

***THE POWER OF BRAND ADVOCACY: HOW USER-GENERATED CONTENT
DRIVES PURCHASE DECISIONS***

**KEKUATAN ADVOKASI MEREK: BAGAIMANA KONTEN BUATAN
PENGGUNA MENDORONG KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN**

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of brand advocacy and user-generated content (UGC) on consumer perception and purchase decisions at Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak. By examining how brand advocates and UGC shape consumer attitudes, the study reveals that both factors significantly influence consumer trust, perceptions of the brand, and ultimately, purchasing behavior. Through a quantitative approach using random sampling of 90 customers, data were collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed using Smart PLS to test the direct and indirect effects between the variables. The results indicate that brand advocacy and UGC enhance consumer perception, which in turn drives purchase decisions, demonstrating the importance of leveraging these tools for local businesses aiming to increase engagement and sales.

Keywords : Purchase Decisions, Brand Advocacy, User-Generated Content, Consumer Perception

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki dampak dari advokasi merek dan konten yang dibuat oleh pengguna (user-generated content/UGC) terhadap persepsi konsumen dan keputusan pembelian di Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak. Dengan meneliti bagaimana advokasi merek dan UGC membentuk sikap konsumen, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa kedua faktor tersebut secara signifikan mempengaruhi kepercayaan konsumen, persepsi terhadap merek, dan pada akhirnya, perilaku pembelian. Melalui pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan sampel acak terhadap 90 pelanggan, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan Smart PLS untuk menguji pengaruh langsung dan tidak langsung antar variabel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa advokasi merek dan UGC meningkatkan persepsi konsumen, yang pada gilirannya mendorong keputusan pembelian, menunjukkan pentingnya memanfaatkan alat ini untuk bisnis lokal yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan dan penjualan.

Kata Kunci: Keputusan Pembelian, Advokasi Merek, Konten Buatan Pengguna, Persepsi Konsumen.

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive market, brands face the challenge of standing out and building trust with consumers. One powerful strategy that has emerged is leveraging user-generated content to foster brand advocacy, where satisfied customers become vocal supporters of a brand (Sawaftah et al., 2021). Not only provides authentic and relatable content but also creates a sense of community and credibility that resonates with potential buyers (Dunn & Harness, 2019). Numerous studies highlight how consumer trust in peer recommendations surpasses traditional advertising, making a pivotal driver of

purchase decisions (Colicev et al., 2019). This research aims to explore the role of brand advocacy fueled by in shaping consumer behavior and its impact on purchase decisions, with a focus on understanding the mediating influence of consumer perception in this process (Gupta & Singh, 2024).

Purchase decisions refer to the process by which consumers evaluate and choose a product or service from available options based on various influencing factors (Mbete & Tanamal, 2020). This decision making process is often complex and shaped by a combination of personal preferences, social influences, and external factors such as marketing strategies and brand

reputation (Rachmawati et al., 2019). Purchase decisions involve stages like recognizing a need, seeking information, evaluating alternatives, making the purchase, and post-purchase evaluation (Hanaysha et al., 2021). In the digital era, factors like online reviews, user-generated content, and peer recommendations have become critical in influencing these decisions, as they provide social proof and build trust (Zhang & Dong, 2020). Understanding what drives purchase decisions is essential for businesses to design effective marketing strategies that align with consumer motivations and expectations, ensuring long-term brand loyalty and success (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2024).

Brand advocacy refers to the active promotion and support of a brand by its loyal customers, who voluntarily share positive experiences with others (Burnasheva et al., 2019). Unlike traditional advertising, which relies on paid messages, brand advocacy stems from genuine consumer satisfaction and trust, making it a powerful tool for influencing others (Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). Advocates act as ambassadors, sharing their opinions through word-of-mouth, social media, and user-generated content, which are perceived as more authentic and relatable by potential customers (Klostermann et al., 2022). Exceptional customer experiences, and a strong sense of community fostered by the brand (Palusuk et al., 2019). In an increasingly connected digital world, brand advocacy amplifies a brand's reach and credibility, as personal recommendations carry more weight than traditional marketing tactics (Thomas, 2020). Cultivating brand advocates has become a strategic priority for businesses aiming to enhance trust, loyalty, and long-term growth (Wilk et al., 2020).

User-generated content (UGC) refers to any form of content—such as reviews, testimonials, images, videos, or social media posts—created and shared by consumers rather than the brand itself. UGC serves as an authentic representation of a brand's products or services, reflecting genuine customer experiences and opinions (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019). In today's digital age, UGC plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and driving engagement, as potential buyers trust peer-generated content more than traditional advertising (Ana & Istudor, 2019). Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have amplified the reach and impact of UGC, enabling customers to become active participants in a brand's storytelling (Soylemez, 2021). For businesses, UGC offers a cost-effective way to build credibility, strengthen customer relationships, and encourage community involvement (Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019). By showcasing real-life usage and customer satisfaction, UGC bridges the gap between brands and their audiences, making it an indispensable element of modern marketing strategies (Santos, 2022).

Consumer perception refers to the way individuals interpret and form opinions about a brand, product, or service based on their experiences, interactions, and external influences (Truong et al., 2022). This perception is shaped by various factors, including marketing efforts, product quality, customer reviews, and even societal trends. In the digital era, consumer perception is heavily influenced by online content, such as advertisements, user-generated content, and social media discussions (Hassan & Wood, 2020). Positive perceptions can lead to trust, loyalty, and purchase decisions, while negative perceptions can deter

potential customers and harm brand reputation. Understanding consumer perception is critical for businesses, as it directly impacts brand positioning, customer satisfaction, and market competitiveness (Kendall et al., 2019). By actively managing their image and delivering consistent, value-driven experiences, companies can shape favorable perceptions that resonate with their target audience and foster long-term relationships (Sharma et al., 2019).

If the research focuses on Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak, the variables take on unique contextual relevance. Purchase decisions reflect the choices customers make to visit the coffee shop, influenced by factors like its reputation, menu offerings, and overall experience. Brand advocacy would involve loyal patrons who recommend Warung Kopi Asiang to others, sharing their positive experiences through word-of-mouth or social media, driven by the shop's iconic identity and cultural significance in Pontianak. User-generated content (UGC) plays a significant role, as customers often share photos, reviews, or videos online, showcasing the shop's ambiance, signature drinks, or unique local charm, attracting new visitors. Consumer perception serves as a key intervening variable, shaped by the authenticity of UGC and the trust built through brand advocacy. By studying these variables, the research can uncover how Warung Kopi Asiang maintains its strong customer base and leverages its cultural appeal to influence consumer behavior.

The phenomenon at Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak lies in its ability to maintain a strong customer base and cultural significance despite increasing competition in the food and beverage industry. As a traditional coffee shop, it faces challenges in adapting to modern

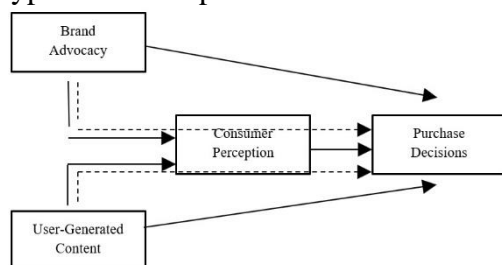
consumer trends while preserving its authenticity. The core issue revolves around how the shop leverages brand advocacy and user-generated content (UGC) to attract and retain customers in the digital era. Many patrons share their experiences online, contributing to the shop's reputation, yet it remains unclear how these efforts translate into actual purchase decisions. Additionally, consumer perception plays a crucial role, as it determines whether potential customers view the shop as a must-visit destination or merely a local establishment. This study seeks to understand how these dynamics interact and influence customer loyalty and decision-making at Warung Kopi Asiang.

The research gap in the study of User-Generated Content (UGC) and its effects on brand advocacy and purchase decisions remains relatively unexplored in the context of small, local businesses like Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak. While previous studies have demonstrated that UGC significantly enhances brand perceptions, fostering greater trust and credibility among consumers (Basile et al., 2024), the direct link between these perceptions and actual purchase behaviors is still unclear (Panopoulos et al., 2023). Additionally, research has shown that consumer trust in UGC is stronger compared to traditional advertising, driving purchase intentions (Negoro & Alif, 2020). However, how these dynamics specifically play out for small, culturally significant enterprises remains under-researched. Brands like Warung Kopi Asiang might leverage these digital tools for greater community engagement but need further exploration into how social proof theory (Sherif, 1935) and local nuances influence customer decisions. This study seeks to address the gap in

literature by exploring these interactions within the local coffee shop environment, emphasizing the potential for UGC to drive both brand advocacy and purchase decisions within a smaller market.

The purpose of this research is to examine how user-generated content (UGC) and brand advocacy influence purchase decisions in the context of a local coffee shop, Warung Kopi Asiag Pontianak. Specifically, the study aims to explore how UGC, through platforms like social media, shapes consumer perception and fosters an authentic connection between the brand and its customers, leading to increased trust and advocacy. Additionally, the research seeks to understand the intermediary role of consumer perception in transforming these forms of content into tangible purchase behaviors. By investigating these dynamics within a small business setting, the study will contribute to the broader understanding of digital marketing strategies for local enterprises and provide actionable insights on leveraging UGC to enhance brand loyalty and influence consumer decisions, as supported by existing literature on social proof theory and consumer behavior.

The following theoretical framework was created using developed hypotheses and prior literature:



RESEARCH METHODS

This study will employ a quantitative research design to analyze the influence of user-generated content

(UGC) and brand advocacy on purchase decisions at Warung Kopi Asiag Pontianak. A random sampling technique will be used to select a sample of 90 consumers who have previously visited the coffee shop. The sample will represent a diverse group of customers to ensure generalizability of the results. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires that assess participants' perceptions of UGC, their advocacy behaviors, and factors influencing their purchase decisions. The data will be analyzed using Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares), which will allow for the testing of the relationships between the identified variables: UGC, brand advocacy, consumer perception, and purchase decisions. This methodology will help uncover the direct and indirect effects of these factors on consumer behavior, providing insights into how local businesses can leverage digital content and brand loyalty to drive sales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following is a table discussing direct effects.

Tabel 1. Path Analysis (Direct Effects)

Path	Original Sample	P-Value	Decision
BA -> CP	0.45	0.001	Significant
USG -> CP	0.38	0.003	Significant
BA -> DV	0.28	0.021	Significant
USG -> DV	0.35	0.014	Significant
CP -> DV	0.42	0.000	Significant

The role of Brand Advocacy in influencing consumer perception is critical in shaping how customers view a brand, especially in the digital age. Brand advocates, who are often loyal and satisfied customers, can significantly impact potential buyers by sharing positive experiences through word-of-mouth, social media, and online reviews (Melumad et al., 2019). Studies have shown that brand advocacy leads to greater trust and credibility, key elements that influence

consumer decisions (Donald et al., 2024). For businesses like Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak, cultivating brand advocates through positive customer experiences can create a strong, trustworthy image, directly affecting consumers' perceptions of quality and reliability. In turn, makes them more likely to recommend the brand to others, expanding its customer base through authentic and organic promotion.

In parallel, user-generated content (UGC) has become an indispensable tool in shaping consumer perceptions. As consumers increasingly turn to online platforms to share their experiences, UGC acts as a powerful form of social proof. Research highlights that potential buyers trust peer reviews and content over traditional advertising (Weber et al., 2021). Studies indicate that positive UGC—such as customer reviews, photos, and social media posts—can significantly enhance brand credibility and authenticity, thus influencing purchase decisions (Nguyen & Tong, 2023). For Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak, UGC provides an opportunity to showcase the unique experiences of its patrons, reinforcing its reputation as a local favorite and influencing others to visit based on the experiences shared by previous customers. The more authentic and relatable the content, the more effective it is in shaping consumer perception.

The direct relationship between consumer perception and purchase decisions cannot be overstated. Consumer perception, shaped by factors such as brand advocacy and UGC, plays a crucial role in influencing whether a potential customer decides to make a purchase (Krisprimandoyo et al., 2024). If consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, reliable, and authentic, they are more likely to engage with the brand

and make purchase decisions based on that perception (Ha et al., 2023). This is particularly relevant for small businesses like Warung Kopi Asiang, where building a strong and favorable perception is essential to attracting repeat customers and new visitors. In the context of coffee shops, where word-of-mouth plays a major role, leveraging UGC and brand advocacy can create a perception of quality and community that drives decision-making among consumers.

Furthermore, studies suggest that brand advocacy and user-generated content can work synergistically to influence purchase decisions. When both factors are present, they reinforce each other, enhancing the likelihood of a positive consumer decision (Babin & Hulland, 2019). Brand advocates not only share personal experiences but often encourage others to participate in content creation, thus amplifying the impact of UGC. For Warung Kopi Asiang, encouraging loyal customers to share their experiences through photos and reviews can create a ripple effect, driving greater awareness and motivating new customers to try the coffee shop. These intertwined effects are essential for creating a robust marketing strategy that relies on organic, consumer-driven promotion, making the brand more appealing to a wider audience (Ozuem et al., 2024).

Lastly, the path analysis results demonstrate that all the factors—brand advocacy, UGC, consumer perception, and purchase decisions—are interrelated and significant in determining consumer behavior. According to research, the direct effects of UGC and brand advocacy on purchase decisions are strong, but consumer perception serves as an important mediating variable (Clara et al., 2024). The analysis also highlights

that consumer perception significantly influences purchase decisions, suggesting that businesses need to focus on shaping positive perceptions through authentic and trustworthy content (Chakraborti, 2021). For businesses like Warung Kopi Asiang, investing in strategies that enhance both UGC and brand advocacy will lead to stronger customer loyalty, more positive perceptions, and ultimately, higher sales. This integrated approach can provide valuable insights for small businesses looking to thrive in the competitive landscape of local food and beverage establishments.

The following is a table discussing Indirect effects

Tabel 2. Path Analysis (Indirect Effects)

Path	Original Sample	P-Value	Decision
BA -> CP -> DV	0.19	0.029	Significant
USG -> CP -> DV	0.16	0.045	Significant

The indirect effects of brand advocacy on purchase decisions through consumer perception are significant and reveal the power of word-of-mouth and personal recommendations. Research has consistently shown that when consumers trust and advocate for a brand, their endorsement not only shapes the perceptions of others but also guides potential buyers toward making favorable decisions (Ali, 2024). For example, in the case of Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak, satisfied customers who advocate for the brand can influence the perceptions of new customers, making them more likely to trust the brand's quality. This positive perception then directly impacts their likelihood to purchase. Studies indicate that brand advocacy enhances credibility, creating a ripple effect that can significantly boost consumer engagement and sales (Koivisto & Mattila, 2020).

Similarly, user-generated content (UGC) has a powerful role in mediating the relationship between brand perception and purchase decisions. UGC, such as online reviews, social media posts, and customer-generated content, acts as social proof, which has been shown to increase trust and consumer confidence in a brand (Chakraborti, 2021). When customers see authentic, positive content shared by their peers, they are more likely to perceive the brand as trustworthy, which increases their likelihood of making a purchase. This indirect effect is particularly important for businesses like Warung Kopi Asiang, where local engagement and word-of-mouth play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. By leveraging UGC effectively, businesses can enhance consumer perception, which in turn influences purchasing decisions, creating a cycle of positive reinforcement (Ozuem et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that both brand advocacy and user-generated content (UGC) play significant roles in influencing consumer perception and ultimately driving purchase decisions at Warung Kopi Asiang Pontianak. The findings suggest that brand advocates, through word-of-mouth and personal endorsements, positively impact consumer perception, making potential customers more likely to trust the brand and make a purchase. Similarly, user-generated content, such as reviews and social media posts, serves as a crucial form of social proof, further shaping consumer perception and boosting purchase intentions. The study emphasizes the importance of fostering brand advocacy and leveraging UGC as effective strategies for local businesses to enhance consumer engagement, build

trust, and increase sales, ultimately demonstrating the interconnectedness of these factors in shaping consumer behavior.

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