

Driving Purchase Intention for Sustainable Intercity Bus Services through Social Media Marketing

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of social media marketing activities on consumer purchase intentions in the context of bus transportation services. Using a quantitative approach and SEM-PLS on data from a questionnaire to 272 respondents, results show that social media marketing activities have a significant and positive direct effect on purchase intentions. These activities not only enhance brand awareness but also positively influence brand associations in consumers' minds. While brand awareness does not significantly affect purchase intentions, brand associations play a crucial role in positively influencing consumer decisions. Additionally, the study reveals that social media marketing does not indirectly influence purchase intentions through brand awareness but does significantly contribute to brand associations, which subsequently drive purchase intentions. These results emphasize the importance of leveraging social media as a strategic tool for building strong brand awareness and associations to ultimately increase consumer purchase intentions for bus transportation services.

Keywords: social media marketing, consumer purchase intentions, bus transportation services, brand awareness, brand associations.

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INTRODUCTION

Transportation systems are fundamental for interfacing locales and supporting national and territorial advancement (Jiao et al., 2017). In Indonesia, intercollegiate buses (AKAP) stay a well-known transportation mode due to their adaptability in flight plans, openness to last goals, and reasonable ticket costs (Puspitasari et al., 2019). These administrations are particularly imperative for financial portability, contributing to neighborhood financial advancement (Freitas, 2013). Agreeing to the Ecclesiastical Declare KM 35 of 2003, AKAP alludes to traveler transportation administrations that work over common borders by street.



To stay competitive, transport administrators must center on overseeing brand picture, client dependability, and reputation—key components in building long-term commerce supportability (Prihanto et al., 2023). As advanced innovation advances, social media has ended up a crucial component of coordinates promoting techniques. Agreeing to Riyanto (2021), Indonesia has over 170 million dynamic social media clients, speaking to a noteworthy opportunity for advanced showcasing and buyer engagement (Seo & Park, 2018).

Shoppers presently anticipate more visit and intuitively communication with transportation suppliers through social media stages Gault et al., 2014). These stages empower companies to screen client criticism in real-time, address benefit disturbances, and cultivate engagement through two-way communication. Additionally, social media reinforces word-of-mouth (WOM) impacts, builds brand communities, and impacts obtaining choices (Nawaz & Kaldeen, 2020; Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022).

In expansion to its promoting potential, social media can moreover serve as a catalyst for advancing maintainable transportation behavior. By impacting shopper demeanors toward mass travel administrations like intercollegiate buses, social media showcasing has the potential to empower a modular move from private vehicle utilize to open transportation. This move can contribute altogether to lessening activity clog, fossil fuel reliance, and carbon emissions—key targets in accomplishing maintainable urban portability. Hence, understanding how social media promoting influences customer buy eagerly isn't as it were pertinent for commerce development but too adjusts with broader sustainability objectives within the transportation segment.

In any case, a clear investigate crevice remains. Most thinks about on social media showcasing center on divisions such as retail, e-commerce, or tourism administrations (Khosravi et al., 2023; Ziarani et al., 2023). Small consideration has been given to its part in open arrive transport—particularly intercollegiate buses—despite the rising appropriation of social media by Indonesian transport administrators, prove by their huge adherent bases (see Table 1).

Table 1 Bus Corporation (Social Media data)

No	Corporation	Fun Club Name	Social media	Followers
1	PO Primajasa	-	Facebook	115,000
2	PO Bongkotan Jati Utama	Black Bus Unity	Facebook	133,000
3	PO NPN	NP Mania	Facebook	138,000
4	PO ALS	Place Manis	Facebook	142,000
5	PO Budiman	-	Facebook	145,000
6	PO Sinar Jaya	Sinar Jaya Mania	Facebook	148,000
7	PO Sudiro Tungga Jaya	STJ Funs	Facebook	154,000
8	PO Haryanto	Haryanto Mania	Facebook	140,000
9	PO Harapan Jaya	-	-	92,000

Source: harianhaluan.com

In expansion, earlier investigate has rarely coordinates social media showcasing exercises, brand value, and buy deliberate into a single system (Aljumah et al., 2021; Zarei et al., 2022). Given the developing computerized nearness of intercollegiate transport brands, a more profound understanding of how these factors connected is basic to optimize communication methodologies and drive buyer behavior.

This consideration draws on two hypothetical establishments: the Hypothesis of Arranged Behavior (TPB) and the Employments and Satisfaction Hypothesis (UGT). TPB sets that shopper choices are molded by demeanors, subjective standards, and seen behavioral control, driving to deliberate and behavior (Onel & Mukherjee, 2015). In the meantime, UGT highlights how clients effectively lock in with media to fulfill needs such as data, interaction, and amusement (Latif & Calicioglu, 2020). These systems give a comprehensive focal point for investigating how social media impacts customer decision-making in a transportation setting.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), developed by Katz et al. (1974), is a communication theory centered on social interaction. This theory adopts a functionalist perspective, emphasizing that the primary role of media is to fulfill the needs and motivations of its audience. UGT seeks to explain why people are drawn to specific media and what satisfaction they derive from it (Katz et al., 1974).

According to Ku et al. (2013), UGT views audiences as active participants who seek, identify, and use media to satisfy particular needs. The more effectively these needs are met, the greater the satisfaction experienced (Windahl et al., 2008). Rooted in traditional mass communication research, UGT originally studied how specific media were chosen to fulfill audience needs (Katz et al., 1974; Chiang, 2013). Over time, UGT has been adapted to analyze user motivation and satisfaction with social networking sites, including their intentions to continue using these platforms (Al-Jabri et al., 2015; Majeed et al., 2021).

Social media is a powerful online communication tool that significantly impacts society (Giang & Hoang, 2018). Over the past decade, the use of social media platforms has grown rapidly (Chen & Qasim, 2021). Social media marketing involves utilizing platforms and websites to promote products, services, or content, becoming an essential aspect of modern business (Felix et al., 2017). Social media serves as a hub for various internet-based and mobile services that enable users to engage in online exchanges, contribute user-generated content, and participate in online communities such as blogs (e.g., Tumblr), social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and media-sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram) (Dewing, 2010). These applications significantly influence sales and consumer purchasing behavior (Kapoor et al., 2018). As the number of online community platforms grows, many organizations aim to utilize these tools to build relationships, foster communication, and create virtual brand communities, resulting in closer and more engaging interactions with users (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2018). Social media fosters engagement and trust, which are essential for developing brand equity (del Barrio-García & Prados-Peña, 2019), Intention to invest (Wibisono and Ang, 2019) and influencing purchase intentions (Manzoor et al., 2020; Moslehpour et al., 2021).

Social media marketing activities are often defined as an effective communication method encompassing five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trends, customization, and advertising (Bilgin, 2018). Social media platforms have become increasingly popular marketing tools due to their ability to reach millions of customers and facilitate brand-related conversations (Iankova, 2018).

Facebook is platform social media founded by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. Launched on February 4, 2004, Facebook gradually spread to university institutions and eventually spread throughout society (Jain, 2021). Facebook allows users to create profiles, share updates, photos, and videos, and interact with friends and family through comments, likes, and messages (Macarthy, 2021). There is also Facebook Live, feature Facebook Popular additions to using live broadcasting include video recording and streaming capabilities, as well as channels for quick contact between broadcasters and viewers (Zelenkauskaitė & Loring-Albright, 2023). Online consumers' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use influence customers' purchase intentions via live streaming Facebook. The ease of leaving comments and receiving feedback from hosts creates a seamless and interactive shopping experience and plays an important

role in the decision-making process. Informative content has a positive impact on customers and helps sellers through Facebook improve service and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Limna et al., 2023).

Several decades ago, the idea of brand equity became a key idea in marketing theory and practice. Currently, brand equity is one of the most widely used brand performance measures (Jamilena et al., 2017). By combining different brand attributes, brand equity is embedded in consumers' minds as a special asset that differentiates it from competing brands. Therefore, brand equity is a sociocultural phenomenon that is more than just a product name, it is a symbolic meaning that a brand seeks (Seo & Park 2018).

Keller (1993) defines brand equity as the differential effect caused by consumers' knowledge of a brand on their response to that brand's marketing actions carried out by the company. According to (Aaker, 1991) brand equity includes several dimensions, including brand awareness and brand association.

The first step in building brand equity is to increase consumer awareness of the brand. Brand awareness is the ability of customers to recognize and recall a brand, with brand awareness by consumers of a brand indicating that consumers are aware of the brand name, which increases the possibility that the brand will be purchased by consumers (Keller, 1993). Consumers gain brand awareness through effective marketing and communication media such as television, and social media online. Consumers will have confidence in the superiority of the product, and this reduces the possibility of making bad decisions (Rubio et al., 2014). Brand awareness plays an important role in the long-term survival of any company (Zia et al., 2021). Brand awareness can help the brand be desired by the company, create consumer familiarity with the brand, and show commitment to the brand. Brand awareness involves two main components, namely memory and recognition (Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

Brand associations include everything related to the memory of a brand. Brand associations function as a platform for differentiation, positioning, and brand extension as a basis for consumers to buy a particular brand which then gives consumers a strong reason to buy and utilize a particular brand (Aaker, 1991). Clear and well-defined brand associations are essential to brand identity. Information that is embedded in consumers' minds, both positively and negatively, will be connected to their memories. This can make brand associations a tool for differentiating brands (Emari et al., 2012). To develop brand associations, customers must understand the brand first (Jayswal & Vora, 2019). Choosing a memorable brand is beneficial, but the brand must have greater meaning to customers than just being part of a product or service category. A brand is a form of solid communication that can be used to enhance the main features or benefits that influence the positioning of a product and service. Furthermore, brand associations often express the value of a brand, because a brand is a mechanism that makes people believe that a company can meet their demands (Keller, 2013). The stronger the relationship between a brand and a product or service, the greater the likelihood that consumers will remember it, thereby potentially increasing brand loyalty (Sasmita & Suki, 2015).

Purchase intention is a consumer's preference for purchasing a product or service which shows the level of consumer feelings about how confident they are to buy a product or service (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Understanding consumer purchasing intentions is very important because it usually predicts consumer behavior (Hsu et al., 2017), in other words, the level of consumer willingness to buy is determined by their purchasing intentions (Lee et al., 2017).

In this research, purchase intention is an important construct that must be researched. Previous research shows that an increase in purchase intention reflects an increase in purchase opportunities (Martins et al., 2019). Several researchers explored purchase intentions in various industries like in green using various theories such as the uses and gratification theory (UGT) (Majeed et al., 2021) theory of planned behavior (Huang & Ge,

2019), and social presence (Ye et al., 2020). This research will outline social media marketing activities, and brand equity because these variables also strongly drive purchase intentions, as suggested by previous research (Sağtaş, 2022; Shuyi et al., 2024).

METHODS

A questionnaire was administered in a methodical manner that included both closed and open-ended questions to gather respondents' opinions on the research variables. The survey result was statistically significant. The questionnaire was constructed using established indicators and theoretical frameworks.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the population size, the target demographic was those who utilized intercity bus services. Respondents who met the criteria and were present during data collection were selected for incidental sampling, which was a non-probability sampling method. There were 272 valid responses.

To analyze the data, we applied SEM with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. This technique is appropriate for scrutinizing complex relationships among latent variables and enables simultaneous examination of multiple independent (and dependent) variables.

Table 2 presents the research items categorized under three main variables: Social Media Activity, Brand Equity, and Purchase Intention, adapted from previous studies. Social Media Activity, based on Bilgin (2018), includes six dimensions—Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Customization, and Advertisement—captured through nine items that assess users' perceptions of social media content, interaction opportunities, timeliness, and advertising appeal. Brand Equity, referring to Seo & Park (2018) and Park & Lee (2019), is measured through two dimensions—Brand Awareness and Brand Association—using four items that evaluate brand recognition, recall, and image. Lastly, Purchase Intention, drawn from Husnain & Toor (2017), is assessed through six items focusing on the influence of social media engagement on consumer decision-making, interest, and intention to purchase or become a customer.

Table 2 Research Item

Variables	Dimensions	Item
Social Media Activity Bilgin (2018)	Entertainment	1. Using social media is fun.
	Interaction	2. The content displayed on social media looks interesting.
	Trendy	3. Social media allows you to share information with others.
	Trendiness	4. Social media allows you to share your opinions with others.
	Customization	5. The information displayed on social media is up to date.
	Advertisement	6. This company's use of social media is interesting.
		7. Social media provides the information needed.
		8. This brand's advertisement on social media is interesting to me.
		9. This brand's media and social media advertising has had a positive impact on my interest in the brand.
Brand Equity Seo & Park (2018); Park & Lee (2019)	Brand Awareness	10. I know the brand of this intercity bus company. I know the characteristics of this brand. I always remember the logo of this brand.
	Brand Association	11. Several characteristics of this brand quickly come to mind.
		12. Easy to remember the performance of this brand
		13. It's hard for me to picture this brand in my mind.

Purchase
Intention
Husnain & Toor
(2017)

14. Interacting with this brand's Facebook helps me make better decisions before purchasing their products and services.
15. Interacting with this brand's Facebook increases my interest in purchasing their products and services
16. I will buy the product as marketed on this brand's Facebook
17. I have high intentions to become a customer of this brand.
18. I will buy the product as marketed on this brand's Facebook
19. I have high intentions to become a customer of this brand

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test outer model specifies the relationship between latent variables and research items which can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Test the outer model

Information	Brand Association	Brand Awareness	Purchase Intention	Social Media Marketing Activities
ba1	0.901			
ba2	0.888			
ba3	0.686			
bw1		0.905		
bw2		0.901		
bw3		0.892		
pi1			0.889	
pi2			0.891	
pi3			0.899	
pi4			0.817	
sm1				0.786
sm2				0.747
sm3				0.773
sm4				0.791
sm5				0.699
sm6				0.794
sm7				0.799
sm8				0.825
sm9				0.859

Source: Data Proceed by PLS (2024)

From the results of data processing in Table 3, of the nineteen items, seventeen items were declared valid for use in further testing because they have a value loading factor greater than 0.70. One item on the brand association variable and one (one) item on the social media marketing activity variable that has a value loading

factor below 0.70, then these two items are not used for further testing. The output results of research model testing can be seen in Figure 1.

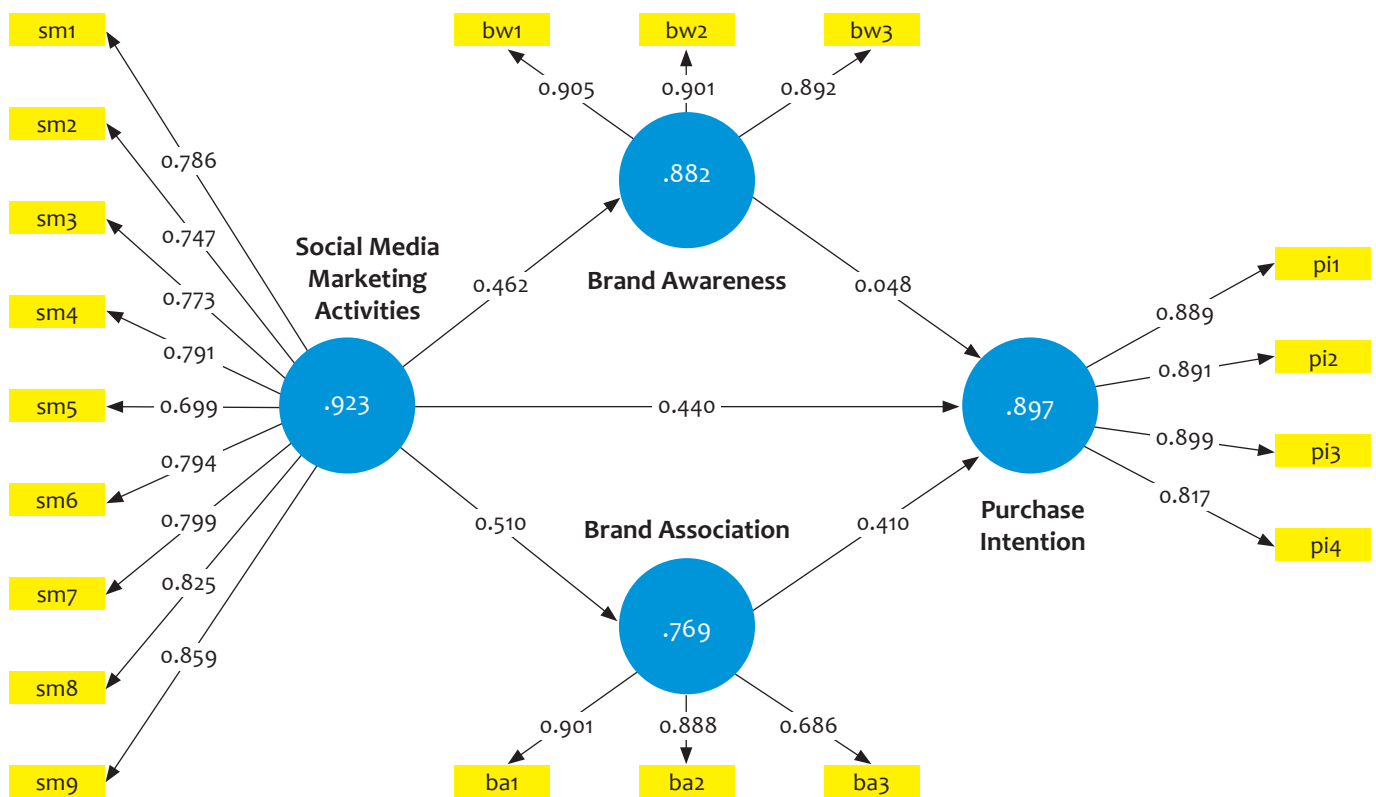


Figure 1 Research Model Results

The validity and reliability values of the research construct from the data processing results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 Construct Reliability and Validity

Description	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_A)	Composite reliability (rho_C)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Association	0.769	0.800	0.868	0.690
Brand Awareness	0.882	0.882	0.927	0.809
Purchase Intention	0.897	0.897	0.929	0.765
Social Media Marketing Activities	0.923	0.928	0.936	0.619

Source: Data processed by PLS (2024).

Through regression tests, reliability and validity proved the research instrument to be reliable and appropriate for measuring brand associations, brand awareness, purchase intent as well as social media marketing activities. As soon on Table 4 the 0.70 threshold, Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability

were highly consistent. This was demonstrated by our results. Convergent validity was established when AVE values were above 0.50.

Table 5 Values R-square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Association	0.260	0.257
Brand Awareness	0.213	0.210
Purchase Intention	0.598	0.593

Source: Data processed by PLS (2024).

Brand association, brand awareness, and purchase intent were measured using R² values of 0.260, 0.213, or 0.577, respectively, in the structural model analysis as shown in Table 5. The results show that social media marketing activities account for 26% of the variance in brand associations, 21.3% in Brand Awareness, and 57.7% in Purchase Intent (along with brand equity).

This chapter focuses on the data analysis, including hypothesis verification and discussion. Using SEM-PLS for data processing, the study identifies direct and indirect relationships between social media marketing activities and the intention to use transportation services, mediated by brand awareness and associations. In this section, the verification of hypotheses and related discussions are elaborated. Based on the SEM-PLS analysis, the study reveals the direct and indirect impacts of social media marketing activities on consumers' intention to use bus transportation services.

According to Table 6, social media marketing activities are strongly associated with brand awareness and brand associations, supporting Hypotheses 1 through 2. Interactive content that is both engaging and interactive can help people become more familiar with the brand and feel more connected to it.

Hypothesis 3 is supported by the analysis that revealed a significant direct influence of social media marketing on purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.440$, $t = 7.113$). Through digital communication, people can be motivated to choose sustainable public transportation.

Brand awareness is linked to purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.048$), but its significance was not high enough ($t = 0.6885$, $p = 0.493$) to justify Hypothesis 4 being invalidated. However, brand associations had a significant impact on purchase decision-making ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 6.107$), supporting Hypothesis 5.

Table 6 Results of Testing the Direct Effect of the Structural Equation Model

Information	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-statistic	P. Value
Social Media Marketing → Brand Awareness	0.462	0.463	0.057	8.101	0.000
Social Media Marketing → Brand Association	0.510	0.514	0.051	9.911	0.000
Social Media Marketing → Purchase Intention	0.440	0.443	0.062	7.113	0.000
Brand Awareness → Purchase Intention	0.048	0.048	0.070	0.685	0.493
Brand Association → Purchase Intention	0.410	0.407	0.067	6.107	0.000

Source: Data processed by PLS (2024)

The correlation between social media marketing and brand awareness purchasing intent wasn't significant ($= 0.022$, $t = 0.661$, $p = 0.502$), in line with Hypothesis 4. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 isn't supported.

The impact of social media marketing activities on brand affinity through purchase behavior ($= 0.209$, test results 5, 661, $p = 0.001$) supports Hypothesis 7. Creating meaningful connections to encourage consumer behavior is an essential strategic imperative.'

Table 7 Results of Testing the Indirect Effect of Structural Equation Models

Information	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-statistics	P. Value
Social Media Marketing → Brand Awareness → Purchase Intention	0.022	0.023	0.033	0.671	0.502
Social Media Marketing Activities → Brand Association → Purchase Intention	0.209	0.208	0.035	5.961	0.000

Source: From processed data

Table 7 presents the results of testing the direct effects in the structural equation model. The findings show that Social Media Marketing has a significant positive effect on Brand Awareness ($\beta = 0.462$, $t = 8.101$, $p < 0.001$), Brand Association ($\beta = 0.510$, $t = 9.911$, $p < 0.001$), and Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.440$, $t = 7.113$, $p < 0.001$). Brand Awareness does not significantly influence Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.048$, $t = 0.685$, $p = 0.493$). In contrast, Brand Association has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 6.107$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that brand association plays a more crucial role than brand awareness in driving purchase intentions in the studied context.

Social media marketing activities are crucial in determining brand equity and consumer choices, as demonstrated by the findings. Strong brand associations, rather than mere awareness, are the primary factor driving consumers towards opting for bus transportation services (Ramasamy et al., 2021; Wisutwattanasak et al., 2023; Zulueta et al., 2024).

The sustainability implications of this study are practically practical. A shift from private vehicles to public transportation is essential in reducing carbon emissions, traffic congestion and fuel overruns (AlKheder, 2021; Jing et al., 2022; Boray et al., 2024). Why? By utilizing social media strategies that emphasize interactive storytelling, user-generated content, and value-driven messaging, consumers can shift their perceptions and adopt more sustainable commuting habits.

Bus operators and transport authorities must use social media to reinforce messages about reliability, environmental benefits, affordability, and comfort, as brand associations have a significant impact (Nguyen & Mogaji, 2022; Mogaji et al., 2023).

Earlier research has indicated that social media platforms can be effective in encouraging sustainable consumer behavior, particularly when brand values are linked to environmental consciousness. The data analysis chapter includes a discussion and hypothesis verification. SEM-PLS is utilized in the research to establish both direct and indirect connections between social media marketing activities and the desire to use transportation services. In this section, the verification of hypotheses and corresponding discussions are described. Through the use of SEM-PLS analysis, researchers can observe the direct and indirect effects of social media marketing activities on consumers' decision to use bus transportation services.

CONCLUSION

Social media marketing is believed to have a significant impact on consumer preference for bus transportation, particularly by strengthening brand associations. Although brand awareness increases sales, this is not the only factor that leads to intent on buying. Effective social media content should prioritize the importance of trust, emotional connection and relevance as these elements are what drive strong brand associations, according to the findings. These measures not only appeal to consumers but also promote sustainable transportation by promoting the use of public transport over private vehicles. These findings not only emphasize the strategic role of social media in driving brand engagement and consumer purchase intentions but also align with broader sustainability objectives. As highlighted in the SROI framework by Saraswati et al. (2023), evaluating social and environmental outcomes of business initiatives is increasingly vital. Social media campaigns that promote a shift from private vehicles to intercity buses contribute to reducing emissions, traffic congestion, and fossil fuel dependency—key goals in achieving sustainable mobility. Intercity bus operators should assess their digital readiness to influence consumer behavior at scale. These findings are also supported by Oktaviani (2024), who confirms the EWOM can shape purchase intentions. Although the study draws on cross-sectional data, it is limited to one type of transport service.

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