

The Influence of Digital Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth on Customer Retention in Generation Z Consumers in TikTok Shop with Brand Trust as a Moderator

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 26 January 26
Final Revision: 09 February 26
Accepted: 19 February 26
Online Publication: 31 March 26

KEYWORDS

Digital Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth, Customer Retention, Brand Trust, Generation Z

KATA KUNCI

Pemasaran Digital, *Electronic Word of Mouth*, Retensi Pelanggan, Kepercayaan Merek, Generasi Z

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DOI

10.37034/jems.v8i2.383

A B S T R A C T

This study was conducted in response to the growing phenomenon in which digital marketing gradually replaces traditional marketing, with TikTok shop exemplifying expertise in sustaining social commerce amid intense competition. The research aims to examine the influence of Digital Marketing (X1) and Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) on Customer Retention (Y), with Brand Trust (Z) positioned as a moderating variable. A quantitative approach was employed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS software, as this method is suitable for testing complex relationships among latent constructs. Data were collected through surveys distributed to Generation Z consumers actively engaged with TikTok shop, ensuring representation of the population most immersed in social commerce. Measurement indicators included promotional strategies, SEO, social media, public relations, e-WOM intensity, valence, content, and trust dimensions. The findings revealed that Digital Marketing and Brand Trust significantly and positively affect Customer Retention, while the moderating role of Brand Trust was not statistically significant. These results imply that effective digital marketing strategies and trust-building initiatives are crucial for sustaining customer loyalty, though trust alone may not strengthen moderating effects.

A B S T R A K

Penelitian ini dilakukan sebagai respons terhadap fenomena yang berkembang di mana pemasaran digital secara bertahap menggantikan pemasaran tradisional, dengan TikTok Shop sebagai contoh keahlian dalam mempertahankan perdagangan sosial di tengah persaingan yang ketat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh Pemasaran Digital (X1) dan *Electronic Word of Mouth* (X2) terhadap Retensi Pelanggan (Y), dengan Kepercayaan Merek (Z) diposisikan sebagai variabel moderasi. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan dengan menggunakan *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) dengan perangkat lunak SmartPLS, karena metode ini cocok untuk menguji hubungan kompleks antar konstruk laten. Data dikumpulkan melalui survei yang didistribusikan kepada konsumen Generasi Z yang aktif terlibat dengan TikTok Shop, untuk memastikan representasi populasi yang paling terlibat dalam perdagangan sosial. Indikator pengukuran meliputi strategi promosi, SEO, media sosial, hubungan masyarakat, intensitas e-WOM, valensi, konten, dan dimensi kepercayaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pemasaran Digital dan Kepercayaan Merek secara signifikan dan positif memengaruhi Retensi Pelanggan, sementara peran moderasi Kepercayaan Merek tidak signifikan secara statistik. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi pemasaran digital yang efektif dan inisiatif membangun kepercayaan sangat penting untuk mempertahankan loyalitas pelanggan, meskipun kepercayaan saja mungkin tidak cukup untuk memperkuat efek moderasi.

1. Introduction

Digitalization has become a new milestone for business players as a way to market their products and retain their customers. The main basis of this study is customer retention, a factor that inaugurates the quintessential dynamics of maintaining about stability and sustainability of a commerce. Customer retention itself is the company's commitment to retaining old customers so that the loyalty that has been built remains intact, so that customers will continue to choose the company over

its competitors [1]. It can also be stated that customer retention is a manifestation of loyalty behavior, referring to customer loyalty in making repeat purchases [2].

One of the keys for a company to see the magnitude of a potential profit is through customer retention [3]. Therefore, without the role of consumers who have high loyalty and continue to choose a particular business over its competitors, existing companies may suffer losses such as a decline in revenue, which could lead to the business being forced to shut down. This statement

emphasizes how important consumers are to companies and their businesses. Therefore, this study focuses on customer retention in an effort to provide an overview for companies, particularly TikTok shop, on how to maintain enduring commercial nexus with consumers.

About selection of TikTok Shop as the object of customer retention research drew its provenance from

the discovery of a recent phenomenon in which TikTok Shop is the most popular platform compared to its competitors. This is reinforced by data from a Populix survey, which found that 86% of people have engaged in social commerce shopping, and that the most visited platform is TikTok shop (45%), as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Shopping on Social Media [4]

Based on the statements and data available, this can happen because TikTok shop not only provides shopping features but also features that provide entertainment content with shopping activities through social commerce innovations. This phenomenon provides an opportunity for TikTok shop because its innovative concept attracts consumers' attention more strongly and emotionally than its competitors. Therefore, as the most visited shopping platform, this shows that there is strong potential for TikTok shop to build customer retention.

This study focuses on Generation Z consumers, because adaptive to digital technology. In addition, Generation Z is that tends to enjoy things that are easy, efficient, and fast. TikTok provides for these needs through the concept of social commerce, where Generation Z can easily use TikTok as a platform to provide them with entertainment content, information about products they want to buy, read reviews, and even make purchases, all in one application.

This statement is supported by the findings that the TikTok app is used by Generation Z not only as a

platform for entertainment but also as a platform for shopping on TikTok shop [5]. Kumparan.com also states that the latest data shows that 60% of TikTok users in Indonesia were born between 1997 and 2012, which is Generation Z. TikTok, with its social commerce innovation, offers a more practical and interactive shopping experience, which is in line with the behavior trends of Generation Z consumers who prioritize efficiency. Therefore, based on the data and facts found, it is accurate to say that Generation Z consumers have a strong interest and the potential to become loyal, long-term consumers of TikTok shop. Therefore, selecting Gen Z as the subject of appertaining to current investigation receive appraisal as considered appropriate and suitable.

Contingent upon Figure 2 foregoing, which shows the research framework, a prediction or assumption was made that TikTok shop would dominate the market with a 46% share, based on a survey, where TikTok shop is the most frequently used and visited shopping application by consumers compared to other competitors, and TikTok shop's ability to retain their customers is suspected to be governed by an array of

precipitating concomitants such as digital marketing, electronic word of mouth, and brand trust [4].

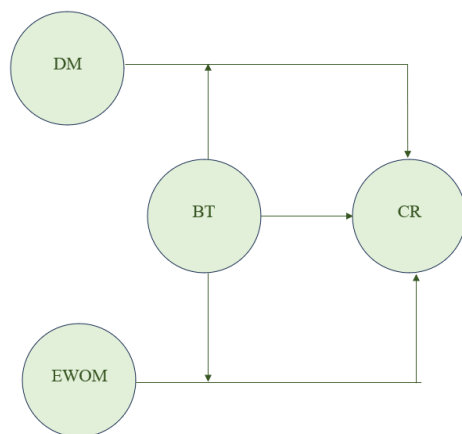


Figure 2. Research Framework

About topic of this research is customer retention, which is the basis for this research because it was found that business competition, especially in this digital era, is very strong, but many companies have stopped running their businesses because they do not have the ability to maintain relationships and retain their customers. Then, the assumption that digital marketing, electronic word of mouth, and brand trust possesses to influence customer retention is because the delivery of marketing messages in an interactive, personal, and creative way through digital video content on TikTok or through entertaining advertisements can be done by digital marketing factors.

Furthermore, electronic word of mouth wields operative agency in influencing consumers through recommendations, reviews, and comments from other consumers who have made purchases on TikTok shop and used products sold on TikTok shop. Furthermore, brand trust also wields operative agency in influencing consumers, where the trust of Generation Z consumers in deciding to make purchases and transactions on TikTok shop greatly determines repeat purchase decisions, demonstrating loyalty and long-term retention. In this study, brand trust is not only an independent variable, but also plays another role in moderating the finding that the brand trust can strengthen the influence of digital marketing and electronic word of mouth on customer retention.

Contingent upon previous study, yielded digital marketing evinces a significant effect towards customer retention [6]. Then, within inquiry mounted by certain research, it stands averred that brand trust evinces a positive effect towards customer retention [7]. The findings stated that one of the reasons for loyalty among Generation Z consumers is their trust in existing brands. Furthermore, electronic word of mouth evinces a positive significancy effect on customer retention [8]. Other previous studies have proven digital marketing evinces a significancy on customer retention [9].

Different findings state digital marketing evinces a positive influence on customer retention [10].

Referring to the novelty as delineated in the current exposition regarding the nexus between digital marketing, electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), and customer retention, new variables were formed, namely digital marketing, e-WoM, customer retention, and brand trust as a moderator. Originality inherent to this research emerges via fact that antecedent have not discussed Brand Trust in its capacity in the guise of moderating variable between aforementioned variables of digital marketing, e-WoM, and customer retention. This especial pertinence anent TikTok shop and Generation Z consumers. previous studies generally only examined the direct relationship between digital marketing and electronic word of mouth on customer retention, without involving the factor of brand trust as a factor that strengthens this relationship.

Therefore, in this study, the author presents a research model that includes brand trust under the denomination of moderating then will test its influence on customer retention. The test will then examine whether brand trust expressed moderating variable exhibits competence in moderate or does not influence the variables of digital marketing and e-WoM on customer retention. Findings herein stand poised to augment theoretically development aimed at attaining digital marketing science also practically for companies in determining strong strategies for successful customer retention in the digital era.

2. Research Method

The present study instantiates quantitative approach through SEM. Through quantitative methods, this study collected data which was then analyzed using the figures obtained [11]. Quantitative research methods are methods that describe and explain a phenomenon through general concepts [12], quantitative is a method that emphasizes the importance of samples, populations, and data analysis [13]. The population in this study included all members of Generation Z who frequently shop on TikTok Shop. The research sample consisted of 73 respondents who completed the research questionnaire and met the required criteria. Apposite to SEM model is used due to its relevance to the variables being tested, which have construct gauges alongside a effect of moderating [14].

Present modelling draws provenance from fourfold variables.

- a. Customer Retention (Y) receives gauging via three indicators, organizing reward programs for regular customers, responding to customers quickly, and organizing attractive promotional offers [1].
- b. Second, Digital Marketing (X1) with measurements on four indicators, namely promotion, SEO, social media, and public relations [15].

- c. Third, Electronic Word of Mouth (X2) with measurements based on three indicators, namely intensity, valence of opinion, content [16].
- d. Fourth, Brand Trust (Z) with measurements of three indicators, namely satisfaction, value, trust [17].

The study was conducted in several steps:

- a. First, participant demographic attributes delineative portrayal, providing an overview of the research respondents.
- b. Second, descriptive statistics germane to participant survey retorts having been explained. Descriptive statistics encapsulate inquiry data via mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. Level involvement in the field for each variable studied can be described using descriptive statistics [18].
- c. Third, scrutinizing the research questionnaire's congruence with the variables subjected to appraisal. Factor loading scores furnish the yardstick for the variable's validity attestation. If score evincing > 0.5 the questionnaire can be considered valid, and if the score is > 0.7 the model can be considered a good fit.
- d. Fourth, testing the reliability of research data is done through a test of reliability, in addition examining unerring regularity within respondents' answers. If scores for rho, Cronbach's alpha, and reliability composite are each > 0.7 then data permits reliable classification and assured [19].
- e. Fifth, hypothesis testing and conclusion statements refer to appraisal of the hypothesis qualifies evince accepted or proven rejected. This research hypothesis was conducted using a one-tailed test, so granted that T Statistic value evince > 1.65 and P Value evince < 0.05 indicates hypothesis accepted [20].
- f. Sixth, exposition of the resultant regression, replete with decipherment. This decipherment stands poised up explained with reference to the influence coefficient values and the related strategies.
- g. Seventh, presenting outcomes yielded by the coefficient of determination within the present modelling framework.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Respondent Profile

This article utilized a sample 73 participants from Generation Z, with 59 female respondents (80.8%) and 14 male respondents (19.2%). The age categories were divided into three groups based on the current age of Generation Z, ranging from 13 to 17 years depicts 0 respondents (0%), 18 to 22 depicts 64 respondents (87.7%), 23 to 28 depicts 9 participants (12.3%). Furthermore, the highest level of education attained by

the respondents was as follows: 35 respondents (47.9%) had completed high school/vocational school, 35 respondents (47.9%) were undergraduate students/bachelor's degree graduates, and 3 respondents (4.1%) had other educational backgrounds. Herein, the scholarly examination delineates used PLS. PLS itself about an analysis method can construct a prediction model when used and thereby engendering insight and analysis interlinkage each existing variable.

3.2. Smart PLS Descriptive Statistical Test

Descriptive statistics are techniques that focus on presenting an overview of existing data by summarizing it into a more understandable format. Basically, descriptive statistics are used in describing the characteristics of data that has been collected, analyzed, and presented [21]. The structure used in this study encompasses the floor and ceiling values mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation to severally variables, digital marketing, e-WoM, brand trust, and customer retention.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic Test

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Stdev	Percentage
Digital Marketing	73	1	5	4.16	0.756	83.2
Electronic Word of Mouth	73	1	5	4.24	0.734	84.8
Brand Trust	73	3	5	4.33	0.688	86.6
Customer Retention	73	2	5	4.20	0.766	84.0

Pertaining to the outcomes yielded by descriptive statistical tests on Table 1, the aforesaid appendages conclusions drawn:

- a. Analysis obtained from variable (X1) Digital Marketing minimum attained 1, maximum attained 5, mean attained 4.16 and standard deviation 0.756 equivalent to 83.2%
- b. Obtained from variable (X2) Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) minimum attained 1, maximum attained 5, mean attained 4.24, and a standard deviation 0.734 equivalent to 84.8%.
- c. Obtained from the variable (Z) Brand Trust minimum attained 3, maximum attained 5, mean attained 4.33, and standard deviation 0.688, equivalent to 86.6%.
- d. Obtained from the variable (Y) Customer Retention minimum attained 2, maximum attained 5, mean attained 4.20 and a standard deviation 0.766 or equivalent to 84%

Referring to Figure 3, it emerges clearly that all figures are above 0.5. Therefore, assertion warrants that all indicators are valid. The overall conclusion is whereby every indicator embedded in the variables in present inquiry are justified and effective.

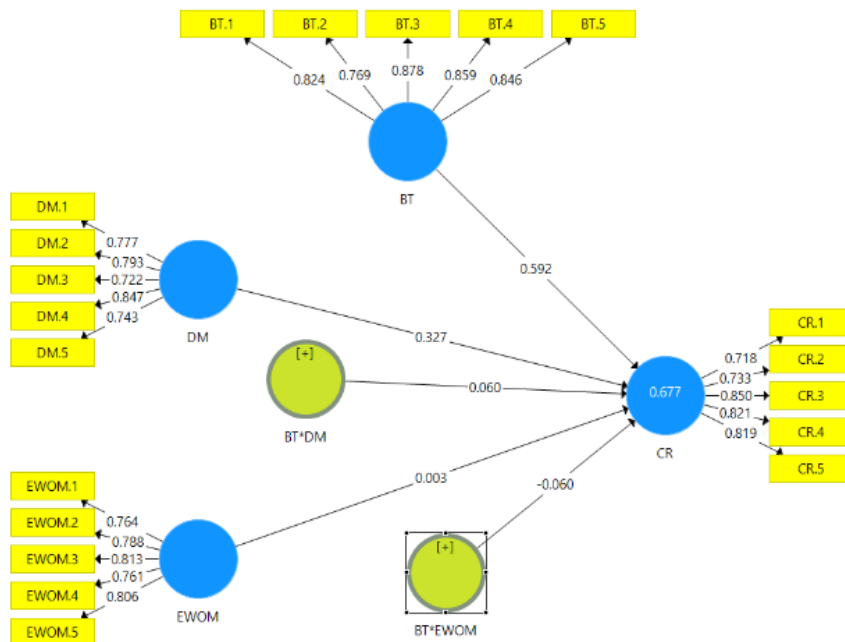


Figure 3. Loading Factor Results

3.3. Validity and Reliability Tests

Test of validity that can demonstrate accuracy of a tool in conducting its tests [22]. Reliability is a test to provide an overview of how consistent the statements given to respondents are in the same circumstances in different places [23]. Reliability in a study can be proven when the responses of individuals to the statements they receive produce consistent and stable responses. Validity and reliability tests are facilitated by various techniques, namely:

- a. Cronbach's Alpha: this method plays a role in providing an overview of the consistency of a questionnaire involved in the study. A score of > 0.7 is considered acceptable.
- b. Composite Reliability: this method plays a role in measuring the consistency of a questionnaire involved in research. A score of > 0.7 is considered acceptable.
- c. Average Variance Extracted (AVE): this method plays a role in explaining the reliability of a study. Value exceeding 0.5 qualify as satisfactory and acceptable.

An evaluation of both reliability and validity was carried out through the application of AVE, Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha, shown the Table 2. The conclusion is that, relying upon the obtained AVE measurements, the variables of digital marketing, e-WoM, brand trust, and customer retention are above 0.5. Referring to this discussion, it indicates that the variables can be considered valid and acceptable, or that all variables have excellent validity discriminant. The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are exceeding 0.7, referring to this discussion, it

indicates that this research is considered reliable and credible in terms of accuracy. Furthermore, in line with the research being conducted, it is known that all variables are exceeding 0.7. Therefore, it was found that the variables possess good reliability or quality.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	CR	AVE
DM	0.837	0.847	0.884	0.605
EWOM	0.846	0.846	0.890	0.619
BT	0.892	0.897	0.920	0.699
CR	0.849	0.860	0.892	0.624
BT*DM	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
BT*EWOM	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

To determine how effective the linear regression method is, we can describe the diverse data using r-square. R-Square has a value between 0 and 1, which means that improvement in r-square signifies better representation. Referring to available data, customer retention accounts for an explained variance of 0.677. Variables of X1, X2, and Z are proficient at explicating 67.7% of the diversity in customer retention. Then, adjusted r square is 0.653 or 65.3%. Referring to results obtained, assertion warrants adjusted r-square value achieved is above 50%, which indicates that even though the existing model already describes satisfactory performance, development can still be carried out by including additional variables in line with this so that the explanation of customer retention can be further improved.

The F-Square value also found an association among variables as indicated by effect size, f-square 0.00 (minor), 0.17 (moderate), and 0.39 (major). Referring to the discussion of the F-Square value, it is known that the variable in the large effect size position with a

benchmark > 0.11 is found in the brand trust variable $0.392 > 0.11$.

3.4. Hypothesis Test

Model inner analysis serves to establish a causal rapport between variables, research model formed can be more stable and accurate. Inner model analysis is considered

Table 3. Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Coefficient Value	T Statistic	P Values	Decision
H1 Digital Marketing > Customer Retention	0.327	2.903	0.002	Accepted
H2 Electronic Word of Mouth > Customer Retention	0.003	0.017	0.493	Rejected
H3 Brand Trust > Customer Retention	0.592	4.482	0.000	Accepted
H4 Brand Trust * Digital Marketing > Customer Retention	0.060	0.438	0.331	Rejected
H5 Brand Trust * Electronic Word of Mouth > Customer Retention	-0.060	0.451	0.326	Rejected

Based on Figure 3, after data processing with SEM, the latest research framework was obtained. Insights garnered from the research endeavor found moderating variable was lacking in significant role. One of the direct effects, the contribution of electronic word of mouth in shaping consumer retention patters, betokened outcome have no significant effect. Thus, only two direct effects provided positive and significant results, the contribution of digital marketing in sustaining consumer retention characterized by P values 0.002 and contribution brand trust on customer retention characterized by P-value of 0.000. It is proven to be significant because P-values found in the direct effect variables are less than 0.05.

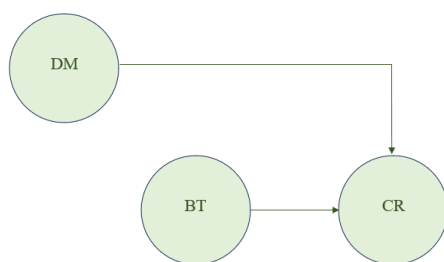


Figure 3. Latest Research Result Framework

Contingent upon these research results, thence it follows that if TikTok shop wants to improve its ability to retain its customers, especially Generation Z, then TikTok shop needs to pay full attention to maintaining brand trust by increasing consumer shopping satisfaction and prioritizing strong values. Then, strengthen digital marketing by focusing on providing product recommendations that are relevant to consumer preferences on social media rather than traditional advertising. Referring to the data in Table 3, one may deduce therefrom that of five hypotheses suggested, two hypotheses were acknowledged.

3.5. Verification: First Hypothesis

The coefficient value showed a result 0.327, characterized by T-statistics 2.903, P-values 0.002. In conclusion, H1 is accepted. Digital marketing helps

significant when transcending 1.65 T Statistic registers prominently. In other patterns, employ the criterion that P Values must undercut 0.05. Table 3 shows the research results obtained after testing using PLS to understand significant and insignificant data.

TikTok shop form more personal relationships with Generation Z consumers by combining entertainment, information search, and e-commerce features in one application, which is convenient for users, especially Generation Z, who prefer things that are easy and fast. TikTok fulfills this need. based on the research results, the fourth indicator has the greatest contribution to influence.

Therefore, TikTok shop needs to pay attention to and maintain their digital marketing and public relations to help Generation Z consumers become more familiar with and trust shopping on TikTok shop. Furthermore, there is a second indicator that TikTok shop needs to maintain by facilitating seo features for sellers on TikTok shop so that Generation Z consumers find it easy to search for the products they need, thereby improving the quality of their online shopping experience.

3.6. Verification: Second Hypothesis

The coefficient value showed a result 0.003, characterized by T-statistic 0.017, P-value 0.493, evincing no discernible impact. In conclusion, H2 was rejected, showing that online wom incapale provide evidence of a significant effect on retaining Generation Z consumers on TikTok shop. The rejection of this hypothesis can be attributed to the fact that even though Generation Z consumers are active in seeking reviews, comments, and product recommendations from other consumers who have used the products on TikTok shop, other aspects such as shopping experience, price, service quality, and product quality are more likely to dominate their decision to repurchase the product and whether they will return to using TikTok shop as a shopping platform. Additionally, according to the findings of certain research, it is also stated negative electronic word of mouth becomes, with escalating it reduces customer loyalty to brands with a level of brand readiness that does not pay attention to the potential of electronic word of mouth and lacks ability about manage it, resulting in a decrease in customer loyalty [24]. Thus, without consumer loyalty, companies cannot effectively build customen retention.

3.7. Verification: Third Hypothesis

The coefficient value showed a result of 0.592, characterized by T-statistic 4.482 and a P-value 0.000. In conclusion, H3 is accepted. Generation Z consumers are generally known to be a group of consumers who not only want everything to be fast and easy, but also expect the company to offer product value and a positive and consistent image. This increases the trust of Generation Z consumers. This is also reinforced by the findings of study before, which stated that Generation Z tends to focus on quality and reputation or brand image before deciding to purchase a product [25]. Therefore, when TikTok shop wants to build Generation Z consumers' trust in their brand, they particular focus should be accorded to the magnitude of the products sold on their platform, as well as build positive value for TikTok shop. By doing so, Generation Z consumer's trust will increase and stimulate their interest in purchasing, leading them to decide to shop and remain loyal in the long term.

3.8. Verification: Fourth Hypothesis

The coefficient value showed a result of 0.060, characterized by T-statistic 0.438, P-value 0.331, evincing no discernible impact. In conclusion, H4 is rejected. This may occur, meaning that digital marketing in the form of product promotions and recommendations through creative content tends to encourage Generation Z consumers to make purchases and repeat purchases. However, when digital marketing involves excessive promotional content, constant advertising that disturbs consumer comfort, and promotional messages that do not meet consumer needs, consumer trust in the company will decline. This is because consumers feel that companies only tend to focus on sales and do not pay attention to their values and preferences. Not only that, the mismatch between the product purchased and the product in the digital marketing content can reduce brand trust and cause disappointment for consumers. This disappointment can have an impact on subsequent purchasing decisions, where they will not make repeat purchases because of this.

3.9. Verification: Fifth Hypothesis

The coefficient value shows a result of -0.060, characterized by T-statistic 0.451, P-value 0.326, evincing no discernible effect. In conclusion, H5 is rejected. If there are comments or information received by Generation Z consumers from other consumers that are negative and contain false information, then Generation Z consumers cannot rely on the electronic word of mouth they receive, susceptible to reduce brand trust. As a result, it can reduce consumer loyalty, making it difficult for companies to develop customer retention.

4. Conclusion

The present inquiry, the outcomes found X1 and X3 possess a positive and significant effect on customer retention among Generation Z consumers on TikTok Shop. Digital marketing, with its creative content,

attracts the attention of Generation Z consumers, and brand trust provides a sense of trust and security when using TikTok shop for shopping. However, the moderating variable, brand trust, was lacking in a significant effect. Contingent upon present inquiry, future researchers are expected to present a more diverse and larger sample size in order to provide more accurate research results. Future researchers are also expected to form other moderating variables that show the possibility of moderating the relationship. The influence of X1 on Y has coefficient value 0.327 or 32.7% of direct influence, while the effect of brand trust on customer retention has coefficient 0.592 or 59.2% of the direct effect. Because the effect of the direct variable, namely digital marketing, is less than 50%, which indicates other factors such as price, quality, and features in the application, which the author did not examine and which may also have an effect. Therefore, it is hoped that further research can examine these factors to see if their influence is greater. Future inquiry is envisioned to exhibit a tangible impact within the domain of digital marketing.

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