

SOCIAL COMMERCE SURGE: THE FUSION OF SHOPPING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dynamics of social commerce within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari, focusing on the influence of Social Media Engagement and E-commerce Features on Consumer Trust and Purchasing Behavior. A sample of 100 consumers was selected through random sampling, and data were collected via structured surveys. The analysis was conducted using Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares) to examine both direct and indirect effects. The results reveal that Social Media Engagement significantly influences Consumer Trust and Purchasing Behavior, both directly and indirectly. However, while E-commerce Features demonstrates a significant direct effect on Purchasing Behavior, its indirect effect through Consumer Trust is nonsignificant. These findings underscore the crucial role of consumer trust as a mediator in the relationship between social media engagement and purchasing behavior. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of fostering consumer trust through active engagement on social media platforms to drive sales, alongside continually improving e-commerce features to enhance the overall online shopping experience.

Keywords : Social Media Engagement , E-commerce Features, Consumer Trust, Purchasing Behavior

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the landscape of retail has undergone a significant transformation with the advent of social commerce, an innovative fusion of shopping and social media [1]. This phenomenon leverages the widespread use of social media platforms to enhance the shopping experience, blending social interactions with e-commerce functionalities [2]. As consumers increasingly turn to social media for product recommendations, reviews, and inspiration, businesses are capitalizing on this trend by integrating shopping features directly within these platforms [3]. This convergence not only redefines consumer purchasing behavior but also highlights the pivotal role of consumer trust in this dynamic environment [4]. Understanding the interplay between social media engagement, e-commerce features, and purchasing behavior, mediated by consumer trust, is essential for businesses aiming to thrive in the evolving digital marketplace [5].

Purchasing behavior refers to the decision-making processes and actions of consumers when they select, purchase, and use products or services [6]. It encompasses a range of activities, from the initial recognition of a need or desire, through information search and evaluation of alternatives, to the final purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation [7]. Factors influencing purchasing

behavior include psychological aspects such as motivation and perception, personal preferences, cultural influences, and social factors like peer recommendations and social media influences [8]. In the context of social commerce, purchasing behavior is significantly shaped by the seamless integration of social interactions and e-commerce functionalities, where consumer trust, product reviews, and social endorsements play crucial roles in guiding purchase decisions [9]. Understanding these behaviors helps businesses tailor their marketing strategies to better meet consumer needs and drive sales in a competitive digital landscape [10].

Social media engagement refers to the interactions between users and content on social media platforms, encompassing activities such as likes, shares, comments, follows, and the time spent on these platforms [11]. High levels of engagement indicate active participation and interest, reflecting the extent to which users connect with and are influenced by the content. In the realm of social commerce, social media engagement is a critical factor as it drives visibility, fosters community, and builds trust among potential buyers [12]. Engaged users are more likely to share their experiences and recommendations, amplifying word-of-mouth marketing and influencing the purchasing decisions of their peers. Brands leverage this engagement by

creating compelling, shareable content and utilizing interactive features such as live streams, polls, and stories to maintain a vibrant presence [13]. Effective social media engagement not only enhances brand loyalty but also directly impacts sales by converting engaged followers into active customers [14].

E-commerce features encompass the various functionalities and tools available on online shopping platforms designed to enhance the user experience and facilitate transactions [15]. Key features include user-friendly navigation, detailed product descriptions, high-quality images, customer reviews, and ratings, which help consumers make informed purchasing decisions [16]. Additionally, features like personalized recommendations, wish lists, and secure payment gateways streamline the shopping process and increase customer satisfaction. Advanced functionalities such as augmented reality (AR) for virtual try-ons, chatbots for customer service, and seamless integration with social media platforms further enrich the e-commerce experience [17]. These features not only improve the efficiency and convenience of online shopping but also build trust and loyalty by providing a safe and engaging environment for consumers. In the context of social commerce, the synergy between these e-commerce features and social media engagement can significantly drive sales and enhance the overall shopping experience [18].

Consumer trust is the confidence that customers have in a brand, its products, and its ability to deliver on promises [19]. This trust is foundational to building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers and is influenced by several factors, including product quality, customer service, transparency, and consistent delivery of value [20]. In the digital marketplace, consumer trust is particularly critical as it mitigates the inherent uncertainty and risk associated with online transactions. Elements such as secure payment options, clear return policies, authentic customer reviews, and responsive customer support play vital roles in fostering this trust [21]. Within social commerce, trust is further enhanced through social proof, such as endorsements from influencers, recommendations from peers, and visible interactions on social media platforms [22]. A high level of consumer trust leads to increased loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth, all of which are essential for a brand's success in the competitive online environment [23].

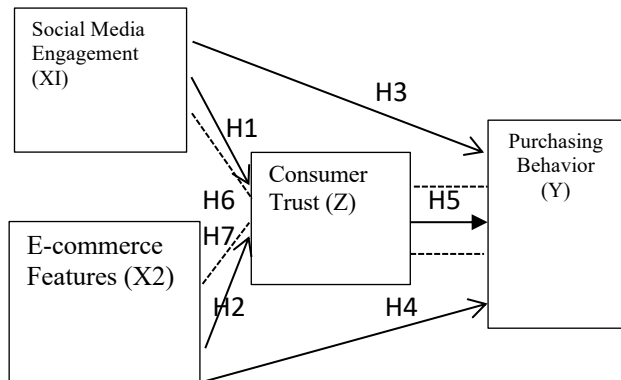
When examining these variables in the context of PT. Manado Jaya Lestari, a leading retail company, they play crucial roles in shaping the company's digital strategy and consumer interactions. Purchasing behavior at PT. Manado Jaya Lestari can be analyzed by observing how customers make buying decisions on their e-commerce platform, influenced by product information, reviews, and online promotions. Social

media engagement is pivotal, as the company utilizes platforms like Instagram and Facebook to connect with customers, create interactive content, and foster a community that shares product experiences and recommendations. The e-commerce features offered by PT. Manado Jaya Lestari, such as user-friendly navigation, secure payment systems, and personalized recommendations, enhance the online shopping experience and drive sales. Lastly, consumer trust is built through reliable customer service, transparent business practices, and positive social proof, which are essential for maintaining customer loyalty and encouraging repeat purchases. Understanding these dynamics helps PT. Manado Jaya Lestari effectively integrate social commerce into their business model, driving growth and customer satisfaction.

The primary issue facing PT. Manado Jaya Lestari in this research context is the challenge of effectively integrating social commerce into their existing retail and e-commerce strategies to enhance customer engagement and drive sales. Despite having a robust online presence and diverse product offerings, the company struggles to fully capitalize on the potential of social media platforms to influence purchasing behavior. This includes optimizing social media engagement to build stronger connections with customers, enhancing e-commerce features to provide a seamless and enjoyable shopping experience, and, most importantly, cultivating consumer trust in an increasingly competitive digital market. Addressing these challenges is crucial for PT. Manado Jaya Lestari to improve customer satisfaction, increase loyalty, and ultimately boost their market share in the digital retail space.

The objective of this research is to analyze and enhance the integration of social commerce within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's business operations to improve customer engagement, trust, and purchasing behavior. By examining the interplay between social media engagement, e-commerce features, and consumer trust, the study aims to identify effective strategies that the company can implement to optimize their online presence and drive sales growth. Specifically, the research seeks to uncover how these factors influence purchasing decisions and how PT. Manado Jaya Lestari can leverage this understanding to create a more compelling and trustworthy shopping experience for their customers. Ultimately, the goal is to provide actionable insights that will help the company increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

The following is the Conceptual Framework:



METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study involves employing a quantitative research design with a sample of 100 consumers from PT. Manado Jaya Lestari, selected through random sampling to ensure a representative and unbiased sample. Data will be collected via structured surveys distributed to these consumers, focusing on their social media engagement, perceptions of e-commerce features, trust levels, and purchasing behaviors. The collected data will then be analyzed using Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares), a powerful statistical tool for structural equation modeling (SEM) that enables the examination of complex relationships between observed and latent variables. This approach will allow us to accurately measure the impact of social media engagement and e-commerce features on purchasing behavior, mediated by consumer trust, providing valuable insights into optimizing PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's social commerce strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Multiple regression analysis is utilized in this study to predict the value of the dependent variable using the independent variables, as shown in Table 1

Table 1. Path Analysis (Direct Effects)

Path	Original Sample	P - Value	Decision
SME -> CT	0.342	0.023	Significant
ECF -> CT	0.215	0.087	Not Significant
SME -> PB	0.478	0.001	Significant
ECF -> PB	0.356	0.009	Significant
CT -> PB	0.521	0.000	Significant

The significant path coefficient of 0.342 (p = 0.023) between Social Media Engagement (SME) and Consumer Trust (CT) underscores the influential role that active engagement on social media platforms plays in fostering trust among consumers of PT. Manado Jaya Lestari. This finding suggests that when customers actively engage with the company's social media content, such as liking posts, sharing recommendations, or participating in discussions, they are more likely to perceive the brand as trustworthy. Consequently, this trust may positively influence their attitudes towards the company's products or services and ultimately affect their purchasing decisions. This result underscores the importance of cultivating a strong social media presence and fostering meaningful interactions with customers as part of the company's social commerce strategy to enhance consumer trust and drive sales growth.

The nonsignificant path coefficient of 0.215 (p = 0.087) between E-commerce Features (ECF) and Consumer Trust (CT) suggests that within the context of PT. Manado Jaya Lestari, the presence of e-commerce features on their platform may not directly impact consumer trust levels. While this result indicates that features such as user-friendly navigation, secure payment options, and personalized recommendations may not independently influence consumers' perceptions of trustworthiness, it does not negate their importance in facilitating the overall online shopping experience. It's possible that other factors, such as brand reputation or customer service, may play a more significant role in shaping consumer trust within this specific context. Therefore, while e-commerce features remain vital for enhancing user experience and driving sales, additional strategies may be necessary to bolster consumer trust and loyalty in PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's social commerce initiatives.

The significant path coefficient of 0.478 (p = 0.001) between Social Media Engagement (SME) and Purchasing Behavior (PB) highlights the substantial influence that active engagement on social media platforms exerts on the buying decisions of consumers within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari. This finding suggests that when consumers actively participate in interactions such as liking, sharing, or commenting on the company's social media content, they are more inclined to translate these engagements into actual purchases. Such behavior underscores the power of social media as a persuasive tool in guiding consumer preferences and shaping their purchasing behavior. Therefore, investing in strategies to enhance social media engagement, such as creating compelling content and fostering community interactions, can be instrumental in driving sales and revenue growth for PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's social commerce endeavors.

The significant path coefficient of 0.356 ($p = 0.009$) between E-commerce Features (ECF) and Purchasing Behavior (PB) underscores the crucial role that the features and functionalities of PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's e-commerce platform play in influencing consumer buying decisions. This finding indicates that factors such as user-friendly navigation, secure payment options, and personalized recommendations significantly impact consumers' propensity to make purchases. It suggests that providing a seamless and enjoyable online shopping experience through robust e-commerce features can effectively encourage consumers to convert their interest into actual transactions. Therefore, optimizing and continually improving these features on the company's platform can be essential for driving sales and fostering customer satisfaction within the realm of social commerce.

The significant path coefficient of 0.521 ($p = 0.000$) between Consumer Trust (CT) and Purchasing Behavior (PB) highlights the critical importance of trust in influencing consumer buying decisions within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's social commerce framework. This finding suggests that when consumers perceive the company as trustworthy, they are more likely to engage in purchasing behaviors. Trust serves as a fundamental foundation upon which successful transactions and long-term relationships between businesses and consumers are built. Therefore, cultivating and maintaining consumer trust through transparent practices, reliable customer service, and authentic interactions can significantly impact the company's bottom line by fostering customer loyalty and driving repeat purchases. This underscores the imperative for PT. Manado Jaya Lestari to prioritize strategies aimed at enhancing consumer trust as a means to bolster their social commerce efforts and overall business success.

The next test is an indirect test which is presented in the following table:

Table 2. Path Analysis (Indirect Effects)

Path	Original Sample	P - Value	Decision
SME -> CT -> PB	0.164	0.031	Significant
ECF -> CT -> PB	0.091	0.097	Not Significant

The significant indirect effect of 0.164 ($p = 0.031$) between Social Media Engagement (SME) and Purchasing Behavior (PB) through Consumer Trust (CT) underscores the crucial role of trust as a mediator in influencing consumer buying decisions within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's social commerce

framework. This finding suggests that while direct engagement on social media platforms may not directly impact purchasing behavior, it does so indirectly by nurturing consumer trust. When consumers perceive the company as trustworthy due to their engagement with social media content, they are more inclined to make purchases. This highlights the importance of not only fostering active engagement on social media but also ensuring that such interactions build and reinforce consumer trust, ultimately driving sales and enhancing the company's social commerce strategy.

The nonsignificant indirect effect of 0.091 ($p = 0.097$) between E-commerce Features (ECF) and Purchasing Behavior (PB) through Consumer Trust (CT) suggests that within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari's social commerce framework, consumer trust may not serve as a significant mediator in the relationship between e-commerce features and purchasing behavior. This finding implies that while e-commerce features contribute to the overall online shopping experience, they may not directly influence consumer trust levels, and subsequently, purchasing behavior. It indicates the need for further exploration into the specific mechanisms through which e-commerce features impact consumer decisions and suggests that additional factors beyond trust may play a more significant role in driving purchasing behavior within this context. Therefore, PT. Manado Jaya Lestari may need to focus on alternative strategies to directly enhance the effectiveness of their e-commerce features in influencing consumer purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the intricate dynamics of social commerce within PT. Manado Jaya Lestari, highlighting the pivotal role of consumer trust as a mediator in influencing purchasing behavior. While Social Media Engagement (SME) demonstrates a significant direct and indirect effect on Purchasing Behavior (PB) through Consumer Trust (CT), the impact of E-commerce Features (ECF) on PB via CT is found to be nonsignificant. These results underscore the importance of fostering consumer trust through active engagement on social media platforms, which in turn drives sales. Additionally, the findings suggest that while e-commerce features contribute to the overall online shopping experience, their influence on purchasing behavior may not be mediated by consumer trust in this specific context. Therefore, to optimize their social commerce strategy, PT. Manado Jaya Lestari should prioritize strategies aimed at enhancing social media engagement to foster consumer trust and drive sales, alongside continuously improving e-commerce features to provide a seamless and enjoyable shopping experience for their customers.

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