

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION ON  
CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF BRANDS AND PURCHASE  
INTENTIONS IN THE PANDEMIC AND POST-PANDEMIC ERA: AN  
ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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**Abstract**

The global pandemic, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in fundamental changes in consumer behavior, triggering a transformation in their interactions with social media. This research explores the impact of social media communication on consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intentions amid the pandemic and post-pandemic era through a thorough literature review. Detailing findings from relevant journals and information sources, this research provides in-depth insights into the complex dynamics between social media, brand perception and consumer purchase decisions. The literature analysis includes an in-depth understanding of how social media influences the way consumers form perceptions of brands, modify their preferences, and ultimately affect purchase intentions. Findings from related studies are comprehensively integrated to produce a holistic view of the role of social media in shaping consumer behavior. The results of this literature review are expected to contribute to academic understanding and provide practical guidance for companies in adapting their marketing strategies to the evolving consumer dynamics in the pandemic and post-pandemic era.

**Keywords:** Social Media Communication, Consumer Perception, Purchase Intention, Brand, Pandemic Era, Post Pandemic, Analytical Research.

**INTRODUCTION**

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a key driver of change in consumer behavior patterns around the world. Not only a global health crisis, the pandemic has also brought about a profound transformation in consumers' interactions with brands and products through social media. In a state of physical restriction and uncertainty, social media has become the main channel for individuals to stay connected with the outside world, get information, and participate in virtual dialog. This phenomenon illustrates the essential role of social media in shaping and modifying consumer behavior in the pandemic era. This research involves in-depth understanding through findings generated from a number of scientific studies. The main focus of the research is to investigate how communication through social media influences consumers' perceptions of brands and their purchase intentions, particularly in the

evolving dynamics during and after the pandemic. By detailing these findings, the research aims to contribute to an in-depth understanding of the adaptation of consumer behavior in the face of significant situational change. During the pandemic, consumers have massively turned to social media as a source of information and a platform to share experiences. These interactions then shape consumers' perceptions of brands. The ability of social media to present information in real-time and facilitate interpersonal interactions results in complex dynamics in brand image formation. In the context of purchase intention, consumer behavior tends to be influenced by content presented through social media, including reviews, testimonials, and recommendations from fellow users. In addition, the post-pandemic phenomenon is also a focal point of this research. The changes in behavioral patterns that began during the pandemic appear to have lasting impacts, and this research seeks to identify these shifts in the dynamics of consumer perceptions of brands and purchase intentions in the post-pandemic era. The implication is that marketing and brand communication strategies must constantly adapt to the evolution of evolving consumer behavior patterns. Through this research, it is hoped that it can clearly illustrate how social media communication is key in shaping consumers' views of brands and guiding their purchasing decisions, especially in the face of significant changes in the pandemic and post-pandemic era. These findings provide an important foundation for companies and marketers to develop more responsive and effective strategies in facing the challenges and opportunities amidst the changing landscape of consumer behavior.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research finds its foundation in an in-depth literature review, which includes a critical analysis of relevant empirical studies and scholarly articles with a focus on the influence of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands and purchase intentions, especially in the pandemic and post-pandemic era. The literature review was conducted using a rigorous critical analysis method to detail the findings of previous studies that are directly or indirectly related to this research topic. Data collection was done through a comprehensive literature search from various academic databases, scientific journals, and other reliable sources of information. In this process, published scholarly articles, books, and research reports were accessed to gather relevant information. The references used included key research in the fields of social media communication, consumer behavior, and marketing strategy. Some of the key references integrated in this literature review include works from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that discuss the concept and definition of social media, Smith et al. (2020) which reviews the impact of social media on consumer behavior, and Wang et al. (2018) which focuses on marketing strategies through social media. In discussing the influence of social media on consumer perceptions of brands, findings from Khan's (2021) research are integrated to highlight the dynamics of consumer interactions with brands through social media platforms. Furthermore, the research of Rosen et al. (2019) is used as a reference in illustrating how social media can modify consumer perceptions of brands and influence purchase intentions. In addition, concepts from the research of Ryan et al. (2017) study on the influence of social media on purchase decisions is also an important foundation in discussing the relationship between social media communication and consumer purchase intentions. By detailing and analyzing these findings, this research can provide a strong framework for understanding the complex relationship between social media

communication, brand perception, and purchase intention. This literature review provides a solid theoretical basis for looking at the impact of social media on consumer behavior, and further, guides the analysis and discussion of these research findings in the context of the pandemic and post-pandemic.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

### **A. Results of the Literature Review:**

#### **1. Findings related to the Influence of Social Media Communication:**

In looking at the findings related to the influence of social media communication on consumer perceptions, it should be emphasized that interactions on social media are not only informative, but also have a significant impact on how consumers form views of a brand. Uses and Gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) can provide a useful perspective in understanding the role of social media as an interaction tool.

According to this theory, consumers use social media to fulfill their personal needs, such as seeking information, entertainment, or building social relationships. In the context of social media influence on brands, consumers actively choose the type of content they want to consume, including information about brands. With the two-way interaction on social media, consumers not only receive information, but also participate in shaping the brand narrative.

Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) study confirms that social media creates an atmosphere where consumers can share brand-related experiences, opinions and views. Consumer engagement theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985) can be applied to explain that through active participation in social media, consumers increase their level of involvement with brands. This engagement can stimulate feelings of ownership towards the brand and influence how consumers perceive and understand brand values.

Furthermore, engaging consumers in interactions on social media opens up opportunities for brands to build a stronger brand identity. In brand identity theory (Aaker, 1997), brands are considered to have characteristics that can form emotional connections with consumers. Through various interactions on social media, brands can convey messages that build their identity, and consumers can respond by forming an emotional bond with the brand.

Thus, it can be concluded that the influence of social media communication on consumer perception is not only informative but also involves aspects of deep consumer interaction and engagement. In an era where consumers are increasingly taking an active role in building brand narratives, marketing strategies that focus on interaction and participation on social media are becoming increasingly important to build a positive brand image in the eyes of consumers.

2. Consumer Perception of Brands in the Context of Social Media: The study conducted by Khan (2021) highlights the significant role of interactions through social media in shaping consumer perceptions of brands. Within this conceptual framework, the theory of Two-Way Communication and Mirror Theory can serve as a foundation for understanding the dynamics of consumer interactions with brands through social media.

According to Two-Way Communication theory (DeVito, 2016), social media facilitates a two-way dialog between brands and consumers. It allows consumers to not only receive information from brands but also provide responses, questions, and feedback. This interaction creates an opportunity to build a more personalized engagement with the brand. For example, through comments, direct messages or responses to brand content, consumers can feel more involved in the communication process.

In this context, Mirror theory (Higgins, 1987) can be applied to explain how social media functions as a mirror that reflects consumers' views of brands. Consumers form their perceptions of brands based on the content they consume and the interactions they experience on social media. If brands manage to present content that is relevant, positive and triggers emotional resonance, this can create a positive mirror that strengthens the brand image in the eyes of consumers.

However, it is important to remember that interactions on social media also carry the risk of negatively impacting brand perception. Communication Risk Theory (Rimal & Real, 2003) can be used to understand how risks can arise in the context of social media communication. If interactions are poorly managed, for example, through less responsive responses to negative or controversial comments, this can result in a negative impact on consumers' perceptions of the brand.

Furthermore, the Consumer Engagement theory (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1990) can provide insights into how interactions on social media affect consumers' engagement with brands. High engagement can increase consumers' understanding of the brand, create emotional bonds, and shape more positive perceptions. Conversely, low engagement can lead to a lack of attention to the brand and a negative impact on consumer perception.

Through interactions on social media, consumers also participate in the formation of brand identity. Brand Identity Theory (Aaker, 1997) emphasizes that brands have characteristics and values that can create an emotional connection with consumers. By participating in interactions, consumers help shape the brand narrative and actively build brand identity.

Along with brand identity theory, Customer Relationship theory (Gummesson, 2002) can also be applied. Interactions on social media create a more personalized relationship between brands and consumers. Brands that are able to foster strong and positive relationships through interactions on social media can gain higher consumer loyalty.

In the context of Khan's (2021) research, it can be seen that social media is not only a medium for information transmission, but also a tool that facilitates more personalized dialogue and engagement between brands and consumers. By understanding these supporting theories, we can more deeply understand the complexity of the influence of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands.

### 3. Consumer Purchase Intention Influenced by Social Media:

Research conducted by Rosen et al. (2019) highlights the crucial role of social media in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Understanding these dynamics can be deepened by applying Word of Mouth (WOM) theory and the Technology Acceptance Model to understand how positive recommendations and reviews on social media influence consumers' purchase intentions.

Word of Mouth (WOM) theory (Arndt, 1967) suggests that recommendations from others, especially fellow social media users, can have a significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions. Through social media, information about products or services can spread quickly and widely, creating a domino effect among consumers. In this context, positive reviews and recommendations from social media users can provide a positive boost to consumers' purchase intentions.

Further explanation can be found in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), which proposes that consumers' perceptions of technology, including social media, can influence users' intention to adopt and use the technology. If consumers believe that the information they get from social media is reliable and useful, then they are likely to have a stronger intention to make a purchase.

In addition, the concept of trust can also be integrated to understand how recommendations on social media influence purchase intentions. Consumer trust in the reviews and recommendations of fellow social media users can build confidence that the product or service is of good quality. For example, if an influencer or friend on social media gives a positive testimonial about a product, this can build consumer trust in the brand.

In the context of marketing, Network Activation Theory can provide insight into how social media acts as a promotional and sales platform. Social media not only serves as a place where consumers get information, but also as a platform where brands can activate consumer networks to support product or service promotion. An effective marketing campaign strategy on social media can create a positive buzz among consumers, increase brand awareness, and in turn, influence purchase intent.

Keep in mind that the success of a social media marketing campaign depends not only on the number of positive recommendations, but also on the credibility of the source. Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) proposes that sources of information that consumers consider credible are more likely to influence their attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, recommendations from social media users who are considered credible and competent have more potential to influence purchase intentions.

Through the application of these theories, we can understand that social media is not only an information channel, but also a platform that has a strategic role in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Social media's ability to disseminate information, build trust and activate consumer networks makes it an essential element in modern marketing strategies.

## B. Discussion:

### 1. Integration of Findings from Multiple Sources:

In looking at the integration of findings from various sources in this literature review, it is worth emphasizing that social media is not only a medium of communication, but also a complex platform that influences how consumers form perceptions of brands and make purchasing decisions. This understanding can be deepened by applying Information Source Integration theory and Consumer Engagement Theory.

Information Source Integration Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) presents the view that when information comes from multiple credible sources, its impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors becomes stronger. In the context of social media, information about brands can come from various sources such as regular users, influencers, or official brands themselves. If this information is consistent and mutually supportive, then consumers' perception of the brand will become more solid and positive.

The integration of information sources can also be seen through the Theory of Consumer Involvement (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1990). This theory states that the level of consumer involvement in the buying process can influence the way they seek, assess and use information. In the context of social media, consumers who are actively engaged and involved in interactions with brands can create a deeper understanding, which in turn strengthens the integration of information from multiple sources.

Along with that, Consumer Engagement Theory (Zaichkowsky, 1985) adds an emotional dimension to the integration of information sources. Emotional engagement can be realized through consumer interactions with brand content on social media that create positive experiences. Consumers who have high emotional engagement tend to be more open to information from multiple sources, creating stronger information integration and deepening their relationship with the brand.

The increasingly important role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions of brands can also be understood through Social Media and Identity Theory (boyd & Ellison, 2007). This theory emphasizes that social media serves not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool to shape and communicate identity. Consumers who identify themselves with brands through interactions on social media create closer relationships with brands and strengthen information integration.

This literature review reflects that social media creates a complex information ecosystem, where information from multiple sources interlinks and interacts to shape consumers' views of brands. In an era where consumer trust and engagement are key, good integration of information on social media is critical in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors.

### 2. Similarities and Differences with Previous Research Findings:

In evaluating the similarities and differences of the findings from this literature review with previous research, it should be recognized that many previous empirical studies have highlighted the positive impact of social media communication on brand

perception and purchase intention. Some of these findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that social media can be a positive force in building brand image and influencing consumer purchase decisions.

## Similarities with Previous Research Findings:

Many previous studies, as described by Smith et al. (2018) and Lee (2020), show that interactions on social media can shape positive perceptions of brands. Two-way communication on social media creates an opportunity for brands to engage directly with consumers, building a more personalized relationship. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing that consumers who feel a positive engagement and connection with brands through social media are more likely to have high purchase intentions.

In addition, the concept of recommendations and positive reviews from fellow social media users, as proposed by Rosen et al. (2019), have also been found in previous studies. These findings confirm that the influence of Word of Mouth (WOM) on social media can significantly influence consumers' desire to buy a product or use a particular service. This phenomenon has been the focus of many previous studies showing that recommendations from friends or family on social media have a strong impact on purchasing decisions.

## Differences with Previous Research Findings:

Although the findings of this literature review are in line with many previous studies, it should be recognized that some studies point to the potential negative impact of social media communication, particularly in relation to reputational risk. Findings by Jones (2017) and Wang et al. (2021) highlight that interactions on social media can also carry risks, such as the spread of negative information or less positive responses from consumers.

This difference suggests that while social media can be an effective tool in building a positive image, companies should also be aware of the potential reputational risks that arise from interactions on these platforms. Therefore, risk mitigation strategies need to be considered by companies to ensure that interactions on social media can have a positive impact without jeopardizing their reputation. *enimbulkkan risiko yang tidak diinginkan.*

## Strategi Mitigasi Risk:

Communication Risk Mitigation Theory (Fischhoff, Slovic, Lichtenstein, Read, & Combs, 1978) can be applied to design effective risk mitigation strategies. Companies can take steps such as active monitoring of negative comments, prompt response to emerging issues, and the establishment of crisis response teams to handle situations that could harm brand reputation.

By considering the similarities and differences in findings with previous research, we can enrich our understanding of the complex role of social media in influencing consumer perceptions of brands and purchase intentions. Along with recognizing the positive potential, understanding the risks and implementing mitigation strategies are

key to harnessing the positive potential of social media wisely.

### 3. Implications and Recommendations for Future Research:

This literature review reveals diverse findings around the influence of social media communication on brand perception and consumer purchase intention. As an initial stage in understanding the complexity of this phenomenon, future research can develop further understanding and provide a more in-depth view. Implications and recommendations for future research could focus on several key aspects.

#### a. Confirm and Deepen Findings:

First of all, more in-depth empirical studies are needed to confirm these findings in a practical context. Empirical research can be conducted to validate and complement the findings from this literature review. Quantitative studies can measure the impact of social media communication more specifically, while qualitative research can explore the consumer experience in depth.

#### b. Variation of Impacts across Industries or Sectors:

Future research could be directed towards understanding the differential impact of social media communication on brand perception and purchase intention across different industries or sectors. Each industry has unique dynamics, and the influence of social media may vary depending on the context of the industry. Involving different sectors can provide a richer and more contextualized understanding of the role of social media in influencing consumer behavior.

#### c. Konteks Lokal dan Global:

Studies can explore differences in the impact of social media between local and global contexts. Consumer behavior can be influenced by different cultural, social and economic factors in different regions. Research can compare and analyze how social media interactions influence brand perception and purchase intentions in local and global contexts.

#### d. Influence of Different Social Media Platforms:

Research could focus more on the influence of different social media platforms. Each platform has unique features and characteristics, which can have a different impact on how consumers interact with brands. Identifying the differences in influence between platforms can help companies direct their marketing resources more effectively.

#### e. Development of a Findings-Based Marketing Strategy:

The practical implications of these findings indicate the importance of companies and marketers paying attention to the role of social media in designing marketing strategies. Therefore, future research can concentrate on developing specific marketing strategies based on the findings of this literature. For example, how content produced on social media can be optimized to build a positive brand image and increase consumer purchase intentions.

#### Latest Theory (2019-2024):

Over the past five years, some recent theories that can serve as a foundation for research involve Digital Engagement theory (Bowden et al., 2021) and Social

Network Theory (Wasserman & Faust, 2018). Digital Engagement Theory can help understand the extent to which digital interactions, including on social media, can influence consumers' engagement with brands. Meanwhile, Social Network Theory can provide insights into how relationships between individuals on social media platforms influence brand perception and purchase intentions.

Future research can utilize these theoretical developments to deepen the understanding of the influence of social media in the context of consumers and brands. By combining literature findings with the latest theoretical frameworks, research can provide more holistic and relevant insights related to the role of social media in shaping consumer behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

By detailing the implications and recommendations, it is hoped that future research can go further in understanding the complex relationship between social media communication, brand perception and consumer purchase intention. This literature review has provided an in-depth overview of the influence of social media in the context of marketing and consumer behavior. Therefore, this conclusion emphasizes some important points that can serve as a foundation for future research.

**The Importance of Engaging the Practical Context:** The implications of these literature findings highlight the importance of involving practical context in future research. Empirical testing in the field can provide deeper insights into how certain variables interact and influence each other in real-world situations. Applied research that focuses on specific industries or geographical contexts can provide more contextualized and relevant recommendations for practitioners.

**Support for Marketing Strategy Development:** Recommendations for future research emphasize support for marketing strategy development based on the findings of this literature. Companies can utilize a deeper understanding of how social media communication influences brand perception and purchase intention to design more effective campaigns. Case studies and intervention research can be useful methods to test and implement relevant marketing strategies.

**Social Media's Role as a Strategic Asset:** It is important to recognize that social media is not just an additional communication tool, but rather a strategic asset that can form the foundation of successful marketing. Future research can further explore how companies can utilize social media as an integral part of their marketing strategy. Identifying new trends and changes in consumer behavior through social media can help companies stay relevant and responsive to the market.

**Knowledge Expansion in the Global Sphere:** This conclusion emphasizes the need for knowledge expansion in a global setting. As social media crosses geographical boundaries, future research could explore differences and similarities in the impact of social media in different parts of the world. Understanding how local cultures, values and norms influence responses to social media communication can provide a broader and more contextualized view.

**Contribution to New Theory Development:** It is important to note that the findings

of this literature can also contribute to the development of new theories in the field of marketing and consumer behavior. Further research could try to combine the findings from various studies to formulate a more holistic theory on the role of social media in brand image formation and its influence on consumer purchasing decisions.

Future research covering these aspects can enrich our understanding of the dynamics of social media in the marketing sphere. By detailing these practical implications and recommendations, this research is expected to make a meaningful contribution not only to the academic world but also to practitioners who are actively involved in designing effective marketing strategies in this digital age.

Hopefully, future research can deepen our insight into how social media is not only a communication tool, but also a strategic force that can significantly shape consumer mindset and behavior.

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