(Kurdi et al., 2022). This integration helps start-ups leverage the strengths of each approach, where digital marketing helps create brand awareness, while face-to-face interactions build trust and long-term relationships with consumers.(Soedarsono et al., 2020). Research on omnichannel marketing strategies shows that message consistency across channels increases the likelihood of conversion because consumers receive a more cohesive experience.(Drury, 2008). In this way, start-ups in West Java can leverage

a combination of digital and face-to-face marketing strategies to create a holistic customer journey, where each channel serves to strengthen purchasing decisions and build consumer loyalty.

Marketing Transformation in Start-Ups in West Java

Start-ups in West Java face challenges in competing in an increasingly competitive market. Budget constraints force them to maximize the right and efficient marketing strategies to reach target consumers. Digital marketing, which includes social media, content, and SEO, is the main strategy that allows start-ups to reach consumers at low cost and with extensive access to analytical data (Del Sarto et al., 2022).

While digital marketing dominates modern marketing strategies, face-to-face interactions provide trust and a more personal connection with consumers. In direct interaction experiences, such as product events or face-to-face consultations, consumers can directly see the quality and features of the product, which helps build trust.(Aldianto et al., 2021).

Consumer purchasing decisions are not only influenced by messages received digitally but also by direct experiences. Consumer behavior studies show that more personal experiences, such as face-to-face interactions, increase consumer confidence and make them more likely to purchase a product. While digital marketing generates initial interest, direct interactions strengthen consumer purchase intentions.(Van Opstal & Borms, 2023).

An omnichannel approach, which integrates digital and face-to-face marketing, creates a consistent consumer experience across channels. In the context of start-ups in West Java, combining these two strategies can strengthen the customer journey, increase conversions, and consumer loyalty.(Kropp et al., 2008).

Table 2. Thinking Framework Model

Independent Variable	Moderation	Dependent Variable
Digital Marketing Strategy		
Social Media Marketing		
Content Marketing	Consumer Preferences	Consumer Purchasing Decisions
Relationship Strategy	(Digital vs. Face to Face)	
Product Demonstration		
Face to Face Consultation		

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis (H1): Digital marketing strategies have a significant positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions at start-ups in West Java.

Hypothesis (H2): Face-to-face interaction has a significant positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions at start-ups in West Java.

Hypothesis (H3): Consumer preferences moderate the relationship between digital marketing strategies and purchasing decisions, where consumers with preferences for digital media are more likely to be influenced by digital marketing strategies.

Hypothesis (H4): Consumer preferences moderate the relationship between face-to-face interactions and purchasing decisions, where consumers who prefer direct interactions are more likely to be influenced by face-to-face interactions.

Hypothesis (H5): Integration between digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions (omnichannel approach) has a more significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions than using either strategy separately.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method for the study on "The Role of Digital Marketing Strategy and Face-to-Face Interaction on Consumer Purchasing Decisions in Start-Ups in West Java" is designed to include comprehensive stages that support valid and reliable results, combining quantitative approaches with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and qualitative to gain a deeper perspective.

This study uses a mix method approach to utilize the advantages of quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. This method allows the integration of numerical results and in-depth insights from respondents to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon being studied. This approach is in accordance with the guidelines of (Tabri & Elliott, 2012), which emphasizes the importance of mixed approaches in understanding complex relationships in social research.

This research design uses a convergent parallel model, where quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and analyzed separately. Quantitative analysis focuses on the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of software such as SmartPLS. SEM was chosen because of its ability to analyze complex relationships between variables, including independent variables (digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions), dependent variables (consumer purchasing decisions), and moderating variables (consumer preferences). (Chin et al., 2008).

The population of this study includes consumers in West Java who have made purchases from start-ups in the last two years. To ensure adequate representation, quantitative samples were taken using the stratified random sampling method, with a minimum sample size of 300 respondents to ensure the reliability of the SEM analysis ((Abdillah & Jogiyanto, 2015). Qualitative samples were selected using purposive sampling involving 15-20 participants who had significant experience related to digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions.

The quantitative research instrument is a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale that measures the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies, face-to-face interactions, consumer preferences, and purchasing decisions. Questions in the questionnaire are designed to cover various dimensions of digital marketing such as social media marketing and content marketing, as well as face-to-face interaction components such as product demonstrations and direct consultations. (Tabri & Elliott, 2012). The qualitative interview guide was semi-structured to allow for in-depth exploration of consumer experiences and their views on both marketing strategies.

Quantitative data collection was conducted through an online survey distributed through relevant online communities and social media. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews that were recorded with the consent of the participants for further analysis. Interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings or video conferencing platforms to accommodate the convenience of the participants and save resources.

Quantitative data analysis includes descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of respondents and inferential analysis using SEM. The SEM model is used to test the relationship between research variables, verify theoretical models, and identify

the moderating influence of consumer preferences. Qualitative analysis is carried out using the thematic analysis method.(Hair et al., 2012), which helps identify key patterns and themes from the interviews, with the help of software such as NVivo for coding data and organizing results.

The validity of the quantitative instrument was tested through content validity with input from experts in the field of marketing and construct validity testing using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Reliability was measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, where values above 0.7 are considered reliable.(Chin et al., 2008). Qualitative data were validated through triangulation by comparing interview results with secondary data and survey results to strengthen the accuracy of the findings, as well as member checking to ensure interpretations that are in accordance with participant perceptions.

The principles of research ethics are maintained by securing informed consent, maintaining data confidentiality, and giving participants the right to withdraw at any time. Data is stored securely and used only for research purposes, in accordance with data protection regulations.

With this method, the research is expected to provide comprehensive insights into how digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions, along with consumer preferences, influence purchasing decisions in the start-up environment in West Java.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Description

The study involved a total of 300 respondents representing start-up consumers in West Java. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 35 years, which is the main demographic of digital technology users and early adopters of digital media-based marketing strategies.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Age 18-25 years	135	45%
Age 26-35 years	105	35%
Age > 35 years	60	20%
Man	135	45%
Woman	165	55%
Undergraduate Education	180	60%
Postgraduate Education	120	40%

Descriptive Test

Descriptive analysis shows that respondents gave a mean score of 4.2 (SD = 0.8) for the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies, with social media marketing and content marketing as the main elements valued. The mean score for face-to-face interactions was 4.5 (SD = 0.7), indicating that consumers consider direct experiences to be very important in building trust and purchasing decisions. Purchase decisions had a mean score of 4.3 (SD = 0.6), reflecting a high level of commitment when consumers feel involved in both face-to-face and digital interactions.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	SD
Digital Marketing Strategy	4.2	0.8
Face to Face Interaction	4.5	0.7
Buying decision	4.3	0.6

SEM Goodness-of-Fit Analysis

The SEM model was used to evaluate the relationship between the main variables in the study, including digital marketing strategies, face-to-face interactions, and purchasing decisions, with consumer preferences as a moderating variable. The results of the goodness-of-fit test showed that the model had a good fit with the collected data.

Table 3. Goodness-of-Fit Index of SEM Model

Index	Cut-off Criteria	Model Results	Interpretation
Chi-square/df	< 3.0	2.1	Good
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.91	Good
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.95	Good
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	> 0.90	0.94	Good
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	< 0.08	0.04	Good

The results of the goodness-of-fit analysis on the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model show that the model used has a good fit with the collected data. This is reflected in several main indicators of goodness-of-fit that meet the cut-off criteria suggested in the literature.

The Chi-square/df index showed a value of 2.1, which is below the maximum limit of 3.0, indicating that the model has a good level of fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was recorded at 0.91, which exceeded the threshold of 0.90, indicating adequate model fit.

Another relevant index, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), reached 0.95, which is above the cut-off of 0.90, indicating that the model has a very good fit with the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) also stood at 0.94, supporting the interpretation that the model has a good fit. Finally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value was 0.04, which is below the cut-off of 0.08, indicating that the model has a very good fit and is appropriate for the data collected.(Chin et al., 2008).

Overall, the goodness-of-fit results indicate that the SEM model used in this study is able to adequately represent the relationship between digital marketing strategies, face-to-face interactions, purchasing decisions, and consumer preferences as moderating variables. The suitability of this model strengthens the validity of the model in describing the phenomena studied and supports the conclusions drawn from the results of the path analysis.

SEM Path Coefficient Results

The results of path analysis in SEM show that digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions have a significant positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions. Consumer preferences as a moderating variable also show a significant influence, strengthening the relationship between face-to-face interactions and purchasing decisions.

Table 4. SEM Path Analysis Results

Relationship between variables	Path Coefficient (β)	p-value	Interpretation
Digital Marketing Strategy → Purchase Decision	0.45	< 0.001	Significant
Face to Face Interaction → Purchase Decision	0.53	< 0.001	Significant
Consumer Preference (Moderation) → Purchase Decision	0.32	< 0.01	Significant, Positive Moderation

The results of path analysis in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) show that digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions have a significant positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions. The path coefficient (β) of 0.45 for digital marketing strategies with a p-value <0.001 indicates that digital marketing efforts effectively increase purchasing decisions. This finding supports previous literature stating that engaging digital content and strong online marketing strategies can increase consumer interest and engagement.(Tabri & Elliott, 2012).

Face-to-face interaction has a higher path coefficient, which is 0.53, with a p-value <0.001, indicating a stronger influence than digital marketing strategies. This confirms the importance of personal experience and direct interaction in building trust and increasing consumer confidence in products, in accordance with the Trust-Building theory.(Fatmawati & Fauzan, 2021). Consumers tend to feel more confident and emotionally connected when they can interact with a company or product representative directly.

Consumer preference as a moderating variable shows a path coefficient of 0.32 with a p-value <0.01, which means that this preference strengthens the relationship between face-to-face interaction and purchasing decisions. This result emphasizes that consumers who value personal experiences more have a stronger tendency to purchase after interacting directly with the product. This finding is consistent with the theory of planned behavior(Setiawan et al., 2020), which states that consumer behavior is greatly influenced by their intentions and preferences.

Overall, these results underscore the importance of integrating digital strategies and face-to-face interactions to create a holistic and effective customer journey, and demonstrate that understanding consumer preferences can maximize the impact of marketing strategies on purchasing decisions.

Data Description and Processing

Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 15 participants selected based on their experiences with digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions by start-ups in West Java. The interviews focused on exploring their perceptions, beliefs, and personal experiences related to both strategies. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis methods.(Sarwono, 2015)which involved open coding to

identify key themes. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with direct observation results and secondary data from customer reviews on social media to ensure the validity of the findings.(Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Trust and Credibility

This theme emerged as one of the most important elements in making a purchase decision. Respondents stated that face-to-face interactions, such as product demonstrations or in-person consultations, provided greater trust than simply viewing digital advertising. One participant stated, “When I talk to a representative in person and see the product in real life, my trust in the product increases significantly.” Trust-Building Theory(Fatmawati & Fauzan, 2021)supports this finding, stating that trust is a crucial element in building solid customer relationships. Data from observations showed that consumers who attended exhibitions or promotional events tended to have more product-related questions, which were then answered in person, increasing their confidence. Secondary data from social media reviews also noted an increase in positive sentiment after face-to-face events, corroborating the findings from the interviews.

Interview results show that trust in start-up products in West Java increases significantly when consumers have the opportunity to interact directly. A respondent in Bandung who attended the MSME exhibition said, “I feel more confident when I can try the product on the spot. Seeing the quality of the product and talking directly to the representative makes me more confident.” Observations at the exhibition also showed that booths that allowed consumers to try the product had higher levels of visits and interactions. Secondary data from Instagram reviews of the exhibition event in Bandung showed an increase in positive sentiment after consumers attended the event, with many citing first-hand experience as a major factor in their purchasing decision.

Personal Experiences That Increase Loyalty

Respondents from Bogor stated that direct interaction made them feel valued as consumers, which increased their intention to purchase and repurchase. Customer Experience Theory(Das Guru & Paulssen, 2020)supports the importance of emotional experiences in building long-term relationships with consumers. Personal experiences gained through direct interactions contribute to consumer loyalty. Respondents stated that they felt more valued when they were able to interact directly with the product and company representatives. One participant said, “Direct interactions make me feel more connected to the brand. It’s different from just seeing an advertisement or reading an online review.” Research on Customer Experience Theory(Kim & Choi, 2016)supports the importance of personal interaction in increasing consumer emotional engagement. Triangulation with secondary data shows that customer reviews on social media that emphasize positive experiences from direct interactions tend to have more responses and support from other users, indicating that the personal element has a broad impact.

The Role of Social Media in Early Awareness

While face-to-face experiences have a significant impact, social media plays a significant role in building initial awareness of a product. Several respondents noted that they first learned about a product through social media ads or influencer content. One participant said, “Social media is where I discover new products. However, to really believe in it and decide to buy, I need a first-hand experience.”

Social media remains an important element in creating product awareness among consumers in West Java. Most respondents noted that they learned about the product through social media, especially Instagram and TikTok. A respondent from Bandung said, “I first saw the product on Instagram, but after seeing the promotional event advertisement, I decided to come and see it in person.”

Information Integration Theory (Tononi, 2004) supports this view, emphasizing that purchasing decisions are influenced by the integration of information from multiple sources. Observational data supports the role of social media in generating initial interest, but face-to-face interactions reinforce purchase intentions. Triangulation analysis with online reviews suggests that the combination of digital and face-to-face strategies results in a more cohesive and complete experience for consumers.

The Influence of Digital Marketing Strategy on Purchasing Decisions

The results of the SEM analysis show that digital marketing strategies have a significant positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$). This finding supports the first hypothesis proposed in the study. Consumers acknowledge that digital marketing campaigns, such as social media marketing and content marketing, play an important role in attracting initial attention and increasing product awareness. Customer Engagement Theory (Vivek et al., 2012) explains that interactions that occur on digital platforms can increase consumer engagement and purchasing intentions.

These results are consistent with studies by (Winell et al., 2023), which shows that digital marketing helps build closer relationships between consumers and brands through interactive and personalized content. Qualitative data also supports this finding, with some respondents stating that the information they receive from social media helps them get to know the product better before making a purchase.

The Influence of Relationship Strategy on Purchasing Decisions

Face-to-face interaction is proven to have a stronger influence than digital marketing strategies, with a path coefficient ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). The second hypothesis proposed in this study is also supported by the data. Research participants stated that personal experiences gained through direct interactions, such as product demonstrations or consultations, provide more confidence in the product and company. Trust-Building Theory ((Yang et al., 2019) emphasizes that trust is a fundamental element in purchasing decisions, and direct interaction is an effective way to build that trust.

This finding is supported by customer reviews on social media that noted an increase in positive sentiment after attending promotional events or product exhibitions. For example, consumer reviews often mentioned that they felt more confident after trying the product directly at a pop-up store or local exhibition. Data triangulation shows that the integration of digital strategies and face-to-face interactions increases marketing effectiveness. Observations at a start-up exhibition at the Bandung Convention Center showed that consumers who had been exposed to digital advertising tended to be more engaged when attending a physical event, confirming that an omnichannel approach delivers better results. Omnichannel Marketing Theory (Nguyen et al., 2022) supports these findings, suggesting that marketing channel integration creates a holistic experience for consumers.

The Role of Consumer Preferences as Moderation

Consumer preference moderates the relationship between face-to-face interaction and purchase decision ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), which supports the third hypothesis. This finding suggests that consumers who tend to prefer face-to-face interaction have stronger purchase decisions after interacting with the product directly. This is consistent with the theory of planned behavior.(Ajzen, 2020)which emphasizes that consumer behavior is influenced by individual intentions and preferences.

Qualitative analysis revealed that consumers who value personal experiences are more satisfied when they can try a product before buying. One respondent stated, “I am more likely to buy a product after seeing and trying it firsthand, because it makes me feel more trusting and connected to the brand.” This data reinforces the findings of the quantitative analysis, which shows the importance of accommodating consumer preferences in marketing strategies.

Integration of Digital Strategy and Relationship Strategy

The findings of this study are in line with the omnichannel marketing theory.(Cui et al., 2021), which states that the combination of digital and face-to-face marketing channels creates a more holistic consumer experience. Qualitative results show that consumers exposed to digital campaigns are more likely to make a purchase decision after attending an in-person event that supports the information they have already received online.

Triangulation of data conducted through in-depth interviews, observation at promotional events, and analysis of social media reviews, showed consistency in the results. Interviews with participants revealed that trust and credibility of the product increased significantly after the direct interaction experience, which could not be achieved with digital campaigns alone. This is supported by secondary data from customer reviews stating that the combination of these strategies helped them feel more confident and committed to buying.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital marketing strategies and face-to-face interactions each have a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions in start-ups in West Java. Face-to-face interactions have a stronger influence in building trust and increasing purchase decisions, while digital marketing strategies are effective in creating initial awareness and consumer interest. Consumer preferences are shown to moderate this relationship, indicating that a personal approach increases trust and purchase intention. The integration of digital strategies and face-to-face interactions, in accordance with the concept of omnichannel marketing, provides optimal results by creating a holistic consumer experience. The practical implications of this study suggest that start-ups should adopt an integrated marketing strategy to maximize the effectiveness of their campaigns and increase consumer loyalty. This study also emphasizes the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative data to gain in-depth and comprehensive insights. Further research is recommended to explore the role of cutting-edge technology in supporting the integration of digital and face-to-face strategies.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study provides theoretical contributions by confirming the relevance of Customer Engagement and Trust-Building theories in the context of start-up marketing. From a practical perspective, start-ups in West Java are advised to adopt an omnichannel approach that combines digital and face-to-face strategies, thus creating a more integrated and effective consumer experience. This can increase consumer loyalty and maximize sales conversion opportunities.

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