

FROM STORIES TO SALES: HOW STORYTELLING MARKETING AFFECTS PURCHASE DECISIONS THROUGH THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of storytelling marketing on social media on the purchase decisions of Ventela shoes, with brand image as a mediating variable among Generation Z in Solo Raya. A quantitative method was employed, involving 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 3 software. The results revealed that storytelling marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand image (t-statistic = 25.371; p-value = 0.000) and purchase decisions (t-statistic = 5.603; p-value = 0.000). Furthermore, brand image was found to have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (t-statistic = 2.094; p-value = 0.037). In addition, brand image significantly mediates the relationship between storytelling marketing and purchase decisions (t-statistic = 2.038; p-value = 0.042). These findings indicate that Ventela's storytelling marketing strategy on social media effectively enhances brand image and encourages Generation Z to purchase Ventela products.

Keywords: *Storytelling Marketing, Brand Image, Purchase Decision, Generation Z, Ventela.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's fashion industry has experienced rapid growth in recent years, with footwear emerging as a key component of personal style and consumer confidence.

Several local brands such as Aerostreet, Brodo, and Compass have gained consumer attention through various collaboration strategies. Among them, Ventela stands out by using storytelling marketing, presenting emotionally rich narratives that strengthen its position in the competitive local sneaker market (Galuh Tiyasherlinda et al., 2022).


Ventela, founded in 2017 by William Ventela in Bandung, has become widely known for offering affordable shoes with quality comparable to international brands (About Ventela, 2017). The brand leverages Instagram to communicate its values through collaborations with influencers and public figures, focusing on themes such as cultural heritage, sustainability, and personal stories that emotionally resonate with consumers.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is highly immersed in digital culture. They are particularly active on social media platforms, especially Instagram, which serves as a key source of inspiration and product discovery (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). As a result, platforms like Instagram offer a strategic opportunity for brands like Ventela to engage Gen Z consumers through storytelling-based content (Putra et al., 2020).



Storytelling marketing is a strategy that builds emotional connections with consumers by sharing narratives that go beyond product information. This approach not only increases brand engagement but also shapes positive brand image, which plays a critical role in influencing consumer purchase decisions (Aliyah, 2020; Fadilah & Huda, 2024; Kim et al., 2018). A favorable brand image leads to stronger brand loyalty, trust, and intention to purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Ventela shoes communicates its product values through collaborations with influencers, companies, and by highlighting Indonesian culture, creating a deeper emotional connection with its followers. The following table presents several notable collaborations between the Ventela shoes brand and its partners.

Table 1 Ventela Collaborates with Influencers and Partners

Product	Partner	Story	Picture
Ventela x Nevertoolavish	Ventela "Hard13 Noir" — A collaboration with Bernhard Suryaningrat (Hardthirteen)	It tells the story of a deep emotional bond between a person and their pet. The name "Noir" was taken from Bernhard's late cat, as a tribute to their relationship	

Ventela x Yang Ayam by Nevertoolavish	Ventela "Sang Sekerta"- A collaboration with Kaesang Pangarep (Yang Ayam), Nevertoolavish	Honoring Batik as part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. Each purchase of this shoe contributes one meal from Yang Ayam to those in need, as a form of social care.	 <p>ventela x yang ayam by nevertoolavish</p> <p>kolaborasi kedua ventela shoes rilis pada tanggal 9 oktober 2020. Artikel tersebut bernama Ventela "Sang Sekerta".</p>
Ventela x Badjatex	Ventela Denim Series A collaboration with PT. Badjatex	Made with eco-friendly denim materials, including organic fibers and recycled components. This collaboration promotes the theme of environmental preservation and inspires greater awareness of nature..	 <p>ventela x badjatex</p> <p>Kolaborasi ketiga Ventela® rilis pada tanggal 1 Februari 2021. Artikel kolaborasi ini menggunakan 3 siluet sepatu ventela, yaitu B15 BO, Public dan Armer</p> <p>tap to continue</p>
Ventela x Evil Army with Papa Gading	Ventela "All is Well" A collaboration with Gading Marten, Evil Army	Inspired by Gading Marten's life motto that "life is beautiful because of today." This collaboration delivers a message of encouragement, reminding us that everything will be okay even in difficult times.	 <p>ventela x evil army with papa gading</p> <p>Kolaborasi keempat Ventela® rilis pada tanggal 1 Juni 2021. Artikel tersebut bernama Ventela "All is Well".</p>
Ventela x Chicco Jerikho	Ventela "Leaving a Legacy" A collaboration with Chicco Jerikho	A collaboration that highlights art as a legacy. It tells the story	

		that life's journey is full of challenges, but it can be meaningful and enjoyable when lived sincerely.	 <p>ventela x chicco jerikho Kolaborasi kelima Ventela® rilis pada tanggal 3 Juli 2022. Artikel ini hadir dengan nama Ventela "Leaving a Legacy".</p>
Ventela x Jerome Polin	Ventela "Konnijiwa" A collaboration with Jerome Polin	This shoe reflects Jerome Polin's love for mathematics through graphics featuring mathematical formulas. The collaboration aims to inspire educational advancement and personal development.	 <p>ventela x jerome polin Kolaborasi keenam Ventela® rilis pada tanggal 1 Agustus 2022. Artikel ini hadir dengan nama Ventela "Konnijiwa".</p>

Source: Instagram Ventelashoes (2024)

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that Ventela's collaborations with influencers in Indonesia not only produce attractive shoes but also carry meaningful stories and messages—such as personal memories, social awareness, and the preservation of culture and the environment—making them more meaningful to the public. Through these collaborations, Ventela offers more than just products; it creates emotional experiences and values that influence consumer perception, ultimately affecting their purchase decisions.

Several studies have shown that storytelling marketing significantly affects both brand image and consumer purchase decisions (Fadilah & Huda, 2024; Hayati et al., 2025; Mavilinda et al., 2023). Similarly, other researchers emphasize that storytelling enhances the emotional and cognitive perceptions of a brand, which in turn influences purchasing behavior (Genoveva & Berliana, 2021; Kent, 2015).

Considering the importance of digital storytelling in modern marketing, this study aims to investigate the effect of storytelling marketing on social media on the purchase decisions of Ventela shoes, with brand image as a mediating variable. The research focuses on Generation Z in Solo Raya, a demographic that is digitally savvy and responsive to narrative-driven marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Elaboration Likelihood Theory.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo, explains how individuals process persuasive messages through two main routes: the central route (cognitive, rational) and the peripheral route (emotional, superficial) (Petty et al., 1988). In this study, storytelling marketing on social media, particularly Instagram, operates through the peripheral route by using emotional narratives, visuals, and engaging stories to attract consumers. Instead of critically evaluating technical aspects of the product, consumers are influenced by emotions, social associations, and brand stories.

Brand image functions through both routes. Via the peripheral route, consumers perceive the brand as trendy, unique, and culturally relevant due to influencer collaborations and storytelling. Through the central route, more rational consumers assess product quality based on testimonials, materials, and features conveyed through storytelling. Purchase decisions are influenced by both routes. Emotional engagement and positive associations (peripheral route) may trigger impulse buying, while rational evaluations (central route) lead to more deliberate decisions. Brand image serves as a bridge, linking the emotional appeal of storytelling to both affective and rational purchase behaviors. While central processing involves deeper elaboration, focusing on quality, price, and logical arguments, peripheral processing relies on cues like attractiveness, credibility, consensus, and mood. Changes resulting from the peripheral route tend to be temporary.

This study adopts ELM as the theoretical foundation, as each research variable aligns with its mechanisms: storytelling marketing influences via the peripheral route, brand image acts as a mediator, and purchase decisions are shaped by both emotional and rational pathways.

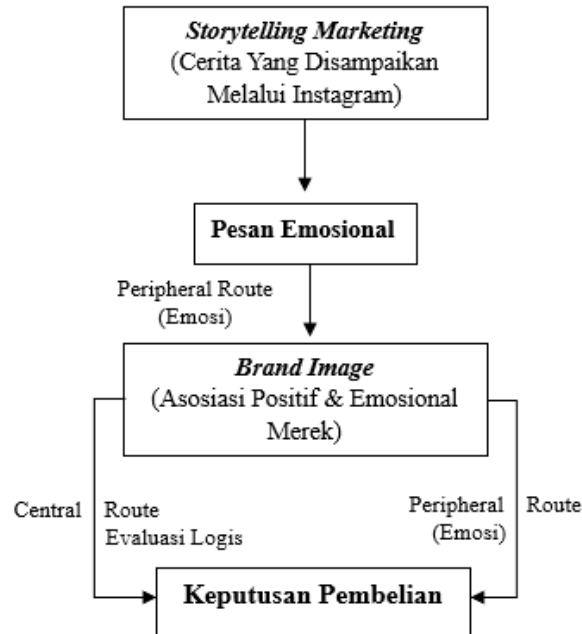


Figure 1 ELM Model Framework

Purchase Decision

Effendy et al., (2023) describe purchase decision as a process of integration that combines knowledge and desire, in which consumers evaluate various available alternatives and select one or more options based on specific considerations. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2016), consumer purchase decisions can be measured through the following indicators:

1. Product Choice – The consumer selects the product that meets their needs and wants.
2. Brand Choice – The consumer chooses a specific brand after gathering information about available options.
3. Store Choice – The consumer decides where to purchase the chosen product.
4. Purchase Timing – The consumer determines the most appropriate time to make the purchase, aiming to avoid future regrets.

Storytelling Marketing

According to Aaker et al., (2012), storytelling marketing is a communication tool that incorporates various elements and presents messages in the form of narratives. In marketing, storytelling moves the audience emotionally, helps them feel something different, and encourages them to take engaging actions. The term "storytelling" combines "story" (a narrative) and "telling" (to communicate). As Fadilah & Huda, (2024) explain, storytelling is a form of human communication that goes beyond verbal

expression and involves emotional engagement. According to Smeda et al. (2012), there are four key indicators of storytelling marketing:

1. Story Aspects – Elements related to the content of the story, including plot, storyline, characters, setting, and mood.
2. Learning Aspects – The purpose and information conveyed through the story.
3. Digital Creation Aspects – The content, presentation, production process, and technology used in delivering the story.
4. Combined Aspects – The overall quality of the story and evaluation of its effectiveness.

Brand Image

According to Tjiptono (2005, p. 49), brand image is a description of consumers' associations and beliefs about a particular brand. Research on brand image has been conducted across various fields, including consumer behavior studies, and has been shown to correlate with multiple variables. According to Kotler (2016), brand image consists of three main indicators:

1. Strength of Brand Associations – Refers to how well product information is remembered and retained by consumers.
2. Favorability of Brand Associations – Indicates the brand's distinctive and superior quality compared to competitors, making it more appealing.
3. Uniqueness of Brand Associations – Highlights the need to create a unique advantage that differentiates the brand from others, encouraging consumer preference

Conceptual framework and Hypoteses

According to Escalas (2004), storytelling marketing helps attract and enhance positive audience emotions. A brand cannot thrive without a compelling story, and brand narratives are essential for shaping brand image. Tsai (2020) also emphasizes that storytelling is one of the most effective strategies for building long-term brand-consumer relationships and strengthening brand image. Fog et al., (2010) state that storytelling supports long-term goals such as product sales, consumer knowledge, brand image reinforcement, and purchasing behavior. Genoveva & Berliana (2021) found that a strong brand image positively influences purchase decisions.

Previous studies show that marketing and brand image affect purchasing decisions. In this study, storytelling marketing influences purchase decisions through the mediating role of brand image, by enhancing emotional appeal and consumer perception.

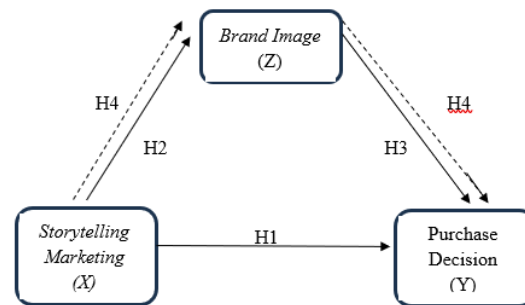


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

The hypotheses in this study are formulated as follows:

H1: Storytelling marketing has a significant direct influence on consumers' purchase decisions.

H2: Storytelling marketing has a significant direct influence on brand image.

H3: Brand image has a significant direct influence on consumers' purchase decisions.

H4: Brand image significantly mediates the relationship between storytelling marketing and consumers' purchase decisions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research method, aiming to test the influence of storytelling marketing (X) on purchase decision (Y) with brand image (Z) as a mediating variable. Research was conducted in the Solo Raya region, including Surakarta, Sragen, Karanganyar, Wonogiri, Klaten, Sukoharjo, and Boyolali. The population includes Gen Z Instagram users in Solo Raya. As the total number is unknown, Lemeshow's formula was used to determine a sample of 100 respondents, distributed proportionally across the seven areas in Solo Raya. Collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software. A purposive sampling technique was applied with the following criteria:

1. Born between 1997–2012
2. Active Instagram users
3. Live in Solo Raya
4. Have purchased Ventela shoes
5. Have viewed Instagram highlights of @ventelashoes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Profile

This study investigates the influence of storytelling marketing on the @ventelashoes Instagram account toward purchase decisions, with brand image as a mediating variable. The respondent data were collected to provide a profile overview of the participants. The characteristics include age, gender, and domicile, offering insight into the demographic background of Generation Z respondents involved in the study.

Table 2 Respondent Profile

Respondent Profile		Persentation (%)
Based on age	13-16	10
	17-20	35
	21-24	35
	25-28	20
Based on gender	Laki-laki	55
	Perempuan	45
Based on Domicile	Surakarta	8
	Boyolali	14
	Sukoharjo	14
	Karanganyar	14
	Wonogiri	16
	Sragen	15
	Klaten	19

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Measurement Model Testing (Outer Model)

The measurement model was tested to assess the validity and reliability of the research instruments. This process evaluates the strength of each indicator in representing its respective construct. To provide a clearer understanding of indicator performance, the results of the outer loading values from the SmartPLS algorithm calculation are presented. These values demonstrate whether each item meets the minimum threshold, supporting the construct's convergent validity.

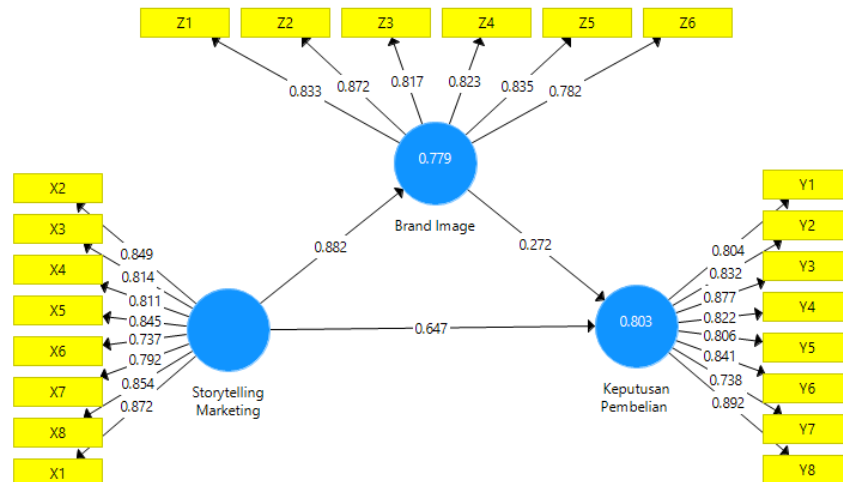


Figure 3 Output Caculate Algorithm

Table 3 Analysis of reliability and validity

Latent Variable	Item	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Storytelling Marketing	X1	0.872	0.931	0.944	0.677
	X2	0.849			
	X3	0.814			
	X4	0.811			
	X5	0.845			
	X6	0.737			
	X7	0.792			
	X8	0.854			
Brand Image	Z1	0.833	0.908	0.929	0.685
	Z2	0.872			
	Z3	0.817			
	Z4	0.823			
	Z5	0.835			
	Z6	0.782			
Purchase Decision	Y1	0.804	0.934	0.945	0.685
	Y2	0.832			
	Y3	0.877			
	Y4	0.822			
	Y5	0.806			
	Y6	0.841			
	Y7	0.738			
	Y8	0.892			

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Outer model evaluation aims to evaluate indicator variables. The indicator variables in the reflective model are variables that are highly correlated so that the evaluation of the reflective model is based on the reliability and validity of the indicator variables (Widarjono, 2014). Reflective model evaluation consists of:

1. Indicator Reliability: The reliability indicator is based on the outer loading value. If the outer loading value is more than 0.7, then the indicator variable needs to be maintained. As shown in table 1, all variables have values above 0.7.
2. Convergent validity: Average Variance Extract (AVE) is used to evaluate convergent validity. AVE value must be more than 0.5.
3. Discriminant validity: Discriminant validity can be evaluated by using Fornell-Larcker criterion. The Fornell-Larcker criterion evaluates discriminant validity by examining the square root of AVE for each latent variable. According to this criterion, the square root of AVE of each of the latent variables should be greater than its correlation with another latent variable. The results confirmed that the square root of AVE of each latent variable is greater than its correlation with other latent variables, as shown in Table 1.
4. Composite Reliability: Composite reliability is used to evaluate internal consistency. Reliability test using method PLS has criteria for a composite reliability value > 0.7 and a Cronbach's alpha value > 0.6 (Ghazali & Latan, 2015).

Evaluation of Structural (Inner Model)

The structural model, or inner model, is used to evaluate the relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables to determine whether these relationships are statistically significant (Hamid & Anwar, 2019). This analysis is guided by the research questions and hypotheses, aiming to identify causal relationships among variables. The testing involves estimating path coefficients and calculating R-squared values using the bootstrapping procedure. The results of the structural model testing were generated using SmartPLS version 4.0, as presented below.

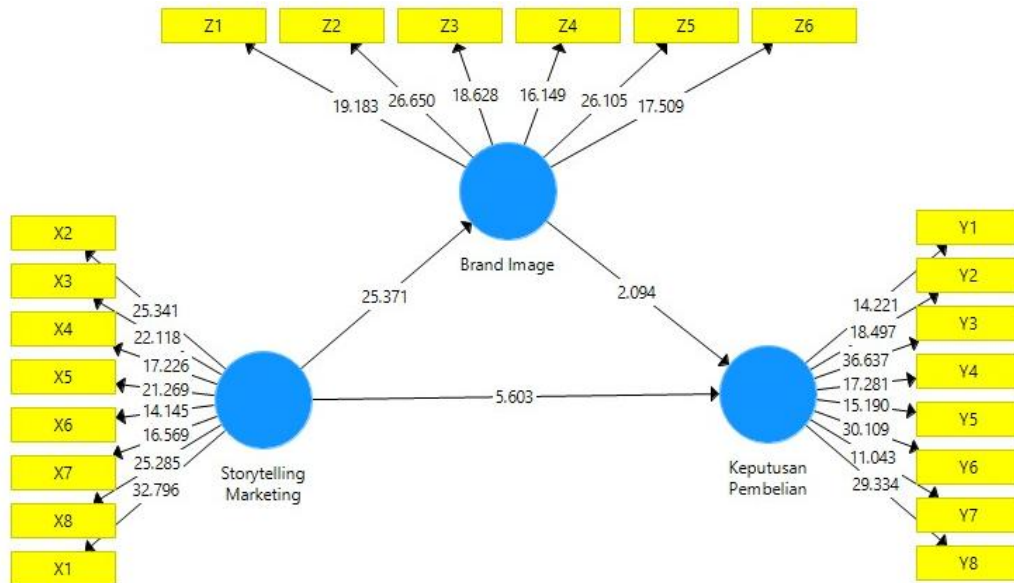


Figure 4 Inner Model (Bootstrapping)

Table 4 R-Square Analysis

Variabel	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Purchase Decision	0.803	0.799
Brand Image	0.779	0.776

Source: Processed Data (2025)

1. Goodness of Fit: The structural model evaluation aimed to assess the relationships among variables and test the proposed hypotheses. The R^2 value for purchase decision was 0.803, indicating that storytelling marketing and brand image explain 80.3% of its variance. The R^2 for brand image was 0.779, suggesting that storytelling marketing accounts for 77.9% of the variation in brand image.

$$\begin{aligned}
 Q\text{-Square} &= 1 - [1 - R^2_1] \times [1 - R^2_2] \\
 &= 1 - [1 - 0,803] \times [1 - 0,779] \\
 &= 1 - (0,197 \times 0,201) \\
 &= 1 - 0,039597 \\
 &= 0,960403
 \end{aligned}$$

The model's predictive relevance was confirmed by the Q^2 value of 0.960, indicating a strong goodness of fit and the model's high explanatory power.

2. F-Square: In terms of effect size (f^2), storytelling marketing showed a very large influence on both brand image ($f^2 = 3.518$) and purchase decision ($f^2 = 0.471$).

Meanwhile, brand image had a small effect on purchase decision ($f^2 = 0.083$). These findings confirm that storytelling marketing plays a dominant role in shaping both brand image and consumer purchasing behavior.

Table 5 F-Square Analysis

	<i>Brand Image</i>	Purchase Decision	<i>Storytelling Marketing</i>
<i>Brand Image</i>		0.083	
Purchase Decision			
<i>Storytelling Marketing</i>	3.518	0.471	

Source: Processed Data (2025)

3. Hypotheses Testing (Path Coefficient)

The path coefficient analysis was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4.0 to test the direct and indirect relationships between variables. The results are summarized as follows:

Table 6 Direct Effect

	Hypotheses	Original Sampel	t-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
<i>Storytelling Marketing -> Purchase Decision</i>	H1	0.647	5.603	0.000	Supported (positive effect)
<i>Storytelling Marketing -> Brand Image</i>	H2	0.882	25.371	0.000	Supported (positive effect)
<i>Brand Image ->Purchase Decision</i>	H3	0.272	2.094	0.037	Supported (positive effect)

Source: Processed Data (2025)

As shown in Table 6, all three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) were supported with positive and statistically significant relationships ($p < 0.05$). Storytelling marketing demonstrated a strong direct influence on both brand image ($\beta = 0.882$; $p = 0.000$) and purchase decision ($\beta = 0.647$; $p = 0.000$). Moreover, brand image also significantly influenced purchase decision ($\beta = 0.272$; $p = 0.037$), indicating its mediating role in the model.

These findings highlight that storytelling marketing on social media, especially through emotional narratives, effectively enhances brand perception and drives consumer purchasing decisions among Generation Z.

The indirect effect of storytelling marketing on purchase decision through brand image was also tested to evaluate the mediating role of brand image. The result is presented in Table 7

Table 7 Indirect Effect

	Hypotheses	Original Sampel	t-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
<i>Storytelling Marketing</i> -> <i>Brand Image</i> -> Purchase Decision	H4	0.240	2.038	0.042	Supported (positive effect)

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The result indicates that brand image significantly mediates the relationship between storytelling marketing and purchase decision with a path coefficient of 0.240, a t-value of 2.038, and a p-value of 0.042. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the mediation effect is statistically significant.

This finding confirms that storytelling marketing not only directly affects consumers' purchasing behavior but also indirectly enhances it by improving the brand image. Therefore, brand image acts as a meaningful bridge between emotional narratives and consumer decision-making processes.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that storytelling marketing has a direct and significant influence on purchase decisions among Generation Z consumers in Solo Raya. This supports the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), where storytelling marketing operates through the peripheral route—utilizing emotional narratives, visual elements, and social context to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors (Mavilinda et al., 2023)

The results show that storytelling marketing significantly enhances brand image ($\beta = 0.882$, $p < 0.001$), aligning with previous studies that emphasize the role of narratives in building emotional connections and brand identity (Escalas, 2004; Tsai, 2020). Moreover, brand image significantly affects purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.272$, $p = 0.037$), and serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between storytelling marketing and purchase decisions (indirect effect $\beta = 0.240$, $p = 0.042$).

These results imply that storytelling marketing not only creates direct emotional engagement but also strengthens brand associations—both unique and favorable (Kotler & Keller, 2016)—which ultimately shape consumer decision-making. While storytelling exerts a strong direct influence on consumer decisions ($\beta = 0.647$, $p < 0.001$), the role of brand image as a mediating variable highlights the importance of perceived brand quality and relevance in translating narrative appeal into action.

This study corroborates the findings of Genoveva & Berliana (2021)), who reported that a strong and positive brand image increases consumer purchase intention. Additionally, the results echo Fog et al., (2010) who argue that brand storytelling supports long-term brand goals, such as sales, loyalty, and behavioral influence.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that storytelling marketing significantly influences purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly through the mediation of brand image, among Generation Z consumers in Solo Raya. The strong direct effect of storytelling marketing suggests that narrative-driven content—such as collaborations, emotional storytelling, and cultural relevance—effectively captures consumer attention and influences their decision-making. This supports the theoretical framework of the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which emphasizes the power of emotional and peripheral cues in shaping attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, brand image plays a crucial mediating role, reinforcing the effect of storytelling by enhancing the perceived uniqueness, strength, and credibility of the brand. Although the impact of brand image on purchase decisions is smaller than the direct effect of storytelling, its mediating role confirms that storytelling not only attracts consumers but also helps build a favorable brand perception. Therefore, companies targeting Gen Z audiences should combine emotionally resonant stories with consistent brand positioning to foster both engagement and loyalty..

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