



Research article

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The role of social media marketing in enhancing vegetarian food literacy and shaping consumer purchase decisions

Section:
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Abstract

This study examines the role of social media marketing in enhancing vegetarian food literacy and its impact on consumer purchasing decisions, applying the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) model as an analytical framework. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through an online questionnaire from 158 Generation Y and Z respondents in Palembang, selected via purposive sampling, and analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to test direct and mediating relationships. The results reveal that social media marketing significantly strengthens vegetarian food literacy by capturing consumer attention, stimulating interest, and encouraging search behavior. At the same time, the “Share” component of the AISAS model emerges as the most influential factor in shaping purchase decisions. This indicates that testimonials and recommendations from influencers and peers are more effective than other stages in converting awareness into actual purchases. The study contributes originality by integrating the AISAS model into the context of vegetarian food consumption and identifying “Share” as the key link between social media-driven literacy and purchasing behavior. This provides valuable insights for businesses to develop more targeted and effective social media marketing strategies that leverage social sharing and peer influence to drive consumer action.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran pemasaran media sosial dalam meningkatkan literasi makanan vegetarian dan dampaknya terhadap keputusan pembelian konsumen, dengan menerapkan model AISAS (Perhatian, Minat, Pencarian, Tindakan, Bagikan) sebagai kerangka analisis. Dengan pendekatan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner online dari 158 responden Generasi Y dan Z di Palembang, yang dipilih melalui sampling purposif, dan dianalisis menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) untuk menguji hubungan langsung dan mediasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran media sosial secara signifikan memperkuat literasi makanan vegetarian dengan menarik perhatian konsumen, merangsang minat, dan mendorong perilaku pencarian. Pada saat yang sama, komponen “Share” dari model AISAS muncul sebagai faktor paling berpengaruh dalam membentuk keputusan pembelian. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa testimoni dan rekomendasi dari influencer dan teman sebaya lebih efektif daripada tahap lain dalam mengubah kesadaran menjadi pembelian aktual. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi orisinal dengan mengintegrasikan model AISAS ke dalam konteks konsumsi makanan vegetarian dan mengidentifikasi “Share” sebagai tautan kunci antara literasi yang didorong oleh media sosial dan perilaku pembelian. Hal ini memberikan wawasan berharga bagi bisnis untuk mengembangkan strategi pemasaran media sosial yang lebih terarah dan efektif yang memanfaatkan berbagi sosial dan pengaruh teman sebaya untuk mendorong tindakan konsumen.

Kata Kunci: Media sosial, literasi makanan vegetarian, keputusan pembelian, Model AISAS, SEM-PLS.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are many healthy food alternatives, including combinations of juices, herbal medicines, and vegetarian options. Vegetarianism not only contributes to health by reducing the risk of disease, but is also chosen by many people due to concerns for the environment, animal welfare, economic considerations, ethics, global hunger issues, and religious reasons. The vegetarian food market in Indonesia is experiencing rapid growth, with an estimated value of \$34.24 billion by 2028. Consumer awareness of animal welfare is on the rise, driving the development of this sector. Although the market remains small, growth projections indicate a positive trend.

Based on preliminary research with 50 respondents, most vegetarians choose this lifestyle due to health considerations, animal ethics, and environmental sustainability. There are various types of vegetarians, including semi-vegetarians, vegans, lacto-vegetarians, and ovo-vegetarians. Social media is the primary marketing choice for vegetarian food businesses. Instagram, one of the most widely used platforms, offers features such as Instagram Shopping and Live to attract prospects and foster relationships with customers.

Purchase decisions related to vegetarian food are evaluated using the AISAS model. Consumers pay attention, develop interest, search for information, take purchasing action, and share their experiences after purchase. This study formulates issues related to the influence of social media on vegetarian food literacy, the impact of food literacy on purchasing decisions, and the effectiveness of the AISAS model components. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze these influences, using academic benefits as a reference and practical benefits to inform purchasing decisions through social media marketing.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Consumer behavior is the study of the actual actions taken by individuals in the process of purchasing and using products. Consumers, as individuals involved in the activities of buying, searching for, using, and consuming products, consider their personal needs and desires. In the

purchasing decision-making process, consumers select, search for information, purchase, and use products.

The main factors that influence consumer behavior, as stated by Kotler and Keller, include consumer characteristics such as cultural, social, and personal factors. Culture encompasses the way individuals live within a community, while social factors involve the influence of reference groups such as family, friends, and work environment. Personal factors such as age, occupation, and lifestyle also play a role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions.

Consumer psychology highlights motivation, perception, emotions, and experience as key factors in the purchasing process. Basic needs influence consumer motivation, while perception involves the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information to form a meaningful understanding of the world. Consumer emotions and experiences, which originate from memory, can influence future consumer preferences and decisions.

Social media, as an internet platform that facilitates interaction and information sharing, has become a vital component in modern marketing. Marketing through social media not only affects brand reputation and customer interaction but also creates opportunities to influence consumer purchasing decisions. Factors such as content quality, trust-building, engagement, and integration with other media platforms play a crucial role in the effectiveness of social media marketing. Social media marketing is not just an advertising tool, but also a way to influence consumer interest and decisions regarding a business or product.

Social media marketing fosters more personal social relationships, which have a positive impact on consumer purchasing decisions (Adolf, Lapien, & Tulung, 2022). These individual interactions help consumers gain a deeper understanding of products. Attention-grabbing social media messages, as suggested by Khachatryan (2019) and Oktimawati, Primyastanto, & Abidin (2018), encourage consumer interest in products, which is the first step for online businesses to become recognized and remembered by consumers.

H1: Social media influences attention

Shopping on social networks offers convenience and satisfaction, which can lead to a reduction in attention to price and a sense of security. These results support the acceptance of the second hypothesis. These findings align with research (Gulseven, 2018), which indicates that social media followers tend to be more interested in messages and information, thereby increasing their interest in products promoted through social media.

H2: Social media influences interest.

The currently popular activity of online shopping makes it easy for consumers from all walks of life. With just a device like a smartphone or laptop with internet access, purchases can be made without leaving the comfort of home. The existence of highly popular social media also helps manufacturers promote their products more efficiently. The existence of social networks is expected to bring a new dimension to the online buying and selling process, in line with the study's findings (Ari Bowo, Paryanto, & Iqbal, 2023).

H3: Social media influences search.

People today are increasingly concerned about their food choices, combining taste satisfaction with health considerations. Emphasizing the reduction of cholesterol intake, many are turning to

the increasingly popular vegetarian diet. Living as a vegetarian has benefits, mainly because vegetarian foods are free from cholesterol, which is found in animal products. Research (Hendriyani, 2018) indicates that increased attention to organic foods enhances understanding of health benefits, production processes, and support for sustainability.

H4: Attention influences vegetarian food literacy.

The number of Asians adopting a vegetarian diet is increasing, reflecting a growing interest in plant-based protein and an increasing awareness of the health benefits and environmental impact. Choosing a healthy lifestyle by selecting plant-based foods has a positive impact on individual and overall community health. However, research (Malan, 2020) shows an interest in social media content that promotes organic products.

H5: Interest influences vegetarian food literacy.

People who switch to a vegan diet cite ethical, moral, religious, and sustainability-based motivations. There are three main categories of motivation, namely those related to living beings, oneself, and environmental sustainability. These motivations are worth exploring further, particularly in relation to the transition to a vegetarian diet. Although the results of the study (Ditzler & Greenhawt, 2018) show information-seeking activities after paying attention to organic farming,

H6: Search influences vegetarian food literacy.

Vegetarian food literacy influences consumer purchasing decisions regarding vegetarian products or services. This includes understanding nutrition, the importance of a vegetarian lifestyle, product knowledge, relevance to consumer values, and health and environmental impacts. Research shows that the level of vegetarian food literacy can significantly influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. For a deeper understanding, market research and analysis that consider these variables are necessary.

H7: Vegetarian food literacy influences purchase decisions.

Consumer purchasing decisions influence the act of sharing experiences or recommendations with others, such as direct sharing, writing online reviews, or participating in social media discussions. Factors that influence sharing include positive experiences, customer satisfaction, emotional involvement, product uniqueness, social influence, social media platforms, incentive programs, online reviews, and brand reputation.

H8: Purchase decisions influence sharing.

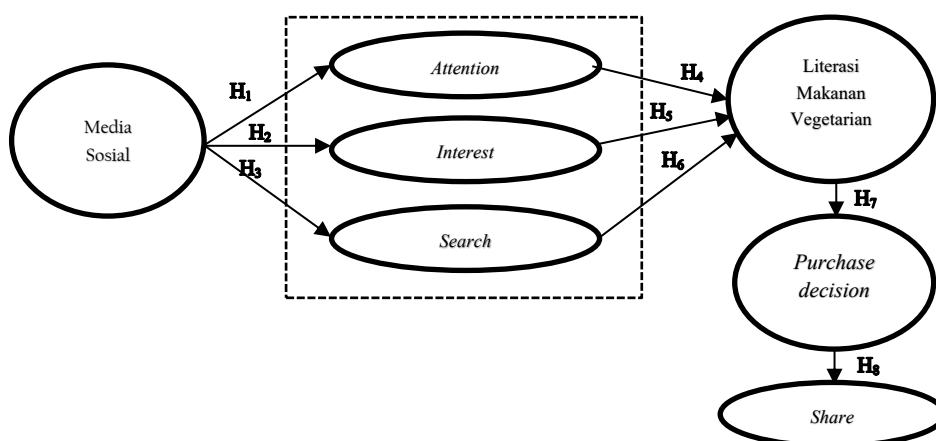


Figure 1: Research model

METHODS

This section outlines the research methodology, including the Participant and procedure, and data analysis techniques applied in the study.

Participants and procedure

This study utilizes two types of data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected through questionnaires distributed to Generations Y and Z in the city of Palembang, while secondary data included previous studies, scientific articles, books, and statistical reports.

Data analysis will involve statistical methods, including descriptive and inferential analysis, as well as regression and moderation tests, to test the research hypothesis. This study uses quantitative methods to collect data that can be measured numerically, mainly through surveys using questionnaires. The research population comprises all members of Generations Y and Z in the city of Palembang, without a specific number limit.

The research sample, selected using convenience sampling, consists of members of generations Y and Z in Palembang aged 13-50 years who have been vegetarian for at least one year. The number of samples obtained was 280 respondents, with a sampling method that considered population size, error rate, and accuracy rate.

Measure

In this study, a closed questionnaire with a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6 was used to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions toward the research subject. The questionnaire was distributed online through social media and WhatsApp using a Google Form link, ensuring easy access for respondents. The Likert scale was used with positive statements ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," in accordance with the method described in the Likert scale table.

The study employed a survey questionnaire as the data collection method. The questionnaire was compiled using a Likert scale and distributed to Generations Y and Z in Palembang through an online platform. The questions focused on the impact of social media, vegetarian food literacy, and the components of the AISAS model on purchasing decisions. The Likert scale provided answer options ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The collected data will be analyzed using statistical techniques, including regression analysis and path analysis, to understand the relationship between variables. This method is expected to produce valid and reliable data to support the completion of the research questions.

Data analysis procedures

This study examines the impact of social media marketing, vegetarian food literacy, and purchasing decisions among Generations Y and Z in Palembang, employing quantitative methods with a Likert scale questionnaire. Social media marketing is viewed as a tool to foster interaction between companies and consumers, not only to drive sales but also to build consumer interest and loyalty. At the same time, the vegetarian lifestyle provides various health benefits.

Multiple linear regression analysis is applied to examine the relationship between independent (social media) and dependent variables (purchasing decisions, vegetarian food literacy, and sharing), complemented by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) to assess causal relationships, direct and indirect effects, and moderating influences. The SEM-PLS

process involves designing the theoretical model through a literature review, developing a path diagram, translating it into SEM-PLS equations that incorporate endogenous and exogenous variables, selecting estimation techniques, addressing identification issues, evaluating model fit, and refining the model to ensure consistency with empirical data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

This study reached out to the general public, focusing on the Dharmakirti Temple and the KMBP Student and Alumni Community, who are involved in vegetarianism. The Dharmakirti Temple and KMBP in Palembang became the centers of dissemination, with positive participation showing high interest and involvement in their spiritual and cultural aspects. Respondents consisted of generations Y and Z in Palembang, aged 13-50 years, with the majority having been or currently being vegetarians. Analysis of the characteristic data showed a balanced distribution between genders, with the majority aged 17-<25 years, having a bachelor's degree, and diverse occupations, with employees as the majority.

Table 1.

Uji Reliabilitas dan Validitas

Variabel	Indikator	Outer Loading	AVE	CR	Cr. Alpha	Valid atau Tidak Valid	Reliabel atau Tidak Reliabel
Media Sosial	X1.1	0.946	0,840	0,955	0,954	V	R
	X1.2	0.931				V	R
	X1.3	0.924				V	R
	X1.4	0.946				V	R
Literasi Makanan Vegetarian	Y1.1	0.890	0,809	0,922	0,921	V	R
	Y1.2	0.919				V	R
	Y1.3	0.891				V	R
	Y1.4	0.898				V	R
Purchase Decision	Y2.1	0.911	0,823	0,947	0,946	V	R
	Y2.2	0.905				V	R
	Y2.3	0.907				V	R
	Y2.4	0.891				V	R
	Y2.5	0.922				V	R
Share	Y3.1	0.929	0,853	0,945	0,942	V	R
	Y3.2	0.929				V	R
	Y3.3	0.949				V	R
	Y3.4	0.886				V	R
Attention	Z1.1	0.902	0,840	0,907	0,904	V	R
	Z1.2	0.942				V	R
	Z1.3	0.904				V	R
Interest	Z2.1	0.894	0,840	0,913	0,907	V	R
	Z2.2	0.937				V	R
	Z2.3	0.924				V	R
Search	Z3.1	0.934	0,877	0,931	0,930	V	R
	Z3.2	0.941				V	R
	Z3.3	0.935				V	R

The model's measurement results demonstrate validity and reliability that meet the standards (>0.7 for validity and <0.5 for reliability). Therefore, all variables are considered valid and reliable for each dimension and related indicator. The next step is to measure discriminant validity, where each reflective indicator should correlate highly only with the relevant construct. Discriminant validity is met if the correlation between latent constructs is less than the square root of the AVE of each related construct.

Table 2.

Correlation Values between Construct Dimensions

Correlation Values between Constructs							
	AT	IN	LMV	MS	PD	SE	SH
AT	1,000	0,913	0,845	0,874	0,871	0,911	0,888
IN	0,913	1,000	0,865	0,865	0,885	0,924	0,897
LMV	0,845	0,865	1,000	0,805	0,842	0,881	0,812
MS	0,874	0,865	0,805	1,000	0,791	0,843	0,832
PD	0,871	0,885	0,842	0,791	1,000	0,903	0,916
SE	0,911	0,924	0,881	0,843	0,903	1,000	0,879
SH	0,888	0,897	0,812	0,832	0,916	0,879	1,000

The correlation values for all variable dimensions meet the criteria, with construct values smaller than the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each related construct. Discriminant validity can be evaluated by comparing the outer loading values of indicators in one construct with those in other constructs. Outer loading values greater than the cross-loading of indicators indicate a stronger correlation with their own construct. Thus, high outer loading values reflect a strong correlation between the indicators and their construct.

Hypothesis testing

To further validate the research framework, hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the relationships between variables. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3.

Correlation Values between Construct Dimensions

Var. Endogen		Var. Eksogen	Path Coef.	t-stat.	P-value	R ²	Ket
AT	<-	MS	0,874	38,988	0,000	0.764	Signifikan
IN	<-	MS	0,865	39,405	0,000	0.748	Signifikan
SE	<-	MS	0,843	27,719	0,000	0.711	Signifikan
LMV	<-	AT	0,134	0,860	0,390	0.796	Tidak Signifikan
LMV	<-	IN	0,286	1,884	0,060	0.796	Tidak Signifikan
LMV	<-	SE	0,494	4,283	0,000	0.796	Signifikan
PD	<-	LMV	0,842	22,847	0,000	0.709	Signifikan
SH	<-	PD	0,916	43,980	0,000	0.711	Signifikan

From Table 3, it can be concluded that social media has a significant positive effect on Attention, Interest, and Search (with R2 values of 0.874, 0.863, and 0.843, respectively). Furthermore, Search has a positive impact on Vegetarian Food Literacy (with an R2 value of 0.134). Vegetarian Food Literacy also has a positive effect on Purchase Decision with a t-value of 0.286. Meanwhile, Purchase Decision has a positive impact on Share with a t-value of 0.916. Attention and Interest, however, do not have a positive effect on Vegetarian Food Literacy (with R2 of 0.134).

Discussion

Based on the results in the table, the first hypothesis is accepted with a Path Coef. of 0.874 and a p-value of 0.000. The indicator regarding viewing vegetarian food promotions on social media, brochures, and billboards has an R2 of 0.902. This finding aligns with research (Adolf, Lapien, & Tulung, 2022), which emphasizes the positive impact of social media on consumer purchasing decisions.

The second hypothesis is accepted with a Path Coef. of 0.865 and a p-value of 0.000. Consumers familiar with vegetarian food reached a value of 93.7%. H2 aligns with research (Gulseven, 2018), indicating the positive impact of social media followers on individual interest in promoted products.

The third hypothesis is accepted with a Path Coef. of 0.843 and a p-value of 0.000. Consumers seek information about vegetarian food on the internet, involving the practice of searching and collecting reviews. These findings support the popularity of online buying and selling through social media (Ari Bowo, Paryanto, & Iqbal, 2023).

The fourth hypothesis was rejected with a Path Coef. of 0.134 and a p-value of 0.390. Interest in vegetarian food does not have a significant effect on food literacy. The suggestion is to focus on more informative and relevant content related to vegetarian food.

The fifth hypothesis was rejected with a Path Coef. of 0.286 and a p-value of 0.060. Consumer interest in vegetarian food does not have a significant effect on food literacy. The suggestion is to emphasize more substantial information related to vegetarian food.

The sixth hypothesis was accepted with a Path Coef. of 0.494 and a p-value of 0.000. Searching for information online contributes to vegetarian food literacy. This finding aligns with research (Ditzler & Greenhawt, 2018) that demonstrates how searching for information enhances consumer understanding of products.

The seventh hypothesis was accepted with a Path Coef. of 0.842 and a p-value of 0.000. Vegetarian food literacy has a positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions. Awareness of nutritional value, taste, and other aspects influences purchasing decisions (Putri, 2021)

The eighth hypothesis was accepted with a Path Coef. of 0.916 and a p-value of 0.000. Purchasing decisions influence consumers' actions of sharing experiences, reviews, or recommendations. This finding supports the role of external factors in shaping consumer behavior (Hera, 2025)

Limitations

This study focuses on analyzing the impact of social media marketing on vegetarian food literacy and purchasing decisions, examining aspects such as purchase frequency, purchase quantity, and brand preference. It focuses on the general effects of social media marketing through various forms, such as paid advertising and posts. Clear explanations of research design, data collection, measurement instruments, and research period are provided to ensure validity, reduce bias, and strengthen interpretation, thereby enhancing the study's contribution to the literature.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the motivations of individuals to adopt a vegetarian diet, taking into account environmental, animal welfare, and religious factors. Social media plays a significant role in promoting a vegetarian lifestyle. The research method used questionnaires and previous studies, involving Generations Y and Z in Palembang with 158 valid respondents. Of the eight hypotheses, two statements were not significant, namely, attention and interest in vegetarian food literacy. Attention may be influenced by the respondents' prior knowledge and personal values, while interest may be influenced by variations in interest and external factors.

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