Effectiveness of Digital Marketing with Influencers, Video Content, and Referral Programmes on Consumer Trust in E-Commerce Platforms in West Java

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study examines the efficacy of digital marketing methods, particularly influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs, on consumer trust in e-commerce platforms in West Java. A quantitative research design was utilized to collect data from 300 respondents through a structured online questionnaire. The investigation employed Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS 3) to examine the links between digital marketing methods and consumer trust. The results indicate that all three tactics markedly improve consumer trust, with influencer marketing exerting the greatest influence. These findings provide significant insights for e-commerce enterprises aiming to enhance their digital marketing strategies and cultivate more robust consumer relationships. The study enhances comprehension of customer behavior in the digital marketplace and offers practical ideas for improving consumer trust in e-commerce.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic realm of e-commerce, consumer trust is a pivotal factor influencing purchasing decisions, especially in regions like West Java. Digital marketing strategies such as influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs have emerged as effective tools for fostering consumer trust and engagement. These strategies not only enhance brand loyalty but also address the challenges of building trust in an online environment where physical cues are absent. Influencer marketing significantly boosts consumer trust by leveraging the credibility and reach of influencers, creating engaging and credible content that resonates with consumers, which in turn enhances brand loyalty [1]. The effectiveness of influencer marketing is mediated by consumer trust, which plays a crucial role in translating marketing efforts into brand loyalty [1]. Similarly, video content campaigns are instrumental in building consumer trust by providing transparent and engaging information about products and services, effectively communicating brand values and product benefits, thus encouraging online purchasing decisions [2]. Referral programs,

on the other hand, capitalize on social proof, as recommendations from trusted sources increase consumer trust and purchase likelihood, while also enhancing engagement by incentivizing existing customers to share their positive experiences [3].

Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in the digital marketing landscape, leveraging the popularity and credibility of individuals to influence consumer purchasing decisions. Influencers create a sense of authenticity and relatability, enhancing consumer trust and engagement, particularly in a digital environment where consumers are overwhelmed with information. Influencers act as trusted intermediaries, providing recommendations that resonate with their audience. Influencer marketing utilizes social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to reach consumers through trusted figures who have established credibility and rapport with their followers [4], [5]. The authenticity and relatability of influencers are key factors that foster trust and engagement, making influencer marketing a potent tool for brands [4], [6]. Influencers significantly affect consumer opinions, behaviors, and trends, especially among younger demographics like Generation Z, who value trust and brand image in their purchasing decisions [5]. This strategy enhances consumer engagement and can increase brand loyalty, as observed in various market contexts, including Malaysia [7]. Influencer marketing has become an indispensable part of modern business strategies, helping companies achieve their goals by leveraging the social capital of influencers [8]. Successful influencer collaborations require alignment with organizational strategies and objectives to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes [6].

Video content has significantly transformed the digital marketing landscape by providing an engaging medium that effectively conveys messages and showcases products. The dynamic nature of videos allows brands to present their products in a more relatable context, fostering a deeper emotional connection with consumers.

Research shows that visual content, especially video, can greatly influence consumer behavior, leading to increased trust and higher conversion rates. Short-form videos are particularly effective in engaging consumers through emotionally resonant, story-driven content, which aligns with the rapid consumption habits of digital audiences, making it a powerful tool for capturing attention quickly and effectively [9]. Emotional mobilization in short videos enhances the attractiveness and persuasiveness of information, promoting emotional resonance and behavioral participation [10]. The emotional appeal in video content significantly boosts enjoyment and engagement, influencing impulse buying behavior, particularly among younger consumers [11]. Additionally, video content integrated with social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok increases engagement and conversion rates, as these platforms allow for two-way interaction between brands and consumers, strengthening relationships and boosting customer loyalty [12]. The use of AI for personalization in video ads further enhances campaign relevance and effectiveness [12]. Technological advancements have democratized content creation, enabling brands to reach wider audiences and making video a primary conduit of information and emotion [13].

Referral programs are a potent strategy for enhancing consumer trust in e-commerce by leveraging word-of-mouth marketing, incentivizing existing customers to refer new clients, and harnessing the social proof that comes from personal recommendations. This approach is often more persuasive than traditional advertising as it builds on the trust inherent in personal relationships. Referral programs operate through incentive structures, where customers receive rewards, such as referral bonuses, when they refer potential buyers, increasing their virtual value [14]. The social appropriateness of referrals makes referred customers more likely to make further referrals, amplifying the program's

effectiveness [15]. Research shows that referred customers tend to be more valuable, making 31-57% more referrals than non-referred ones, increasing customer value and reach [15]. The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly influence participation in referral programs, particularly for high-involvement products [16]. Additionally, referrals have a contagion effect, where referred customers are more likely to refer others, creating a self-sustaining cycle of customer acquisition [17].

Despite the increasing interest in these digital marketing methods, a significant vacuum exists in empirical studies examining their collective impact on customer trust in e-commerce platforms, especially in the context of West Java. This study seeks to address this deficiency by empirically examining the effects of influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs on consumer trust in e-commerce.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has become a pivotal strategy in digital marketing, leveraging the reach and perceived authenticity of social media influencers to influence consumer behavior. With their large followings, influencers are often seen as more trusted than traditional advertising due to their relatable and authentic presentation. This trust enhances consumer engagement and drives higher conversion rates as influencers can effectively shape consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on factors like the influencer's expertise, attractiveness, and content relevance, which influence their perceived credibility [4], [5]. Influencer

marketing boosts consumer engagement and fosters brand loyalty, especially on platforms like Instagram and TikTok [7]. The relationship between brands, influencers, and consumers is crucial for shaping opinions and behaviors [18]. However, successful campaigns require strategic alignment between the influencer and brand objectives, along with careful evaluation of collaboration effectiveness [6]. Despite its benefits, influencer marketing faces challenges related to transparency, authenticity, and ethics, requiring ongoing scrutiny of its social and psychological impacts [5].

2.2 Video Content

Video content is an essential component of modern digital marketing, providing a dynamic medium for storytelling and product demonstration. Studies have shown that video marketing is more effective than static content in capturing attention and conveying information [19]. The use of video can lead to enhanced emotional engagement, making consumers more likely to trust and connect with a brand [20]. Furthermore, video content can facilitate better product understanding, thereby reducing uncertainty and fostering trust among potential customers [21]. The integration of video in e-commerce has been linked to improved customer satisfaction and increased likelihood of repeat purchases, emphasizing its importance in building consumer trust.

2.3 Referral Programs

Referral programs leverage existing customers to promote products or services to their networks, creating a powerful form of word-of-mouth marketing. The effectiveness of referral programs lies in their ability to provide social proof, which significantly influences consumer decision-making [22]. Research has shown that referrals from friends or family are among the most trusted sources of information for consumers, often leading to higher conversion rates compared to other marketing strategies [23]. Additionally, referral programs not only incentivize new customer acquisition but also reinforce loyalty among existing customers, as they feel valued and rewarded for their advocacy [24]. This reciprocal trust between consumers and brands can lead to long-term relationships and sustained business growth.

2.4 Consumer Trust in E-Commerce

Consumer trust is a crucial factor influencing purchasing behavior in e-commerce environments. Trust is defined as the belief in the reliability and integrity of a brand, which is particularly important in online settings where consumers may lack direct interaction with the seller [25]. Factors contributing to consumer trust include website quality, security, transparency, and customer service [26]. Digital marketing strategies, such as influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs, play a vital role in enhancing consumer trust by addressing these factors and fostering positive consumer perceptions [27].

Research Gap

Despite the abundant literature on digital marketing tactics and consumer trust, there is a significant deficiency of empirical studies investigating the synergistic benefits of influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs specifically in the realm of e-commerce in West Java. This study aims to quantitatively examine the impact of digital marketing methods on customer trust and, therefore, the efficacy of e-commerce platforms in the region. This research seeks to deliver practical insights for firms aiming to enhance their digital marketing strategies and strengthen consumer interactions.

Conceptual Framework

This study demonstrates the correlation between three digital marketing strategies—influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs—and consumer trust on e-commerce platforms in West Java. Influencer marketing seeks to enhance consumer trust by utilizing the credibility of prominent individuals capable of fostering emotional connections. Simultaneously, video content is crafted to communicate product information in a more captivating and comprehensible way, therefore diminishing ambiguity and enhancing trust. Referral systems contribute by offering social evidence via endorsements from credible sources, so impacting customer choices. The three elements are individually assessed to

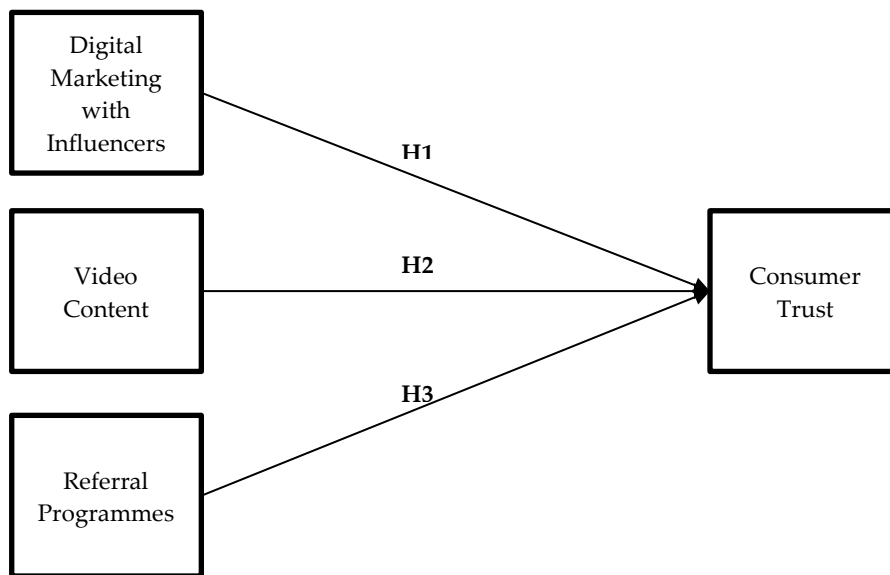positively impact consumer trust in utilizing e-commerce platforms.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research approach to empirically investigate the correlations between the chosen digital marketing methods and consumer trust. A systematic questionnaire was created to collect data from respondents regarding their perceptions of influencer marketing, video content, referral programs, and their overall trust in e-commerce platforms. The research design facilitates statistical analysis, allowing for the testing of hypothesized relationships and the drawing of meaningful conclusions.

3.2 Sample Selection

The research's target audience comprises consumers who actively participate in e-commerce platforms in West Java. A non-probability sampling method, namely convenience sampling, was employed to pick participants. This method facilitates the gathering of data from persons who are easily reachable and amenable to participating in the study. A sample size of 300 respondents was established in accordance with the guidelines for acceptable

power in SEM analysis, guaranteeing sufficient data for dependable conclusions.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was gathered via a structured online questionnaire disseminated across multiple digital platforms, including social media and e-commerce forums, to engage a wide audience in West Java. The questionnaire was crafted for clarity and comprehension, and a pilot test was administered with a small cohort to detect and resolve any concerns before the primary data collection.

3.4 Data Analysis

The gathered data was analyzed utilizing Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS 3) to investigate the proposed links among the variables. SEM-PLS is particularly appropriate for this study as it facilitates the evaluation of intricate interactions across latent components while successfully managing reduced sample quantities. The analytical procedure comprised three primary stages: The measuring Model Assessment evaluated the validity and reliability of the

measuring scales, encompassing internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE), and discriminant validity. The Structural Model Assessment evaluated the associations between the independent variables (influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs) and the dependent variable (customer trust), analyzing path coefficients and their significance via bootstrapping methods. Ultimately, Hypothesis Testing was performed to assess the strength and significance of the correlations among the variables, yielding insights into the efficacy of each digital marketing strategy in bolstering customer trust in e-commerce platforms.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

A total of 300 respondents participated in the survey, providing a representative sample of e-commerce consumers in West Java. The demographic characteristics of the participants are as follows: the majority of respondents were aged between 18 to 30 years (60%), followed by those aged 31 to 45 years (25%) and above 45 years (15%), indicating a youthful demographic more engaged with digital platforms. In terms of gender, 55% of participants identified as female and 45% as male, reflecting a slight skew toward female consumers in the e-commerce space. Regarding education level, 50% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, 30% had a high school education, and 20% held postgraduate degrees, indicating a well-educated consumer base. Additionally, 70% of respondents reported shopping online at least once a month, demonstrating a high level of engagement with e-commerce platforms.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability to confirm that the constructs effectively measured the relevant variables. Reliability analysis indicated that the Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, signifying satisfactory internal consistency. Specifically, influencer marketing ($\alpha = 0.85$), video content ($\alpha = 0.83$), referral programs ($\alpha = 0.82$), and consumer trust ($\alpha = 0.88$) exhibited robust reliability. Convergent validity was established as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct surpassed the advised threshold of 0.50, indicating that the constructs accounted for more than fifty percent of the variance in their indicators. The Fornell-Larcker criterion substantiated discriminant validity, demonstrating that the square root of the AVE for each concept exceeded the correlations among constructs. These results validate the measurement model's reliability, facilitating a comprehensive investigation of the interrelationships among the variables.

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was analyzed to assess the hypothesized relationships between influencer marketing, video content, referral programs, and consumer trust. The analysis revealed positive and significant path coefficients for all three independent variables on consumer trust: influencer marketing ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), video content ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$), and referral programs ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that each digital marketing strategy significantly contributes to enhancing consumer trust in e-commerce platforms. Hypothesis testing confirmed that all proposed hypotheses were supported, demonstrating that influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs positively impact consumer trust.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of digital marketing strategies in building consumer trust in e-commerce platforms in West Java. Digital marketing strategies play a pivotal role in building consumer trust in e-commerce platforms in West Java, with influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs being particularly effective. Influencer marketing has a significant positive relationship with

consumer trust, as influencers are perceived as credible sources that enhance authenticity and relatability, crucial for trust-building [28], [29]. This strategy is especially impactful among younger consumers who are more likely to emulate influencer lifestyles ("Influencer Marketing in the Digital Age: Exploring the Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer," 2024). According to trust transfer theory, trust in influencers can transfer to brands, thereby influencing purchase intentions [28]. Video content, on the other hand, facilitates emotional connections and provides richer product information, making it a powerful tool for engaging consumers and enhancing trust [2]. E-commerce platforms can leverage video marketing strategies like product demonstrations and customer testimonials to attract potential buyers [2]. Lastly, referral programs capitalize on social proof, as recommendations from friends or family are perceived as more trustworthy than traditional advertising, thus enhancing credibility and leveraging existing customer relationships to build trust [2]. Together, these strategies significantly contribute to strengthening consumer trust and engagement in the digital marketplace.

Implications for E-commerce Platforms

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for e-commerce businesses in West Java seeking to enhance their digital marketing strategies. By focusing on influencer partnerships, utilizing engaging video content, and implementing effective referral programs, businesses can significantly increase consumer trust, leading to higher customer loyalty and improved sales performance.

Limitations and Future Research

This study offers valuable information, however it has limits. Convenience sampling may restrict the generalizability of the results to the larger population. Subsequent research may investigate various regions or sectors to further corroborate the findings. Furthermore, qualitative investigations may yield profound insights into consumer motives and views of digital marketing methods.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial importance of digital marketing techniques in bolstering consumer trust in e-commerce platforms in West Java. The results indicate that influencer marketing, video content, and referral programs substantially enhance consumer trust, which is crucial for success in the competitive e-commerce environment.

Through the engagement of influencers, the use of captivating video content, and the implementation of efficient referral systems, e-commerce enterprises can enhance consumer confidence, resulting in heightened customer loyalty and enhanced sales outcomes. These insights not only deepen the comprehension of consumer behavior in digital marketing but also offer pragmatic recommendations for organizations seeking to fortify their market position. Future research should investigate the enduring impacts of these methods on consumer trust and examine the changing dynamics of the digital marketing environment.

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