

THE EFFECT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION THROUGH BRAND TRUST AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: A SEM-PLS ANALYSIS OF FOOD-RELATED SMES IN PONTIANAK

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Abstract

Digital marketing transformation has changed how culinary MSMEs build relationships with consumers. This study aims to examine the effect of digital marketing on consumers' purchase intention through brand trust and customer engagement in culinary MSMEs in Pontianak City. The study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design. A total of 285 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of consumers who had been exposed to digital promotions of culinary MSMEs and had made a purchase within the last six months. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS and a bootstrapping procedure of 5,000 subsamples. The results indicate that digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust, customer engagement, and purchase intention. Brand trust and customer engagement also have positive and significant effects on purchase intention. In addition, both variables significantly mediate the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention, indicating a strong partial mediation pattern. These findings imply that the effectiveness of digital marketing in culinary MSMEs is determined not merely by promotional intensity, but more importantly by its ability to build brand trust and stimulate customer engagement. Practically, culinary MSME owners in Pontianak City need to develop digital strategies that are more interactive, informative, credible, and relationship-oriented in order to strengthen consumers' purchase intention.

Keywords: *Brand Trust, Culinary MSMEs, Customer Engagement, Digital Marketing, Purchase Intention.*

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has become a mainstream trend in the development of SMEs in Indonesia. The government is encouraging the accelerated adoption of digital technology by SME operators, while at the local level in Pontianak, the city government is also actively positioning digitalization as a strategy to help SMEs scale up. At the same time, a study on Pontianak's culinary SMEs indicates that digital literacy significantly impacts SME performance; thus, the Pontianak context demonstrates that digital transformation is no longer a peripheral issue but a genuine necessity for strengthening the competitiveness of culinary businesses (Puspitasari et al., 2024). In this increasingly digital context, marketing no longer functions merely as a one-way promotional tool. Digital marketing has evolved into a strategic instrument that enables businesses to build intensive communication, deliver brand experiences, and maintain sustained closeness with consumers (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). This is particularly relevant in the culinary sector, as consumer purchasing decisions are often influenced by product visuals, customer testimonials, account responsiveness, and perceptions of brand credibility built through digital platforms (City of Pontianak Government, 2025).

Theoretically, digital content marketing is understood as the creation and distribution of relevant and valuable content to foster engagement, trust, and stronger relationships with consumers. Customer engagement itself is viewed as consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with a brand, while brand trust serves as the foundation of the belief that a brand is reliable (Holoobeek et al., 2014). Empirical literature also indicates that social media marketing activities can influence purchase decisions through the mediation of brand trust (Hanaysha, 2022). Thus, the influence of digital marketing on purchase intent is more accurately understood as a relational process involving psychological mechanisms, rather than a mere direct relationship. The city of Pontianak provides a relevant context for testing this model. Data from the Pontianak City Statistics Agency (BPS) shows the presence

of eateries/restaurants across various subdistricts, while recent local research indicates that Pontianak’s culinary SMEs have been moving toward more intensive use of digital technology. However, studies specifically examining how digital marketing shapes consumer purchase intent through brand trust and customer engagement among Pontianak’s culinary SMEs remain limited (BPS Kota Pontianak, 2025). Strengthening the local context is important because the city of Pontianak not only demonstrates a growing push toward the digitalization of SMEs but also has a culinary business base spread across various subdistricts. Data from the Pontianak City Central Statistics Agency shows that the distribution of eateries and restaurants in the city is concentrated primarily in South Pontianak and Pontianak City, while other districts also host culinary businesses that form part of the local market ecosystem. This situation indicates that Pontianak possesses a culinary business landscape sufficiently relevant to be analyzed in relation to digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior.



Figure 1. Distribution of Restaurants by Subdistrict in Pontianak City, 2020

Source: Pontianak City Central Statistics Agency (2025).

Figure 1 shows that the distribution of eateries/restaurants in Pontianak City is not yet even, with the highest concentration in South Pontianak, followed by Pontianak City, while other subdistricts have relatively fewer establishments. This pattern confirms that culinary business activities in Pontianak are concentrated in specific areas that have the potential to become hubs for competition and digital marketing; thus, Pontianak City is a suitable research locus to examine how digital marketing influences brand trust, customer engagement, and consumer purchase intent among culinary SMEs. Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing on consumer purchase intent through brand trust and customer engagement among culinary SMEs in Pontianak City. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution by testing a double mediation model in the context of local culinary SMEs, while also offering practical implications for business owners in designing more effective digital marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a marketing strategy that leverages digital media such as social media, websites, and online platforms to reach and interact with consumers. Advances in digital technology have transformed the way companies communicate with consumers, making it more interactive, personalized, and real-time (Spears & Singh, 2004). Digital marketing serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of building long-term relationships with consumers through relevant digital experiences. Activities such as content marketing, social media marketing, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) are key factors in influencing consumer perception (Anjani, 2024). Herawati et al. (2025) state that digital marketing has been proven to increase brand awareness, consumer engagement, and influence purchasing decisions (Herawati et al., 2025). Another study by Hartini et al. (2025) concluded that digital

marketing can increase brand awareness, customer engagement, and brand trust, which ultimately impacts purchasing decisions (Hartini et al., 2025).

Purchase Intention

Consumer purchase intention refers to an individual's tendency or desire to purchase a product or service after evaluating various available alternatives. Purchase intention is often used as a key indicator in predicting actual purchasing behavior. In the digital context, purchase intention is influenced by various factors such as information quality, brand trust, and the user experience when interacting with digital platforms (Sari, 2020). The higher the level of trust and positive perception toward a product or brand, the greater the likelihood that consumers will make a purchase (Belopa, 2015). Rijkard (2024) research indicates that brand trust, brand image, and content marketing have a positive influence on purchase intention among SMEs (Rijkard, 2024).

Brand Trust

Brand trust is the level of consumer confidence in a brand that reflects the belief that the brand is capable of delivering value, quality, and reliability in line with consumer expectations (Delgado-Ballester, 2004). In the digital environment, brand trust is a crucial aspect because consumers cannot interact directly with the product or the seller. Therefore, information transparency, customer reviews, and digital experiences play a key role in building trust (Gefen et al., 2003). Supriyanto (2024) states that brand trust is also frequently used as a mediating variable in the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention, as trust serves as the primary foundation for consumer decision-making (Supriyanto, 2024). Another study by Nurfitriyani et al. (2025) indicates that brand trust acts as a mediator between customer engagement and purchase intention (Nurfitriyani et al., 2025).

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement refers to the level of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement consumers have with a brand, as reflected through active interactions between consumers and the company (Brodie et al., 2011). In the digital age, customer engagement has become a key element in marketing strategies because it enables companies to build stronger relationships with consumers. Engagement can be manifested through activities such as comments, likes, shares, reviews, and participation in digital campaigns (Lestari, 2025). According to Vivek et al. (2012), high customer engagement can increase loyalty, strengthen brand trust, and drive consumer purchase intent (Vivek et al., 2012). Research conducted by Verawati et al. (2025) indicates that customer engagement has a positive influence on purchase decisions and enhances brand trust. Additionally, Saputri (2024) states that customer engagement plays a crucial role in increasing brand trust and repurchase intention.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the background and objectives outlined above, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H1: Digital marketing has a positive effect on brand trust.
- H2: Digital marketing has a positive effect on customer engagement.
- H3: Digital marketing has a positive effect on purchase intention.
- H4: Brand Trust has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.
- H5: Customer Engagement has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.
- H6: Brand Trust mediates the effect of digital marketing on Purchase Intention.
- H7: Customer Engagement mediates the effect of digital marketing on Purchase Intention.

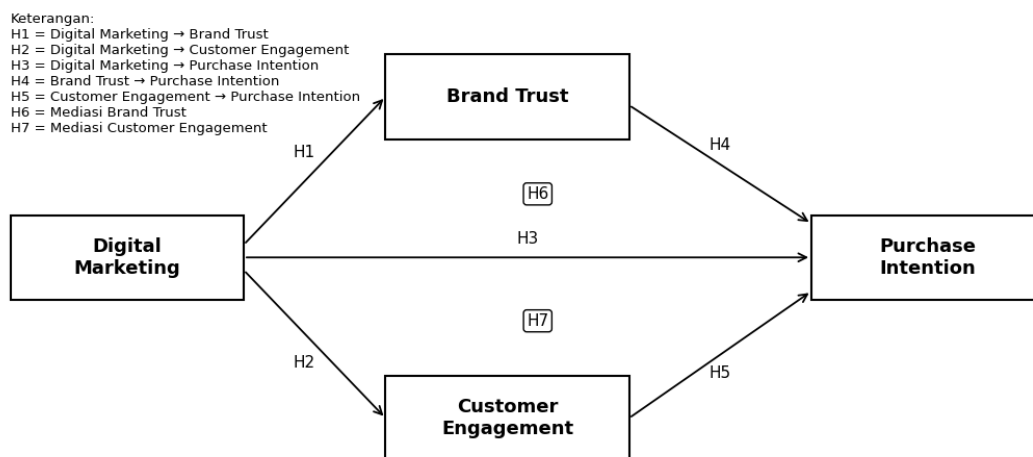


Figure 2. Research Hypothesis Model

Legend: H1 = Digital Marketing → Brand Trust; H2 = Digital Marketing → Customer Engagement; H3 = Digital Marketing → Purchase Intention; H4 = Brand Trust → Purchase Intention; H5 = Customer Engagement → Purchase Intention; H6 = Brand Trust mediates; H7 = Customer Engagement mediates.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey design. The study population consists of consumers of culinary SMEs in Pontianak City who have been exposed to digital promotions for a culinary brand. The study sample comprises 285 respondents selected using purposive sampling. Respondent criteria include: (1) having seen digital promotions for culinary SMEs in Pontianak City, (2) having made a purchase within the last six months, and (3) being willing to complete the research questionnaire. The research instrument was designed as a closed-ended questionnaire using a 1–5 Likert scale. The Digital Marketing construct was measured through five indicators: information quality, content appeal, interactivity, ease of access, and promotional relevance. The Brand Trust construct was measured through four indicators: brand reliability, brand honesty, sense of security, and brand consistency. The Customer Engagement construct is measured through four indicators reflecting cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. The Purchase Intention construct is measured through four indicators: intention to try, desire to buy, plan to buy, and brand preference. The instrument development is based on the Brand Trust, Customer Brand Engagement, and Purchase Intention scales widely used in the literature. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS. Model evaluation included tests of the outer model and the inner model. The outer model was assessed using outer loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha, the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and HTMT. The inner model was assessed using VIF, R-square, f-square, Q-square, SRMR, and hypothesis testing with 5,000 bootstrapped subsamples. This approach is commonly used for predictive modeling and latent construct testing in management and marketing research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The results of the outer model testing indicate that all indicators have loading values above 0.70. This indicates that all indicators have met the criteria for convergent validity and should be retained in the model.

Table 1. Construct Outer Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Loading
<i>Digital Marketing</i>	DM1	0,784
<i>Digital Marketing</i>	DM2	0,812
<i>Digital Marketing</i>	DM3	0,835
<i>Digital Marketing</i>	DM4	0,861
<i>Digital Marketing</i>	DM5	0,828
<i>Brand Trust</i>	BT1	0,806
<i>Brand Trust</i>	BT2	0,842
<i>Brand Trust</i>	BT3	0,873
<i>Brand Trust</i>	BT4	0,851
<i>Customer Engagement</i>	CE1	0,791
<i>Customer Engagement</i>	CE2	0,824
<i>Customer Engagement</i>	CE3	0,847
<i>Customer Engagement</i>	CE4	0,833
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	PI1	0,819
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	PI2	0,857
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	PI3	0,881
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	PI4	0,846

Source: Results of primary data analysis using SmartPLS, 2026.

Table 1 shows that all indicators in the Digital Marketing, Brand Trust, Customer Engagement, and Purchase Intention constructs have outer loading values above 0.70; thus, all indicators meet the criteria for convergent validity and are suitable for retention in the model. The highest loading value is found in indicator PI3 at 0.881, followed by BT3 at 0.873 and DM4 at 0.861, indicating that these indicators most strongly reflect their latent constructs. Meanwhile, the lowest loading value was found in CE1 at 0.791, but it remained above the required minimum threshold. Thus, it can be concluded that all measurement items in this study have a good ability to explain the measured variables and are suitable for use in further model analysis.

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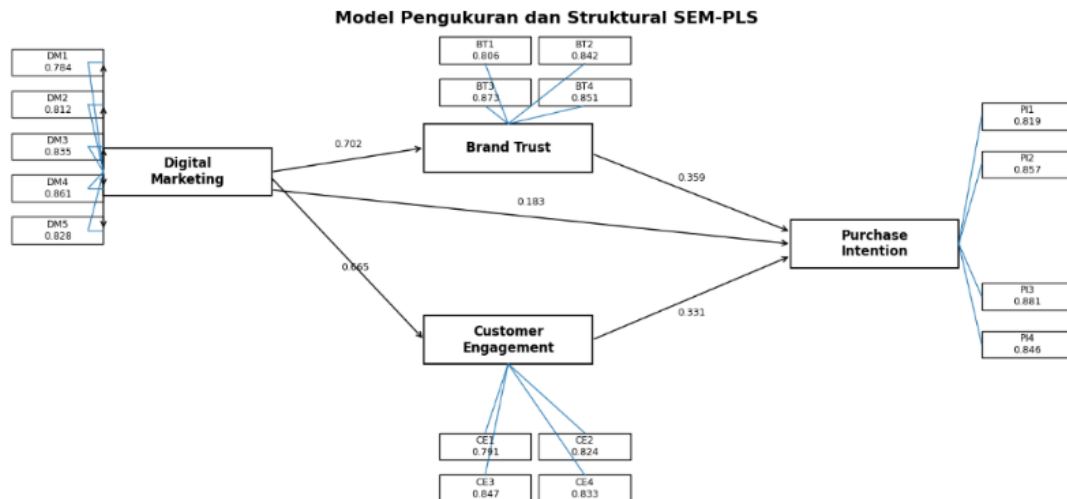


Figure 2. SEM-PLS Measurement and Structural Model

Note: The numbers on the indicators represent outer loadings, while the numbers on the arrows between constructs represent path coefficients.

The results of the reliability and construct validity tests also indicate that all variables met the criteria. The Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values were above 0.70, while the AVE for each construct was greater than 0.50.

Tabel 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variabel	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Digital Marketing	0,882	0,914	0,679
Brand Trust	0,865	0,908	0,711
Customer Engagement	0,841	0,894	0,679
Purchase Intention	0,873	0,913	0,725

Source: Results of primary data analysis using SmartPLS, 2026.

Table 2 shows that all constructs in this study met the criteria for reliability and convergent validity. This is evident from the Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all variables, each of which is above 0.70, indicating good internal consistency of the instrument. Additionally, all AVE values are above 0.50, meaning each construct adequately explains the variance of its indicators. Among all variables, Purchase Intention has the highest AVE value at 0.725, indicating the strongest explanatory power for its indicators, while Digital Marketing has the highest Composite Reliability value at 0.914. Thus, all variables are deemed valid and reliable for use in subsequent structural equation modeling.

Structural Model Evaluation

The R-square value indicates that Digital Marketing explains 49.3% of the variance in Brand Trust and 44.2% of the variance in Customer Engagement. Furthermore, the combination of Digital Marketing, Brand Trust, and Customer Engagement explains 61.2% of the variance in Purchase Intention.

Tabel 3. Nilai R-Square

Variabel Endogen	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Trust	0,493	0,491
Customer Engagement	0,442	0,440
Purchase Intention	0,612	0,608

Source: Analysis of primary data using SmartPLS, 2026.

Based on Table 3, the R-Square values indicate that the model’s ability to explain the endogenous variables falls within the “fairly good” to “strong” range. The Brand Trust variable has an R-Square value of 0.493, meaning that 49.3% of the variation in Brand Trust can be explained by the exogenous variables in the model, while the

remaining 50.7% is influenced by other factors outside the model. The Customer Engagement variable has an R-Square value of 0.442, indicating that 44.2% of its variation can be explained by the constructs influencing it. Meanwhile, Purchase Intention has an R-squared value of 0.612, meaning 61.2% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by the model, thus indicating relatively strong explanatory power. The adjusted R-squared value, which is not significantly different from the R-squared, further confirms that the constructed model is quite stable and possesses good predictive capability. The Q-square values for Brand Trust, Customer Engagement, and Purchase Intention are 0.338, 0.294, and 0.436, respectively. These values indicate that the model has good predictive relevance. The SRMR value of 0.071 also indicates that the model meets the criteria for model validity.

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the direct path tests indicate that all direct hypotheses are accepted.

Tabel 4. Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	t-statistics	p-values	Decision
H1	Digital Marketing → Brand Trust	0,702	15,842	0,000	Accepted
H2	Digital Marketing → Customer Engagement	0,665	13,924	0,000	Accepted
H3	Digital Marketing → Purchase Intention	0,183	2,481	0,013	Accepted
H4	Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	0,359	4,726	0,000	Accepted
H5	Customer Engagement → Purchase Intention	0,331	4,384	0,000	Accepted

Source: Results of primary data analysis using SmartPLS, 2026.

Based on Table 4, all effect paths in the model were found to be positive and significant, so all research hypotheses were accepted. Digital Marketing has the strongest influence on Brand Trust with a coefficient of 0.702 and a t-statistic of 15.842, followed by its influence on Customer Engagement at 0.665 and a t-statistic of 13.924, indicating that the better the digital marketing strategy, the higher the brand trust and consumer engagement. Furthermore, Digital Marketing also has a direct effect on Purchase Intention of 0.183 with a p-value of 0.013, although its effect is smaller than that of the other pathways. Regarding the mediation of consumer behavior, Brand Trust has a significant effect on Purchase Intention with a coefficient of 0.359, while Customer Engagement also has a significant effect of 0.331. These findings indicate that an increase in consumer purchase intention is not only directly influenced by digital marketing but is also reinforced through the development of brand trust and consumer engagement. The results of the indirect effect tests also show that both mediation pathways are significant.

Tabel 5. Specific Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect Route	Coefficient	t-statistics	p-values	Decision
H6	Digital Marketing → Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	0,252	4,315	0,000	Accepted
H7	Digital Marketing → Customer Engagement → Purchase Intention	0,220	3,901	0,000	Accepted

Source: Results of primary data analysis using SmartPLS, 2026.

Based on Table 5, both indirect effects in the model were found to be positive and significant; therefore, hypotheses H6 and H7 are accepted. The path Digital Marketing → Brand Trust → Purchase Intention has a coefficient of 0.252, a t-statistic of 4.315, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that Brand Trust mediates the effect of digital marketing on consumer purchase intention. Similarly, the Digital Marketing → Customer Engagement → Purchase Intention path has a coefficient of 0.220, a t-statistic of 3.901, and a p-value of 0.000, meaning that Customer Engagement also acts as a significant mediator. These findings confirm that the influence of digital marketing on purchase intention does not occur solely through a direct effect but operates more strongly through the development of consumer trust in the brand and active consumer engagement with that brand. The total indirect effect of Digital Marketing on Purchase Intention is 0.472, which is greater than the direct effect of 0.183. A VAF value of 72.1% indicates that the mediation observed constitutes strong partial mediation.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that digital marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand trust. These results suggest that the higher the quality of content, interactivity, and relevance of digital promotions implemented by culinary SMEs, the greater the consumers' trust in the brand. In the culinary context, trust is particularly crucial because consumers evaluate brands not only based on promotional promises but also on the consistency of information, product presentation, and seller responsiveness in the digital space. These findings align with the perspective of Hollebeek and Macky (2019), who state that relevant and valuable digital content can strengthen trust and the consumer-brand relationship (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), and are consistent with the findings of Hanaysha (2022), who found that social media marketing activities can influence purchasing decisions through brand trust (Hanaysha, 2022).

Digital marketing has also been proven to have a positive and significant impact on customer engagement. This means that engaging and interactive digital promotions encourage consumers to become more involved with the brand cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally (Hair et al., 2021). In the culinary SME sector, this engagement can manifest through comments, content sharing, responding to posts, or actively following the brand's account. This finding aligns with the conceptualization of customer-brand engagement developed by Hollebeek et al. (2014), which positions engagement as a multidimensional relationship between consumers and brands within the context of digital interactions (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Further research findings indicate that digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, but its direct effect is relatively smaller than the total indirect effect. These findings demonstrate that digital exposure can indeed spark initial interest, but stronger purchase intentions are formed when digital promotions first foster trust and engagement with the brand. In other words, the primary strength of digital marketing for Pontianak's culinary SMEs lies in its ability to transform digital attention into meaningful psychological connections.

Brand trust and customer engagement were also found to have a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. This indicates that consumers who trust a brand and feel engaged with it are more likely to make a purchase. For Pontianak's culinary SMEs, these results are relevant because the digital space often serves as the primary point of contact before an actual purchase occurs. Therefore, credible, consistent, and responsive digital promotions will be more effective in driving purchase intention than those that are merely informative. Finally, the two mediating variables brand trust and customer engagement were found to significantly mediate the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention. These results confirm that the success of digital marketing for culinary SMEs in Pontianak primarily operates through two channels: the trust channel and the engagement channel. In practical terms, SME operators must not only increase the frequency of posts or offer digital discounts but also consistently build brand credibility and foster consumer engagement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis using the SEM-PLS method, this study shows that digital marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand trust, customer engagement, and purchase intention among consumers of culinary SMEs in Pontianak City. Additionally, brand trust and customer engagement were also found to have a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. These findings further reinforce the crucial role of brand trust and customer engagement as mediating variables, as both were found to significantly mediate the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. Thus, it can be concluded that enhancing effective digital marketing strategies not only directly drives consumer purchase intention but also indirectly does so by increasing brand trust and customer engagement.

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