Economic and Business Horizon

ISSN: 2963-2765

Economic and Business Horizon
Volume: 05
Issue: 06
Year: 2026
Page: 1133-1146

Citation:
Bancin, J. B., Sukmani, M., Harinie, L. H., & Muliyani, A. (2026). The moderating effect of Instagram social media marketing on purchase decisions. *Economic and Business Horizon*, *5*(6), 1133-1146.

The Moderating Effect of Instagram Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of service quality and Instagram social media marketing on customers' purchase decisions. A quantitative approach was employed using purposive sampling, with 100 respondents selected based on Cochran's formula. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that service quality has a positive and statistically significant effect on purchase decisions. In contrast, Instagram social media marketing has a positive but insignificant effect. The moderation analysis further reveals that social media marketing does not strengthen the relationship between service quality and purchase decisions; instead, it shows a negative but insignificant moderating effect, indicating no significant moderation. These findings suggest that improving service quality should remain the primary strategic priority, while Instagram content should accurately reflect the actual customer experience to align expectations with service performance. The study contributes to the digital marketing literature by demonstrating that a moderating variable does not necessarily enhance the relationship between constructs. It also provides practical insights for culinary MSMEs on integrating service quality and social media marketing to support more effective and sustainable business strategies.

Keywords

Instagram, Purchase Decisions, Service Quality, Social Media Marketing.

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in Indonesia's economy, contributing to employment, regional development, and economic resilience. In 2025, MSMEs accounted for approximately 61% of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed nearly 97% of the workforce. According to the Ministry of MSMEs, the number of business units increased from 30,178,617 in 2024 to 30,209,069 in 2025. Micro-enterprises dominated this structure, representing more than 99% of MSMEs, while small and medium enterprises accounted for approximately 0.24% and 0.05%, respectively. A similar trend occurred in Palangka Raya; based on Figure 1, MSMEs increased from 9,478 units in 2021 to 9,504 in 2022 and 27,298 in 2023. These comprised 19,042 micro-enterprises, 7,922 small enterprises, and 334 medium enterprises, highlighting their contribution to regional economic development.

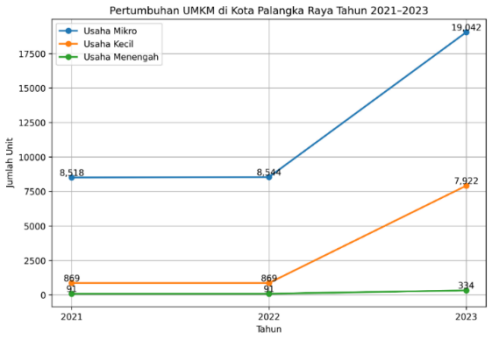


Figure 1. Growth of MSMEs in Palangka Raya, 2021-2023

Rapid MSME growth has intensified competition in Palangka Raya's culinary sector, where expanding cafes and restaurants provide consumers with diverse dining options. This environment encourages businesses to develop distinctive advantages to attract and retain customers (Osei et al., 2026; Szukits & Marciniak, 2026). Offering unique value, superior benefits, and differentiated experiences helps shape consumer preferences and strengthen market positions (Sueda & Seo, 2024; Bai et al., 2025). Purchase decisions involve evaluating available alternatives through need recognition, information search, option evaluation, selection, and post-purchase assessment (Tjiptono, 2014). Understanding these factors is essential for businesses to attract customers, remain competitive, and achieve sustainable growth.

Service quality influences purchasing behavior in competitive markets. Customers evaluate service and interactions; meeting or exceeding expectations builds satisfaction and encourages initial and repeat purchases (Huang & Kim, 2023; Yum & Yoo, 2023). Service quality is an organization's ability to meet customer needs, assessed by comparing expected and actual performance (Najib et al., 2023). In culinary businesses, friendliness, responsiveness, order accuracy, and dining comfort shape evaluations, making service quality a resource for satisfaction, competitiveness, and purchase decisions (Seo & Park, 2018; Duffett & Wakeham, 2022). Social media marketing shapes purchasing decisions by transforming business–consumer communication. Platforms enable promotion, information sharing, engagement, and customer relationships (Diebes & Iriqat, 2019). It delivers promotional content through social networks according to target audiences' interests and needs (Setianingtyas & Nurlaili, 2020), while creating, communicating, and exchanging stakeholder value (Mukuan et al., 2023). For MSMEs, it offers market reach, brand awareness, and consumer trust; creative, interactive content

facilitates information sharing, strengthens brand image, and deepens customer relationships.

Bandrek Opung Cafe, established in 2021, is a culinary MSME in Palangka Raya that differentiates itself by introducing Medan, North Sumatra's cultural identity through traditional food, beverages, and dining experiences. Its signature menu includes authentic Medan-style bandrek and popular regional dishes such as Soto Medan. The cafe also hosts weekend live music featuring Medan songs, attracting local customers and visitors seeking cultural experiences. However, preliminary interviews identified several service-related challenges, including long wait times during peak hours, inadequate rain shelters, and limited parking. Interviews with the owner and direct observations also indicated that the restaurant underutilizes Instagram marketing, as reflected in infrequent content uploads and relatively low audience engagement.

Although numerous studies have examined the influence of service quality and social media marketing on purchase decisions, previous findings remain inconsistent. Several studies report that service quality does not always significantly influence purchasing behavior. For example, Hidayat (2021) found no significant relationship between service quality and purchase decisions among coffee shop customers in Gresik. Similar findings were reported by Ena et al. (2019), who observed that service quality did not significantly affect purchase decisions. Likewise, Pewarta et al. (2022) concluded that social media marketing activities did not significantly influence consumer purchase decisions. These inconsistent findings indicate that further empirical investigation is needed across different business contexts, consumer characteristics, and industry settings.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to provide additional empirical evidence regarding the relationships among service quality, Instagram social media marketing, and purchase decisions. Furthermore, this research offers a distinctive context by investigating a culturally themed cafe whose business identity is strongly rooted in Palangka Raya's culinary heritage. These characteristics distinguish the study from previous research on conventional cafes and are expected to offer broader insights into consumer purchasing behavior in culture-based culinary businesses.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Service Quality and Purchase Decisions

Service quality refers to an organization's ability to consistently meet or exceed customer expectations through service delivery. It reflects customers' overall evaluations of their service experiences and serves as an important indicator of organizational performance. Service quality as organizational activities intended to fulfill customer expectations emphasizes customers' perceptions after experiencing a service (Susilowati & Yasri, 2019; Permono & Pasaribu, 2021). Similarly, service quality is an overall evaluation of service encounters that influences customer satisfaction. Service quality can be assessed through five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Hoque et al., 2023). Tangibility concerns physical facilities, equipment, and employee appearance; reliability refers to consistent and accurate service delivery; responsiveness involves employees' willingness and promptness in assisting customers; assurance reflects employees' competence, professionalism, and ability to inspire confidence; and empathy represents individualized attention and concern for customers' specific needs.

Service quality has long been recognized as a key determinant of consumer purchasing behavior. Organizations that deliver services that satisfy or exceed customer expectations create positive experiences that foster satisfaction, strengthen customer loyalty, and reinforce long-term relationships with consumers (Kalra et al., 2026). Previous empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the positive

relationship between service quality and purchase decisions. Sanjaya et al. (2024) reported that service quality significantly influenced customers' purchase decisions within the culinary industry. Similar findings were obtained by Utomo and Santosa (2023), who concluded that superior service quality positively affected purchasing behavior. Likewise, service quality significantly determined Generation Z consumers' purchase decisions.

H1: Service quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

2.2. Social Media Marketing and Purchase Decisions

Social media marketing has become an important component of digital marketing, enabling businesses to promote products, communicate with consumers, and build customer relationships through online platforms. Hartzel et al. (2011) emphasize its role in enhancing corporate image and fostering long-term customer relationships through interactive communication. Social media marketing comprises five dimensions. Entertainment refers to content's ability to attract attention, entertain audiences, and encourage content creation or sharing. Interaction involves communication and information exchange between users and businesses, including discussions and the sharing of product experiences and opinions (Godey et al., 2016). Trendiness concerns providing current information and emerging trends that support consumer decision-making (Muntinga et al., 2011). Customization reflects a business's ability to provide personalized information and services that match individual preferences, reduce information overload, and support decision-making. Finally, Electronic Word-Of-Mouth (e-WOM) encompasses online reviews, recommendations, testimonials, and shared consumer experiences that shape perceptions of products and brands and influence purchasing decisions.

Besides service quality, consumers' purchase decisions are increasingly influenced by digital marketing strategies implemented through social media platforms. Social media enables firms to communicate promotional information efficiently, reach broader audiences, and establish stronger emotional connections with consumers (Pahlawan et al., 2025; Dasmi et al., 2026). Engaging content and interactive communication also contribute to positive perceptions of products and services, thereby encouraging purchasing behavior (Zhang et al., 2026). Hashmi et al. (2024) stated that social media marketing significantly influenced consumers' purchase decisions. Likewise, Siddiqui et al. (2025) showed that social media marketing contributed substantially to purchasing behavior in Pakistan's apparel industry and exerted a stronger influence than electronic word-of-mouth.

H2: Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions

2.3. The Moderating Effect of Social Media Marketing

Service quality is an important determinant of purchase decisions, as consumers evaluate service experiences when selecting products or services that meet their needs and expectations. However, the strength of this relationship may depend on other factors that shape consumers' perceptions and evaluations. Purchase decisions are influenced by personal, psychological, and social factors (Sangadji & Sopiah, 2013). Kotler and Armstrong (2012) describe decision-making as a process involving problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. These perspectives suggest that consumers' purchasing decisions are shaped not only by direct service experiences but also by the information and perceptions developed before purchasing.

Social media marketing may moderate the relationship between service quality and purchase decisions by reinforcing or weakening it. Through platforms such as

Instagram, businesses can communicate their value propositions, engage with consumers, and shape expectations before customers experience their services (Ngo et al., 2025a). Hartzel et al. (2011) emphasize social media's role in enhancing corporate image and building long-term customer relationships through interactive communication. Effective social media marketing may therefore strengthen service quality's influence by reinforcing positive perceptions and aligning promotional messages with actual service experiences (Siddiqui et al., 2025). Moreover, social media expands market reach and facilitates customer interaction, potentially strengthening consumers' perceptions of service quality (Zollo et al., 2020; Ngo et al., 2025b). Accordingly, when digital communication accurately reflects service performance, the positive relationship between service quality and purchase decisions may become stronger.

H3: Social media marketing positively moderates the relationship between service quality and purchase decisions.

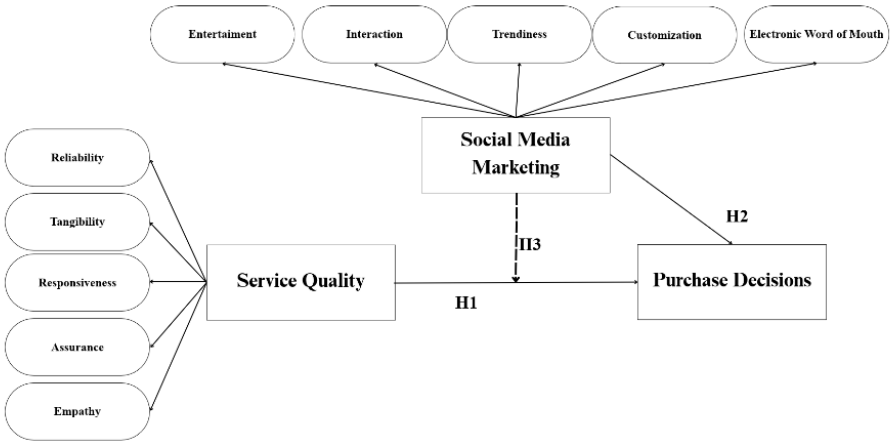


Figure 2. Research Conceptual Framework

The proposed relationships among service quality, social media marketing, and purchase decisions are illustrated in the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2. The framework examines the relationships among service quality, social media marketing, and purchase decisions. Service quality is proposed to have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (H1), reflecting the importance of reliable service, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible aspects in shaping consumers' purchasing choices. Social media marketing is also hypothesized to positively influence purchase decisions (H2) through engaging, interactive, informative, and personalized digital content. Furthermore, social media marketing is proposed to positively moderate the relationship between service quality and purchase decisions (H3), potentially strengthening the influence of service quality when online communication reinforces customers' service perceptions.

3. Methods

This study used a quantitative approach and a causal research design to examine the relationships among the proposed constructs and evaluate the moderating role of social media marketing within the conceptual model. The research was conducted at Bandrek Opung Cafe, a culinary MSME located in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan. Specifically, the study examined how service quality influences customers' purchase decisions and assessed whether Instagram-based social media marketing moderates this relationship. The sample size was determined using Cochran's sample size formula with a 10% margin of error, resulting in a minimum

sample requirement of 96.04 respondents. To improve representativeness and simplify data collection, the sample size was rounded to 100 respondents. Respondents were selected using a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling approach. To ensure that participants possessed sufficient experience with the research object, respondents were required to meet three eligibility criteria: (1) be at least 17 years old, (2) have previously purchased products from Bandrek Opung Cafe, and (3) follow the cafe's official Instagram account.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents who met the predetermined eligibility criteria. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions of service quality, Instagram social media marketing, and purchase decisions at Bandrek Opung Cafe. Service quality was measured through five dimensions: reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Social media marketing was assessed using five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and e-WOM. Purchase decisions were measured using indicators representing respondents' purchasing decisions toward the cafe's products. The questionnaire was administered to respondents aged 17 years or older who had previously purchased products from Bandrek Opung Cafe and followed its official Instagram account. These criteria ensured that participants had direct experience with the cafe and exposure to its Instagram marketing activities, enabling them to provide relevant responses regarding the constructs examined in this study.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Descriptive statistics summarized respondents' demographics, including gender, generation, educational attainment, occupation, and monthly income. PLS-SEM examined the hypothesized relationships among service quality, social media marketing, and purchase decisions, considering the model's Higher-Order Constructs (HOCs) and moderating effect. Following the hierarchical component model proposed by Sarstedt et al. (2019), service quality and social media marketing were specified as HOCs, with their respective dimensions treated as Lower-Order Constructs (LOCs). The measurement model was evaluated using the disjoint two-stage approach recommended for reflective higher-order construct models. In the first stage, the validity and reliability of the LOCs were assessed. After establishing their adequacy, the second stage evaluated the HOCs. Once the measurement model (outer model) met the required validity and reliability criteria, the structural model (inner model) was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. This sequential evaluation followed the procedure described by Becker et al. (2012) and supported the systematic assessment of the proposed research model.

4. Results

The descriptive analysis indicates that most respondents were female, accounting for 59% of the total sample (59 respondents). By generation, most respondents belonged to Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), and by educational attainment, respondents with a bachelor's degree made up the largest group, representing 54% of the sample. By occupation and monthly income, most respondents were university students with monthly incomes below IDR 1,500,000. A detailed summary of respondents' demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	41	41
	Female	59	59
Generation	Generation Z (1997–2012)	70	70
	Generation Y (1981–1996)	26	26
	Generation X (1965–1980)	4	4
Education	Bachelor's degree	54	54
	High school/equivalent	19	19
	Postgraduate	25	25
	Diploma	2	2
Occupation	Civil servant/military/police	23	23
	State/region-owned BUMD	2	2
	Private sector employee	3	3
	Student	61	61
	Other	9	9
	Entrepreneur	2	2
Monthly Income	< IDR 1,500,000	58	58
	IDR 1,500,000–4,000,000	20	20
	IDR 4,000,000–6,500,000	10	10
	> IDR 6,500,000	12	12

Convergent validity was assessed to determine the extent to which each indicator adequately represented its corresponding latent construct. Factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used as the primary criteria for this assessment. Based on the threshold suggested by Ghozali and Latan (2015), an indicator was retained when its loading exceeded 0.70, while an AVE value above 0.50 was regarded as evidence of acceptable convergent validity.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Reliability for LOC

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Assurance	Assur01	0.910	0.852	0.828	0.920
	Assur02	0.936			
Customization	Cust01	0.901	0.811	0.767	0.896
	Cust02	0.900			
Empathy	Emp01	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Entertainment	Ent01	0.838	0.736	0.827	0.893
	Ent02	0.850			
	Ent03	0.885			
Electronic Word of Mouth	e-WOM02	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Interaction	Inter01	0.805	0.708	0.795	0.879
	Inter02	0.869			
	Inter03	0.848			
Purchase Decisions	PD01	0.810	0.718	0.868	0.910
	PD04	0.857			
	PD05	0.895			
	PD06	0.824			
Reliability	Rel01	0.859	0.769	0.701	0.869
	Rel02	0.895			
Responsiveness	Res01	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Tangible	Tan01	0.839	0.716	0.802	0.883
	Tan02	0.864			
	Tan04	0.835			
Trendliness	Trend01	0.930	0.868	0.848	0.930
	Trend02	0.934			

The first-stage analysis assessed the LOCs of service quality and social media marketing. As shown in Table 2, all retained indicators had factor loadings ranging from 0.805 to 1.000, while AVE values ranged from 0.708 to 1.000, exceeding the 0.50 threshold and confirming convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.701 to 1.000 and 0.869 to 1.000, respectively, surpassing the recommended 0.70 threshold (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Thus, all constructs demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Test – LOC

Items	Assur	Cust	Emp	Ent	e-WOM	Inter	Kep	Rel	Res	Tan	Trend
Assur	0.923										
Cust	0.444	0.900									
Emp	0.710	0.439	1.000								
Ent	0.396	0.688	0.407	0.858							
e-WOM	0.417	0.562	0.379	0.583	1.000						
Inter	0.471	0.805	0.409	0.774	0.643	0.841					
PD	0.777	0.391	0.635	0.395	0.488	0.486	0.847				
Rel	0.596	0.346	0.655	0.319	0.266	0.351	0.631	0.877			
Res	0.732	0.348	0.581	0.312	0.273	0.441	0.670	0.603	1.000		
Tan	0.712	0.449	0.729	0.374	0.301	0.448	0.621	0.592	0.736	0.846	
Trend	0.468	0.736	0.424	0.757	0.517	0.796	0.456	0.338	0.402	0.467	0.932

Note: Assur = Assurance; Cust = Customization; Emp = Empathy; Ent = Entertainment; e-WOM = Electronic Word of Mouth; Inter = Interaction; PD = Purchasing Decision; Rel = Reliability; Res = Responsiveness; Tan = Tangible; Trend = Trendliness

The Fornell–Larcker criterion was applied to assess the discriminant validity of the LOCs. As shown in Table 3, the square root of the AVE for each construct (the diagonal values) exceeds its correlations with the other constructs. For example, assurance has a diagonal value of 0.923, while its highest correlation with another construct is 0.777 with purchasing decision. Similarly, customization (0.900), entertainment (0.858), and interaction (0.841) have diagonal values higher than their respective inter-construct correlations. The results indicate that the LOCs demonstrate adequate discriminant validity, suggesting that each construct is empirically distinct from the others (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Table 4. Convergent Validity and Reliability Test for HOC

HOC	LOC	Loading Factor	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Service Quality	Reliability	0.780	0.692	0.889	0.918
	Tangible	0.829			
	Responsiveness	0.846			
	Assurance	0.881			
	Empathy	0.821			
Social Media Marketing	Entertainment	0.876	0.713	0.899	0.925
	Interaction	0.887			
	Trendliness	0.863			
	Customization	0.844			
	e-WOM	0.746			

After confirming the adequacy of the lower-order constructs, the assessment proceeded to the HOCs of service quality and social media marketing. As presented in Table 4, service quality recorded factor loadings ranging from 0.780 to 0.881, an AVE of 0.692, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.889, and Composite Reliability of 0.918. Social media marketing demonstrated factor loadings ranging from 0.746 to 0.887, an AVE of 0.713, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.899, and Composite Reliability of 0.925. All factor loadings exceeded 0.70, both AVE values were above 0.50, and both reliability coefficients exceeded 0.70. These results indicate that both higher-order constructs satisfy the recommended criteria for convergent validity and internal consistency, supporting their adequacy for subsequent structural model evaluation.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Test – HOC

Construct	Purchase Decisions	Service Quality	Social Media Marketing
Purchase Decisions	0.847		
Service Quality	0.771	0.832	
Social Media Marketing	0.434	0.466	0.845

Table 5 presents the results of the Fornell-Larcker assessment for the higher-order constructs. For each construct, the square root of its AVE exceeded its correlations with the other constructs in the model. This pattern indicates that the higher-order constructs are sufficiently differentiated from one another and adequately represent their respective theoretical dimensions. The measurement model demonstrates satisfactory validity and reliability, supporting its use in the subsequent evaluation of the structural relationships.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Test

Statistics	Value
Variable	Purchase Decisions
R-Square	0.614

The predictive accuracy of the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2). Based on Table 6, the analysis yielded an R^2 value of 0.614 for the endogenous construct purchase decisions. This means the predictors in the model account for 61.4% of the observed variation in purchase decisions. The unexplained portion (38.6%) may reflect the contribution of determinants outside the variables examined in this study. The model shows sufficient explanatory strength and offers acceptable predictive performance for purchase decisions.

Table 7. Hypothesis Test

Path Relationship	Coefficient	t-statistics	P-value	Conclusion
Service Quality -> Purchase Decisions	0.674	8.642	<0.001	Accepted
Service Quality*Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decisions	-0.086	1.643	0.051	Rejected
Social Media Marketing -> Purchase Decisions	0.146	1.453	0.073	Rejected

Table 7 presents the hypothesis testing results for the relationships among service quality, social media marketing, and purchase decisions. Service quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, with a path coefficient of 0.674, a t-statistic of 8.642, and a p-value below 0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, indicating that higher service quality is associated with stronger purchase decisions. In contrast, the interaction between service quality and social media

marketing has a negative path coefficient of −0.086, with a t-statistic of 1.643 and a p-value of 0.051. As the p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, the moderation hypothesis is rejected. Social media marketing also has a positive but statistically insignificant effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.146$; $t = 1.453$; $p = 0.073$). Thus, the corresponding hypothesis is rejected. These findings suggest that service quality significantly predicts purchase decisions, whereas the direct and moderating effects of social media marketing are not statistically significant at the 5% level.

5. Discussion

The analysis identified service quality as a significant positive predictor of customers' purchase decisions. Among the relationships tested, service quality demonstrated the strongest effect, highlighting its importance in customers' purchasing decisions. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing service quality in consumer decision-making. Azizah and Kusnanto (2023) found that improved service quality significantly increased purchase decisions at Eat Toast Cafe in Indramayu. Similar findings were reported by Utomo and Santosa (2023) and Sanjaya et al. (2024), who identified service quality as an important determinant of purchasing behavior across different business settings. These consistent findings suggest that superior service can create positive customer experiences and encourage purchasing behavior. Specifically, prompt responses, reliable service, courteous employees, and a comfortable environment may strengthen customers' confidence in a business and increase their willingness to purchase. Therefore, service quality should be a strategic resource for Bandrek Opung Cafe, as it can enhance customer satisfaction, support purchase decisions, and strengthen the cafe's long-term competitiveness.

Social media marketing had no statistically significant effect on purchase decisions, indicating that Instagram marketing was not a significant determinant of customers' purchasing decisions. This finding contrasts with Wardani et al. (2024), who found that Instagram marketing significantly influenced purchase decisions. This discrepancy suggests that social media marketing effectiveness may vary according to business characteristics, customer profiles, and digital marketing implementation. Although statistically insignificant, the positive coefficient suggests a potential positive relationship, but its influence was weaker than that of service quality. Thus, Instagram may function primarily as a complementary promotional tool rather than a principal driver of purchasing decisions. Follow-up interviews provided further insight: customers said their visits were driven more by previous dining experiences, recommendations from family and friends, and service quality than by Instagram promotions. Several respondents also perceived the cafe's Instagram account as relatively inactive and less engaging because of infrequent uploads and limited content variety. These findings suggest that attractive online content alone may be insufficient to stimulate purchases without a satisfying service experience. Consequently, Instagram currently serves mainly as an informational platform rather than a persuasive marketing instrument that directly influences customers' purchase decisions.

The final hypothesis examined whether Instagram social media marketing strengthens the relationship between service quality and purchase decisions. The interaction effect was negative ($\beta = -0.086$) but statistically insignificant ($t = 1.643$, $p = 0.051$). This result suggests that Instagram marketing does not strengthen the positive relationship between service quality and purchase decisions. Under the proposed model, the negative coefficient indicates a tendency for the relationship to weaken as social media marketing increases, although this effect is not statistically significant. The finding also indicates that Instagram marketing may not sufficiently

reinforce customers' perceptions of service quality to encourage purchasing behavior (Anggara et al., 2024). Follow-up interviews may help explain this result. Several customers reported that Instagram content did not accurately reflect the actual atmosphere and service experience. In fact, some perceived the cafe's actual environment and service performance as better than its online portrayal. This discrepancy suggests that digital content shapes customer expectations before a visit. When online communication fails to represent the experience, Instagram marketing may be less effective in reinforcing positive service perceptions and supporting purchase decisions.

This interpretation aligns with the findings of Mufadhol et al. (2024), who showed that content quality significantly influences consumers' perceptions of products and brands. Their study also emphasized that content consistency, posting frequency, and interactions with followers contribute to customer engagement and long-term loyalty. Likewise, Gallaugher and Ransbotham (2010) and Seo and Park (2018) argued that social media plays an essential role in strengthening brand image and customer relationships. Therefore, culinary MSMEs should ensure that their digital communication accurately reflects customers' real experiences. Aligning online promotional content with actual service performance may enable businesses to maximize the strategic value of social media as an integrated component of customer relationship management rather than merely as a promotional platform.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships among service quality, Instagram social media marketing, and purchase decisions using a quantitative causal design and PLS-SEM analysis of 100 purposively selected respondents. The findings indicate that service quality has a positive and statistically significant effect on purchase decisions, establishing it as the strongest predictor in the model. In contrast, Instagram social media marketing has no statistically significant direct effect on purchase decisions, and its moderating effect on the relationship between service quality and purchase decisions is also insignificant. The model explains 61.4% of the variation in purchase decisions. These findings highlight the importance of prioritizing service quality through reliable service, prompt responses, courteous employees, and a comfortable environment. Instagram should complement these efforts by presenting accurate, engaging, and consistent content that reflects the actual customer experience rather than serving as the primary driver of purchasing decisions.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focused on a single culinary MSME, limiting the generalizability of its findings to businesses with different characteristics. Furthermore, purposive sampling restricted participation to 100 respondents aged at least 17 years who had previously purchased from the cafe and followed its official Instagram account. The quantitative design and focus on three constructs also limited the scope of the investigation, while the interview findings suggest that other factors may influence purchasing decisions. Future research should involve larger samples and multiple culinary businesses to improve external validity, compare Instagram with other platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, and incorporate additional variables, including customer satisfaction, brand image, trust, e-WOM, customer engagement, and perceived value. Mixed-methods or longitudinal designs could also provide deeper insights into how digital marketing and actual service experiences jointly shape consumer purchase decisions over time.

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