



The influence of content marketing and social media influencers on purchase decisions through consumer trust as an intervening in fresh milk products in Boyolali City

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how content marketing and social media influencers impact purchase decisions, using consumer trust as an intervening variable. The study focuses on fresh milk consumers in Boyolali City. Because previous studies show conflicting results regarding how digital marketing affects consumer behavior through trust, this study aims to fill that research gap. Using a quantitative causal design, primary data were collected from 121 fresh milk consumers via purposive sampling and structured questionnaires. Data analysis using SmartPLS 3.2 indicates that content marketing significantly and positively influences both consumer trust ($\beta > 0$; $p < 0.05$) and purchase decisions ($\beta > 0$; $p < 0.05$). While social media influencers significantly boost trust ($\beta > 0$; $p < 0.05$), they lack a statistically significant direct effect on buying behavior ($p > 0.05$). Furthermore, consumer trust positively impacts purchase decisions ($\beta > 0$; $p < 0.05$) and functions as a critical mediating variable that reinforces the overall relationship between marketing strategies and consumer actions. These findings highlight that trust is essential for turning digital marketing efforts into actual sales within the fresh milk industry.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid digital technology expansion has significantly converted marketing communication strategies, particularly through the utilization of content marketing and social media influencers. Digital platforms enable firms to disseminate information efficiently, interact directly with consumers, and influence purchasing behavior in increasingly competitive markets (Hamdan et al., 2021).

Among various digital marketing strategies, content marketing has gained prominence due to its ability to deliver relevant and valuable information that enhances consumer engagement and supports informed purchasing decisions Santy & Andriani, (2023). Meanwhile, social media influencers are prominent parties in determining consumer perceptions by delivering persuasive messages that may foster credibility and trust

Batubara1 & Phannata2, (2022). However, trust does not emerge instantly in digital environments, highlighting the importance of consistent communication and credible information sources (Evania et al., 2023).

Empirical findings concerning the effectiveness of content marketing and social media influencers on purchasing decisions remain inconclusive. Several studies report a positive and significant relationship between content marketing and purchasing decisions, according to Hamdan & Alkharabsheh, (n.d.); Herman et al., (2023); and Deva Satria Pamungkas et al., (2024). Otherwise, a study by Adil Satiawan et al., (n.d.) suggests that content marketing insignificantly affects consumer purchasing behavior. Similarly, although some researchers confirm that social media influencers positively affect purchasing decisions through enhanced consumer trust like the studies by Shadrina & Sulistyanto, (n.d.); Ekonomi et al., (2024); Fenny et al., 2024; and Hidayatul Khotizah et al., (2024), other studies indicate a non-significant or negative influence of influencers on purchase decisions (Kusuma & Vidyanata, 2022).

These inconsistencies indicate a clear research gap regarding the mechanisms underlying the relationship between digital marketing strategies and purchasing decisions. Specifically, intervening variables of consumer trust's remains underexplored, particularly under the context of fresh milk products. This gap is especially relevant in Boyolali City, a major milk-producing region in Central Java, where competition in the fresh milk market continues to intensify despite increasing production capacity.

Therefore, the present study aims to identify the influence of content marketing and social media influencers on purchasing decisions, with consumer trust serving as an intervening variable in the fresh milk industry of Boyolali City. By addressing this gap, contribution in theoretical field in literature of digital marketing is expected through the present study by clarifying the role of consumer trust and practically by providing insights for fresh milk producers in designing effective digital marketing strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research approach with a causal-associative design is adopted in this study to examine the relationships among content marketing, social media influencers, consumer trust, and purchasing decisions.

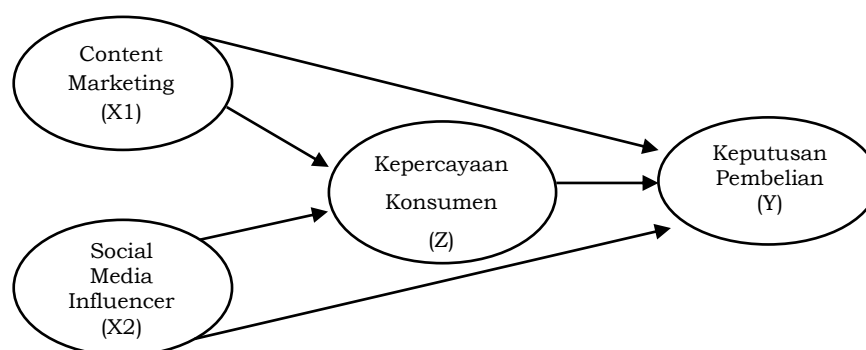


Figure 1. Research Framework

This model is grounded in marketing communication theory as the theoretical foundation, which posits that informative and persuasive marketing content enhances consumer trust and subsequently influences purchasing behavior. Content marketing delivers relevant and credible information that reduces consumer uncertainty, while social media influencers serve as trusted opinion leaders capable of shaping consumer perceptions and confidence toward products, ultimately affecting purchasing decisions.

This study takes the consumers in Boyolali City who have previously purchased fresh milk products as population. Given that the exact population size could not be settled and not all consumers possess sufficient experience with fresh milk purchasing, purposive sampling was employed. The individuals who had purchased and consumed fresh milk

products were chosen as the respondents, ensuring the relevance and accuracy of the collection of data. The valid responses obtained were 121 valid responses.

The data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire measured on a 1–5 semantic differential scale. The questionnaire items were adapted from verified instruments in prior studies for content validity confirmation. Content marketing was measured using indicators related to information relevance, clarity, perceived benefits, authenticity, and frequency of exposure. Social media influencer variables were measured through credibility, expertise, communication style, trustworthiness, and promotional appeal. Consumer trust indicators included confidence in product quality, perceived manufacturer concern, transaction security, perceived benefits, and loyalty. Purchasing decision indicators encompassed product comparison, confidence in purchasing, habitual buying behavior, recommendations, and quality-price considerations (Ferdinand, 2014); (Ghozali, I. , 2018).

For the data analysis, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted through SmartPLS 3.2. The specific approach was chosen because it is particularly effective for predictive modeling and managing complex frameworks that incorporate mediating variables, even with smaller datasets. With 121 participants, the study satisfies the 10-times rule criteria, as the most complex construct in the model is influenced by no more than ten structural paths (Hair et al., 2017).

The outer (measurement) model first assessed to establish reliability and validity. Convergent validity was confirmed as factor loadings exceeded 0.70 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) met the minimum threshold of 0.50. Additionally, internal consistency was verified with both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability scores surpassing 0.70. Subsequently, the structural (inner) model was analyzed to test the research hypotheses (Sugiyono., 2017).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Description of Respondent

a. Age of Respondent

Respondents were categorized into five age categories, namely 17–20, 21–30, 31–35, 36–40, and >50 years. The subsequent Table 2 presents a demographic breakdown of the participants, categorized by their respective age groups. Name:

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics Based on Age

Age	Amount	Presentase
17-20 Year	33	27,27%
21-30 Year	87	71,90%
31-35 Year	1	0,82%
36-40 Year	0	0%
>50 Year	0	0%
Total	121	100%

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

Respondents were classified into five age categories: 17–20 years, 21–30 years, 31–35 years, 36–40 years, and above 50 years. Table 2 presented the majority of respondents who were aged 21–30 years, accounting for 71.90% (87 respondents). The 17–20 age group represented 27.27% (33 respondents), while only one respondent (0.82%) belonged to the 31–35 age category. No respondents were recorded in the 36–40 years and above 50 years categories. This distribution indicates that the sample was predominantly composed of young adults.

b. Gender

There are two categories of respondent characteristics based on gender: male and female. Table 3 displays the percentage of respondents broken down by gender.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender

Gender	Amount	Presentase
Male	49	40,50%
Female	72	59,50%
Total	121	100%

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

Table 3 presents the respondents' gender distribution in which female respondents constituted the sample majority by representing 59.50% (72 respondents), and the male respondents were 40.50% (49 respondents). This indicates a higher participation rate among female consumers in this study.

c. Last Education

Participants were segmented into four distinct cohorts predicated upon their terminal educational qualifications, encompassing: intermediate secondary education, advanced secondary education, vocational diplomas (equivalent to D1/D2/D3), and tertiary degrees (S1/S2/S3). The items distributions are displayed in Table 4.:

Table 4. Respondent Characteristics Based on Last Education

Last Education	Amount	Presentase
Junior High School	1	0,82%
Senior Hight School	74	59,52%
D1/D2/D3	4	3,30%
S1/S2/S3	44	36,36%
Total	121	100%

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

The respondents' educational attainment is summarized in Table 4. Most respondents had completed senior high school education, accounting for 59.52% (74 respondents). Respondents with tertiary education (S1/S2/S3) represented 36.36% (44 respondents), while those with vocational diplomas (D1/D2/D3) accounted for 3.30% (4 respondents). Only one respondent (0.82%) had completed junior high school. These results indicate that the majority of respondents possessed at least a secondary-level education.

d. Frequency of Fresh Milk Purchases Per Week

Analysis of respondent demographics, categorized by their weekly frequency of fresh milk acquisition, reveals four distinct strata:

Table 5. Respondent Characteristics Based on Frequency of Fresh Milk Purchases Per Week

Frequency	Amount	Presentase
< 1 time a week	75	61,17%
1-3 times a week	33	27,27%
4-6 times a week	5	4,13%
Every Day	9	7,43%
Total	121	100%

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

Table 5 illustrates the frequency of fresh milk purchases per week. Most respondents reported purchasing fresh milk less than once per week, accounting for 61.17% (75 respondents). Purchases made one to three times per week represented 27.27% (33 respondents), while 4–6 times per week accounted for 4.13% (5 respondents). Daily purchases were reported by 7.43% (9 respondents). This distribution suggests that fresh milk consumption among respondents was generally infrequent.

3.2 Data Analysis

a. Measurement Model Test (Outer Model).

The present research endeavors to rigorously evaluate its posited conjectures by employing a Structural Equation Model (SEM), subjected to analysis via the Partial Least Squares (PLS) methodology within the SmartPLS 3.2 software environment. A schematic representation of the PLS program model under investigation is delineated herein.

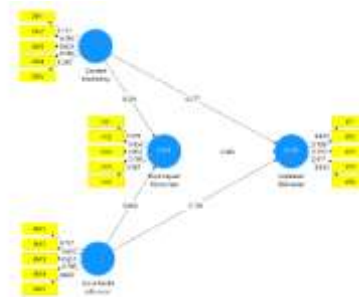


Figure 2. Outer Model Test

Source: SmartPLS 3.2 data processing results (2025)

Subsequent to the examination of the proposed model, validation and verification procedures are undertaken to ascertain the congruence between unobserved constructs and their corresponding manifest indicators.

3.3 Validity

a. Convergent Validity

As articulated by Che et al., (n.d.), an index is deemed psychometrically sound when its constituent outer loading surpasses a threshold of 0.7, thereby substantiating its robust alignment with the construct it purports to measure (Ghozali, I. , 2018).

Table 6. Convergent Validity

Indicators	Loading Factor	Information
CM1	0,791	Valid
CM2	0,785	Valid
CM3	0,803	Valid
CM4	0,780	Valid
CM5	0,580	Invalid
SMI1	0,737	Valid
SMI2	0,820	Valid
SMI3	0,857	Valid
SMI4	0,746	Valid
SMI5	0,830	Valid
KP1	0,619	Invalid
KP2	0,789	Valid
KP3	0,552	Invalid
KP4	0,821	Valid
KP5	0,810	Valid
KK1	0,839	Valid
KK2	0,838	Valid
KK3	0,851	Valid
KK4	0,789	Valid
KK5	0,887	Valid

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

The study assessed convergent validity by analyzing the outer loading values. As shown in Table 6, the majority of the indicators surpassed the standard 0.70 threshold,

which confirms that the model has sufficient convergent validity. For the indicators that scored under 0.60, a careful evaluation of their theoretical importance was conducted before deciding to keep them in the final structural model.

b. Discriminant Validity

As posited by Al Ma et al., (n.d.), discriminant validity is empirically substantiated when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for a given construct transcends a limit value of 0.5. This metric signifies that the instrument in question possesses a pronounced capacity to assess the specific construct it was designed to measure. The AVE values for the research variables are as follows:

Table 7. Nilai (Average Variance Extracted)

	CM	KK	KP	SMI
CM	0,752			
KK	0,661	0,841		
KP	0,594	0,622	0,727	
SMI	0,734	0,695	0,482	0,799

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

In assessing the discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was employed and the result is described in Table 7. As displayed in the table, every AVE value in each construct exceeds 0.50. This confirms that each construct accounts for enough variance in its indicators to satisfy the requirements for discriminant validity.

3.4 Reliability Test

a. Composite Reliability

This reliability score is utilized to ascertain the genuine dependability of a construct. A value above 0.7 is considered to indicate satisfactory and sufficiently high reliability, as noted by Al Ma et al., (n.d.). The composite reliability scores for all variables in this research are displayed below:

Table 8. Composite Reliability

Variable	Composite Reliability
Content Marketing (X1)	0,866
Social Media Influencer (X2)	0,898
Keputusan Pembelian (Y)	0,845
Kepercayaan Konsumen (Z)	0,924

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

b. Cronbach's Alpha

According to Al Ma et al., (n.d.), the internal consistency or reliability of a construct is measured using Cronbach's Alpha. An acceptable value is achieved when it is exceeding 0.60. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients corresponding to each of the investigated variables are delineated herein.

Table 9. Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Content Marketing (X1)	0,807
Social Media Influencer (X2)	0,859
Keputusan Pembelian (Y)	0,771
Kepercayaan Konsumen (Z)	0,096

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

To determine the research tools' internal consistency and reliability, Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha were calculated. Tables 8 and 9's data show that every construct scored higher than 0.70 for Composite Reliability and above 0.60 for Cronbach's Alpha. These figures confirm the consistency of measurement instruments.

c. Inner Model Test

The objective of this assessment is to quantify the interdependencies among unobserved constructs, a process that will be undertaken through an examination of *the Path Coefficient, R-Square, Effect Size, Specific Indirect Effect, and Model Fit indices*.

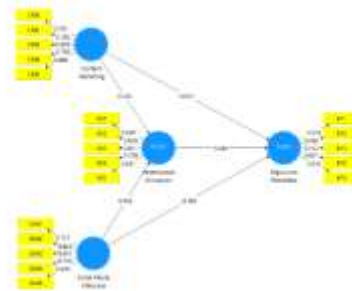


Figure 3. Inner Model

Source: SmartPLS 3.2 data processing results (2025)

d. Path Coefficient

The veracity of the hypotheses propounded within this investigation was rigorously examined through an in-depth analysis of the P-value and T-statistic. In accordance with the established conventions articulated by Al Ma et al., (n.d.), a hypothesis is deemed tenable if its corresponding P-value falls beneath the value of threshold at 0.05 and its T-statistic surpasses the benchmark of 1.96. Employing SmartPLS 3.2 as the analytical instrument, the ensuing path coefficient outcomes derived from the bootstrapping procedure are delineated in the subsequent presentation.

Table 10. Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Content Marketing -> Kepercayaan Konsumen	0,326	0,340	0,119	2,738	0,006
Content Marketing -> Keputusan Pembelian	0,377	0,366	0,142	2,649	0,008
Kepercayaan Konsumen -> Keputusan Pembelian	0,445	0,435	0,119	3,733	0,000
Social Media Influencer -> Kepercayaan Konsumen	0,456	0,451	0,113	4,002	0,000
Social Media Influencer -> Keputusan Pembelian	-0,104	-0,080	0,143	0,725	0,469

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

The results for the path coefficients, summarized in Table 10, demonstrate that content marketing significantly boosts consumer trust ($\beta = 0.326$; $p = 0.006$) and positively influences purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.377$; $p = 0.008$). In the same way, consumer trust significantly influences the decision to buy ($\beta = 0.445$; $p = 0.000$). While social media influencers are very important for building trust among consumers ($\beta = 0.456$; $p = 0.000$), the results indicate that they do not have a direct, significant impact on actual buying behavior ($\beta = -0.104$; $p = 0.469$).

e. R-Square

The coefficient of determination, or R^2 , measures how well the independent variables explain differences in the dependent variable. Usually, a larger R^2 indicates a more effective model. Following the standards of Al Ma et al. (n.d.), a value of 0.75 is strong, 0.50 is

moderate, and 0.25 is weak. The R^2 scores for this research are presented in the following table:

Table 11. R-Square

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Kepercayaan Konsumen (Z)	0,533	0,525
Keputusan Pembelian (Y)	0,450	0,436

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

As shown in Table 11, the model explains 53.3% of the variance in consumer trust ($R^2 = 0.533$) and 45.0% of the variance in purchasing decisions ($R^2 = 0.450$). The calculated Q^2 values for consumer trust (0.533) and purchasing decisions (0.450) exceed zero, indicating adequate predictive relevance of the structural model.

f. Effect Size

The magnitude of the independent variable's impact on the dependent variable is quantitatively assessed via the f-squared (f^2) statistic. As explained by Al Ma et al. (n.d.), effect sizes are characterized by the following benchmarks: a value of 0.02 denotes a small effect, 0.15 signifies a medium effect, and 0.35 indicates a large effect. The f-squared results for this study are presented below:

Table 12. Effect Size

Variable	Content Marketing	Social Media Influencer	Keputusan Pembelian	Kepercayaan Konsumen
Content Marketing (X1)	0,533	0,525	0,108	0,105
Social Media Influencer (X2)	0,450	0,436	0,008	0,206
Keputusan Pembelian (Y)				
Kepercayaan Konsumen (Z)			0,168	

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

The effect size analysis results are summarized in Table 12. Content marketing exhibited a small effect on both consumer trust ($f^2 = 0.105$) and purchasing decisions ($f^2 = 0.108$). Social media influencers showed a moderate effect on consumer trust ($f^2 = 0.206$) but a negligible effect on purchasing decisions ($f^2 = 0.008$). Consumer trust demonstrated a medium effect on purchasing decisions ($f^2 = 0.168$).

g. Specific Indirect Effect Test

To ascertain the significance of the observed effects within the scope of this investigation, the P-Value serves as the primary indicator. A P-Value falling below the threshold of 0.05 is interpreted as support for the hypothesis under examination, in line with the methodology proposed by Al Ma et al., (n.d.). The process of hypothesis verification was executed utilizing the SmartPLS 3.2 software package. Presented hereafter are the values of path coefficient derived from the bootstrapping procedure outcomes.

Table 13. Specific Indirect Effect Test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Content Marketing -> Kepercayaan Konsumen -> Keputusan Pembelian	0,145	0,146	0,066	2,204	0,028
Social Media Influencer -> Kepercayaan Konsumen -> Keputusan Pembelian	0,203	0,196	0,076	2,654	0,008

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

The mediation analysis results are presented in Table 13. Content marketing was found to have a significant indirect effect on purchasing decisions through consumer trust ($\beta = 0.145$; $p = 0.028$). Similarly, social media influencers exhibited a significant indirect

effect on purchasing decisions through consumer trust ($\beta = 0.203$; $p = 0.008$). These findings confirm the mediating role of consumer trust in the proposed research model.

h. Model Fit

The model's goodness-of-fit was tested by examining the SRMR, NFI, and Chi-Square values. The fit is considered good if SRMR is < 0.08 and NFI is ≥ 0.90 ; an NFI below 0.90 indicates a poor fit Alshurideh et al., (2021). These tests, run in SmartPLS 3.2, produced the results displayed in the table below.

Table 14. Model Fit

Model Fit	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,077	0,077
D ULS	1,233	1,233
D G	0,528	0,528
Chi- Square	338,040	338,040
NFI	0,766	0,766

Source: Primary data processed by 2025

The structural model's fit was evaluated through an analysis of SRMR, NFI, and Chi-square statistics, as detailed in Table 14. An SRMR of 0.077 aligns with established benchmarks, confirming an acceptable fit. Conversely, the NFI result of 0.766 indicates that the model's overall alignment has not yet reached an optimal level.

3.4 Discussion

The results demonstrate that content marketing positively and significantly impacts both consumer trust and purchase decisions, despite the effect size being relatively modest. This emphasizes that content marketing supports the consumer behavior influence instead of acts as the main driver of purchase decisions. In the context of fresh milk products, purchasing behavior tends to be routine and necessity-based, which may limit the immediate impact of promotional content.

Social media influencers were found to have a significant influence on consumer trust but not on purchasing decisions. This result implies that influencer marketing is more effective in shaping perceptions and credibility than directly stimulating purchase behavior. The insignificant direct effect on purchasing decisions may be explained by the functional nature of fresh milk products, where consumers prioritize practical attributes such as quality, freshness, and availability over symbolic or aspirational endorsements (Alshurideh et al., 2021; Ambarwati et al., 2024; Pembelian et al., 2024).

The mediation analysis confirms that consumer trust plays a crucial role in translating marketing efforts into purchasing decisions. Both content marketing and social media influencers exert significant indirect effects through consumer trust, highlighting trust as a key psychological mechanism in the decision-making process. This finding emphasizes that marketing strategies are more effective when they succeed in building consumer confidence (Mammadli, n.d.; Nur Idris et al., n.d.; Alkan & Ulas, 2023).

4 CONCLUSION

This study reveals that digital marketing strategies influence purchasing decisions mainly through consumer trust rather than through direct effects. Content marketing has a significant but limited role in directly encouraging purchases, while social media influencers do not directly affect purchasing decisions. However, both strategies contribute positively to consumer trust, which in turn significantly influences purchasing decisions.

These results bridge the identified research gap by establishing consumer trust as a pivotal mediating variable between digital marketing initiatives and consumer acquisition, specifically within the staple goods sector. Consequently, the findings suggest that the efficacy of promotional campaigns is significantly enhanced when prioritized toward credibility-building rather than mere transactional incentives.

From a practical perspective, fresh milk businesses in Boyolali should emphasize informative and transparent content marketing and prioritize credible influencer

collaborations to strengthen consumer trust. This trust-oriented approach is expected to support more sustainable purchasing behavior.

This study is limited by its sample size and geographic scope, as well as by the limited number of variables examined. To gain a more complete understanding, future studies should use larger and more varied groups of participants across a wider geographical area. It is also suggested that researchers include other factors, such as price, perceived quality, lifestyle, or consumer involvement, to provide a deeper perspective on the topic.

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