The Influence of Visual Content on Social Media on Generation Z Purchasing Decisions with Brand Engagement as an Intervening Variable

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of visual content on social media on Generation Z's purchase decisions, with brand engagement as an intervening variable. The population in this study consists of Generation Z in Palembang City, totaling 135 individuals. The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, with criteria for Gen-Z individuals aged 12-27 years, social media users, and those who have made purchases through social media. This study employs a quantitative method with SmartPLS 3.0 as the analysis tool to test the relationships between the proposed variables. The results show that visual content has a significant effect on purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly through brand engagement as an intervening variable. Brand engagement is proven to mediate the relationship between visual content and purchase decisions. These findings highlight the importance of managing creative and relevant visual content for brands to build emotional connections with Generation Z, thus driving purchase decisions. This study offers practical implications for marketers to enhance social media-based marketing strategies to more effectively reach Generation Z.

Keywords: Visual Content, Brand Engagement, Purchase Decisions.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the marketing world, especially through social media. Social media has become a highly popular platform for sharing information and promoting products, particularly among Generation Z. This generation is known as digital natives because they grew up alongside technological advancements. They typically spend a significant amount of their time on social media, with an average daily usage of 4-6 hours (Statista, 2023). This finding aligns with data published by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), which shows that 85% of the Generation Z population in various countries uses social media every day, with an average usage duration of 3 to 4 hours per day. Popular platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are favorites among Generation Z, with a strong preference for visual content, such as images, videos, and infographics. This visual content is unique in delivering information directly and engagingly, making it an effective tool for brands to capture the attention of their target consumers (Hsieh & Chen, 2011).

This habit has made social media the primary channel for obtaining information, identifying trends, and making purchases. Visual content, such as photos, videos, and infographics, plays a key role in capturing the attention of Generation Z, who tend to be more responsive to visuals than to long texts (Forbes, 2022). Moreover, visual content not only serves as a communication tool but also acts as a key driver in influencing purchasing decisions. According to a HubSpot study (2022), approximately 72% of consumers are likely to purchase a product after seeing engaging visual content on social media. This indicates that the appealing visual presentation of products or services can increase consumer interest, leading them to explore and ultimately buy the product

In addition, information presented visually is more persuasive than textual content (Kusuma et al., 1991). Visual content also allows for better representation of experiences and creates a sense of visibility for intangible concepts (Akpinar & Berger, 2017; Bakri et al., 2020). Images effectively stimulate users' thoughts and emotions, triggering the heuristic of realism, and images are also generally considered more authentic than written text (Sundar, 2008). Not only do they capture consumers' attention, but high-quality visual content can also build a deep emotional connection between consumers and the brand. This connection is known as brand engagement, which refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement of consumers with a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

In the context of Generation Z, brand engagement becomes an important aspect that bridges the influence of visual content on purchasing decisions. Previous research has shown that a high level of brand engagement can enhance consumer loyalty and drive positive purchasing decisions (Kumar & Kaushik, 2021; Ibrahim & Suastrini, 2024). This is highly relevant, as Generation Z tends to choose brands that offer interactive experiences and two-way communication on social media. In other words, effective visual content not only captures attention but also creates deep engagement that positively influences purchasing decisions.

The importance of visual content and brand engagement has been widely discussed, yet there is still a gap in research regarding how these two interact in influencing Generation Z's purchasing decisions. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the impact of visual content on social media on Generation Z's purchasing decisions, both directly and through brand engagement as an intervening variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual Content
Visual content refers to various forms of content or material that can be enjoyed visually on media in today's technological world, such as blogs, wikis, discussion forums, chat messages, tweets, podcasts, pins, digital images, videos, audio files, advertisements, and other forms of media content created by users of online systems or services, often through social media platforms (Martajaya, 2021).

According to Backlinko (2021), visual content refers to the use of elements such as images, videos, graphics, and other designs to convey messages across various media platforms, including social media, websites, and applications. Gallo (2021) states that visual content, such as images and videos, has the power to capture attention more quickly than text, with higher effectiveness in increasing audience engagement. This explains why visual elements are crucial in digital marketing campaigns, especially in today's fast-paced digital era.

Several types of visual content commonly used in digital marketing include images, videos, infographics, and memes. Each of these types has its own advantages in conveying information. For example, images and videos can communicate messages quickly, while infographics combine data and visuals to explain complex information in a more easily understood manner (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2021). Effective visuals help audiences absorb information and interact with the brand. This is particularly important in the context of audiences who have shorter attention spans in a digital world saturated with information.

The power of visual content also lies in its ability to create an emotional experience for the audience. Visual elements can evoke certain feelings, such as happiness, awe, or even fear, which can enhance engagement and encourage action (Schender, 1997). For example, using emotion-provoking visuals in marketing campaigns can increase customer loyalty and strengthen the relationship between consumers and the brand.

According to Anggoro & Pranata (2020), several indicators of visual content include: 1) Image content, such as using images relevant to the product or service being offered, and visually appealing images that align with the target market; 2) Clear language, such as using words that are easily understood by the target audience, and images that match the product being introduced; and 3) Relevant information, where the information is easy to understand and not confusing, and the message is directly related to the product or service being offered, clearly highlighting its benefits.

Brand Engagement
Brand engagement refers to the behavior of customers after repeated purchases (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018). Brand engagement is a form of motivation related to involvement and attention absorption, which can be inferred from patterns of action or withdrawal in relation to the target object (Pham & Avnet, 2009). Engagement reflects motivation, which arises from an individual's interactive experience with the focal object in enhancing brand awareness in the process (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Additionally, a high level of engagement reflects a deep emotional connection, which encourages the customer's willingness to develop and maintain the relationship (Zuraidah et al., 2016).

Brand engagement is a psychological state that occurs after consumers experience a specific product, service, or brand (Ubgade & Joshi, 2023). Consumer brand engagement is defined as the relevance that an individual feels toward a brand based on inherent needs, values, and interests (Razmus, 2021). Customer engagement is seen as an investment of resources driven by motivation and willingness (including cognitive knowledge/skills) (Mohd-Ramly & Omar, 2017).

According to Hollebeek et al. (2014), brand engagement in self-concept refers to positive brand attachment with consumers on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral level during interactions. Furthermore, Hollebeek et al. (2014) suggest that brand engagement consists of three dimensions: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement.

Purchase Decision
The purchase decision is the stage in the decision-making process where consumers actually make a purchase (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The purchase decision is a process in which consumers recognize their problem, seek information about a particular product or brand they wish to buy, evaluate how well the product solves their problem compared to alternative options, and ultimately lead to a purchase decision (Tua & Andariyani, 2022). Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) explain that the purchase decision is the selection of one option from two or more alternatives. In other words, consumers who are about to make a choice must decide from among the various alternatives available. Meanwhile, according to Devaraj et al. (2003), online purchase decisions refer to a buying process done by consumers through alternatives using the internet, which has higher utility value.

Naela (2018) in her study suggests that there are 3 indicators that can affect purchase decisions: 1) Consumer confidence, 2) Deciding without hesitation, and 3) Alignment of attributes with needs. According to Devaraj et al. (2003), purchase decisions can be measured through several indicators: 1) Efficiency, 2) Value, and 3) Interaction. Lestari & Iriani (2018) in their study also suggest that purchase decisions can be measured through the following indicators: 1) Vendor reputation, 2) Purchase priority, 3) Search efficiency, and 4) Transaction frequency.

Based on the background explanation, conceptual review, and relevant studies, the conceptual framework of this research is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
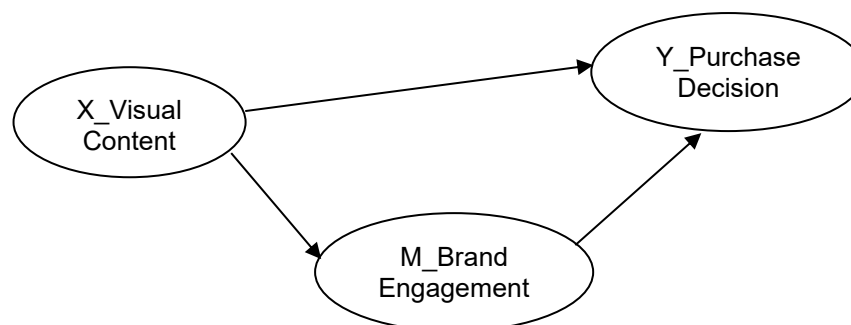

Figure 1. Concetual Framework

Based on the research objectives, the hypotheses of this study are as follows:
1. It is suspected that visual content has a significant effect on brand engagement.
2. It is suspected that visual content has a significant effect on purchase decision.
3. It is suspected that brand engagement has a significant effect on purchase decision.
4. It is suspected that visual content, through brand engagement, has a significant effect on purchase decision

RESEARCH METHOD

Population and Sample. The population for this study consists of Generation Z in Palembang. Since the population size is unknown, the author determined the sample size using the theory proposed by Hair et al. (2017), which states that the minimum sample size should be five times the number of indicators (27), resulting in 135 participants. Meanwhile, the sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on specific considerations (Sugiyono, 2019). The reason for using purposive sampling is that the sample is selected based on the following criteria: Gen-Z aged 12-27 years, social media users, and those who have made purchases through social media.

Research Methods and Approaches. This study is essentially categorized as both descriptive and explanatory research. Sugiyono (2019) defines descriptive research as a statistical technique that evaluates data by characterizing it in its original form. The general description of the research components being studied in this research, which include Visual Content, Brand Engagement, and Purchase Decision, is obtained using descriptive techniques. Meanwhile, the explanatory research uses hypothesis testing to determine the causal relationships between the research variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Analytics and Data Analysis Tools. To analyze the data in this study, Partial Least Squares software version 3.0 will be used. This analytical approach is used to explain the existence or absence of relationships between latent variables (predictors), as well as to confirm the theory. However, prior to that, the model will first be tested through the outer model and inner model tests (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Operasional Variabel. This study consists of three variables: one exogenous variable (Visual Content), one intervening variable (Brand Engagement), and one endogenous variable (Purchase Decision). The measurement indicators for each variable are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Operational Variables

No	Variable	Dimensions	Indicator
1	**X_Visual Content** *Source: Anggoro & Pranata (2020)*	Image content	1. Interesting and informative
			3. Product benefits clearly
			4. Want to try the product
		Clear language	5. Easy to understand
			6. Familiar to consumers
			7. Informative and educational
		Relevant information	8. Complete information
			9. Accurate and reliable
			10. Choose the right product
2	**M_Brand Engagement** *Source: Hollebeek et al (2014)*	Cognitive	11. Attention
			12. Understanding of Information
			13. Rational Evaluation
		Emotion	14. Personal Attachment
			15. Response to Brand Experience
			16. Perception of Trust in Brands
		Behavior	17. Participate in Brand Activities
			18. Supporting Brands on Social Media
			19. Recommendations to Others
3		Efficiency	20. Fast time

No	Variable	Dimensions	Indicator
	Y_Purchase Decision *Source: Devaraj et al (2003)*		21. Easy to use
			22. Easy in search
		Value	23. Providing benefits
			24. As expected
			25. Unique
		Interaction	26. Involvement in Communication
			27. Ease of interaction
			28. Relevant information

RESULTS

Respondent Profile Characteristics

The profile of the respondents in this study is intended to provide an overview of the characteristics or demographics of the participants (respondents) in this survey. The respondent profile in this study includes gender, age, highest level of education, and daily social media usage duration. The table below provides an overview of the respondent profile recorded in this survey

Tabel 2. Respondent Profile

No	Respondent Profile	Amount	Percentage (%)
1	**Gender**		
	Man	76	56,3
	Woman	59	43,7
2	**Age Group**		
	< 15 Years	2	1,5
	15 – 18 Years	32	23,7
	19 – 22 Years	97	71,9
	> 26 Years	4	3
3	**Education**		
	Junior High School	14	10,4
	Senior High School	70	51,9
	Diploma	12	8,9
	Bachelor degree	37	27,4
	Master	2	1,5
4	**Duration of Social Media Usage per Day**		
	< 3 Hours	20	14,8
	3 – 5 Hours	81	60
	> 5 Hours	34	25,2

Description of Research Variables

The Likert scale is used in descriptive analysis to determine the state of the observed variables, which include digital marketing, company image, and interest in visiting the Prodia laboratory clinic. This scale is intended to determine whether the subjects agree or disagree with the statements presented. Descriptive analysis involves creating a frequency distribution table to assess whether the variable scores fall within the range from very poor to very good. The following table summarizes information about the variables described in this study.

Table 3. Description of Research Variables

No	Variable	Item	Score	Scale Range	Information
1	X_Visual Content	9	4.196	3.40 – 4.10	Good
2	M_Brand Engagement	9	4.140	3.40 – 4.10	Good
3	Y_Purchase Decision	9	4.029	3.40 – 4.10	Good

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)
Three types of tests are applied in the evaluation of the measurement model to ensure the contribution of each item in measuring latent variables. The first test, convergent validity analysis, aims to assess the relationship between each item and the latent variable. The second test, discriminant validity, is used to evaluate reflective items against latent variables and measure the accuracy of the research model. Finally, composite reliability is conducted to ensure the extent to which the research items can be relied upon in identifying latent variables.
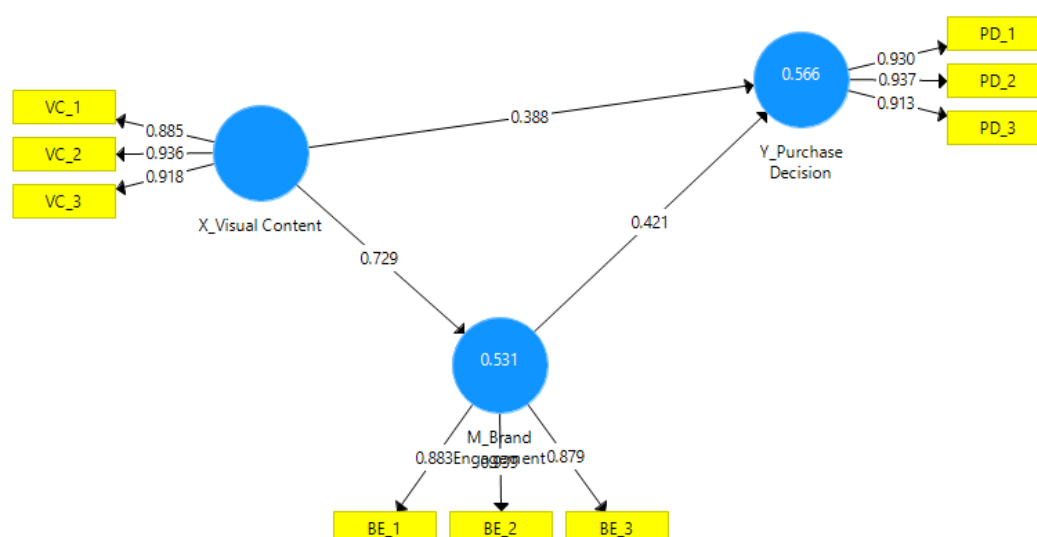

Figure 2. Full Outer Model

Figure 2 above clearly shows that the contribution of each indicator to the latent variable has been validated. As a result, the constructs created using the indicators for each variable do not need to be removed.

Structural Model Test Results (Inner Model)
The purpose of structural model analysis is to determine whether the resulting research model meets all the criteria for good testing, so it can be considered adequate. The Goodness of Fit Index, Path Coefficient, and R-Square are used as tools to evaluate the structural model. This structural model testing is crucial as it focuses on achieving the research objectives while simultaneously validating the hypotheses proposed in the research model.

a. R–Square value (Coefficient of determination)
The R-Square analysis aims to evaluate the quality of the developed research model. To meet the testing criteria, each exogenous variable must be able to predict or explain the endogenous variable. Ghozali and Latan (2015) state that an R-Square value of 0.75 indicates a strong relationship, 0.50 indicates a moderate relationship, and 0.25 indicates a weak relationship. The findings from this test are explained in Table 2.

Table 2. R-Square Test Results

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
M_Brand Engagement	0,531	0,528
Y_Purchase Decision	0,566	0,559

Source: SmartPLS Output 3, 2024.

The findings regarding the coefficient of determination, as shown in Table 2, indicate an R-square value of 0.531 for the brand engagement variable, meaning that virtual content can explain 53.1% of brand engagement. Additionally, an R-square value of 0.566 is obtained for the purchase decision variable, which indicates that 56.6% of the purchase decision can be explained by virtual content and brand engagement, while the remaining 43.3% is explained by other factors not included in this model.

Referring to the theory proposed by Ghozali & Latan (2015), virtual content has a moderate influence on brand engagement (0.531 < 0.75). This indicates a moderate relationship between virtual content and brand engagement. Similarly, virtual content and brand engagement have a moderate relationship with purchase decision (0.566 < 0.75), which also shows a moderate relationship.

b. F–Square Value (f^2 Effect Size)
When a construct is removed from the model, the significance of the change in the R-square value is measured using the F-square method to determine whether the removed construct has a significant impact on the endogenous construct. According to Hair et al. (2017), an effect size of less than 0.02 indicates that the variable has no effect, while an F-square value of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicates a small, moderate, and large effect, respectively. The table below shows the F-square values as follows:

Table 3. F-Square Test Results

	M_ Brand Engagement	Y_Purchase Decision
X_Virtual Content	1,133	0,191
M_Brand Engagement		0,163

Source: SmartPLS Output 3, 2024.

Based on the data processing results shown in the table above, it is clear that all variables contribute significantly to the R-square value of the research model. Specifically, the F-square value for the impact of virtual content on brand engagement is 1.133, which is greater than 0.35 (large). The effect of virtual content on purchase decision also has a large contribution, with a value of 0.191 (greater than 0.15). Similarly, brand engagement has a significant contribution to purchase decision, with a value of 0.163 (greater than 0.15).

Hypothesis Testing Results and Discussion
Hypothesis testing
Hypothesis testing is essentially aimed at testing a structural model to determine the relationships between the observed variables. This test is conducted through the bootstrapping process of the model, assuming that previous processes, such as the validity of each indicator for the latent variables, have been met. In path coefficient analysis, the P-value in the structural model must meet certain assumptions. A positive and significant influence between latent variables is defined as follows: if the P-value is less than 0.05 at a 5% error rate, the hypothesis of the research model can be accepted

(proven); if the P-value obtained is < 0.05, the effect of the model on the latent variable can be considered accepted (hypothesis accepted). Conversely, if the P-value obtained is > 0.05, the effect of the model on the latent variable can be considered rejected (hypothesis not accepted). To view the results of the bootstrapping process for the structural model testing, please refer to Figure 3 and Table 4 below.
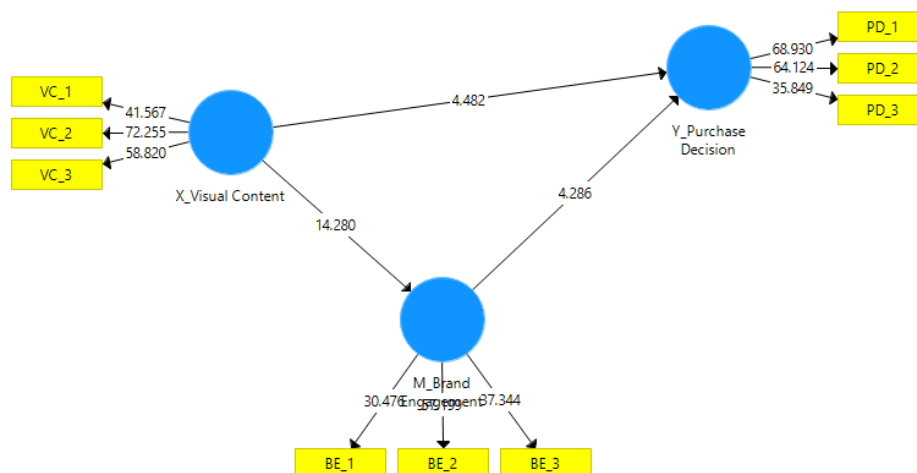

Figure 3. Research Construct Relationship Model Using the Bootstrapping Method

Table 4. Direct and Indirect Influence

Hypothesis	Latent Variables	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Value	Information
H1	VC → BE	0,729	14,280	0,000	Hypothesis Accepted
H2	VC → PD	0,388	4,482	0,000	Hypothesis Accepted
H3	BE → PD	0,421	4,286	0,000	Hypothesis Accepted
H4	VC →BE→PD	0,306	3,964	0,000	Hypothesis Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output 3, 2024.
Note: VC = Virtual Content; VE = Brand Engagement; PD = Purchase Decision
DISCUSSION

Virtual Content on Brand Engagement
Visual content has now become a focal point in every marketing strategy due to its strong connection to human nature. The significant impact of images and videos, coupled with the ease of producing graphic content today, is a key factor supporting marketing engagement through visual content. With the help of images, in whatever form they may take, brands can achieve the desired reach and recognition, making marketing investments more efficient (Manic, 2015).

Visual content has become a crucial element in digital marketing strategies, particularly in building brand engagement. Visual content such as images, videos, infographics, and animations has the ability to instantly capture the audience's attention, trigger emotions, and facilitate information delivery. According to Mayer (2005), humans process visual information 60,000 times faster than text. Therefore, visual content is an effective tool for creating engagement between consumers and brands.

One of the main reasons visual content is effective in building brand engagement is its ability to create an immersive and relevant experience for the audience. When visual content is well-designed, highlighting the brand's aesthetics and emotional values, consumers tend to feel closer to the brand. A study by Hollebeek et al. (2014) shows that brand engagement can be enhanced through relevant, engaging, and emotional content, especially on visually-driven social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

Moreover, visual content allows brands to tell their story creatively, which can increase audience engagement. For example, short videos showing the "behind-the-scenes" production process of a product can enhance consumer trust and connection with the brand. A study by Kumar and Kaushik (2021) indicates that authentic and informative visual content has a significant impact on building emotional attachment between consumers and brands, ultimately encouraging further interaction.

In the digital age, personalizing visual content has become a key factor in enhancing brand engagement. Consumers, especially Generation Z, are more likely to engage with brands that provide content tailored to their preferences. For instance, a study by Smith (2020) revealed that 78% of Generation Z is more likely to interact with visual content that reflects their lifestyle or that they can relate to personally. Therefore, companies must ensure that their visual content is not only aesthetically appealing but also contextually relevant.

In-depth, visual content is a crucial element in building brand engagement. By leveraging the power of visuals to create creative, relevant, and emotional messages, brands can increase consumer engagement, strengthen loyalty, and expand audience reach. As emphasized by Balakrishnan et al. (2014), the use of visual content in digital marketing strategies is no longer an option but a necessity to win the competition in an increasingly competitive market.

Virtual Content on Purchase Decision
Visual content plays a significant role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Affandi et al., 2023; Ramadhan & Purnamasari, 2023; Agianto et al., 2024), especially in today's digital era. Purchasing decisions are not only based on rationality but also on emotional and aesthetic elements conveyed through visuals. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), visual elements can be part of the peripheral persuasion route, which is effective in capturing attention and influencing consumers with low involvement. Therefore, visual content such as high-quality images, promotional videos, and infographics can accelerate the consumer's decision-making process.

One of the main ways visual content influences purchasing decisions is by enhancing the product's appeal and credibility. A study by Sheth and Mittal (2004) shows that an attractive visual representation of a product on social media enhances consumers' positive perceptions of the product's quality. For example, fashion products often use professionally taken photos with proper lighting to highlight design, texture, and color, which encourages purchase interest. This visualization creates emotional appeal that influences consumer perception and desire.

Additionally, visual content serves as a communication tool that speeds up the consumer's understanding of a product's benefits. In the context of e-commerce, product demonstration videos are often crucial in influencing purchasing decisions. A study by Hudson and Thal (2013) found that 64% of consumers are more likely to purchase a product after watching a product review or demonstration video. Such videos provide

more in-depth information and build trust with consumers, especially when they cannot see or try the product directly.

Personal branding also plays an important role in the influence of visual content on purchasing decisions. Particularly Generation Z is highly influenced by visual content combined with authentic narratives. According to Smith (2020), around 76% of Gen Z consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands that present relatable visualizations that reflect their lifestyle. Therefore, companies need to focus on producing visually relevant content that is culturally, emotionally, and aesthetically appealing to increase the attractiveness of their products in the market.

Visual content also leverages the principle of "social proof" to drive purchasing decisions. Testimonials in the form of photos or videos from other customers, especially on social media, can strengthen new consumers' trust in a particular brand or product. According to Nielsen (2012), 92% of consumers trust reviews or recommendations from others more than brand advertisements. In this case, user-generated content becomes a key strategy for influencing purchasing decisions.

Thus, visual content is not just a tool for attracting attention; it also plays a strategic role in shaping perceptions, building trust, and accelerating purchasing decisions. The effective use of visual content can provide a significant competitive advantage for companies, especially in today's highly competitive digital environment.

Brand Engagement on Purchase Decision
Brand engagement has a significant influence on purchasing decisions (Ibrahim & Suastrini, 2024), especially in the context of a competitive digital market. Brand engagement refers to the level of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement of consumers with a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). The higher the level of consumer engagement with a brand, the more likely they are to make a purchase, as brand engagement creates a deeper connection between the consumer and the products or services offered. Furthermore, Aaker (2019) explains that brand engagement can add value to a brand, thus increasing sales.

One way brand engagement influences purchasing decisions is through increased loyalty and trust in the brand. According to Brodie et al. (2013), when consumers feel emotionally connected to a brand, they are more likely to trust the quality of the products and services offered, which ultimately drives purchasing decisions. This is often seen in brands that actively engage with consumers via social media platforms, where direct interactions such as comments, likes, or reposts build a more personal and meaningful relationship.

Additionally, brand engagement influences purchasing decisions through positive brand experiences. Consumers who have positive experiences with a brand, both online and offline, tend to have better perceptions of the brand's value. For example, a study by Kumar and Kaushik (2021) shows that a strong brand experience, relevant to consumer values, increases the likelihood of a purchase by up to 30%. These experiences include direct interactions with the product, responsive customer service, and engaging digital campaigns.

For Generation Z, brand engagement also serves as a tool for creating personal identity. This generation often integrates the brands they support into their personal identities. According to a study by Smith (2020), around 74% of Gen Z consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands that reflect their values and offer opportunities for direct interaction, such as through interactive content or creative collaborations.

Therefore, brands that successfully enhance emotional and social engagement with consumers will have a greater appeal in influencing purchasing decisions.

Brand engagement also leverages the concept of social proof to encourage purchases. When consumers see others actively engaged with a brand—whether through reviews, comments, or testimonials on social media—they are more likely to trust the brand and make a purchase. According to Nielsen (2012), around 84% of consumers trust recommendations from others who are seen actively engaged with a brand. Thus, brand engagement not only enhances consumer loyalty but also acts as a driver for new purchasing decisions.

With all these points, it is clear that brand engagement plays a vital role in influencing purchasing decisions. Brands that can create strong engagement with consumers through relevant experiences, authentic interactions, and effective communication will be better positioned to drive purchases while also fostering long-term loyalty.

Virtual Content Through Brand Engagement on Purchase Decision
Visual content plays a key role in building interactions between a brand and its audience on social media. In this context, brand engagement acts as a bridge that connects visual content with purchasing decisions. According to Backlinko (2021), engaging visual content such as images and videos can capture the audience's attention, create deeper engagement, and strengthen emotional connections. This process can increase interest and encourage the audience to make a purchase.

Brand engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement of consumers with a brand. Studies show that visually appealing content, such as using aesthetic elements, colors, and relevant symbols, can build a strong emotional connection with the audience (Hollebeek et al., 2014). When the audience feels connected to a brand through attractive visuals, they are more likely to engage further, such as by sharing content or commenting on posts. This interaction strengthens the bond with the brand, which ultimately influences purchasing decisions (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Furthermore, consistent visual content that reflects the brand's values and identity can enhance the consumer's cognitive engagement. Consumers are more likely to remember the brand and associate it with their needs if the visuals presented are relevant and memorable. As Schivinski et al. (2016) suggested, consumers who engage cognitively with a brand through visual content tend to have a positive perception of that brand, which impacts their preference for purchasing the product.

The behavioral dimension of brand engagement is also influenced by visual content. Consumers who are emotionally and cognitively engaged are more likely to take action, such as seeking more information about a product or making a direct purchase. For example, visuals that include a clear call-to-action (CTA) can encourage the audience to click on a purchase link or visit the brand's website (Hudson et al., 2015). In other words, well-designed visual content can motivate consumers to move from the engagement stage to making a purchase decision.

Thus, effective visual content plays a strategic role in enhancing brand engagement, which in turn influences consumer purchasing decisions. By creating visually appealing and relevant experiences, brands can build strong relationships with consumers and increase the likelihood that they will purchase the products or services offered.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that visual content significantly enhances brand engagement, as attractive, relevant, and aesthetic visuals strengthen consumers' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connections with a brand. Strong brand engagement, in turn, positively influences purchasing decisions, fostering consumer loyalty and increasing the likelihood of making a purchase. Additionally, visual content directly impacts purchasing decisions, as appealing and informative visuals enhance product attractiveness and shape consumer perceptions. Furthermore, brand engagement serves as a mediator, strengthening the relationship between visual content and purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of emotional connections and active consumer interactions in effective marketing strategies.

LIMITATION

This study focuses on Generation Z as the object of study, which may have unique characteristics and differ from other generations. Thus, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all age groups or other consumer segments. In addition, if the number of samples used in the study is limited, this may affect the representation and accuracy of the data.

This study used SmartPLS 3.0 to analyze the data, which tends to focus more on the relationship between variables. This method may not provide a deeper picture of qualitative aspects, such as audience perceptions of visual content in a broader context. The variables used in the study were limited to visual content, brand engagement, and purchasing decisions. Other factors such as brand trust, customer experience, or broader digital trends may also have influenced the results of the study but were not discussed in depth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the respondents in Palembang City for their involvement in the study survey.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

This research is devoid of any conflicts of interest

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