

Digital customer experience and social media marketing on purchase intention

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ABSTRACT

Background: The development of digital technology changed consumer interaction patterns among students as the generation who uses online platforms to buy branded products. They use online media to get information as well as to do buying transactions. In the digital marketing, intensity of interactions in the digital form increases and gives impacts to online experiences; therefore communication on social media regarding purchase intentions becomes more important. **Purpose:** We examined some influences of digital customer experiences and social media marketing on formation of buying intentions. We also looked at the role of perceiving value as one mediate variable and trust as moderate variable. **Methods:** We used quantitative survey with 200 undergraduate students from three universities in Purwokerto, Indonesia: Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, and Universitas Amikom Purwokerto. Use purposive sampling technique, with criteria must be active social media users and having experiences related to online shopping. To perform data analysis, we used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4 to generate measure and structure models. **Results:** Digital customer experience and social media marketing significantly rise perceived value and directly strengthen student intention to purchase. Perceived value was a key factor effecting on digital interactions on decision to buy. Trust showed strong relationships between perceived value as well as purchase intentions, indicating that higher levels of trust in digital platforms can grow consumers' intent of making a buying. **Conclusion:** In order to increase perceived value and trust among young consumers, some businesses need to create interestingly and interactively digital experiences and to make credible communication on social media. **Implications:** As digital marketing literature grows, we offer real implications for organizations especially students in online market.

Keywords: Digital customer experience; social media marketing; perceived value; trust; purchase intention

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INTRODUCTION

Customer experience is now a key factor that impacts consumer behaviour in the digital economy. Interactions in digital environments has an important role in shaping consumer perceptions regarding product quality, convenience, as well as trust, ultimately impacting purchase intentions (Tilahun et al., 2023). As part of the digital user generation, college students generally have high expectations for online platforms, particularly in terms of performance, interactivity, and personalization. Previous research also shows that young consumers usually choose digital platforms that can give both practical and enjoyable experiences (Chang & Chang, 2023; Keane et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be seen from the growth of digitalization and online platforms usage among students in Indonesia.

Social media marketing (SMM) is an important platform for companies to communicate and engage with consumers, especially in reaching and influencing young users. Several recent studies show that over 90% of Generation Z users make purchasing decisions through social media such as Instagram and TikTok (Hanaysha & Alhyasat, 2025; Izzah et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024). Various SMM strategies, such as segmented advertising, influencer collaborations, and

interactive campaigns, can create interactive experiences for consumers, which in turn shape attitudes and influence purchasing behaviour. In this context, SMM complements digital customer experience in influencing purchase decisions among students.

Digital experiences and social media marketing (SMM) are important factors influencing the decision of consumer to purchase through the formation of perceived value. The finding is from previous studies stated that effective SMM strategies can increase perceived value, rising engagement, customer loyalty, as well as purchase intention (Nguyen Thi Ha et al., 2024). Bushara et al. (2023) also said perceived value could be as a mediate variable between marketing in social media and buying intention, like in in the hospitality sector. However, a previous research has shown inconsistencies. For example, Cheung et al. (2020), which found interacting with brands of social media does not always increase perceived value, especially when consumers doubt the brand's credibility. Conversely, Chatterjee et al. (2024) examined that in online retail excessive exposure to information can actually increase consumers' perceived value. These inconsistencies highlight the need to re-examine the mediating role of perceived value, particularly among student market.

Trust can be an important factor in guiding

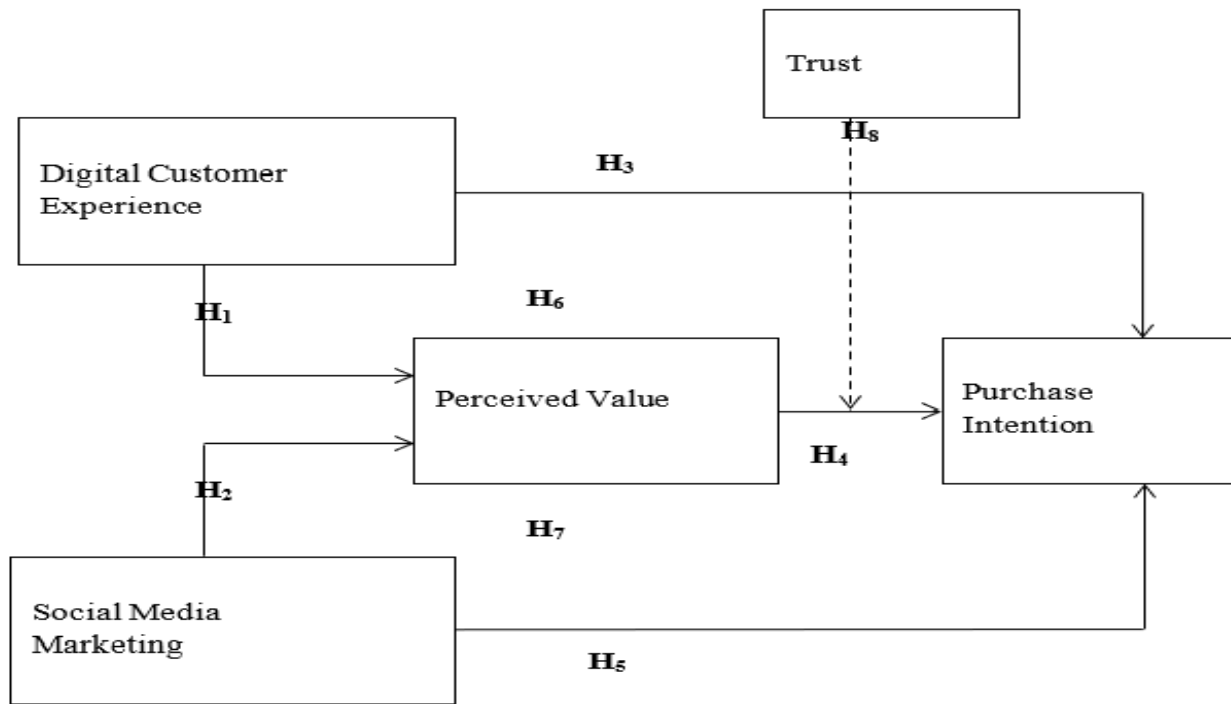
and shaping consumer preferences in digital interactions. Previous research examined trust can strengthen relationships between digital communication and buying intentions without completely eliminating consumer doubts (Kothari et al., 2025). Furthermore, Jabeen et al. (2024) stated that trust can reduce perceived risk when transacting through online advertising, thereby increasing purchase intentions. However, the influence of trust is not always consistent and depends on the specific context. Several studies indicate that trust is not determinant of purchasing behaviour. Shareef et al. (2019), for example, found that reviews from fellow users and user-generated content have a greater influence. Meanwhile, Papadopoulou et al. (2023) showed that brand factors can be more dominant in shaping perceived value. Therefore, the moderating role of trust remains inconclusive and requires further investigation.

Despite extensive research, it remains unclear how these factors influence student consumer behaviour outside metropolitan areas. In Indonesia, more than 60% of internet users aged 18–24 are known to shop online, and this phenomenon has been extensively studied in large cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Medan, and Surabaya. In contrast, mid-sized cities like Purwokerto with a significant student population and growing digital engagement have received limited academic attention. This

gap raises the question of whether findings from metropolitan contexts are applicable to smaller cities with different characteristics.

Various variables such as digital customer experience and social media marketing can be studied in an integrated manner within a single conceptual framework to predict purchase intention, incorporating perceived value as mediate variable and trust as moderate variable. Several studies have shown a significant relationship between these variables (Bushara et al., 2023; Kothari et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024). Several other studies have found inconsistent results, with the relationships between these variables either being insignificant or showing varying degrees of variation (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Cheung et al., 2020; Papadopoulou et al., 2023; Shareef et al., 2019). This inconsistency creates a lack of theoretical clarity and highlights the need for further empirical investigation.

This study aims to examine the effects of digital customer experience and social media marketing on student purchase intention at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, and Universitas Amikom Purwokerto. In this framework, perceived value acts as a mediating variable, while trust functions as a moderating variable. This study offers a new perspective by testing an integrated conceptual model in the context of



Source: Adapted from Prior Research, 2025

Figure 1 Proposed Conceptual Framework

students in a mid-sized city in Indonesia. Thus, this research is expected to enrich understanding of digital consumer behaviour and provide practical insights for designing more effective digital marketing strategies targeting student consumers.

Based on the theoretical arguments and research gaps identified, the conceptual model and proposed hypotheses of this study are presented in Figure 1.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is quantitative analysis with surveying method to analyze the correlation between digital customer experience, marketing in social media, perceived value, trust, as well

as purchase intention. Researchers can use statistical analysis to assess the mediating and moderating effects of latent variables. The research subjects were undergraduate students, while the research objects were digital customer experience, social media marketing, perceived value, trust, and purchase intention.

Respondents in this study consisted of undergraduate students from three universities in Purwokerto: Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, and Universitas Amikom Purwokerto. This group was selected because it is considered representative of the digital native generation, actively using social media and e-commerce platforms. Using a purposive sampling

technique, respondents were determined with the following consideration: active undergraduate students aged 18–25 and using at least one social media platform to look for some information about the products and make online purchases.

The sample size was determined based on the standard guideline for Structural Equation Modeling using SmartPLS. In this model, purchase intention received the largest number of structural paths; therefore, the minimum sample should be at least ten times that number. Based on these requirements, minimum respondents were 150. We successfully collected 200 valid respondents through a questionnaire distributed using Google Forms, thus ensuring more reliable results.

The measurement instruments used validated scales adapted from previous studies and were aligned with the conceptual definitions of each variable. The digital customer experience indicator refers to Tilahun et al. (2023), social media marketing refers to Hanaysha and Alhyasat (2025), trust from Kothari et al. (2025), and purchase intention from Nguyen et al. (2024). The measurement of elements uses a five-point Likert scale scores strongly disagree and a score of 5 indicating strongly agree. Before distributed main questionnaire, a pilot test was done with thirty respondents to ensure that each item was easy to understand,

clear, and had an adequate level of reliability. Following this process, the main questionnaire was distributed to the study respondents.

In accordance with current methodological recommendations, collecting and analysing process were conducted using SmartPLS version 4 (Demir & Uşak, 2025; Kante & Michel, 2023). Model evaluation measures included loading factor, average variance extract (AVE), compositing reliability, Cronbach alpha, and discriminant validity (Kock, 2021; Roemer et al., 2021). Path coefficient, t statistics, coefficient determination (R^2), effecting sizes, and predictive relevance were also analysed. Mediating effects were tested using a bootstrapping procedure (Méndez-Suárez, 2021), while moderating effects were analyzed using a product indicator approach. In addition, Harman's single factor testing and full of collinear evaluation were carried on in accordance with Kock's (2021) recommendations in order to determine whether there was any common method bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 displays the outer loading values for all indicators within each latent construct. The Digital Customer Experience (DCE) indicators had very high loading values, starting 0.933 until 0.956. All exceed the recommendation of minimum threshold as much as 0.70. It means the indicator optimally represent the

Table 1 Outer Loadings

Indicator	Loading
DCE1	0.947
DCE2	0.954
DCE3	0.948
DCE4	0.933
DCE5	0.956
PI1	0.944
PI2	0.934
PI3	0.946
PI4	0.957
PI5	0.943
PV1	0.932
PV2	0.951
PV3	0.94
PV4	0.932
PV5	0.931
SMMC1	0.928
SMMC2	0.955
SMMC3	0.946
SMMC4	0.952
SMMC5	0.952
TR1	0.695
TR2	0.856
TR3	0.794
TR4	0.802
TR5	0.773
Trust x Perceived Value	1.0

Source: Research Results, 2025

constructions (Hair et al., 2021). The Purchase Intention (PI) indicators also displayed strong loading value, starting 0.934 until 0.957, indicating good convergent validation. Meanwhile, in Perceived Value (PV) construct, all many indicators have loading of values more than 0.931, to indicate the construct is measured with a very good level of precision.

The table also displays many indicators from marketing of Social Media variable and there are loading values between 0.928 and

0.955, which meets the threshold and indicates a strong contribution to the construct. For the Trust variable, the loading value is relatively lower than the other variables, with indicator TR1 having a value of 0.695, which is still in the acceptable category, while the other indicators range from 0.773 to 0.856. Furthermore, the Trust × Perceived Value interaction variable shows a loading value of 1.000, which is common in moderation analyses. In general, findings indicate model of measurements have been suitable with the reliability and convergence validation criteria, so that next analysis can proceed to the structural model evaluation stage.

Results from Table 2 show that many constructions had Cronbach alpha and composition reliabilities (ρ_c) of values exceeding minimum threshold as much as as 0.70, reflecting good internality of consistency. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for each construction was also more than the threshold as much as 0.50; this means that the indicators adequately represented the construct. Among all variables, the Trust construct had the lowest AVE value, at 0.618. However, this value is still within the acceptable range, especially for exploratory research. In general, the the findings show that the instruments used are adequate regarding the level of reliability and validity and they can be

Table 2 Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	α	ρ_c	AVE
DCE	0.972	0.978	0.898
PV	0.965	0.973	0.878
PI	0.970	0.977	0.893
SMM	0.971	0.977	0.896
TR	0.844	0.889	0.618

Source: Research Results, 2025

Tabel 3 Discriminant Validity

	PV	PI	SMM	TR	TR×PV
DCE	.784	.704	.411	.081	.036
PV		.874	.682	.088	.119
PI			.859	.165	.134
SMM				.086	.085
TR					.446

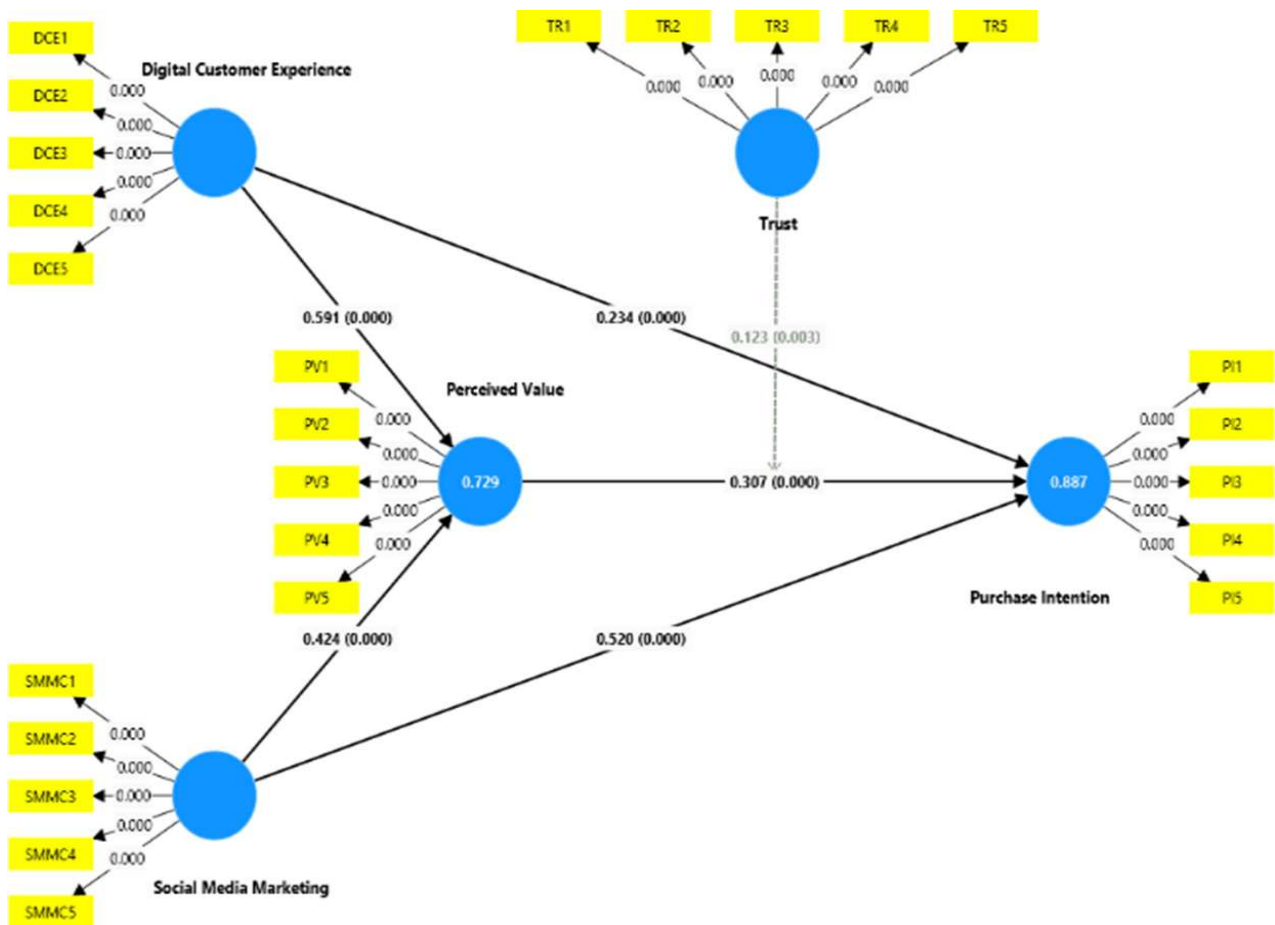
Source: Research Results, 2025

used for the next analysis on structural models.

Discriminant validity in this study used Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for testing, like from Table 3. The analysis results show that all HTMT values are minimum from the recommendation limit of 0.85, with a range of 0.036 to 0.874. The highest value was from the relation between Perceived Value and Purchase (buying) Intention (HTMT = 0.874), but still no more the tolerance threshold of 0.90, thus discriminancy validity was met. Digital Customer Experience showed a moderate relationship with Perceived Value (0.784) and Purchase Intention (0.704), indicating that although the two constructions relate, so they remain distinct. On the other hand, the Trust variable had a relatively low HTMT value compared to the other constructs (0.081–

0.165), further demonstrating its position as an independent construct in the model. In addition, the interaction variable (Trust × Perceived Value) also shows a low level of correlation with all constructs (below 0.45), which indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem in this research model.

Statistically significant structural relationships are shown in Figure 2 at the $p = 0.01$ level. Digital Customer Experience has strongly positive influence on Perceived Value ($\beta = 0.591$; $p = 0.000$) and also directly impacts Purchase (buying) Intention ($\beta = 0.234$; $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, Perceived Value significantly increases Purchase (buying) Intention ($\beta = 0.307$; $p = 0.000$), confirming its importance as a key factor influencing students’ purchasing decisions. Social Media Marketing



Source: Research Results, 2025

Figure 2 Structural Model

also contributes significantly to the model, with a positive effect on Perceived Value ($\beta = 0.424$; $p = 0.000$) and a direct effect on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.520$; $p = 0.000$). The results demonstrate how effective social media in shaping decisions done by consumers..

From moderation analysis, we can see that Trust strengthened the relationships Perceived Value and Purchase (buying) Intention ($\beta = 0.123$; $p = 0.003$). It shows much more higher in consumers' trust, so much more greater in the impact of perceived value when they intend to make a purchase. Meanwhile, the mediation analysis showed that Perceived Value acted as

the primary mechanism mediating the indirect influence of Digital Customer Experience ($\beta = 0.181$; $p = 0.000$) and marketing on Social Media ($\beta = 0.130$; $p = 0.000$) on Purchase Intention. Overall, these findings support what we proposed in model of research and emphasize important roles in digital experience, social media marketing, and trust in influencing college students' purchase intentions in the digital environment.

Research findings indicate that Digital Customer Experience has positively and significantly effected on Perceived Value. When students experience smooth, interactive,

as well as trustworthy digital experience, they tend to rate online purchasing activities as more valuable. In other words, a high-quality digital experience can enhance students' perceptions toward value of products and services. Earlier research has emphasized the importance of digital touchpoints, which include ease of navigation, personalization features, and platform responsiveness, to shaping consumers' perceptions of value (Tilahun et al., 2023). Customer experience is also increasingly recognized as a key factor in shaping perceived value, particularly when digital platforms provide convenience and build trust during the service process (Méndez-Suárez, 2021; Sharma & Fatima, 2024). Furthermore, recent research shows that a positive digital experience can enhance both utilitarian value (functional benefits) and hedonic value (pleasure), ultimately driving consumer engagement with online products and services (Bilro & Loureiro, 2020). From a marketing communications perspective, digital experiences also strengthen a company's value proposition by shaping perceptions of quality and fairness (Bilro & Loureiro, 2020; Roy & Misra, 2024). Research focusing on university students also reveals that the digital generation is highly responsive to experiential aspects, where user-friendly interfaces and reliable systems significantly increase perceived value (Alruthaya et al., 2021).

In general, these findings strengthen hypothesis H1 and indicate that digital customer experience has such important thing in perceived value of many students living in Purwokerto.

The research also shows that social media marketing has positively and significantly effected perceived value. The effective management of socialiation media activities can improve how students assess the benefits of online purchases. When brands present interactive content, collaborate with influencers, and deliver personalized promotional messages, consumers tend to perceive higher informational and emotional value from these digital interactions (McKee et al., 2025). Previous research also confirms that social media marketing provides utilitarian value, such as easy access to product and promotional information, as well as hedonic value through engaging and entertaining content (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024; Rodríguez-Ardura et al., 2024). Furthermore, consumers' perceived value is strongly because of the credibilities as well as authenticities regarding communications on social media, which then shapes their assessment of the brand and its offerings (Kothari et al., 2025; Shareef et al., 2019). Students, whose sources of information and social influence come from social media, are increasingly dependent on this marketing strategy to enhance their perceptions of

relevance, fairness, and overall value (Kothari et al., 2025; Maring & Gmür, 2025; Perera et al., 2023). Furthermore, the consistency and transparency of messaging across social media platforms helps consumers evaluate the balance between price and benefits more positively, further strengthening perceived value (Hariharan & Ruban, 2025; Krowinska & Dineva, 2025; Sansome et al., 2025). In general, results from this study make strong indication in support of hypothesis H2.

Results explain why Digital Customer Experience is significantly affected by Purchase Intention. This finding confirms that smooth and engaging digital interactions play a central role in encouraging students to make purchases. When consumers have a positive digital experience, they tend to have higher levels of trust, lower hesitation, and increased satisfaction, ultimately strengthening purchase intentions (Qing, 2025; Tan et al., 2024). Previous research also revealed that purchasing decisions are not solely determined by product features, but also by the overall digital experience consumers perceive, including aspects of convenience, speed, and personalization (Hardcastle et al., 2025; Muthaffar et al., 2024). On online retail, elements such as user-friendly interfaces, reliable service systems, and secure payment methods have been shown to directly increase purchase intentions through increased

perceptions of quality and security (Houcheimi & Mezei, 2024; Pires et al., 2024). Several recent empirical studies also confirm that digital interactions and customer experiences have big impact on purchase intentions, especially in young consumers with high levels of technological literacy (Amado-Mateus et al., 2025; Dang et al., 2025; Luo et al., 2025). Furthermore, positive as well as memorable digital experiences can build emotional engagement, which in turn drives consumers to make purchasing decisions (Mnajli & Khairi, 2025; Qing, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Regarding university students in Purwokerto, it appears that student purchase intentions will be strengthened if digital platforms continue to provide better experiences. Overall, the results offer strong evidence in support of hypothesis H3.

Research results displays Perceived Value has positively and significantly affected Purchase (buying) Intention, thus ensuring how important the consumer in making decision. When students perceive that the benefits gained from online purchases outweigh the costs or effort involved, their likelihood of making a purchase is higher. Previous research also suggests that perceived value reflects the poise between disadvantages and advantages received by consumers. This assessment significantly determines their behavioral intentions (Blut et

al., 2024; Kowalczyk & Hof, 2025). In the digital context, high levels of perceived value does not only drive purchase (buying) intentions, they increase customerization of satisfaction and loyalty as well (Guo & Li, 2022; Yum & Kim, 2024). Recent studies have revealed that perceived value can be strengthened through the use of beneficial things, such as convenience as well as efficiency, also hedonic beneficiary, such as the enjoyment of online shopping (Sharma & Fatima, 2024). For students, digital platforms that provide reliable service, personalized experiences, and competitive pricing tend to increase perceived value and strengthen purchase intentions (Chowdhury, 2024). In general, these findings strengthen hypothesis H4 and indicate that increased perceived value is a key element in increasing consumer purchase intentions.

Research also shows marketing in social media takes big impact on buying intention. Social media platforms provide an interactive space where targeted advertising, influencer endorsements, and user generated content can persuade consumer regarding behaviour and buying intentions (Alnaser et al., 2024; Bushara et al., 2023; Hanaysha & Alhyasat, 2025; Khairunnisa & Juliadi, 2023). Previous theorists explained marketing activities on social media increase branding awareness, credibility, and trust, so that can strengthen purchase intention

(Alrwashdeh, 2025). Recent research also highlights that engagement and consistency in content IG, TikTok, and FB can build emotional connections with consumers, which then influence their purchase decisions (Shareef et al., 2019). Among active colleagues on social media, the impact about these marketing strategies is even greater due to peer influence and interactions within online communities (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Furthermore, social media campaigns' ability to convey messages directly and personally makes the content feel more relevant and valuable to consumers, further increasing their purchase intention (Hanaysha & Alhyasat, 2025). Overall, these findings support H5.

The study gives results that Perceived Value significantly facilitates the relationship among other Digital Customer Experience and Purchase Intention. This indicates that digital experiences influencing on purchasing decisions occurs primarily through consumers' assessments of the value they receive. In other words, a positive digital experience can increase purchase intentions, first strengthening consumers' perceived value. The finding is in agreement with service dominant concept, stating customer experiences were shaped through dealings and then translated into a perceived value, which influences behavior (Ciuchita et al., 2022). Previous research also

shows that a good digital experience can enhance both utilitarian and hedonic values, thereby strengthening consumers' propensity to purchase (Umpusinga et al., 2026). Furthermore, features such as ease of navigation, personalization, and brightness systems on digital medias have risen the perceived advantages of online services and encourage consumers to make transactions (Pappas, 2018). Other empirical evidence also explains that perceived value links customer experience to purchase outcomes, particularly in the context of e-commerce and mobile-based shopping (Rather & Hollebeek, 2020). Overall, these findings strengthen hypothesis H6 and confirm that perceived value contributes to a necessary role in converting digital experiences into actual purchase intentions among students.

Moreover, these findings indicate that Perceived Value is mediating Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention. It indicates the influence of social media marketing on buying intention is strongly influenced by how consumers assess the benefits they derive from these activities. Unlike interactive content, collaborations with influencers, and personalized promotions have been shown to increase both utilitarian and hedonic value, ultimately shaping consumer buying intention (Bargoni et al., 2023; Chaihanchai et al., 2026; Ünalmiş et al., 2026). Earlier research confirms that perceived value links digital

marketing strategies and consumer behavioral responses, particularly in an online retail (Zhang et al., 2025). Furthermore, consumers tend to perceive higher value when brand communications on social media are delivered consistently, authentically, and engagingly; then can increase their propensity to buy the products (Shian et al., 2025). For younger consumer groups such as students, marketing effectiveness is highly dependent on the experiences they gain through digital interactions. Therefore, perceived value can link social media exposure toward actual purchasing behavior (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Overall, these results offer strong backing for hypothesis H7.

Trust moderates the correlation of perceived value and buying intention in analysis. This means that when students trust so high in a digital platform, the encouragement of perceived value on buying intention is bigger. Even if students already perceive a product as having good value, their purchase intention will increase even more if it is supported by trust in the platform. Result is similar with earlier study that places trust as important element on online transactions, where value is reinforced by belief in reliability and integrity of digital platform (An & Ngo, 2025). From the context of digital commerce, trust also serves to reduce perceived risk, making it easier for consumers to translate perceived benefits into higher

purchase intentions (Hanaysha et al., 2025). Recent study also confirms that trust enhances credibility regarding digital communications and strengthens perceived influence on purchase decisions (Kakkar et al., 2025). Among students, the role of trust becomes increasingly important because they tend to rely on peer group opinions and social validation when evaluating online information (Alferjani et al., 2025; Phan Tan, 2024). Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that the combination of trust and perceived value can reduce bias and increase perceptions of fairness and security, ultimately driving purchase intentions (Senali et al., 2024). These results confirm hypothesis H8 and demonstrate that trust is a key moderating variable that strengthens the influence of perceived value about students' buying intentions in digital environment.

CONCLUSION

The research examines the impact of digital customer experience and social media marketing on the purchase intention of college students in Purwokerto. In the proposed model, perceived value acts as a mediating variable, while trust is tested as a moderating variable. The results show that positive digital experiences and well-managed social media marketing strategies increase students' perceived value, which

ultimately leads to higher purchase intention. Furthermore, trust strengthens this relationship by increasing the credibility of perceived value, thus increasing students' confidence in making purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that perceived value is the primary mechanism linking digital experiences and marketing communications to online purchasing behavior.

For policymakers, these findings suggest the importance of developing interactive digital platforms, improving content personalization, and maintaining credible communication on social media to enhance perceived value and trust among student consumers. Overall, these strategies are expected to improve the effectiveness of digital communication while supporting the development of a sustainable digital commerce ecosystem.

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AI declaration: The authors would like to clarify the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the preparation of this manuscript. AI-assisted tools were used only for language refinement, grammar checking, and improving the clarity of the manuscript. All AI use complies with the journal's policies and may be verified through Turnitin, with the AI detection score maintained below 20%.

The authors take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript, including the accuracy of the analysis, interpretation of results, and the ethical use of AI tools during the preparation and submission process.

Ethical clearance: This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethics committee of Universitas Amikom Purwokerto prior to the data collection process. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation before completing the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and their responses were collected anonymously. The confidentiality of all participants and the privacy of the collected data were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Data availability statement: The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality considerations of the survey respondents. However, the data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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