

The Effect of Storytelling Marketing on Purchase Intention Through Brand Experience and Brand Engagement

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Abstract

The cosmetics industry has experienced substantial growth over the past decade, accompanied by significant changes in consumer behavior, particularly among Generation Z consumers who increasingly value emotional connections, brand narratives, and meaningful experiences when making purchasing decisions. In response to these changes, storytelling marketing has emerged as an important strategy for creating emotional bonds between brands and consumers. However, previous studies have predominantly examined the influence of storytelling marketing on purchase intention through either brand experience or brand engagement separately, resulting in limited understanding of their simultaneous mediating roles. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of storytelling marketing on purchase intention through brand experience and brand engagement among Premium make up brandmakeup consumers in Surabaya.

This study employed a quantitative explanatory approach using a survey method. Data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to university students in Surabaya who had purchased premium make up brandmakeupproducts and were familiar with storytelling marketing content on social media. A purposive sampling technique was applied, resulting in 250 respondents. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis included assessments of the measurement model and structural model, as well as hypothesis testing and mediation analysis through bootstrapping procedures.

The findings indicate that storytelling marketing does not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention. However, storytelling marketing has a positive and significant effect on both brand experience and brand engagement. Furthermore, brand experience and brand engagement significantly influence purchase intention, with brand engagement demonstrating the strongest effect. The mediation analysis reveals that both brand experience and brand engagement significantly mediate the relationship between storytelling marketing and purchase intention. These findings suggest that storytelling marketing is more effective in enhancing consumers' purchase intentions through the creation of meaningful brand experiences and active consumer engagement rather than through direct influence alone.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the global cosmetics industry has experienced significant growth in line with increasing public awareness of self-care and personal image. The global cosmetics market was valued at USD 295.5 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach USD 570.5 billion by 2033, with an annual growth rate of 6.8% (Market.us, 2024). This growth has been driven by lifestyle changes, product innovation, and digital developments that enable more intensive interactions between brands and consumers. Cosmetics no longer function solely as beauty products but have also become a means of self-expression and a representation of identity.

Changes in consumer behavior are increasingly evident among Generation Z as the dominant market segment, which possesses unique characteristics in purchasing decision-making. This generation considers not only product quality but also the values, meanings, and stories conveyed by a brand. More than 60% of Generation Z consumers globally take emotional aspects such as sustainability, identity, and brand narratives into consideration before making a purchase (Deloitte, 2024). This condition has encouraged brands to adopt communication strategies that are more emotional and relevant, one of which is storytelling marketing, which is capable of building closeness with consumers and enhancing purchase intention.

This phenomenon is also evident in Indonesia, one of the largest cosmetics markets in Southeast Asia, with a market value of USD 7.23 billion in 2022 and a projected increase to USD 9.94 billion by 2028 (Southeast Asia

Market Research, 2024). This growth is supported by the dominance of younger generations and high levels of digital penetration that have transformed consumption behavior. Amidst this competitive environment, Premium make up brandmakeup, as a halal cosmetics brand, successfully secured the third position in the Top 10 Best-Selling Cosmetic Brands in Southeast Asia in 2024. This achievement is influenced not only by product innovation but also by communication strategies that successfully establish emotional connections with consumers through relevant values and identities.

Storytelling marketing has become an important strategy for building emotional attachment with consumers. Storytelling not only conveys information but also creates experiences that strengthen the relationship between brands and consumers. This phenomenon is associated with brand experience as consumers' internal responses to a brand, as well as brand engagement as a form of active consumer involvement in interacting with a brand. Although numerous studies have demonstrated that storytelling marketing influences purchase intention, most previous studies have examined mediating variables separately, such as using only brand engagement or brand experience. This condition indicates the existence of a research gap, as only a limited number of studies have simultaneously examined both variables within a single integrated model.

Based on these considerations, this study is important in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanism through which storytelling marketing influences

purchase intention. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of storytelling marketing on purchase intention, with brand experience and brand engagement serving as mediating variables among university students who use Premium makeup products in Surabaya.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Storytelling Marketing

Storytelling marketing is a marketing communication strategy that conveys brand messages through emotional narratives that are relevant to the target audience. This concept is supported by the Narrative Transportation Theory proposed by Green and Brock (2000), which explains that individuals can become immersed in a story, enabling them to understand and accept messages more easily and subsequently develop positive attitudes toward a brand.

Conceptually, storytelling marketing is understood as a strategy for building emotional connections with consumers through meaningful stories (Woodside, 2010). This variable is measured using three primary indicators: credibility, resonance, and extensibility (Chang, 2025), which reflect the level of trustworthiness, emotional connectedness, and the ability of a story to be expanded and disseminated.

Brand Experience

Brand experience refers to consumers' internal responses to a brand, encompassing sensations, emotions, cognitions, and behaviors resulting from interactions with brand-related stimuli. According to Brakus et

al. (2009), brand experience is holistic in nature and consists of four primary dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral, which reflect how consumers perceive and respond to a brand comprehensively.

Conceptually, brand experience plays a role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors and may serve as a mediator influencing consumer responses (Iglesias et al., 2019). Brand experience is defined as consumers' sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral responses to a brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 2010), with indicators including sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experiences.

Brand Engagement

Brand engagement refers to the level of consumer involvement with a brand, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. This concept is based on the Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) Theory developed by Hollebeek (2011), which views engagement as a consumer investment in interactions with a brand. Subsequent developments of the model (Hollebeek et al., 2014) emphasize that engagement is not limited to purchasing behavior but also includes attention, emotional attachment, and active participation, particularly within the context of digital marketing.

Conceptually, brand engagement is defined as a multidimensional process involving consumers' voluntary interactions with a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2012). This variable consists of three primary indicators, namely cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement (Rasmus,

2021), which reflect consumers' attention, feelings, and actions toward a brand.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to consumers' tendency to purchase a particular product or brand. This concept is derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991), which explains that intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Within this context, purchase intention is regarded as the primary predictor of purchasing behavior, whereby consumers evaluate various considerations before making a decision.

Conceptually, purchase intention is defined as an individual's likelihood of purchasing a product based on attitudes toward the brand (Dodds et al., 1991) as well as the willingness to recommend it to others (Zeithaml et al., 1996). This variable is considered unidimensional (Chang, 2025), with indicators including purchase desire, purchase planning, and preference for a product compared with alternative products.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine causal relationships among variables through hypothesis testing. The research method used was a survey, with data collected through questionnaires to analyze the effect of storytelling marketing on purchase intention, mediated by brand experience and brand engagement among Premium make up brandmakeup

makeup consumers within the student population of Surabaya. The data used in this study consisted of primary data obtained through questionnaire distribution and secondary data collected from various literature sources (<https://www.leveons.id/insight/jasa-survey-pasar-dan-konsumen>).

The population of this study comprised university students in Surabaya who had previously purchased Premium make up brandmakeup products and were familiar with storytelling marketing content on social media. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, with a minimum sample size of 180 respondents based on the PLS-SEM rule. Data collection was conducted online through Google Forms using a Likert scale. The research variables included storytelling marketing as the independent variable, brand experience and brand engagement as mediating variables, and purchase intention as the dependent variable (<https://www.leveons.id/insight/data-driven-decision-making>).

Data analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the assistance of SmartPLS 3.0 software. Model evaluation was performed through the assessment of the outer model (validity and reliability) and the inner model (relationships among variables), including tests of the coefficient of determination (R^2), path coefficients, significance testing through bootstrapping, and mediation analysis. In addition, Q^2 , f^2 , and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) tests were conducted to assess model adequacy. Hypotheses

were accepted when the t-statistic value exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was less than 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the questionnaire distribution, respondents in this study were predominantly female, accounting for 98% of the sample, with the majority aged between 21 and 25 years (75%). Most respondents were undergraduate students (D4/Bachelor's degree), representing 91% of the sample, and originated from various universities in Surabaya, with the largest proportions coming from Universitas Negeri Surabaya (51%) and Universitas Airlangga (22%).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents reported purchasing Premium make up brandmakeup makeup products two to three times during the previous six months (46%), with foundation or cushion products being the most frequently used (32%), followed by lip products (31%). Respondents were also found to access storytelling content more frequently through TikTok (56%) and Instagram (38%). The findings indicate that the data used in this study met the requirements for analysis and were subsequently evaluated through measurement model and structural model assessments.

The evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) was conducted to assess construct validity and reliability. Validity testing was performed through convergent validity using the PLS approach. The results indicated that all indicators of the storytelling marketing, brand experience, brand engagement, and

purchase intention variables had outer loading values above 0.70, thereby satisfying the criteria for convergent validity.

Discriminant validity testing was conducted to ensure that each construct was empirically distinct from the others. The results demonstrated that all indicators had the highest cross-loading values on their respective constructs, thereby meeting the criteria for discriminant validity.

The discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker Criterion showed that all variables had square root Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than the correlations among variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that each construct was capable of adequately distinguishing itself from the others, and the model satisfied the requirements for discriminant validity.

Reliability testing was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the indicators using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The results indicated that all variables had Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and were therefore considered reliable. Although the Cronbach's Alpha values were below 0.70, this condition is still acceptable in PLS analysis due to the limited number of indicators. Consequently, all constructs in this study were considered to possess satisfactory internal consistency and were deemed appropriate for further analysis.

The evaluation of the structural model (inner model) was conducted to examine the relationships among constructs and the effects of independent variables on dependent variables. The coefficient of

determination (R^2) results indicated that brand experience (0.061) and brand engagement (0.099) exhibited low explanatory power, whereas purchase intention (0.342) fell within the moderate category. These results indicate that the model was able to moderately explain purchase intention, while the remaining variance was influenced by factors outside the model.

The predictive relevance (Q^2) test revealed that the Q^2 values for purchase intention (0.173), brand experience (0.031), and brand engagement (0.061) were all greater than zero, indicating that the model possessed adequate predictive capability for the endogenous variables.

The effect size (f^2) analysis showed that storytelling marketing had a small effect on purchase intention (0.012), brand experience (0.065), and brand engagement (0.110). Brand experience also had a small effect on purchase intention (0.075). Meanwhile, brand engagement demonstrated a moderate effect on purchase intention (0.201), making it the most influential variable within the model.

The model fit assessment based on the SRMR values indicated that both the saturated model (0.129) and the estimated model (0.146) exceeded the recommended threshold of ≤ 0.08 . Therefore, the model did not fully satisfy the model fit criteria. However, within the PLS-SEM framework, the model remained acceptable for further analysis.

Hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping method demonstrated that storytelling marketing did not have a significant effect on purchase intention. However, storytelling marketing had a positive and significant

effect on both brand experience and brand engagement. Furthermore, brand experience and brand engagement were found to have positive and significant effects on purchase intention, with brand engagement exerting the strongest influence. These findings suggest that improvements in purchase intention are more strongly driven by consumer engagement and experience with the brand than by storytelling marketing directly.

Mediation analysis using bootstrapping revealed that both brand experience and brand engagement significantly mediated the effect of storytelling marketing on purchase intention. This was evidenced by t-statistic values greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05 for both indirect pathways, with positive directions of influence. Therefore, both variables functioned as mediators that strengthened the relationship between storytelling marketing and purchase intention.

Overall, these findings confirm that both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) were adequately evaluated and demonstrate that the proposed research model is appropriate for explaining the relationships among the variables examined in this study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate that storytelling marketing does not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention. However, it exerts significant positive effects on brand experience and brand engagement, which in turn have been proven to enhance purchase intention and serve

as mediating variables within this relationship. These findings suggest that the influence of storytelling marketing is more effective when it operates through the formation of consumer experiences and engagement rather than through a direct pathway.

From a practical perspective, these findings indicate that brands should optimize narrative content strategies capable of creating meaningful experiences and encouraging active consumer interaction, such as through interactive content, relevant storytelling, and the enhancement of digital experiences. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the concepts of Narrative Transportation Theory, Brand Experience Theory, and Consumer Brand Engagement Theory in explaining consumer behavior in the digital era.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by the scope of respondents, which was restricted to university students who use cosmetic products. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate additional variables and expand both the research objects and respondent characteristics in order to obtain more comprehensive findings and improve the generalizability of the results.

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