
Examining Customer Engagement In Linking Social Media Content Quality, Influencer Credibility, And Purchase Intention

Hetifah Sjaifudian¹, Siswanda H. Sumarto², Nuzul Husnah³

^{1,2,3} Digital Business Department, Politeknik Jatiluhur, Purwakarta, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of customer engagement in the relationships between social media content quality, influencer credibility, and purchase intention toward MSME products in West Java. In digital marketing, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have become important promotional channels for MSMEs, making content quality and influencer credibility key factors shaping consumer responses. This study used a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 200 respondents in West Java who actively use Instagram or TikTok, had seen MSME promotions in the last three months, and had been exposed to influencer-based promotions. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. The results show that social media content quality and influencer credibility have positive and significant effects on customer engagement and purchase intention. Customer engagement also positively influences purchase intention and significantly mediates the effects of social media content quality and influencer credibility on purchase intention, indicating partial mediation. Social media content quality has the strongest effect on customer engagement, while influencer credibility has the strongest direct effect on purchase intention. These findings highlight the importance of content quality, credible influencers, and customer engagement in improving MSME marketing effectiveness.

Corresponding Author:

Hetifah Sjaifudian

Digital Business Department, Politeknik Jatiluhur, Purwakarta, Indonesia

Email: hetifah@polijati.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid diffusion of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped how micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) communicate with consumers, build brand visibility, and stimulate purchase responses. Recent scholarship shows that social media is no longer merely a promotional channel, but a central arena where content, interaction, and influence jointly shape consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. In the MSME context, digital marketing has become especially important because it allows smaller firms to reach targeted audiences efficiently while competing with larger brands through creativity, authenticity, and continuous interaction. At the same time, customer engagement has emerged as a core construct in social-media-based marketing, reflecting the growing emphasis on interactive and relationship-oriented consumer behavior rather than one-way persuasion (Barari et al., 2026; Jadhav et al., 2023; Lim & Rasul, 2022; Pan et al., 2025; Waworuntu et al., 2022).

Within this digital environment, social media content quality has become one of the most decisive antecedents of positive consumer responses. Recent studies suggest that content performs better when it is informative, visually appealing, interactive, and aligned with the expectations of platform users. Research on social media content aesthetics and engagement indicates that high-quality content can increase emotional and behavioral responses toward brands, while MSME-oriented studies also show that visual quality, interactivity, and campaign design contribute meaningfully to online engagement and downstream purchase-related outcomes. This is particularly relevant for Instagram and TikTok, where short-form, visually rich, and algorithmically amplified content often becomes the first point of contact between consumers and MSME brands (Bazi et al., 2023; Meliawati et al., 2023; Sarifiyono & Lesmana, 2023).

Another variable that has gained strong attention is influencer credibility. Across recent empirical and meta-analytic studies, influencer credibility consistently appears as a major driver of consumer response, typically reflected in perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The literature shows that credible influencers do more than simply attract attention; they help reduce skepticism, strengthen message acceptance, improve attitudes toward endorsed brands, and raise purchase intention. Several recent studies further demonstrate that the effectiveness of influencer marketing is not only direct but also process-based, operating through psychological and relational mechanisms such as trust, self-brand congruity, and engagement (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Ao et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2024; Sardar et al., 2024; Shabani Shojaei & Barbosa, 2026).

In this regard, customer engagement is highly relevant as a mediating construct. Contemporary research treats engagement as a multidimensional concept involving cognitive attention, emotional connection, and participatory behavior such as liking, commenting, sharing, saving, and following branded content. Recent findings indicate that both content-related cues and influencer-related cues can stimulate customer engagement, and that higher engagement, in turn, increases purchase intention. Meta-analytic and empirical evidence increasingly supports the view that engagement is not merely an outcome of digital marketing, but also a mechanism through which marketing stimuli are translated into commercial intention. This makes customer engagement especially suitable as a mediator between social media content quality, influencer credibility, and purchase intention (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Cao et al., 2025; Gu & Duan, 2024; Jayasingh et al., 2025; Lim & Rasul, 2022).

The focus on West Java is also well justified. Official statistics show that West Java has a very large base of micro and small industrial enterprises; BPS recorded 583,357 micro industrial firms and 56,959 small industrial firms in West Java in 2024, indicating a dense MSME ecosystem that is highly relevant for digital-marketing research (BPS, 2024). At the policy and program level, the West Java government has also been actively promoting MSME digital capability through online training and digital marketing initiatives, signaling that social-media-based commercialization is not peripheral but increasingly institutionalized in the province. This setting makes West Java an important and timely empirical context for examining how content quality and influencer credibility shape purchase intention through engagement.

Although recent studies have widely examined influencer marketing, social media marketing, and purchase intention, the literature still appears fragmented. A substantial portion of recent work focuses on either influencer attributes, platform tactics, or brand-level outcomes in sectors such as fashion, beauty, tourism, livestream commerce, and virtual influencers. By comparison, fewer studies combine social media content quality and influencer credibility in one integrated model while explicitly testing customer engagement as a mediator in a regional MSME setting such as West Java. That gap is an inference drawn from the concentration of recent studies in broader consumer markets, sector-specific settings, or non-West-

Java contexts rather than MSMEs in West Java specifically (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Barari et al., 2026; Jayasingh et al., 2025; Pan et al., 2025; Sardar et al., 2024).

Based on these considerations, this study investigates the effect of social media content quality and influencer credibility on purchase intention, with customer engagement positioned as a mediating variable, among MSME consumers in West Java. The study is expected to contribute theoretically by integrating two major digital-marketing stimuli within a single mediation framework, and practically by offering evidence-based guidance for MSME owners in West Java in designing more persuasive content strategies and choosing more credible influencer collaborations to stimulate consumer purchase intention (Ellitan et al., 2022; Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022; Long et al., 2024; Sarkis et al., 2024; Saternus et al., 2024; Senanu et al., 2023).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

This study can be grounded primarily in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. In the present context, social media content quality and influencer credibility function as external stimuli that shape consumers’ internal psychological states. Customer engagement represents the organismic state because it reflects consumers’ cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with social-media-based brand communication. Purchase intention then serves as the response, reflecting the consumer’s tendency to buy products promoted through MSME social media channels. This logic is consistent with recent digital marketing studies showing that content-related and source-related cues influence engagement, which then affects downstream intentions and outcomes (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Herzallah et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025; Sardar et al., 2024).

A second useful perspective is the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM). Under this lens, consumers process influencer-based promotional messages through both heuristic cues, such as source credibility, and systematic cues, such as message and content quality. Recent work in influencer marketing shows that both types of cues jointly shape consumer engagement and purchase intention, which strongly supports the structure of the present model (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Sardar et al., 2024).

In addition, the model aligns with source credibility theory, which posits that a communicator’s expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness influence persuasion effectiveness. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that these influencer attributes are significant predictors of engagement and purchase intention in social media settings (Ao et al., 2023; V I De Araujo et al., 2025).

2.1. Social Media Content Quality

Social media content quality refers to the degree to which brand-generated content is informative, relevant, visually appealing, timely, and consistent with audience expectations. In digital environments, especially on Instagram and TikTok, content quality is not limited to information accuracy but also includes entertainment value, aesthetic appeal, clarity, and contextual relevance. Recent studies indicate that high-quality content attracts attention more effectively, generates positive affect, encourages interaction, and strengthens brand-related responses (Bazi et al., 2023; Onofrei et al., 2022; Salonen et al., 2024).

Recent empirical work also suggests that content characteristics are among the strongest predictors of social media outcomes. Bazi et al. show that the aesthetic quality of social media content increases customer engagement through entertainment mechanisms and subsequently contributes to favorable brand outcomes. Similarly, Onofrei et al. report that content quality is an important predictor of purchase-related responses in social media interactions. These findings imply that consumers are more likely to engage with MSME brands when the content they encounter is useful, attractive, and meaningful (Bazi et al., 2023; Onofrei et al., 2022).

In the MSME context, content quality is especially strategic because MSMEs often rely on content creativity rather than large advertising budgets. High-quality content allows MSMEs to signal professionalism, product value, and brand personality while increasing the likelihood of interaction and conversion. This makes content quality a foundational antecedent in social-media-based purchase behavior (Khan et al., 2025; Onofrei et al., 2022; Salonen et al., 2024).

2.2. Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility refers to the extent to which audiences perceive an influencer as expert, trustworthy, and personally appealing. In social media marketing, credibility helps consumers reduce uncertainty and process endorsements more favorably. This is especially relevant for MSME products, where consumer decisions often depend on cues that signal authenticity and reliability (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Ao et al., 2023; V I De Araujo et al., 2025).

A large body of recent evidence supports the central role of influencer credibility. Ao et al.'s meta-analysis synthesizing 176 effect sizes from 62 studies confirms that influencer characteristics such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and credibility significantly shape both customer engagement and purchase intention. Alcántara-Pilar et al. likewise find that source credibility is a major factor in engagement and purchase intention on TikTok. More recent studies also show that the persuasive power of credibility may operate through mechanisms such as self-brand congruity, trust, and parasocial connection (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Ao et al., 2023; Shabani Shojaei & Barbosa, 2026; V I De Araujo et al., 2025).

For MSMEs in West Java, influencer credibility is particularly important because influencer endorsements often act as social proof. When consumers perceive the influencer as credible, they are more likely to view the promoted MSME brand as dependable and worth trying. Thus, credibility is not only a persuasive attribute but also a signal that helps shape engagement and intention in digital purchasing journeys (Ao et al., 2023; Munir & Watts, 2026).

2.3. Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is a multidimensional construct that captures the degree of consumers' cognitive attention, emotional connection, and behavioral participation in brand-related interactions. In social media marketing, engagement is expressed through actions such as viewing, liking, commenting, sharing, saving, following, and actively interacting with brand content. Recent review studies stress that social media has amplified the importance of customer engagement because digital platforms allow consumers to become active participants rather than passive message receivers (Lim & Rasul, 2022; Vinerean & Opreana, 2021).

Vinerean et al. validate customer engagement as a higher-order construct in social media marketing and show that it is central to explaining downstream relationship outcomes. Lim and Rasul's review similarly emphasizes that social media customer engagement has become one of the most important constructs in modern marketing research. In empirical settings, engagement often serves as a mechanism that transforms exposure to content and influencers into more concrete behavioral intentions (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Lim & Rasul, 2022; Sardar et al., 2024; Vinerean & Opreana, 2021).

In this study, customer engagement is positioned as a mediating variable because it captures the internal consumer reaction that arises after exposure to quality content and credible influencers. In other words, consumers who encounter persuasive digital stimuli may not immediately intend to buy, but they are more likely to develop purchase intention once they become actively engaged with the MSME brand on social media (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2025; Sardar et al., 2024).

2.4. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the consumer's subjective likelihood or willingness to purchase a product in the future. In digital marketing research, purchase intention is widely used as a proximal outcome because it captures how consumers translate perceptions and attitudes into potential buying behavior. Recent studies consistently show that social-media-based stimuli such as content quality, information credibility, influencer endorsements, and engagement can positively shape purchase intention (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2024; Onofrei et al., 2022).

In social-media-driven MSME markets, purchase intention is particularly important because many first-stage buying decisions are formed online before actual transactions occur. Consumers often evaluate the appeal of the content, the credibility of endorsers, and the extent of their own involvement with the brand before deciding whether to try or purchase a product. Therefore, purchase intention is an appropriate dependent variable for examining the effectiveness of MSME digital marketing in West Java (Adinda et al., 2025; Macías Urrego et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

Hypotheses for this study are:

H1: Social Media Content Quality has a positive effect on Customer Engagement.

H2: Influencer Credibility has a positive effect on Customer Engagement.

H3: Social Media Content Quality has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

H4: Influencer Credibility has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

H5: Customer Engagement has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

H6: Customer Engagement mediates the effect of Social Media Content Quality on Purchase Intention.

H7: Customer Engagement mediates the effect of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention.

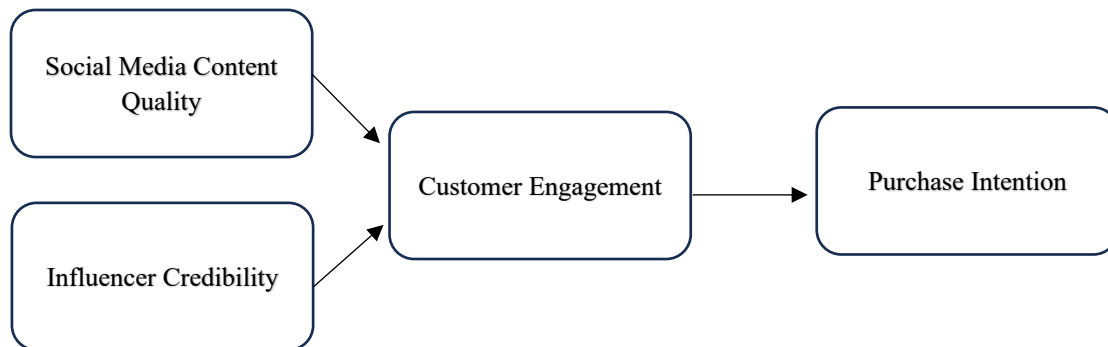


Figure 1. Proposed Research Framework of the Mediating Role of Customer Engagement in the Relationship between Social Media Content Quality, Influencer Credibility, and Purchase Intention among MSMEs in West Java.

3. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. This design was chosen because the study aims to examine the causal relationships among social media content quality, influencer credibility, customer engagement, and purchase intention in the context of MSMEs in West Java. An explanatory design is also appropriate for testing both direct and indirect effects through a mediating variable within a single structural model. To analyze these relationships, this study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), as this method is suitable for predictive research, relatively complex models, and the simultaneous testing of latent constructs and mediation effects.

The study was conducted in West Java Province, Indonesia. This area was selected because it represents one of the regions with a strong MSME presence and growing digital marketing activity, making it an appropriate setting for examining the effectiveness of social media content and influencer-based promotion.

The population of this study consisted of social media users in West Java who met the following criteria:

- 1) Actively use Instagram or TikTok,
- 2) Have seen MSME product promotions within the last three months,
- 3) Have been exposed to MSME promotions involving influencers, and
- 4) Have an interest in or experience evaluating products promoted through social media.

The study used purposive sampling because not all social media users were relevant to the objectives of the research. This technique allowed the researcher to select respondents based on specific criteria related to exposure to MSME promotions on social media and influencer-based marketing content.

The sample size was set at 200 respondents. This number was considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, as the method is suitable for models with moderate sample sizes and can effectively estimate both structural relationships and mediation effects.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire was shared through digital channels relevant to the target respondents, such as social media platforms, online communities, and other internet-based networks.

Before full distribution, the questionnaire should ideally undergo a pilot test with a small group of respondents to ensure that all items are clear, understandable, and appropriate for the context of MSME promotion in West Java. After the pilot phase, the main survey was distributed to respondents who fulfilled all inclusion criteria.

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

The Likert scale was chosen because it is appropriate for measuring perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies related to social media content, influencers, engagement, and purchase intention.

The operational definitions of the variables are as follows:

a. Social Media Content Quality

This variable refers to respondents' perceptions of the quality of MSME promotional content on social media. Its main dimensions include:

- 1) Informativeness,
- 2) Relevance,
- 3) Visual appeal,
- 4) Consistency of message.

Example indicators:

- The MSME promotional content provides clear information.
- The content shown is relevant to my needs.
- The visual appearance of the content is attractive.

- The promotional message is delivered consistently.

b. Influencer Credibility

This variable describes the degree to which respondents perceive the influencer promoting MSME products as credible. Its dimensions include:

- 1) expertise,
- 2) trustworthiness,
- 3) attractiveness.

Example indicators:

- The influencer appears knowledgeable about the promoted product.
- The influencer seems trustworthy.
- The influencer has personal appeal that makes me pay attention to the promotion.

c. Customer Engagement

This variable reflects the level of respondents' involvement with MSME content or MSME social media accounts, both cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally.

Example indicators:

- I am interested in following the promoted MSME content.
- I feel connected to the MSME brand/product I see on social media.
- I am encouraged to like, comment on, save, or share the content.

d. Purchase Intention

This variable refers to the respondents' tendency or willingness to purchase MSME products promoted through social media.

Example indicators:

- I intend to buy MSME products promoted on social media.
- I consider purchasing the promoted product in the future.
- I am willing to try MSME products promoted through influencers and social media.

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS with the PLS-SEM approach. The analysis was conducted in two main stages: outer model evaluation and inner model evaluation.

Outer Model Evaluation

The outer model was assessed to test the quality of the measurement model, including:

- 1) Convergent validity, assessed through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE),
- 2) Discriminant validity, assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and/or HTMT,
- 3) Internal consistency reliability, assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability.

The commonly used criteria are:

outer loading > 0.70,

AVE > 0.50,

Composite Reliability > 0.70,

Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70,

HTMT < 0.90.

Inner Model Evaluation

The inner model was evaluated to test the relationships among latent variables, including:

- 1) Path coefficients,
- 2) Coefficient of determination (R^2),
- 3) Effect size (f^2),
- 4) Predictive relevance (Q^2) if needed,
- 5) Bootstrapping to test the significance of the hypotheses.

Hypotheses were tested by examining:

- 1) t-statistics,
- 2) p-values,
- 3) The direction of the path coefficients.

A hypothesis was accepted when the path coefficient showed the expected direction and the bootstrapping result indicated statistical significance at the selected confidence level.

Mediation Analysis

To test the mediating role of customer engagement, this study examined:

- 1) The indirect effect of social media content quality → customer engagement → purchase intention, and
- 2) The indirect effect of influencer credibility → customer engagement → purchase intention.

The mediation effect was considered significant when the indirect effect obtained through bootstrapping showed a significant p-value. Based on this, customer engagement could be identified as a partial mediator or a full mediator in the proposed model.

The structural model of this study can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Customer Engagement} = \beta_1(\text{Social Media Content Quality}) + \beta_2(\text{Influencer Credibility}) + e_1$$

$$\text{Purchase Intention} = \beta_3(\text{Social Media Content Quality}) + \beta_4(\text{Influencer Credibility}) + \beta_5(\text{Customer Engagement}) + e_2$$

This model allows the simultaneous testing of both direct and mediating effects.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 200 respondents were included in this study. Based on the dataset used in the SmartPLS analysis, the demographic profile indicates that the sample was dominated by female respondents (58.0%), while male respondents accounted for 42.0%. This composition suggests that female users were slightly more represented in the observation of MSME promotions on social media.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the 18–24 years age group (44.0%), followed by 25–34 years (31.0%), 35–44 years (18.5%), and 45 years and above (6.5%). This distribution shows that the study was largely represented by younger social media users, which is consistent with the characteristics of audiences who are more actively exposed to Instagram- and TikTok-based marketing content.

Regarding geographic distribution, respondents were drawn from several cities in West Java. The largest shares came from Bekasi (14.0%) and Bandung (13.5%), followed by Bogor (12.0%), Depok (11.5%), Cirebon (11.0%), Garut (11.0%), Sukabumi (7.5%), Karawang (7.0%), Cimahi (6.5%), and Tasikmalaya (6.0%). This spread indicates that the respondents were relatively diverse across urban and semi-urban areas in West Java.

With regard to social media platform usage, most respondents reported using both Instagram and TikTok (66.0%), while 22.0% mainly used Instagram and 12.0% mainly used TikTok. This finding

strengthens the relevance of the study, as both platforms are among the most important digital channels for MSME promotion and influencer-based communication.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Profile

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	84	42.0
Female	116	58.0
Age Group		
18-24	88	44.0
25-34	62	31.0
35-44	37	18.5
45+	13	6.5
Main Platform		
Instagram	44	22.0
TikTok	24	12.0
Both	132	66.0

The results show that all measurement items had satisfactory outer loadings, ranging from 0.726 to 0.873. Specifically, the Customer Engagement items ranged from 0.726 to 0.844, the Influencer Credibility items ranged from 0.819 to 0.873, the Purchase Intention items ranged from 0.767 to 0.871, and the Social Media Content Quality items ranged from 0.745 to 0.858.

Since all loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, the indicators can be considered acceptable and sufficiently representative of their respective constructs. Although a few indicators were slightly lower than 0.75, they still remained above the minimum acceptable level and therefore did not warrant deletion.

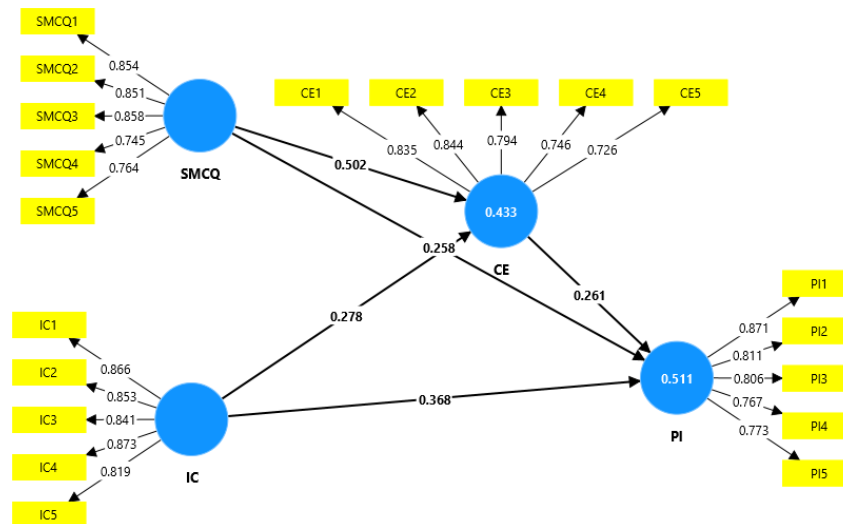


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Structural Model Results

Table 2. Outer Loadings

Construct	Item	Loading
Customer Engagement	CE1	0.835
	CE2	0.844
	CE3	0.794
	CE4	0.746
	CE5	0.726
Influencer Credibility	IC1	0.866
	IC2	0.853
	IC3	0.841
	IC4	0.873
	IC5	0.819
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.871
	PI2	0.811
	PI3	0.806
	PI4	0.767
	PI5	0.773
Social Media Content Quality	SMCQ1	0.854
	SMCQ2	0.851
	SMCQ3	0.858
	SMCQ4	0.745
	SMCQ5	0.764

The reliability and convergent validity results indicate that all constructs met the recommended criteria. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.849 to 0.905, while composite reliability (ρ_c) values ranged from 0.892 to 0.929. These values confirm that all constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency.

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.625 to 0.724, all of which exceeded the threshold of 0.50. This indicates that each construct explained more than half of the variance of its indicators and therefore achieved satisfactory convergent validity.

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	ρ_A	Composite Reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
CE	0.849	0.862	0.892	0.625
IC	0.905	0.910	0.929	0.724
PI	0.865	0.867	0.903	0.650
SMCQ	0.874	0.883	0.909	0.666

These findings indicate that the measurement items consistently capture the intended constructs and that the latent variables possess adequate reliability and convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was examined using both the HTMT ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The HTMT values ranged from 0.412 to 0.689, all below the conservative threshold of 0.90. This indicates that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. Similarly, the Fornell-Larcker results show that the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs. For example, the square root of AVE for Customer Engagement was 0.790, which was higher than its correlations with Influencer Credibility (0.463), Purchase Intention (0.588), and Social Media Content Quality (0.605). The same pattern was observed for all constructs.

Table 4. HTMT Ratio

Construct	CE	IC	PI	SMCQ
CE				
IC	0.519			
PI	0.677	0.657		
SMCQ	0.689	0.412	0.631	

Overall, these results confirm that the four constructs are sufficiently distinct and measure different conceptual domains.

Collinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. All indicator-level VIF values ranged from 1.558 to 2.644, which are well below the commonly accepted cut-off value of 5.00. This indicates that there were no serious multicollinearity issues among the indicators.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	CE	IC	PI	SMCQ
CE	0.790			
IC	0.463	0.851		
PI	0.588	0.584	0.806	
SMCQ	0.605	0.370	0.552	0.816

Thus, the indicators can be retained for further structural model analysis without concerns regarding collinearity bias.

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated by examining R² values, effect sizes (f²), and model fit indices.

The results show that Customer Engagement (CE) had an R² value of 0.433, meaning that 43.3% of the variance in customer engagement was explained jointly by Social Media Content Quality and Influencer Credibility. This can be interpreted as a moderate explanatory power.

Meanwhile, Purchase Intention (PI) had an R² value of 0.511, indicating that 51.1% of the variance in purchase intention was explained by Social Media Content Quality, Influencer Credibility, and Customer Engagement. This result suggests that the proposed model has a reasonably strong predictive ability in explaining consumers' purchase intention toward MSME products in West Java.

Table 6. R-Square Values

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²
CE	0.433	0.427
PI	0.511	0.503

These findings imply that the model has meaningful explanatory capability, especially considering that consumer behavior in social media contexts is typically influenced by multiple psychological and contextual factors.

The effect size results show that Social Media Content Quality had a large effect on Customer Engagement ($f^2 = 0.384$), while Influencer Credibility had a small-to-medium effect on Customer Engagement ($f^2 = 0.117$). This suggests that content quality plays a more substantial role than influencer credibility in stimulating customer engagement.

With respect to Purchase Intention, Influencer Credibility had the strongest effect ($f^2 = 0.214$), which falls into the medium effect category. Customer Engagement had a small effect on purchase intention ($f^2 = 0.079$), and Social Media Content Quality also had a small effect ($f^2 = 0.085$). These findings indicate that although all three predictors contribute to purchase intention, influencer credibility exerts the strongest relative influence among them.

Table 7. Effect Size (f^2)

Predictor	CE	PI
CE		0.079
IC	0.117	0.214
SMCQ	0.384	0.085

From a substantive standpoint, these results suggest that consumers may become engaged primarily because of the quality of the content they encounter, whereas their purchase intention is more strongly shaped by whether the influencer promoting the product is perceived as credible.

The model fit results indicate that the proposed model achieved an acceptable overall fit. The SRMR value was 0.055, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit. The NFI value was 0.883, which is close to 0.90 and suggests an acceptable fit for the estimated model.

Table 8. Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.055	0.055
d_ULS	0.642	0.642
d_G	0.243	0.243
Chi-square	276.501	276.501
NFI	0.883	0.883

Overall, the model fit statistics indicate that the structural model is acceptable and suitable for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS by examining the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. The results show that all direct relationships proposed in the model are positive and statistically significant. In addition, the specific indirect effects indicate that customer engagement significantly mediates the relationships between social media content quality and purchase intention, as well as between influencer credibility and purchase intention.

Table 9. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	SMCQ \rightarrow CE	0.502	9.100	0.000	Supported
H2	IC \rightarrow CE	0.278	4.522	0.000	Supported
H3	SMCQ \rightarrow PI	0.258	4.090	0.000	Supported
H4	IC \rightarrow PI	0.368	6.272	0.000	Supported
H5	CE \rightarrow PI	0.261	3.801	0.000	Supported

The direct effects reveal that Social Media Content Quality (SMCQ) had the strongest influence on Customer Engagement (CE) with a coefficient of 0.502, followed by Influencer Credibility (IC) with a coefficient of 0.278. With respect to Purchase Intention (PI), the strongest direct effect came from Influencer Credibility ($\beta = 0.368$), followed by Customer Engagement ($\beta = 0.261$) and Social Media Content Quality ($\beta = 0.258$).

These findings suggest that content quality is especially important in generating consumer engagement, whereas influencer credibility plays a stronger role in directly shaping consumers' buying intentions.

The mediation analysis shows that Customer Engagement significantly mediates the relationships between the exogenous variables and purchase intention.

Table 10. Specific Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Indirect Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H6	SMCQ \rightarrow CE \rightarrow PI	0.131	3.546	0.000	Supported
H7	IC \rightarrow CE \rightarrow PI	0.073	2.793	0.005	Supported

The indirect effect of SMCQ on PI through CE was 0.131 and statistically significant, indicating that customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between social media content quality and purchase intention. Likewise, the indirect effect of IC on PI through CE was 0.073 and significant, confirming that customer engagement also partially mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention.

Because the direct effects remain significant while the indirect effects are also significant, the mediation pattern in this study can be classified as partial mediation for both paths. This means that social media content quality and influencer credibility affect purchase intention both directly and indirectly through customer engagement.

To better understand the overall magnitude of the relationships, total effects were also examined.

Table 11. Total Effects

Path	Total Effect (β)	t-value	p-value
SMCQ → CE	0.502	9.100	0.000
IC → CE	0.278	4.522	0.000
SMCQ → PI	0.389	7.326	0.000
IC → PI	0.440	8.160	0.000
CE → PI	0.261	3.801	0.000

The total effect results show that Influencer Credibility had the strongest total effect on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.440$), followed by Social Media Content Quality ($\beta = 0.389$). This indicates that while content quality is highly influential in building engagement, influencer credibility has the strongest overall role in driving consumers' intention to purchase MSME products in West Java.

The predictive relevance of the model was assessed using the blindfolding procedure. The cross-validated redundancy values show that the endogenous constructs have Q^2 values greater than zero, indicating that the model has predictive relevance.

Table 12. Q^2 Values (Cross-Validated Redundancy)

Construct	SSO	SSE	Q^2
CE	1,000.000	737.932	0.262
PI	1,000.000	676.113	0.324

The results indicate that Customer Engagement has a Q^2 of 0.262 and Purchase Intention has a Q^2 of 0.324, both of which are above zero. This confirms that the model has adequate predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs.

The second set of blindfolding values also shows positive Q^2 values for all latent variable scores, namely 0.436 for CE, 0.578 for IC, 0.471 for PI, and 0.498 for SMCQ. Collectively, these findings reinforce the predictive capability of the proposed model.

The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that social media content quality, influencer credibility, and customer engagement are all important determinants of purchase intention toward MSME products in West Java. More specifically, the findings reveal distinct roles for each variable within the digital marketing process.

First, the results confirm that social media content quality has a strong positive effect on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.502$, $p < 0.001$). This is the strongest path toward engagement in the model, indicating that consumers are more likely to feel involved with MSME brands when the content they encounter is informative, relevant, visually appealing, and consistently delivered. This finding is in line with recent research showing that content quality, especially aesthetic and entertaining content, plays a central role in stimulating engagement on social media. Bazi, Filieri, and Gorton found that social media content aesthetic quality significantly enhances customer engagement and helps brands build stronger downstream outcomes. It is also consistent with Sardar, Tata, and Sarkar, who report that content characteristics are an important driver of consumer engagement in influencer-led social media environments.

Second, influencer credibility also has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.278, p < 0.001$). This suggests that when influencers are perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and personally appealing, consumers become more attentive and involved with the promoted MSME content. Although the effect is weaker than that of content quality, it remains meaningful and theoretically important. This result is consistent with the meta-analysis by Ao et al., which shows that influencer-related characteristics, including credibility, significantly affect customer engagement across a broad set of studies. It also supports Sardar et al., who found that source factors such as credibility contribute significantly to engagement formation in influencer marketing.

Third, the findings demonstrate that social media content quality directly influences purchase intention ($\beta = 0.258, p < 0.001$). This means that high-quality content does not only attract interaction, but also directly increases consumers' willingness to buy MSME products. In practical terms, persuasive and well-designed content likely reduces uncertainty, communicates product value more effectively, and creates more favorable impressions of the promoted brand. This finding is compatible with research showing that stronger content attributes improve purchase-related outcomes in digital environments. Sardar et al. explicitly identify content characteristics as relevant to purchase intention, while studies on social media marketing more broadly also point to high-quality content as an important antecedent of consumer response.

Fourth, influencer credibility has the strongest direct effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.368, p < 0.001$). This indicates that among the predictors included in the model, credibility is the most decisive direct factor in shaping the intention to purchase MSME products. Consumers appear more ready to purchase when the promoting influencer is perceived as credible. This finding strongly aligns with Alcántara-Pilar et al., who show that influencer credibility in TikTok campaigns has a significant effect on purchase intentions and related loyalty outcomes. It is also consistent with the broader meta-analytic evidence of Ao et al., which confirms that influencer characteristics, including credibility, matter substantially for purchase intention across contexts.

Fifth, customer engagement significantly affects purchase intention ($\beta = 0.261, p < 0.001$). This supports the argument that consumers who are cognitively interested, emotionally connected, and behaviorally involved with social media content are more likely to develop purchase intentions. In other words, engagement is not merely a social media vanity metric; it also represents a meaningful psychological and behavioral route toward buying readiness. This result is consistent with the digital marketing literature that positions engagement as a key mechanism linking online stimuli and behavioral outcomes. Bazi et al. and Sardar et al. both emphasize that engagement serves as an important explanatory process in social media marketing outcomes.

The mediation results provide additional theoretical insight. Customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between social media content quality and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.131, p < 0.001$) and also partially mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.073, p = 0.005$). These results imply that content quality and influencer credibility influence purchase intention not only through direct persuasion, but also through the relational and interactive state represented by customer engagement. This mediation pattern is highly consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) perspective, where content quality and influencer credibility act as external stimuli, customer engagement reflects the internal organismic state, and purchase intention represents the behavioral response. The results are also highly consistent with Sardar et al., who found that consumer engagement mediates the relationship between source credibility, content characteristics, and purchase intention.

From a comparative standpoint, one of the most interesting findings in this study is that content quality is more powerful in building engagement, whereas influencer credibility is more powerful in driving purchase intention directly. This suggests a two-stage consumer response pattern. High-quality content helps MSMEs capture attention and sustain interaction, while credibility helps convert that positive interaction into purchase-oriented judgment. This pattern complements prior research rather than contradicting it. Bazi et al. emphasize the engagement-building role of content quality, while Alcántara-Pilar et al. emphasize the persuasive role of influencer credibility in shaping purchase-related outcomes. The present study extends that understanding into the MSME context in West Java, where both mechanisms appear simultaneously important.

Managerially, these findings suggest that MSMEs in West Java should not rely solely on posting frequently or partnering with popular influencers. Instead, they should ensure that their content is high in quality, meaning visually attractive, informative, relevant, and consistent, because this is what most strongly drives customer engagement. At the same time, MSMEs should choose influencers based not only on follower counts but on perceived credibility, since credibility exerts the strongest total effect on purchase intention. This is especially important for MSMEs, which often need stronger trust signals to reduce consumer hesitation and encourage trial purchases.

Overall, the study confirms that MSME purchase intention on social media is shaped through a combination of high-quality content, credible influencers, and meaningful engagement. These findings enrich the growing literature on digital marketing by demonstrating that customer engagement is not only an outcome of social media strategy, but also a crucial mechanism through which content and influencer attributes translate into buying intention. The results also offer context-specific evidence from West Java, thereby extending previous findings that were often centered on broader retail, fashion, or platform-specific settings.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the mediating role of customer engagement in the relationships between social media content quality, influencer credibility, and purchase intention toward MSME products in West Java. Based on the PLS-SEM results, all proposed hypotheses were supported. The findings demonstrate that social media content quality and influencer credibility both have significant positive effects on customer engagement and purchase intention, while customer engagement also significantly increases purchase intention. In addition, customer engagement was found to significantly mediate the effects of social media content quality and influencer credibility on purchase intention.

The results indicate that social media content quality is the strongest predictor of customer engagement, suggesting that consumers become more involved with MSME brands when promotional content is informative, relevant, visually appealing, and consistently presented. Meanwhile, influencer credibility exerts the strongest direct and total effect on purchase intention, implying that consumers' intention to purchase is strongly influenced by whether the influencer is perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and convincing. These findings confirm that in the social media marketing context, purchase intention is shaped not only by content exposure but also by source credibility and the degree of consumer engagement generated through digital interactions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by confirming the relevance of customer engagement as a mediating mechanism between external marketing stimuli and behavioral intention. The findings support the logic of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, in which social media content quality and influencer credibility

operate as external stimuli, customer engagement represents the internal organismic state, and purchase intention serves as the behavioral response. The study also extends prior research by integrating content-related and influencer-related factors into one model within the MSME context, particularly in West Java, where digital promotion is increasingly important for business competitiveness. Thus, the study adds context-specific evidence to the broader discussion of how social media marketing works in emerging local business environments.

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer several practical implications for MSME owners and marketers. First, MSMEs should prioritize the development of high-quality social media content, as this has the strongest role in increasing consumer engagement. Content should not merely promote products, but should also provide useful information, maintain visual attractiveness, and communicate messages consistently. Second, MSMEs should be more selective in choosing influencers. Rather than focusing only on popularity or follower count, they should collaborate with influencers who are perceived as credible, because credibility appears to be more effective in driving consumers' purchase intention. Third, MSMEs should view customer engagement as a strategic performance indicator rather than just a social media metric. Likes, comments, shares, and emotional connection with content may serve as important signals that consumers are moving closer to purchase intention. Therefore, social media marketing strategies should be designed not only to reach audiences, but also to build interaction and trust.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research was limited to respondents in West Java, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different digital behavior patterns or MSME characteristics. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, meaning that the relationships were examined at one point in time and may not fully capture changes in consumer perceptions or intentions over time. Third, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be subject to response bias, social desirability bias, or differences in subjective interpretation among respondents. Fourth, the model focused only on four main constructs, while consumer purchase intention in social media contexts may also be influenced by other variables such as brand trust, parasocial interaction, perceived value, electronic word-of-mouth, or platform characteristics.

Accordingly, future research is recommended to expand this model in several directions. Future studies may involve respondents from other provinces or conduct comparative regional studies to examine whether the relationships differ across local contexts. Longitudinal research designs may also be used to capture how engagement and purchase intention evolve over time. In addition, future studies may incorporate other explanatory or moderating variables, such as brand familiarity, trust, product type, generation, or platform differences between Instagram and TikTok. Researchers may also consider using multi-group analysis to compare consumer responses across age groups, gender, or levels of social media intensity. By doing so, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital marketing effectiveness for MSMEs in Indonesia.

Overall, this study concludes that the effectiveness of MSME marketing on social media depends on the combined role of high-quality content, credible influencers, and active customer engagement. These three elements work together in shaping consumers' intention to purchase MSME products. Therefore, strengthening digital content strategy and influencer credibility while fostering meaningful consumer engagement is essential for MSMEs seeking to improve their marketing performance in the increasingly competitive digital environment.

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