

# Decoding Purchase Intention in the Digital Era: The Mediating Role of Brand Passion and Brand Loyalty

Rahellia Panjaitan<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sriwijaya University, Indonesia

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### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

[rahelliapanjaitan@fe.unsri.ac.id](mailto:rahelliapanjaitan@fe.unsri.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates how social media communication shapes purchase intention by incorporating brand passion and brand loyalty as mediating constructs, while aligning the analysis with the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within the sustainable development perspective, social media communication is expected not only to persuade consumers but also to educate them, consistent with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), in order to promote responsible consumption as emphasized in SDG 12. The study uses a quantitative method with an explanatory structure. Data were collected from 132 individuals who are actively using social media, selected through purposive sampling, and then analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The main findings reveal that social media communication conveying ethical and sustainability-oriented values significantly enhances both brand passion and brand loyalty. The results of the hypothesis test confirm that the two mediation variables play a crucial role in bridging digital communication with consumer purchase intentions. The emerging trend shows a shift towards ethical consumerism, where consumers are more driven by content that prioritizes the authenticity of social impact rather than aesthetics alone. The implications of this study confirm that the integration of sustainability narratives in social media communication strategies not only supports economic growth (SDG 8), but also creates resilient emotional attachments. Marketing practitioners are advised to adopt an ESD approach in digital content to build long-term loyalty and support the transition to a greener and more responsible market.

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana komunikasi media sosial membentuk niat pembelian dengan menggabungkan gairah merek dan loyalitas merek sebagai konstruksi mediasi, sambil menyelaraskan analisis dengan kerangka Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs). Dalam perspektif pembangunan berkelanjutan, komunikasi media sosial diharapkan tidak hanya dapat membujuk konsumen tetapi juga mengedukasi mereka, konsisten dengan prinsip-prinsip Pendidikan untuk Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (ESD), dalam rangka mempromosikan konsumsi yang bertanggung jawab sebagaimana ditekankan dalam SDG 12. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain penjelasan. Data dikumpulkan dari 132 pengguna media sosial aktif melalui *purposive sampling* dan kemudian dianalisis menggunakan *Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM). Temuan utama mengungkapkan bahwa komunikasi media sosial yang menyampaikan nilai-nilai etis dan berorientasi pada keberlanjutan secara signifikan meningkatkan gairah merek dan loyalitas merek. Hasil uji hipotesis menegaskan bahwa kedua variabel mediasi tersebut berperan penting dalam menjembatani komunikasi digital dengan niat pembelian konsumen. Tren yang muncul menunjukkan pergeseran ke arah *konsumerisme etis*, di mana konsumen lebih didorong oleh konten yang memprioritaskan keaslian dampak sosial daripada estetika saja. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi narasi keberlanjutan dalam strategi komunikasi media sosial tidak hanya mendukung pertumbuhan ekonomi (SDG 8), tetapi juga menciptakan keterikatan emosional yang tangguh. Praktisi pemasaran disarankan untuk mengadopsi pendekatan ESD dalam konten digital untuk membangun loyalitas jangka panjang dan mendukung transisi ke pasar yang lebih hijau dan bertanggung jawab.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

The development of digital technology and the internet have fundamentally changed the way companies conduct marketing communication with consumers. Social media functions not merely as a platform for

social engagement but also as a critical touchpoint within contemporary marketing strategies, emphasize that social media facilitates interactive, two-way communication between brands and consumers [1]. These dynamic plays an important role in shaping consumers' purchase decision-making processes in the digital age. Globally, more than half of the world's population has actively used social media for a variety of purposes, including searching for product information and assessing brands before purchasing [2]. Social media communication that is informative, responsive, and coherent has been proven to be able to form positive consumer attitudes and increase purchase intention, namely the tendency of consumers to buy a product or service [3], [4].

In Indonesia, the latest data shows a strong and increasing digital trend. There are around 143 million social media users in Indonesia, equivalent to more than 50% of the national population in early 2025, and more and more consumers are connected and actively interacting through various digital social networking platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, have become integral to everyday communication [5]. According to the latest Digital 2026 report, Indonesia now records approximately 180 million social media accounts, representing around 62.9% of the total population, indicating substantial growth compared to previous years [5]. This trend highlights the increasingly prominent role of social media in Indonesians' daily lives, functioning not only as a medium for interaction but also as a key source of information and product recommendations.

Furthermore, the expansion of digital commerce in Indonesia continues to accelerate, measured through official statistics. The publication of E-Commerce Statistics 2024 records the development of the e-commerce sector from a business perspective in Indonesia [6]. Data also shows that online trade transactions through e-retail and marketplaces grew 6.19% quarterly in the third quarter of 2025, reflecting an increase in people's digital economic activities [6]. This shows a shift in consumption behavior, where more and more consumers make online purchases through social media platforms and online stores. In addition, the report notes that household consumption in Indonesia experienced annual growth driven by online shopping, showing that online shopping activities are the main driving factor in domestic consumption dynamics [6].

In marketing, purchase intention means how likely someone is to buy a product or brand in the future. Purchase intention is a key sign of what someone might actually do later, and it's shaped by how much they value the brand and their experiences with it [7]. But the link between social media and purchase intention isn't always clear. Research shows it can depend on

factors like feelings and how attached someone is to the brand [2], [8].

One important feeling that affects this is brand passion. It's when someone really likes a brand and feels excited about it [9]. People with brand passion usually have stronger positive feelings and are more likely to buy. Meanwhile, brand loyalty is about sticking with a brand even when there are other choices around. Furthermore, certain research states that brand loyalty is an important predictor of long-term purchase intention [10]. Effective brand communication activities on social media can strengthen consumer loyalty by creating positive experiences and long-term relationships [8], [11].

Although many studies have investigated the relationship between social media communication and purchase intention, there is still a research gap. Most studies emphasize the direct influence of social media communication on purchase intent without exploring affective mediation mechanisms, such as brand passion, and relational mechanisms such as brand loyalty. In addition, studies that integrate these two constructs simultaneously in a single model are still limited, especially in the context of Indonesia, which is socially and digitally unique [3], [11]. Moving from this gap, this research offers novelty by developing a conceptual model that places brand passion and brand loyalty as dual mediators between social media communication and purchase intention. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive theoretical foundation in understanding how social media influences purchasing behavior through affective pathways and long-term relationships.

The objectives of this study are:

- a. to analyze the influence of social media communication on purchase intention;
- b. testing the influence of social media communication on brand passion;
- c. testing the influence of social media communication on brand loyalty;
- d. analyze the influence of brand passion on purchase intention;
- e. analyzing the influence of brand loyalty on purchase intention;
- f. examining the role of brand passion mediation in the relationship between social media communication and purchase intention; and
- g. examining the role of brand loyalty mediation in the relationship between social media communication and purchase intention.

This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution by expanding the literature related to affective and relational mediation mechanisms in

digital marketing, as well as practical contributions for marketing practitioners in designing social media communication strategies that are not only informative, but can also build brand passion and brand loyalty to increase consumer purchase intent.

## 1.2. Literature Study

### 1.2.1. Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Theory

Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Theory explain that external stimuli in the form of marketing communication affect the internal conditions of consumers before generating a response [12]. In this study, social media communication acts as a stimulus, brand passion and brand loyalty as an internal response (organism), and purchase intention as a behavioral response.

### 1.2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This theory explains that purchase intent is formed through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavior control, so psychological factors play a key role in the formation of purchase intention [7].

### 1.2.3. Relationship Marketing Theory

This theory emphasizing that consistent communication builds trust and loyalty which leads to sustainable purchasing behavior [13].

### 1.2.4. Customer Engagement Theory

Certain study stating that brand-consumer interactions in a digital environment create emotional engagement that enhances long-term relationships and brand value [14]. These theories provide a conceptual basis that social media communication can form emotional attachment and loyalty before influencing purchase intent.

### 1.2.5. Social Media Communication

The development of social media has changed the pattern of marketing communication from a one-way approach to interactive and participatory dialogical communication. Social media allows brands and consumers to interact directly, share information, and build more personal and sustainable relationships [1], [2]. In the context of digital marketing, social media communication (SMC) refers to all brand communication activities through social media platforms that aim to convey messages, build engagement, and create value with consumers [4], [15].

The quality of communication on social media, including interactivity, credibility, and relevance of content, plays an important role in shaping consumer perception of brands. Consistent and valuable communication has been proven to increase positive attitudes and consumer engagement [4], [8]. Therefore,

social media communication is seen as the main trigger that affects the psychological and relational processes of consumers in the digital context.

### 1.2.6. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as the tendency or readiness of consumers to buy a product or brand in the future. Purchase intent is an important predictor of actual purchasing behavior and is influenced by cognitive and affective evaluations of the brand [7]. In the digital environment, the experience of consumer interaction with brands through social media is the dominant factor in the formation of purchase intention [3], [16]. Previous research has shown that brand communication and interactions between users on social media significantly affect product evaluations and consumer purchase intent [17]. However, these influences are often not direct, but rather work through emotional and relational mechanisms [2].

### 1.2.7. Brand Passion

Brand passion represents a strong, enthusiastic, and deep emotional attachment between the consumer and the brand. Consumers who have a high brand passion show intense emotional engagement, long-term commitment, and a stronger tendency to purchase intent [9], [18]. This emotional attachment develops through meaningful brand experiences and repetitive interactions [19]. In the context of social media, authentic, valuable, and relevant content is able to evoke positive emotions and strengthen consumers' emotional attachment to it [8]. Therefore, brand passion acts as an affective mechanism that bridges the influence of social media communication on purchase intention.

### 1.2.8. Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as a consumer's commitment to continue to choose a brand despite the existence of various other alternatives. Brand loyalty is the result of a combination of positive attitudes and repetitive purchasing behaviors that reflect the long-term relationship between consumers and brands [10], [20]. Brand communication on social media contributes significantly to building loyalty through value creation and sustainable relationships. Social media marketing activities increase brand loyalty through engagement and long-term relationships [11]. Trust and brand affection as an antecedent of loyalty can also be strengthened through consistent and meaningful communication [21]. Loyal consumers tend to have more stable and sustainable purchase intentions [10].

## 1.3. Framework

This research's framework can be seen on Figure 1.

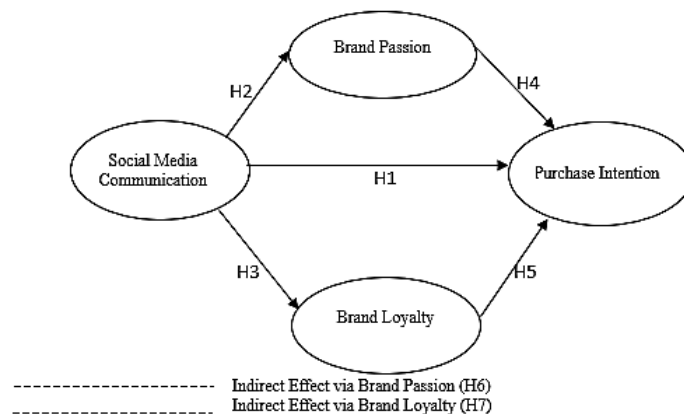


Figure 1. Framework

### 1.3.1. SCM on PI

Social media communication allows brands to convey information, build dialogue, and create interactive brand experiences. Communication activities on social media have been shown to increase value perception and positive attitudes towards brands, which ultimately increases consumer purchase intent [3], [4], [16]. Social media also accelerates the dissemination of information and recommendations between users which significantly influences product evaluations [17]. Additionally, relevant and credible brand communication on social media can increase consumer trust, which is an important factor in the formation of purchase intent [8]. Therefore, the more effective the brand's communication on social media, the higher the consumer's tendency to make a purchase.

### 1.3.2. SCM on BP

Brand passion arises as a result of an intense positive emotional experience with the brand. Consistent and meaningful digital interactions enable consumers to develop a strong emotional attachment to brands [9], [18]. Social media provides a space for storytelling, brand community, and personalized experiences that strengthen emotional bonds [8]. Such emotional engagement develops through repeatable and authentic brand experiences [19]. Therefore, social media communication not only functions as an information tool, but also as a mechanism for forming positive emotions that give birth to brand passion.

### 1.3.3. SCM on BL

Brand loyalty is formed through long-term relationships between consumers and brands that are built through consistent and valuable communication. Social media allows brands to maintain relationships with consumers through continuous interaction, message personalization, and real-time responses [11]. The relationship marketing perspective shows that effective communication increases consumer trust and commitment, which is the main antecedent of brand loyalty [13], [21]. Additionally, social media provides

a space for consumers to participate in brand communities, which reinforces a sense of long-term belonging and commitment [14]. Thus, social media communication plays a strategic role in shaping brand loyalty.

### 1.3.4. BP on PI

Brand passion reflects an intense emotional attachment that drives consumers to show a strong preference for a particular brand. Consumers who have brand passion tend to show higher purchase intentions due to emotional motivation to maintain a relationship with the brand [9], [19]. These emotional bonds increase consumer confidence in purchasing decision-making. Previous research has shown that emotional attachment is a significant predictor of purchase intention because positive emotions increase product evaluation and brand preference [18]. Therefore, brand passion plays a role as the main psychological factor that drives purchasing behavior.

### 1.3.5. BL on PI

Brand loyalty reflects consumers' commitment to continue to choose a particular brand despite other alternatives. Brand loyalty has been shown to increase purchase intent because loyal consumers have stable preferences and resistance to the influence of competitors [10], [20]. In addition, brand loyalty increases trust and reduces the risk of perception in the purchase process, thereby strengthening purchase intention [21]. Thus, brand loyalty is an important determinant in the formation of sustainable buying intentions.

### 1.3.6. BP Mediation in SCM and PI Relationships

The influence of social media communication on purchase intent is not only direct, but also through emotional channels. Brand passion functions as a mediator that translates the brand's communication experience into emotional attachment before influencing purchase intention [2], [9]. Inspirational and authentic communication on social media creates a positive emotional experience that strengthens brand

passion, which ultimately increases purchase intent. Therefore, brand passion plays an important role as an affective mechanism in the relationship between social media communication and purchase intention.

1.3.7. The Role of BL Mediation in SCM and PI Relationships

In addition to emotional channels, social media communication also influences purchase intent through relational channels. Brand loyalty reflects the long-term relationship between consumers and brands that is formed through continuous communication [11], [13]. Consistent communication increases consumer trust and commitment, which ultimately increases loyalty and purchase intent. Therefore, brand loyalty acts as a relational mediator that strengthens the influence of social media communication on purchase intent.

1.4. Research Hypothesis

The development of previous theories and empirical findings, the research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

- H1: SCM Affects PI.
- H2: SCM Affects BP.
- H3: SCM Affects BL.
- H4: BP Affects PI.
- H5: BL Affects PI.
- H6: BP Mediates the Influence of SCM on PI.
- H7: BL Mediates the Influence of SCM on PI.

2. Research Method

2.1. Research Type and Design

This study uses a quantitative method with an explanatory design to examine the connection between social media communication, brand passion, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. A quantitative approach was chosen because the research is focused on testing hypotheses in an objective way using numbers [22]. For data analysis, Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used because it works well for predicting outcomes, handling complex models, and checking for mediating effects, especially with smaller groups of people [23], [24].

2.2. Population and Research Sample

The population includes active social media users in Indonesia who have engaged with brand content and either have bought products or plan to buy them through social media, also sampling method used was purposive sampling, which means participants were selected based on their fit with the study’s goals [22]. A total of 132 people were included in the study, and they met the minimum requirements for PLS-SEM analysis, based on the 10-times rule [23].

2.3 Variable Operational Definition

The operational definition of a variable is an explanation of research variables in a measurable form, so that it becomes a guideline in the preparation of instruments and data collection [22]. The following Table 1 is explanation of variables in this study.

Table 1. Variable Operational Definition

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicator	Scale
Social Media Communication	Consumer perception of the quality and effectiveness of brand communication through social media	Communication interactivity; The credibility of the information; Content relevance; Message consistency	Likert 1–5
Brand Passion	Strong emotional attachment and consumer enthusiasm for a brand	Enthusiasm for the brand; Emotional attachment; Pride in using the brand	Likert 1–5
Brand Loyalty	Consumers' commitment to continue to choose and support a brand in a sustainable manner	Brand preferences; Repurchase intentions; Resistance to competing brands	Likert 1–5
Purchase Intention	A consumer's tendency or readiness to buy a product or brand in the future	Desire to buy; Possibility of buying; Purchase plan	Likert 1–5

2.3. Data Collection Techniques

Through a structured questionnaire that was distributed online. The survey method was chosen because it is effective in reaching social media users and is suitable for research on digital consumer behavior [2], [22].

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

The study used PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4. Both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) were checked. For the outer model, we looked at convergent validity, which means checking if the items measure the same concept, and this was done using AVE, which needs to be more than 0.5. Discriminant validity, which ensures that each

construct is different from others, was tested using the Fornell-Larcker method. Reliability was also checked with Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha [23].

For the inner model, we examined path coefficients, R-values, and significance. A high R<sup>2</sup> value (above 0.67) showed a strong model, a moderate R<sup>2</sup> (between 0.33 and 0.67) indicated a moderate model, and a low R<sup>2</sup> (below 0.33) meant a weak model. Significance was tested using a bootstrapping method. To check if brand passion and brand loyalty acted as mediators, indirect effects were analyzed, which is a standard approach in PLS-SEM and quantitative research [22], [23], [24].

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Results

The analysis that has been carried out obtained a CA value above 0.50, which indicates that this measuring tool has an adequate level of reliability in representing the construct. Here's a summary of what is in question that can be seen on Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation Results

Variable	Item	Loading	AVE
Social Media Communication	SMC1	0.661	0.505
	SMC2	0.791	
	SMC3	0.710	
	SMC4	0.661	
	SMC5	0.722	
Brand Passion	BP1	0.788	0.651
	BP2	0.751	
	BP3	0.825	
	BP4	0.827	
	BP5	0.841	
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.769	0.579
	BL2	0.742	
	BL3	0.823	
	BL4	0.705	
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.794	0.611
	PI2	0.831	
	PI3	0.847	
	PI4	0.773	
	PI5	0.647	

The results from evaluating the measurement model showed that all indicators had a loading factor higher than 0.60. Also, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct was more than 0.50. These included Social Media Communication (0.505), Brand Passion (0.651), Brand Loyalty (0.579), and Purchase Intention (0.611). This means that all the constructs met the standards for convergent validity. So, the indicators are considered valid and ready for use in further analysis of the structural model.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Test Results

	BL	BP	PI	SMC
BL	0.761			
BP	0.735	0.807		
PI	0.555	0.644	0.782	
SMC	0.718	0.544	0.680	0.710

The results of the discriminant validity test using the Fornell-Larcker criteria on Table 3 showed that the square root value of AVE in each construct, namely Brand Loyalty (0.761), Brand Passion (0.807), Purchase Intention (0.782), and Social Media Communication (0.710), was generally higher than the correlation value between constructs. These findings indicate that each variable has a good ability to distinguish its concepts from each other, so that the discriminant validity of the model can be declared fulfilled.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) tests

	CA	CR (rho a)	CR (rho c)
BL	0.759	0.760	0.846
BP	0.866	0.870	0.903
PI	0.838	0.845	0.886
SMC	0.754	0.754	0.835

The results of the reliability test on Table 4 showed that the entire construct had Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rho\_a), and composite reliability (rho\_c) values above the minimum limit of 0.70. Brand Loyalty has a reliability value of 0.759–0.846, Brand Passion 0.866–0.903, Purchase Intention 0.838–0.886, and Social Media Communication 0.754–0.835. These findings indicate that all variables have good internal consistency and the research instrument is declared reliable. The next stage is the evaluation of the structural model (inner model) which aims to analyze the strength of the relationship between constructs as well as test the research hypothesis that has been formulated, which can be seen on Figure 2.

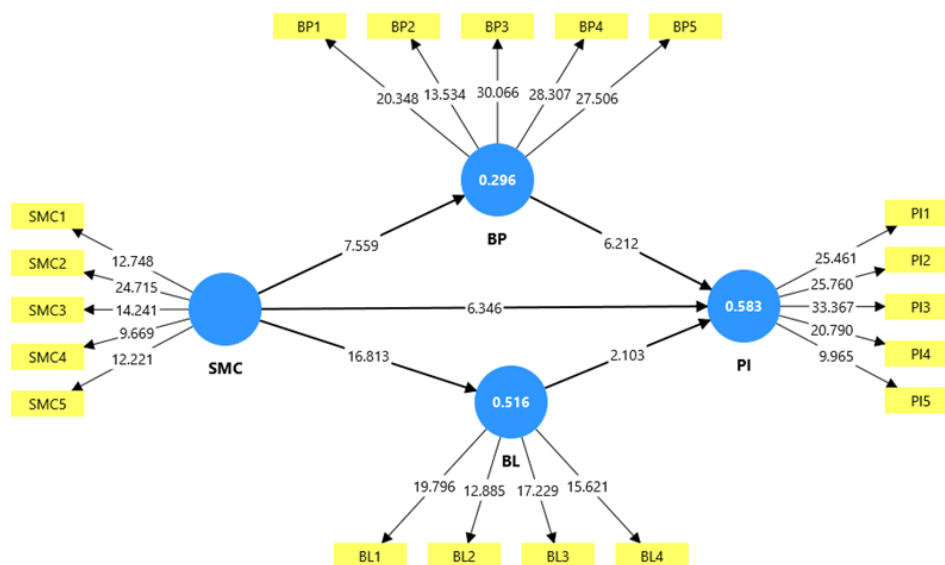


Figure 2. Path Diagram T-Value

The image on Figure 2 shows the results of PLS-SEM (bootstrapping) which illustrates the relationship between  $SMC \rightarrow BP \rightarrow PI$  and  $SMC \rightarrow BL \rightarrow PI$ , with SMC also having a direct effect on PI. The value within the blue circle is  $R^2$ , which means that SMC is able to explain 29.6% of BP variations, 51.6% of BL variations, and overall 58.3% of PI variations (moderate-strong category). All reflective indicators (SMC1–SMC5, BP1–BP5, BL1–BL4, PI1–PI5) have a  $t$ -value  $> 1.96$ , so the indicators are declared valid and significant. Structurally, SMC has a significant effect on BP, BL, and PI, while BP and BL also have a significant effect on PI, suggesting the partial mediation role of BP and BL in the relationship between SMC and PI. Thus, this model supports that the increase in SMC directly or indirectly is able to increase PI.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Research Model

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	T statistics	P values	Conclusion
H1	$SMC \rightarrow PI$	6.346	0.000	Accepted
H2	$SMC \rightarrow BP$	7.559	0.000	Accepted
H3	$SMC \rightarrow BL$	16.813	0.000	Accepted
H4	$BP \rightarrow PI$	6.212	0.000	Accepted
H5	$BL \rightarrow PI$	2.103	0.035	Accepted
H6	$SMC \rightarrow BP \rightarrow PI$	4.877	0.000	Accepted
H7	$SMC \rightarrow BL \rightarrow PI$	2.083	0.037	Accepted

The results of the hypothesis test on Table 5 showed that SMC had a strong and significant direct influence on PI, as well as a significant influence on BP and BL, confirming the role of SMC as a key factor in shaping organizational behavior and learning. Furthermore, BP and BL were shown to have a significant effect on PI, although the influence of BL was relatively weaker than that of BP. These findings are reinforced by the results of indirect influences, where BP and BL significantly mediate the relationship between SMC and PI. Thus, all hypotheses are accepted and it can be concluded that SMC increases PI either directly or through the BP and BL mediation mechanisms, with a partial mediation pattern because the direct path of  $SMC \rightarrow PI$  remains significant.

### 3.2. Discussion

The study shows that communication on social media has a positive and important effect on the intention to buy. This is supported by research, which found that social media communication positively affects purchase intention, along with other factors like brand passion and brand loyalty [25], [26]. The strong influence of social media communication on brand passion is also supported, which showed that elements of social media marketing affect brand passion, which in turn helps with purchase intention [25].

While many studies looking directly at brand loyalty focus on similar factors (like social media marketing leading to brand loyalty), research from certain study shows that media marketing has a positive effect on

brand loyalty [27]. This supports the idea that communication on social media has a significant connection with customer loyalty. The positive connection between brand passion and purchase intention is also backed by different research [28].

Study which studied Netflix and found that brand passion strongly influences purchase intention. Even though many studies focus more on social media marketing and brand loyalty, also found that brand loyalty has a positive impact on purchase intention, as part of a model that looks at how social media marketing affects consumer behavior [25]. Findings that brand passion acts as a mediator are supported by real-world evidence, showing that brand passion is important in turning the influence of social media into actual purchase decisions. This is supported by a study from which also shows that affective factors play a mediating role in purchase intention [25]. Although there are not many studies that directly test the mediation of brand loyalty, evidence from shows that social media marketing influences brand loyalty, and that this variable contributes to buying decisions in the context of smartphones, supporting the role of loyalty as a mediator [27].

### 4. Conclusion

This study found that all the hypotheses (H1–H7) were supported, which means that communication on social media has a positive and important effect on people's desire to buy products, both directly and through other factors. It was discovered that social media communication helps build brand passion and brand loyalty, which in turn encourage people to make purchases. Both brand passion and brand loyalty strongly influence the intention to buy, with brand passion having a slightly stronger effect. Additionally, brand passion and brand loyalty act as partial mediators between social media communication and purchase intention, because the direct effect of social media communication on purchase intention remains strong. From a theoretical perspective, this research strengthens and completes the digital marketing model by explaining how social media communication interacts with emotional and relationship-based factors to influence buying decisions. From a practical standpoint, these findings show that successful social media communication is not just about sharing information, but also about creating strong emotional connections and loyalty with the brand. According to the study's results, brand managers should create social media communication plans that are not just informative, but also emotional and engaging. This helps in creating strong feelings towards the brand and keeping customers loyal, which can lead to more purchases. The study also suggests that future research should look into other psychological factors, consider different industries, and use various research methods. This would help in better understanding how social

media influences customer behavior and make the findings more widely applicable.

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