



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON BRAND AWARENESS AND PURCHASE DECISIONS OF MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions of millennial consumers. Using a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, data were collected from 200 millennial respondents aged 27-43 years through an online questionnaire. The variables measured included social media marketing as an independent variable, brand awareness as a mediating variable, and purchase decisions as a dependent variable. Data analysis uses path analysis with SPSS version 26. The results showed that social media marketing had a positive and significant effect on brand awareness with a path coefficient of 0.672, explaining 45.2% of % variation. Social media marketing also has a direct impact on purchase decisions with a path coefficient of 0.387. Brand awareness has a significant effect on purchasing decisions with a path coefficient of 0.461. The mediation analysis showed that brand awareness played a role as a partial mediation variable with an indirect influence of 0.310 and a total influence of 0.697. Together, social media marketing and brand awareness explain 61.8% of millennial consumers' purchase decisions. This research provides theoretical contributions in enriching the digital marketing literature and practical implications for marketing practitioners in optimizing social media marketing strategies.

Keywords: Social media marketing; Brand Awareness; Purchase Decision; Millennial Consumers; Path Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has fundamentally changed the marketing landscape, where social media is now the dominant platform in modern marketing communications. This digital transformation has created a new ecosystem in the interaction between brands and consumers, which is marked by the increasing use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter as the primary marketing channels. Data shows that by 2024, there will be more than 4.9 billion active social media users worldwide, with a growth of 5.6% from the previous year. In Indonesia itself, social media penetration reaches 68.9% of the total population, with an average usage time of 3 hours and 14 minutes per day. This phenomenon creates an excellent opportunity for companies to utilize social media marketing as an effective and efficient marketing strategy. Social media marketing not only serves as a promotional channel but also as a platform to build relationships, increase consumer engagement, and shape brand perception in consumers' minds.

Millennial consumers, born between 1981 and 1996, are a very significant market segment in the context of social media marketing. This generation is known as digital natives who have grown up with the development of internet technology and social media. The unique characteristics of millennial consumers who tend to search for product information online, actively interact on social media, and have a significant influence on purchasing decisions make them a strategic target market

for various industries. With ever-increasing purchasing power and a population that reaches more than 25% of Indonesia's total population, millennial consumers are becoming an economic force that cannot be ignored by businesspeople.

The urgency of this research arises from the shift in consumer behavior that increasingly relies on social media in the purchase decision-making process. In the midst of increasingly fierce business competition, companies are required to deeply understand how social media marketing can affect brand awareness and purchase decisions, especially in the millennial segment, who have significant purchasing power and unique consumption patterns. From a business perspective, mistakes in social media marketing strategies can result in ineffective waste of marketing budgets, considering that the average company allocates 15-25% of the total marketing budget to social media marketing, but not all companies can measure the effectiveness of these investments on brand awareness and sales conversions. From a consumer perspective, social media has become the primary source of information in product searches, with 54% of millennial consumers using social media to research products before making a purchase. If this issue is not comprehensively researched, companies will struggle to optimize their social media marketing strategies, potentially leading to lost market share opportunities, decreased brand visibility, and an inability to compete in the digital age.

Research on social media marketing has grown rapidly in the last five years, showing a high academic interest in this phenomenon. Kapoor et al. (2020) in their research found that social media marketing activities consisting of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth have a positive influence on brand equity, emphasizing the importance of engaging and interactive content in building brand value on social media. In the context of brand awareness, research by Sanny et al. (2022) shows that social media marketing has a significant effect on brand awareness of fashion products in Indonesia, with a determination coefficient value of 67.3%, revealing that the frequency of posts, content quality, and brand responsiveness to consumer comments are key factors in increasing brand awareness. In line with that, Dwivedi et al. (2021), through their systematic literature review, identified that social media marketing is able to create brand awareness through viral content, influencer marketing, and user-generated content.

Regarding millennial consumer purchase decisions, Sudaryanto et al. (2023) found that social media marketing has a direct influence on purchase decisions by mediating brand trust and brand image, revealing that millennial consumers tend to make purchase decisions based on product reviews, endorsements from influencers, and visual appeal from social media content. Meanwhile, Hajli et al. (2022) in their research in the context of e-commerce showed that the social commerce construct, which includes ratings, reviews, and recommendations, significantly affects the purchase intention of millennial consumers. Recent developments in the literature also show the importance of the role of authenticity and transparency in social media marketing, where Audrezet et al. (2020) stated that millennial consumers highly value authenticity in brand communication on social media, and this authenticity affects brand trust, which then has an impact on purchasing decisions. In

addition, the research of Voorveld et al. (2021) explored the role of user engagement in social media as a mediator between social media marketing activities and brand outcomes, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanism of social media marketing influence.

Although much research has been done on social media marketing, brand awareness, and purchasing decisions, there are some gaps that need to be filled. Most previous studies have examined the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness or purchase decisions separately. However, few have integrated the two into a single comprehensive model to look at the mechanisms of influence simultaneously, particularly in exploring the role of brand awareness as a mediating variable between social media marketing and purchase decisions. The majority of existing research focuses more on the context of developed countries with market characteristics and consumer behaviors that are different from those of Indonesia, so studies that specifically explore Indonesian millennial consumers with dominant cultural characteristics, purchasing power, and social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook still need further research. This limitation is essential considering that Indonesia has the largest millennial population in Southeast Asia with unique digital behavior. Previous studies tend to use a quantitative approach with a sample limited to one or two social media platforms, whereas millennial consumers generally use multiple platforms in the decision-making process, so research that explores the influence of social media marketing across platforms on brand awareness and purchase decisions is still minimal. In terms of the social media marketing dimension, there has not been much research that has comprehensively explored all dimensions of social media marketing activities in the context of Indonesian millennial consumers and how each dimension contributes to brand awareness and purchase decisions.

Based on the background and research gaps that have been identified, this study formulates several research questions that are the focus of the study. First, how does social media marketing affect brand awareness in millennial consumers? Second, how does social media marketing affect millennial consumers' purchasing decisions? Third, how does brand awareness affect millennial consumers' purchasing decisions? Fourth, what is the role of brand awareness in mediating the influence of social media marketing on millennial consumers' purchasing decisions? These questions are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence mechanisms of social media marketing in the context of Indonesian millennial consumer behavior. In line with the formulation of this problem, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness in millennial consumers, analyze the influence of social media marketing on millennial consumers' purchasing decisions, analyze the influence of brand awareness on millennial consumers' purchasing decisions, and analyze the role of brand awareness as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and millennial consumer purchasing decisions. These goals are expected to make significant academic and practical contributions in the field of digital marketing. This research is expected to provide broad theoretical and practical benefits. From the theoretical side, this research

is expected to contribute to the development of digital marketing theory, especially in the field of social media marketing and consumer behavior, by enriching the literature on the mechanism of influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions through the role of brand awareness mediation. The results of this research are also expected to be an academic reference for future research related to digital marketing, brand management, and millennial consumer behavior in the digital era. In addition, this research will contribute to the development of an integrative model that connects social media marketing, brand awareness, and purchasing decisions in the context of Indonesian millennial consumers, which can enrich existing theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Technology Acceptance Model, and Customer-Based Brand Equity in the context of digital marketing.

From a practical perspective, this research will provide valuable insights for marketing practitioners and brand managers on how to optimize social media marketing strategies to increase brand awareness and encourage millennial consumer purchase decisions. The results of this research can be used as a reference in marketing budget allocation, choosing the right social media platform, and developing compelling content for the millennial target market. For companies, especially MSMEs and startups that have limited marketing budgets, this research can help them understand the most influential dimensions of social media marketing, so that they can allocate resources more efficiently. The findings of this research can also help companies in designing more targeted and personalized marketing communication strategies for millennial consumers. From a policy perspective, the results of this study provide input for policymakers, especially in digital marketing regulations and consumer protection on social media, and can be a reference for educational institutions in developing digital marketing curricula that are more relevant to industry needs.

The framework of thought in this study is built on several relevant and interrelated theories and concepts. The concept of Social Media Marketing Activities developed by Kim and Ko (2012) identifies five main dimensions, namely entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and electronic word of mouth, which represent the marketing activities carried out by brands on social media to attract and retain consumers. The concept of Brand Awareness from Aaker (1991) is the ability of consumers to recognize or remember a brand in a specific product category, which consists of brand recognition and brand recall as an essential foundation in building brand equity. Purchase Decision Theory based on the Consumer Decision Making Process from Kotler and Keller (2016) includes the stages of need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior, where, in the digital context, social media plays an essential role in each stage of the process, especially at the stage of information search and alternative evaluation.

The conceptual framework of this study integrates the three concepts in a model that shows the causal relationship between social media marketing, brand awareness, and purchasing decisions. Social media marketing is suspected to have a direct effect on brand awareness and purchase decisions, as well as having an indirect influence on purchase decisions through brand awareness

mediation. This model adopts the perspective that marketing activities on social media not only serve as a direct stimulus to drive a purchase, but also work through cognitive mechanisms by building brand awareness first. The conceptual model shows that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand awareness, social media marketing has a positive impact on direct purchase decisions, brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase decisions, and brand awareness mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions through indirect effects. This conceptual framework is also supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior, which states that behavioral intentions influence a person's behavior. This intention is formed by attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, so that in the context of this study, social media marketing influences consumers' attitudes towards brands through increasing brand awareness, which then influences purchase intentions and decisions.

Based on the literature review and the framework of thought that has been described, this study proposes several hypotheses that will be tested empirically.

The first hypothesis states that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness in millennial consumers, which is based on research by Sanny et al. (2022) and Dwivedi et al. (2021) which shows that consistent, creative, and interactive social media marketing activities can increase consumer awareness of brands, where entertaining content, responsive interactions, And viral content on social media can make brands easier to recognize and remember by millennial consumers.

The second hypothesis states that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on the purchasing decisions of millennial consumers, which is supported by the findings of Sudaryanto et al. (2023) and Hajli et al. (2022) which show that social media marketing activities can directly affect consumer purchase decisions, especially the millennial generation who are very active on social media, where product information, reviews, and recommendations obtained through social media are essential considerations in the purchase decision-making process.

The third hypothesis states that brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on millennial consumers' purchasing decisions, which is based on Aaker's theory (1991) and empirical research from Macdonald and Sharp (2000) which shows that brand awareness is an essential predictor in purchasing decisions, where consumers tend to choose brands that they know and remember, especially in product categories with low involvement or when faced with many choices. The fourth hypothesis states that brand awareness mediates the influence of social media marketing on millennial consumers' purchasing decisions, which is based on the argument that social media marketing not only influences purchase decisions directly but also through cognitive mechanisms, namely, increased brand awareness. Research by Kapoor et al. (2020) and Voorveld et al. (2021) indicates that the effect of social media marketing on behavioral outcomes can be mediated by brand-related cognitions such as brand awareness and brand knowledge, so that with increased brand

awareness through social media marketing activities, millennial consumers will find it easier to remember and consider the brand in their purchasing decision process. These four hypotheses will be tested using a quantitative approach with Structural Equation Modeling analysis techniques to identify direct and indirect influences between variables in the research model.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design that aims to explain the causal relationship between variables. The method used was a survey by distributing an online questionnaire to millennial consumers aged 27-43 years (born in 1981-1996). The study population is millennial consumers who actively use social media and have made product purchases in the last 6 months. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the criteria of active respondents using at least 2 social media platforms and having been exposed to marketing content on social media. Based on calculations using the formula of Hair et al. (2010), the number of samples used was 200 respondents. The variables in this study consisted of social media marketing as an independent variable measured using the indicators of Kim and Ko (2012), including entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. Brand awareness as a mediating variable is measured based on the dimensions of Aaker (1991), which include brand recognition, brand recall, top of mind, and brand dominance. Meanwhile, purchasing decisions as a dependent variable are measured using the purchase decision stages of Kotler and Keller (2016).

Primary data is collected through online questionnaires that are disseminated through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The questionnaire was compiled using a 5-point Likert scale with a value range of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Before the analysis, the data were first tested for validity using Pearson Correlation with the criteria of r calculation $>$ r table and reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum value of 0.70. Classical assumption tests were also carried out, including normality tests with Kolmogorov-Smirnov, multicollinearity tests by looking at Tolerance and VIF values, and heteroscedasticity tests using the Glejser test to ensure that the data met the regression analysis requirements.

The data analysis technique uses path analysis with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 software to test the direct and indirect influences between variables. The path analysis was carried out through two structural equations, namely the first equation to test the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness, and the second equation to test the influence of social media marketing and brand awareness on purchase decisions. Hypothesis testing uses a t-test with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, where the hypothesis is accepted if the significance value $<$ 0.05. In addition, a descriptive analysis was also carried out to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of answers using mean values and standard deviations, to provide a comprehensive picture of the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions of millennial consumers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 200 millennial consumer respondents who met the research criteria. Based on demographic characteristics, respondents were dominated by women, as many as 118 people (59%), and men, as many as 82 people (41%). Judging from age, the majority of respondents aged 28-33 years were 89 people (44.5%), followed by 67 people (33.5%) aged 34-38 years, and 44 people (22%) aged 39-43 years. In terms of education, most of the respondents had a bachelor's education background (S1), as many as 126 people (63%), a diploma 38 people (19%), a postgraduate (S2/S3) 28 people (14%), and a high school 8 people (4%). Based on occupation, the most significant number of respondents were 94 private employees (47%), entrepreneurs 48 people (24%), civil servants 32 people (16%), and students/students 26 people (13%). The social media platforms that are most often used to find product information are Instagram (78%), followed by Facebook (56%), TikTok (42%), Twitter (28%), and LinkedIn (18%).

Validity and Reliability Test Results

The validity test was carried out on all statement items in the questionnaire using Pearson Correlation with a table r value of 0.138 ($n=200$, $\alpha=0.05$). The test results showed that all statement items for the social media marketing variable had a calculated r value ranging from 0.645 to 0.812, which was greater than the r of the table, so it was declared valid. The brand awareness variable statement item has an r -value calculated between 0.698 and 0.789, and the purchase decision statement item has an r -value calculated between 0.672 and 0.825. All statement items are declared valid because the r -value is calculated $> r$ table. The results of the reliability test showed that Cronbach's Alpha value for social media marketing variables was 0.912, brand awareness was 0.889, and purchase decisions were 0.906. All three variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value of > 0.70 , so it can be concluded that the research instrument is reliable and consistent in measuring the research variables.

Descriptive Analysis Results

Descriptive analysis was carried out to determine the respondents' perception of each research variable. The social media marketing variable has an average value of 3.89 with a standard deviation of 0.67, which shows that respondents give a high rating to marketing activities through social media. The entertainment dimension obtained the highest average score of 4.12, indicating that entertaining social media content is the most perceived aspect by millennial consumers. The interaction dimension has an average of 3.95, trendiness of 3.87, customization of 3.76, and word of mouth of 3.78. The brand awareness variable has an average value of 3.92 with a standard deviation of 0.71, indicating a

good level of brand awareness among millennial consumers. The brand recognition dimension received the highest score of 4.08, followed by brand recall (3.94), top of mind (3.85), and brand dominance (3.82). Meanwhile, the purchase decision variable has an average value of 3.86 with a standard deviation of 0.69. The information search stage obtained the highest score (4.02), followed by alternative evaluation (3.91), purchase decision (3.84), need recognition (3.79), and post-purchase behavior (3.74).

Classical Assumption Test Results

The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test showed a significance value of 0.124 (> 0.05), so it can be concluded that the residual data is usually distributed. The multicollinearity test showed a Tolerance value for all independent variables > 0.10 and a VIF value of < 10 , where social media marketing had a Tolerance value of 0.687 and a VIF of 1.456, while brand awareness had a Tolerance value of 0.687 and a VIF of 1.456. It shows that there is no multicollinearity between independent variables. The heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser test showed a significance value for social media marketing of 0.289 and brand awareness of 0.347 (> 0.05), which means that heteroscedasticity did not occur in the regression model. With the fulfillment of all classical assumptions, the regression model is worthy of being used for further analysis.

Path Analysis Results

The path analysis was carried out through two structural equations to test the direct and indirect influences between variables. The first structural equation tested the influence of social media marketing (X) on brand awareness (Y1), resulting in a path coefficient value (ρ_{Y1X}) of 0.672 with a calculated t-value of 12.847 and a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05). The R Square value of 0.452 indicates that social media marketing is able to explain 45.2% of brand awareness variations, while the remaining 54.8% is influenced by other factors outside the model. The second structural equation tests the influence of social media marketing (X) and brand awareness (Y1) on purchasing decisions (Y2). The results of the analysis showed that the coefficient of the social media marketing influence path on purchase decisions (ρ_{Y2X}) was 0.387 with a t-value of 6.243 and a significance of 0.000. Meanwhile, the coefficient of the influence path of brand awareness on purchase decisions (ρ_{Y2Y1}) was 0.461 with a calculated t-value of 7.438 and a significance of 0.000. The R Square value in the second equation of 0.618 shows that social media marketing and brand awareness together are able to explain 61.8% of millennial consumers' purchase decision variations.

Hypothesis Testing Results

The first hypothesis test (H1) showed that social media marketing had a positive and significant effect on brand awareness with a path coefficient value of 0.672, t count 12.847, and significance of $0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, H1 is accepted, which means that the better the social media marketing activities

carried out, the higher the level of brand awareness among millennial consumers. The second hypothesis (H2), which states that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, was also accepted with a path coefficient value of 0.387, t calculated 6.243, and a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$. It indicates that social media marketing has a direct influence on driving millennial consumer purchase decisions. The third hypothesis (H3), which states that brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, was accepted with a path coefficient value of 0.461, t calculated 7.438, and a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$. These results suggest that high brand awareness will increase the likelihood of consumers making a purchase. To test the indirect influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions through brand awareness, the effect of mediation was calculated by multiplying the coefficient of the $X \rightarrow Y1$ path by $Y1 \rightarrow Y2$, which is $0.672 \times 0.461 = 0.310$. The total influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions was direct (0.387) plus indirect influence (0.310) = 0.697. These results show that brand awareness plays a role as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions.

Discussion

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness

The results of the study show that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness of millennial consumers, with a path coefficient of 0.672. These findings indicate that marketing activities through social media are an effective strategy to increase brand awareness among millennial consumers. The millennial generation, who are digital natives, spend significant time on social media, so the marketing content that appears on these platforms has high exposure and has the potential to increase recognition and memory of the brand. These results are in line with the research of Kim and Ko (2012) and Seo and Park (2018), which found that social media marketing activities contribute significantly to building brand awareness, primarily through engaging and interactive content.

The entertainment dimension in social media marketing obtained the highest average score (4.12), indicating that entertaining content is a significant factor that attracts the attention of millennial consumers. Creative, engaging, and fun content is easier for social media users to remember and share, increasing the reach of brand awareness. The interaction dimension also has a significant contribution, where two-way communication between brands and consumers through comments, likes, and direct messages creates engagement that strengthens consumers' memories of the brand. The trendiness aspect that follows viral and trending topics helps brands stay relevant in the minds of millennial consumers who are quick to adapt to changing trends. Meanwhile, customization allows brands to present content that is personalized and relevant to individual consumer preferences, as well as electronic word of mouth through reviews and recommendations on social media to

strengthen brand credibility and awareness. The combination of these five dimensions synergistically contributes to building strong brand awareness among millennial consumers.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions

This study proves that social media marketing has a positive and significant direct influence on millennial consumer purchase decisions with a path coefficient of 0.387. These findings show that marketing activities on social media not only serve as a tool to build brand awareness but also play a direct role in encouraging consumers to make purchase transactions. Millennial consumers who are exposed to marketing content on social media tend to use this information as a reference in the purchase decision-making process. Social media features such as product tagging, shopping features, and direct links to e-commerce make it easier for consumers to transition from the awareness stage to the purchase stage faster. These results are consistent with the research of Yadav and Rahman (2017), which found that social media marketing activities have a direct influence on purchase intention and actual purchase behavior.

The direct influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions can be explained through several psychological mechanisms and consumer behavior. First, engaging and interactive content on social media creates a positive experience that affects consumers' attitudes towards products. Second, social proof formed through likes, comments, and shares provides social validation that increases consumer confidence to make purchases. Third, the ease of access to real-time product information on social media accelerates the process of searching for information and evaluating alternatives in the purchase decision stage. Fourth, influencer marketing and user-generated content on social media create powerful word of mouth and influence the purchasing decisions of millennial consumers who tend to trust recommendations from peers rather than traditional advertising. Fifth, the urgency created through flash sales, limited offers, and exclusive deals on social media encourages consumers to make purchases immediately. Millennial consumers who are familiar with technology and digital platforms also have a high level of convenience in make online transactions that are integrated with social media.

The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions

The results of the analysis showed that brand awareness had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions with a path coefficient of 0.461, even greater than the direct influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions (0.387). These findings confirm the hierarchy of effects model theory that brand awareness is a fundamental stage that influences consumer purchasing decisions. Millennial consumers who have high awareness of a brand tend to include the brand in the consideration set when evaluating alternatives, thus increasing the probability of the brand being chosen. Strong brand awareness also reduces perceived risk in purchases because consumers feel more familiar with and trust familiar brands. These results are in line with the research of Aaker

(1991) and Keller (2013), which emphasizes the importance of brand awareness as a foundation of brand equity that influences consumer purchasing behavior.

The brand recognition dimension that obtained the highest score (4.08) shows that millennial consumers are able to recognize brands when they see logos, packaging, or other visual elements, which are essential triggers in the purchase process both offline and online. Strong brand recall allows consumers to recall the brand spontaneously when a particular need or product category arises, making the brand the first choice considered. Top-of-mind awareness creates a competitive advantage because brands that first appear in the minds of consumers have a greater chance of being chosen. Brand dominance is formed when a brand becomes a representation of the overall product category (such as "Aqua" for mineral water) and creates significant market power. In the context of millennial consumers who are faced with an abundance of choices in the digital era, brand awareness serves as a mental shortcut that simplifies the purchase decision process and reduces cognitive effort. Consumers with high brand awareness tend to have a more positive attitude, stronger trust, and higher purchase intention towards the brand.

The Role of Brand Awareness Mediation

Path analysis shows that brand awareness plays a role as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. The indirect influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions through brand awareness was 0.310 (0.672×0.461), while the direct influence was 0.387, so that the total influence reached 0.697. These findings indicate that social media marketing can influence purchasing decisions through two paths: direct and indirect, through the formation of brand awareness first. The role of partial mediation shows that while brand awareness is essential, social media marketing also has a direct mechanism in influencing purchase decisions that is not entirely mediated by brand awareness. These results are consistent with research by Godey et al. (2016), which found that social media marketing can influence consumer behavior both directly and through the formation of brand equity components such as brand awareness.

The role of brand awareness mediation can be explained through the psychological process of consumers in responding to social media marketing activities. In the early stages, marketing content on social media serves to create exposure and familiarity with the brand, which then builds brand recognition and brand recall. It formed brand awareness, then became the basis for consumers to develop brand associations, quality perceptions, and brand loyalty that ultimately influence purchasing decisions. However, the direct influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions shows that not all millennial consumers go through a linear hierarchical process. Some consumers can immediately make impulse buying or spontaneous purchase decisions when exposed to engaging marketing content on social media, especially with the convenience of shopping and direct purchase features that are integrated into social media platforms. Millennial consumers who are digitally savvy

also tend to make quick decisions based on real-time information obtained from social media without having to go through a deep brand awareness formation process first.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study provide several strategic implications for marketing practitioners in optimizing social media marketing to increase brand awareness and purchase decisions of millennial consumers.

1. Companies need to allocate adequate investment to develop quality, entertaining, and engaging social media content, considering that the entertainment dimension has the highest rating from consumers. Content creators and social media specialists need to focus on engaging storytelling, aesthetic visuals, and varied content formats such as short-form videos, carousels, reels, and interactive content that suit the preferences of millennial consumers.
2. Companies should build active interaction with followers through responsive comments, conducting polls, Q&A sessions, and live streaming to create two-way communication that strengthens engagement and brand awareness.
3. Given the importance of brand awareness as a mediator with significant influence, companies need to implement a consistent integrated marketing communication strategy across various social media platforms to maximize brand recall and top-of-mind awareness. Consistency in visual identity, tone of voice, and key messaging across platforms will strengthen brand recognition.
4. Companies can leverage influencer marketing and user-generated content to amplify electronic word of mouth that has been proven to be effective in influencing millennial consumers' purchasing decisions.
5. Optimizing shopping features and e-commerce integration in social media such as Instagram Shopping, Facebook Marketplace, and TikTok Shop needs to be prioritized to facilitate the direct influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions.
6. Companies need to continuously monitor and analyze the performance of social media content to understand audience preferences and carry out data-driven optimization strategies.

Research Limitations and Future Research Agenda

This study has several limitations that need to be considered in the interpretation of the results.

1. This study uses a cross-sectional design that collects data at a single point in time, so it cannot capture the dynamics of changes in millennial consumer behavior over time. Future research may use a longitudinal design to understand the evolution of the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and long-term purchasing decisions.
2. The use of convenience sampling through the dissemination of online questionnaires on social media can cause selection bias because it only reaches respondents who are active on the platform. Further research can use more representative sampling techniques to improve the generalization of results.

3. This study only focuses on millennial consumers without comparing them to other generations, such as Gen Z or Gen X, so that comparative research between generations can provide more comprehensive insights about the differences in the effectiveness of social media marketing.
4. The variables studied are still limited to social media marketing, brand awareness, and purchase decisions, even though other factors have the potential to affect these relationships, such as trust, perceived value, customer engagement, or brand attitude, which can be explored in future research as mediation or moderation variables.
5. This study did not distinguish between product characteristics (high involvement vs low involvement, hedonic vs utilitarian) that might result in different patterns of influence.
6. This study measures social media marketing in general without distinguishing specific platforms, even though each platform has different characteristics and audience behavior. Future research can conduct a comparative study on the effectiveness of social media marketing on various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or Twitter.
7. This study has not explored the negative aspects of social media marketing, such as information overload or advertising skepticism, that can reduce the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. Future research agendas can also integrate a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the psychological mechanisms of millennial consumers in responding to social media marketing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been conducted, several important conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness and purchase decisions of millennial consumers.

First, social media marketing has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on the brand awareness of millennial consumers, with a path coefficient of 0.672. These findings confirm that marketing activities through social media are an effective strategy to build brand awareness, primarily through the entertainment dimension, which obtained the highest ratings from respondents. Social media content that is entertaining, interactive, follows the latest trends, is personalized, and supported by electronic word of mouth synergistically contributes to increasing consumer recognition and recall of brands. These results show that social media marketing is able to explain 45.2% of the variation in brand awareness among millennial consumers, which indicates the significant role of social media as a platform to build brand exposure and familiarity in the digital age.

Second, social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on millennial consumers' purchasing decisions, both directly and indirectly through brand awareness. The direct influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions has a path coefficient of 0.387, which shows that marketing activities on social media not only function to build brand awareness but are also able to

encourage consumers to make purchase transactions. Meanwhile, brand awareness has also been proven to have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions with a path coefficient of 0.461, even greater than the direct influence of social media marketing. These findings confirm that brand awareness is a necessary foundation that influences consumer purchasing behavior, with better-known brands tending to have a greater chance of being chosen in the purchasing decision process. Overall, social media marketing and brand awareness were able to explain 61.8% of millennial consumers' purchase decisions.

Third, brand awareness has been shown to play a role as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions. The indirect influence of social media marketing on purchase decisions through brand awareness was 0.310, while the direct influence was 0.387, so that the total influence reached 0.697. This partial mediation role indicates that social media marketing can influence purchasing decisions through two paths, namely the direct and indirect channels, through the formation of brand awareness first. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding that although brand awareness has a vital role as a mediator, social media marketing also has a direct mechanism in influencing millennial consumers' purchasing decisions, primarily through easy access to information, social proof, and the integration of e-commerce features in social media platforms that facilitate impulse buying and quick decision-making. The results of this study provide theoretical contributions in enriching the digital marketing literature and practical contributions for marketing practitioners in optimizing social media marketing strategies to increase brand awareness and encourage millennial consumer purchasing decisions.

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