Social Media as a Contributing Factor to the Potential Decline of Commercial Sales Jobs in the Future and the Driving Factors Behind the Increased Intention to Buy Among Generation Y and a Segment of Generation Z in Indonesia

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Abstract. This research aims to investigate the impact of social media on the reduction of commercial sales jobs and the increase in purchasing intent among Generation Y and part of Generation Z in Indonesia. The study also considers the influence of word of mouth, customer experience, and brand equity on purchasing intent. In addition, customer experience and brand equity serve as intervening variables that link social media and word of mouth to purchasing intent. This study provides valuable insights into changes in consumer behavior and market dynamics in the digital era. The results of this research can assist companies in developing more effective and innovative sales and marketing strategies, as well as creating stronger brand value in an increasingly competitive market.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Customer Experience, Intention To Buy, Social Media.

1 Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that members of Generation Y, born between 1980 and 2009, and Generation Z, exhibit a number of distinct characteristics. These generations are often referred to as "pragmatic" and "straightforward," possessing a practical outlook on life and a preference for direct communication. As "digital natives," these generations have an inherent understanding of technology and a strong inclination to utilize it in their daily lives. This propensity for technology is often demonstrated in their ability to effectively navigate and resolve challenges through the use of digital tools and resources [1]. Currently, there has been a 'social media revolution' [2], Wherein this revolution can be compared to the historically significant industrial revolution [3].

The application of digital technology by both Generation Y and Generation Z is extensive and diverse, encompassing social media platforms that facilitate borderless networking, as well as the utilization of on-demand entertainment that can be accessed at any time and place. Social media is characterized by tools, platforms, and applications

that allow users to connect, communicate, and collaborate with one another [4]. Currently, social media has even transformed into a key marketing tool. It can also be defined as a collection of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0, facilitating the creation and exchange of user-generated content[5]. Through Web 2.0 technology, users create, share, and disseminate information to other users or communities with specific interests [6]. Social media has revolutionized the nature of relationships between sellers and buyers. It has not only shifted communication from a monologue to a dialogue but has also introduced a new phenomenon termed 'trialogue' where customers converse with other customers as part of testimonials and customer experience[7–9].

Marketers are no longer able to communicate with their audiences, but marketers must establish relationships and engage with their audiences[10]. The most common use of social media among businesses is to communicate and engage in conversation with their customers [11–19].

From a different viewpoint, it is postulated that in the future, the function of salespeople may become redundant due to the predominance of social media, which enables a triadic communication among producers, potential purchasers, and other users (third parties) who have experience with the product being marketed (customer experience) [20].

Retail businesses have now evolved into a technology-intensive industry with the advent of social media. In 2011, [16] The concept of social media was expanded in 2011 to encompass the use of mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms for the sharing, co-creation, discussion, and modification of user-generated content.

Customer Experience Management plays a vital role in enhancing and sustaining client satisfaction and loyalty. It is imperative for businesses to identify means to guarantee that every interaction between consumers and their products and services is satisfactory. Even the slightest improvement in customer service programs can lead to a notable increase in customer loyalty and sales, amounting to a 10% boost with just a 1% improvement [21]. Exceptional customer experiences lead to a 5% increase in customer loyalty[22].

A plethora of research endeavors employing copious amounts of information gleaned from e-commerce and social media platforms have unequivocally established the pivotal role of Word of Mouth (WOM) in shaping consumer preferences, driving purchasing decisions, and ultimately impacting a company's financial performance [23,24]. According to [25,26] many marketers and companies agree on the importance of WOM (Word of Mouth). For instance, 61% of marketing professionals believe that word-of-mouth marketing is the most successful form of advertising [27].

This study seeks to determine the extent to which social media and word of mouth influence purchasing interest among the general public. Additionally, it considers other factors, including customer experience and brand equity, and evaluates their contribution to the generation of interest. Both social media and word of mouth are categorized as direct and intervening variables in this investigation.

1.1   Latent Variable of Social Media

The latent variable under consideration in this study pertains to digital information channels that reach the general public, encompassing audio-visual, text, and image formats. The following indicators are utilized to assess the level of functionality, ease of use, and duration of time spent online by respondents, with the aim of evaluating the extent to which they are exposed to social media.

1.2   Latent Variable of Word of Mouth

In this study, the latent variable of Word of Mouth pertains to the information acquired by respondents through person-to-person communication, which is conveyed through mediums that are independent of the company. The process of Word-of-mouth communication involves the provision of recommendations, either individually or as a group, about a product or service with the intention of conveying such information personally [28]. Indicators used for this variable include the quality of information, the authority of the information source, the authenticity of the information source, and the appeal of certain information [29].

1.3   Latent Variable of Customer Experience

Customer Experience refers to the experience of a customer when interacting or transacting with a seller or service provider. The latent variable of Customer Experience in this study aims to identify the extent to which this experience is felt by consumers and how it is shared by these consumers on social media. In this study, we will identify the relationship between customer experience as an independent variable and Intention to Buy as the dependent variable. Additionally, we will explore the role of Customer Experience as an intervening variable that mediates the relationship between the independent variable, Social Media, and the dependent variable, Intention to Buy.
In this study, we also analyzed the pathway relationship from social media through Customer Experience, followed by Brand Equity, leading to the emergence of Intention to Buy. The indicators used to measure this variable are the utility of sharing customer experience information on the purchasing interest of other customers, the influence of purchasing interest caused by the experience of other customers, and the level of trust in the information conveyed through social media

1.4   Latent Variable of Brand Equity

Brand Equity or the equity of a brand refers to a set of assets associated with a brand that can increase or decrease the value of that brand [28]. In this study, we will identify to what extent brand equity contributes to a consumer's interest in purchasing (Variable Intention to Buy). In this investigation, brand equity is the independent variable that has a direct impact on the dependent variable, which is the intention to purchase. Furthermore, it functions as an intervening variable, mediating the relationship between word of mouth and the intention to buy, as well as the relationship between customer experience and the intention to buy. The study utilizes three dimensions, brand awareness, brand quality, and brand association, to assess the association with the intention to buy.

1.5   Latent Variable of Intention to Buy

Intention to buy refers to the inclination to make a purchase related to a brand and is typically determined by how well the brand's quality or characteristics align with the buyer's objectives[30]. Intention to Buy can be measured through the dimension of likelihood, that is, a consumer's purchasing plan for a product[31]. This likelihood dimension is divided into two: 'definitely would', which refers to the consumer's certainty in a product, and 'probable', which refers to the possibility of a consumer purchasing a product.

In this investigation, an exploration was conducted to appraise the impact of latent variables associated with social media, Word of Mouth, Customer Experience and Brand Equity on the dependent variable of Intention to Purchase. The Intention to Purchase variable was assessed through various indicators, including the advantages of the product or service, its quality, pricing, and availability.

1.6   Framework and Hypothesis

Based on the previous literature review, this study proposes a research model as follows (see **Fig. 1**) :
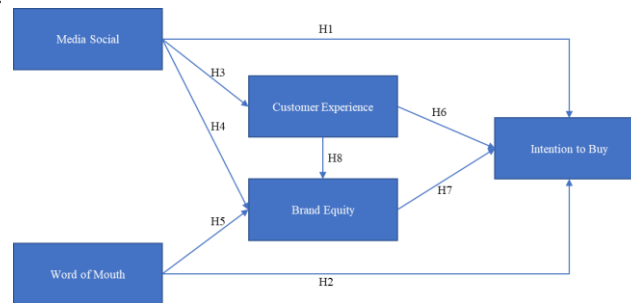

Fig. 1. Proposed Research Model.

Based on the model in Figure 2, the Proposed Research Model, the initial hypotheses suggested are:
- H1: social media has a significant positive influence on intention to buy.
- H2: Word of mouth has a significant positive influence on intention to buy.
- H3: social media has a significant positive influence on customer experience.
- H4: social media has a significant positive influence on brand equity.
- H5: Word of mouth has a significant positive influence on brand equity.
- H6: Customer experience has a significant positive influence on intention to buy.
- H7: Brand equity has a significant positive influence on intention to buy.
- H8: Customer experience has a significant positive influence on brand equity.

2   Methods

The purpose of this research, which employs a verification-based approach, is to investigate the causal relationship or influence that exists between variables, as suggested by our hypotheses and supported by empirical evidence.

2.1   Research Formula

In this investigation, the correlations between the independent variables of social media, word of mouth, customer experience, and brand equity and the dependent variable, intention to purchase, will be established. In this context, customer experience and brand equity function as both independent variables and intervening variables connecting social media and word of mouth to the intention to purchase. The initial assumption is summarized as follows:
- Does Social Media influence Intention to Buy?
- Does Word of Mouth influence Intention to Buy?
- Does Social Media Influence Customer Experience?
- Does Social Media influence Brand Equity?
- Does Word of Mouth influence Brand Equity?
- Does Customer Experience Influence Intention to Buy?
- Does Brand Equity Influence Intention to Buy?
- Does Customer Experience Influence Brand Equity?

2.2   Research Objectives

The purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the impact of the latent variables of social media, word of mouth, customer experience, and brand equity on an individual's decision to make a purchase. Additionally, the study aims to examine the effects of the interaction between social media and customer experience, as well as the joint contribution of word of mouth and brand equity to the formation of the intention to buy.

2.3   Type of Research

The purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the impact of the latent variables of social media, word of mouth, customer experience, and brand equity on an individual's decision to make a purchase. Additionally, the study aims to explore the role of social media in combination with customer experience and the joint effect of word of mouth and brand equity on the intention to buy

2.4   Population and Sample

The study population comprised adults, both men and women, born between 1980 and 2004, who represented a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds, and were recruited from various cities in Indonesia. After initial screening, a total of 405 respondents were included in the analysis, out of which 387 met the necessary qualifications. Data collection was conducted from the fourth week of November 2022 to the third week of December 2022. This study employed a simple random sampling method, where samples were randomly selected by the researcher.

3   Result and Discussion

In this section, we will discuss data collection and data processing using SmartPLS.

3.1   Respondent Profile

In this investigation, data was gathered through the dissemination of questionnaires via social media, and a total of 385 participants took part, including 36.36% males and 63.64% females. A **Fig. 2** detailing the respondent profile is provided for reference.

Jenis Kelamin	Jumlah	%	Tingkat Pendidikan	Jumlah	%	Penghasilan	Jumlah	%
Pria	140	36%	SMA/Sederajat	110	29%	< Rp. 5.000.000,-	203	53%
Wanita	245	64%	Diploma (D1-D3)	67	17%	Rp. 5.000.001,- s/d Rp. 10.000.000,-	103	27%
			Sarjana (S1/D4)	157	41%	Rp. 10.000.001,- s/d Rp. 15.000.000,-	43	11%
			Magister (S2)	51	13%	Rp. 15.000.001,- s/d Rp. 20.000.000,-	23	6%
			Doktor (S3)	0	0%	Rp. 20.000.001,- s/d Rp. 25.000.000,-	4	1%
						> 25.000.000,-	9	2%
Total	385	100%	**Total**	385	100%	**Total**	385	100%

Fig. 2. Respondent Profile

Based on **Fig. 2**, the respondent profile reveals that all respondents are male, with the exception of one female aged between 18-42 years. The majority of participants in this survey were females, representing 64%. In terms of educational attainment, the most significant proportion of respondents have attained a bachelor's degree, constituting 41%. Furthermore, with regards to income, 53% of respondents have an income of less than Rp. 5,000,000.

3.2   Data Processing Method

In this study, a SmartPLS method was utilized to examine the correlation between variable data obtained from a survey.
The analysis involved three stages of interpretation:

1. The outer model testing phase is the stage of evaluating the measurement model, aiming to establish validity and estimate the reliability of both indicators and constructs. The criteria that must be satisfied include:
   a.   Indicator factor loadings should exceed 0.7.
   b.   Reflective construct AVE (Average Variance Extracted) should be greater than 0.5.
   c.   The square root of AVE should be higher than the correlation between constructs.
   d.   Cronbach's Alpha should be above 0.7, and composite reliability should exceed 0.7.

2. The Goodness of Fit testing phase is intended to assess the predictive strength of the model and its appropriateness. The criteria to be met involve the model fit to determine the suitability of the model and data in examining the influence of variables. The condition is that the SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) should be less than 0.10.

3. Inner Model Testing Phase: To test the significance of the influence from exogenous variables to endogenous variables:
   a. Significance test: It is considered significantly influential if the p-value < 0.05 or T-value > 1.96, based on the SmartPLS bootstrapping output.
   b. Partial effect size: f2, derived from the SmartPLS algorithm output.
   c. Simultaneous effect size: R2, as shown in the SmartPLS algorithm output. In the variance-based SEM model or PLS-Path Modeling, this model consists of an Outer model (measurement model). The Outer Model or External Measurement is also known as the measurement model.

3.3   Data Processing and Analysis of Data Processing Results

To test the reliability and validity of the outer model test, where this test has several conditions, namely:

1. Indicator factor loadings should exceed 0.7.

Table 1. Loading Factor Value

	Brand Equity	Customer Experience	Intention to Buy	Media Social	Word of Mouth
MS3				0,822	
MS1				0,820	
MS2				0,809	
MS4				0,688	
MS5				0,597	
BE1	0,844				
BE2	0,831				
BE3	0,810				
CE1		0,835			
CE2		0,849			
CE3		0,824			
EW1					0,759
EW2					0,767
EW3					0,719
EW4					0,722
EW5					0,693
EW6					0,774
EW7					0,786
ItB1			0,798		
ItB2			0,768		
ItB3			0,727		
ItB4			0,738		

In **Table 1**, it is evident that the relationship between latent variables and indicators has an average value above 0.7. Out of all the data, only three indicators have values < 0.7,

namely MS4 (social media), MS5, and indicator EW5 (word of mouth). These three indicator values do not necessarily have to be removed, as they still have values > 0.4, ensuring they are not counterproductive to the constructed variable

2. Reflective construct AVE (Average Variance Extracted) should be greater than 0.5

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho A	Composite Reliability	Avarage Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Equity	0,771	0,772	0,868	0,686
Customer experience	0,786	0,789	0,875	0,699
Intention to Buy	0,753	0,755	0,844	0,575
Media Social	0,806	0,827	0,865	0,566
Word of Mouth	0,868	0,875	0,898	0,557

In **Table 2**, it can be observed that the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value is > 0.5; this indicates that the second criteria of the Outer Model test have been satisfied.

3. The square root of AVE should be higher than the correlation between construct

To obtain the square root value of AVE, a discriminant validity calculation is conducted, wherein the Fornell-Larcker Criterion computation yields the square root of AVE.

Table 3. Square Root of AVE Values

	Brand Equity	Customer Experience	Intention to Buy	Media Social	Word of Mouth
Brand Equity	0,828				
Customer Experience	0,589	0,836			
Intention to Buy	0,781	0,793	0,758		
Media Social	0,696	0,661	0,833	0,752	
Word of Mouth	0,614	0,758	0,810	0,768	0,746

In **Table 3**, the diagonal values represent the square root of AVE, linking the latent variables to themselves. Meanwhile, the off-diagonal values represent the correlations between constructs. From Table 5, it can be observed and concluded that the square root of AVE values is greater than their respective construct correlations.

4. Cronbach's Alpha should be above 0.7, and composite reliability should exceed 0.7

In **Table 2**, the values for Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability both exceed 0.7. From this, it can be inferred that the latent variables, namely Social Media(X_1), Word of Mouth(X_2), Customer Experience(Z_1), Brand Equity(Z_2), and Intention to Buy(Y), exhibit good reliability or a high degree of dependability.

The subsequent step involves the Goodness of Fit test. The aim of this test is to assess the model's predictive strength and suitability. To determine the model's and data's adequacy for assessing the influence of variables, the SRMR must be less than 0.10.

Table 4. Model Fit

	Saturated Model	**Estimated Model**
SRMR	0,097	0,108
d_ULS	2,379	2.930
d_G	n/a	n/a
Chi-Square	infinite	infinite
NFI	n/a	n/a

In **Table 4**, it is evident that the SRMR value is < 0.10, specifically at 0.097. This indicates that the goodness of fit requirement is satisfied, and the model is deemed appropriate for retention. The subsequent phase involves testing the Inner model. The objective of this test is to assess the significance of the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables.

Table 5. Significance Test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Media Social --> Customer Experience	0,661	0,662	0,031	21,239	0,000
Brand Equity --> Intention to Buy	0,291	0,289	0,032	9,054	0,000
Media Social --> Intention to Buy	0,301	0,304	0,036	8,420	0,000
Word of Mouth --> Intention to Buy	0,188	0,185	0,044	4,228	0,000
Customer Experience --> Intention to buy	0,28	0,281	0,047	5,908	0,000
Media Social --> Brand Equity	0,509	0,504	0,060	8,528	0,000
Customer Experience --> Brand Equity	0,197	0,196	0,066	2,988	0,003
Word of Mouth --> Brand Equity	0,073	0,860	0,076	0,956	0,340

In **Table 5**, the path coefficient, which represents the direct effect results, can be observed as follows:
• Social Media has a positive effect on Customer Experience with a t-statistic of 21.239 (p < 0.001).
• Brand Equity has a positive effect on Intention to Buy with a t-statistic of 9.054 (p < 0.001).
• Social Media has a positive effect on Intention to Buy with a t-statistic of 8.420 (p < 0.001).
• Word of Mouth has a positive effect on Intention to Buy with a t-statistic of 4.228 (p < 0.001).
• Customer Experience has a positive effect on Intention to Buy with a t-statistic of 5.908 (p < 0.001).
• Social Media has a positive effect on Brand Equity with a t-statistic of 8.528 (p < 0.001).

• Customer Experience has a positive effect on Brand Equity with a t-statistic of 2.988 (p < 0.001).
• Word of Mouth has no effect on Brand Equity with a t-statistic of 0.340 (p > 0.001).

From **Table 5**, it can be inferred that social media significantly positively impacts Customer Experience in comparison to other relationships, as its t-statistic is substantially higher than those of the other indicators. To observe the indirect effects, the total indirect effect calculation can be employed, resulting in the following illustration:

Table 6. Examining the Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Brand Equity --> Intention to Buy Customer Experience --> Brand Equity Customer Experience --> Intention to Buy	0,057	0,056	0,020	2,909	0,004
Media Social --> Brand Equity Media Social --> Customer Experience	0,130	0,130	0,044	2,946	0,003
Media Social --> Intention to Buy	0,371	0,369	0,039	9,422	0,000
Word of Mouth --> Brand Equity Word of Mouth --> Intention to Buy	0,021	0,023	0,022	0,946	0,345

In **Table 6**, it can be concluded that:
• Customer Experience indirectly influences Intention to Buy with a T-statistic of 2.909 (p = 0.004).
• Media Social has an indirect effect on Brand Equity with a T-statistic of 2.946 (p = 0.003).
• Media Social indirectly impacts Intention to Buy with a T-statistic of 9.422 (p = 0.000).
• Word of Mouth does not exert an indirect influence on Intention to Buy with a T-statistic of 0.946 (p = 0.345).

From **Table 6**, it is evident that media social has a significantly higher indirect influence compared to other indicators, as demonstrated by its much greater significance level compared to other indicators. In addition to the tests conducted according to the data processing method, supporting data was obtained to provide a comprehensive explanation related to the constructed constructs and the value of contribution between its variables.

Table 7. Path Coefficient

	Brand Equity	Customer Experience	Intention to Buy	Media Social	Word of Mouth
Brand Equity			0,291		

Customer Experience	0,197		0,28	
Intention to Buy				
Media Social	0,509	0,661	0,301	
Word of Mouth	0,073		0,188	

In **Table 7**, elucidates the relationships and contributions between the latent variables. From Table 9, it can be observed that the latent variable Brand Equity directly contributes 0.291 units to the variable Intention to Buy. Meanwhile, Customer Experience directly contributes 0.197 units to Brand Equity and directly contributes 0.280 units to Intention to Buy. Media Social contributes directly by 0.509 to Brand Equity, directly contributes by 0.661 units to Customer Experience, and further contributes directly by 0.301 units to Intention to Buy. As for Word of Mouth, it directly contributes 0.073 units to Brand Equity and directly contributes 0.188 units to Intention to Buy.

Table 8. Indirect Effect

	Brand Equity	Customer Experience	Intention to Buy	Media Social	Word of Mouth
Brand Equity					
Customer Experience			0,057		
Intention to Buy					
Media Social	0,130		0,371		
Word of Mouth			0,021		

In **Table 8**, it is observed that the latent variable Brand Equity has no indirect influence on Intention to Buy. Meanwhile, Media Social indirectly affects the Brand Equity variable by 0.130 units and has an indirect influence of 0.371 units on Intention to Buy. As for Word of Mouth, it indirectly contributes 0.021 units to Intention to Buy.

Table 9. Specific Indirect Effect

	Specific Indirect Effects
Media Social --> Customer Experience --> Brand Equity	0,130
Customer Experience --> Brand Equity --> Intention to Buy	0,057
Media Social --> Customer Experience --> Brand Equity --> Intention to Buy	0,038
Media Social --> Brand Equity --> Intention to Buy	0,148
Word of Mouth --> Brand Equity --> Intention to Buy	0,021
Media Social --> Customer Experience --> Intention to buy	0,185

In **Table 9**, the latent variable of Media Social, through the intervening variable of Customer Experience, indirectly influences the latent variable of Brand Equity by 0.130 units. The latent variable of Customer Experience, passing through the intervening variable of Brand Equity, has an indirect effect of 0.057 units on the Intention to Buy

variable. The latent variable of Media Social, mediated by two intervening variables - Customer Experience and Brand Equity, exerts an indirect influence of 0.038 units on the latent variable of Intention to Buy. The latent variable of Media Social, channeled through the intervening variable of Brand Equity, indirectly affects the latent variable of Intention to Buy by 0.148 units. Meanwhile, the latent variable of Word of Mouth, through the intervening variable of Brand Equity, indirectly impacts the Intention to Buy variable by 0.021 units. And the latent variable of Media Social, through the intervening variable of Customer Experience, indirectly influences the latent variable of Intention to Buy by 0.185 units.

4   Conclusion

Based on the findings of the hypothesis testing pertaining to the underlying relationships between media social, word of mouth, customer experience, brand equity, and intention to buy, which were analyzed using the SmartPLS software, the following results were obtained. It can be discerned from this research that the association between indicators and their underlying latent variables exhibits commendable convergent validity. Based on the results of our calculations and data analysis, it is clear that there is a positive relationship between the latent variable of social media and the latent variable of intention to buy, with a path coefficient value of 0.301. Furthermore, the path coefficient from the latent variable of social media to the latent variable of customer experience is 0.661. This indicates that social media has a significant impact on customer experience, with a contribution value of 0.661 units. This study has demonstrated that social media exerts a considerable influence on customer experience, which bears a notable impact on customers' intention to acquire a product. Although other factors, such as brand equity, word of mouth, and standalone customer experience, also play a role in shaping the purchasing intent, their impact is not as conspicuous as that of social media. A recently discovered, yet unexamined, phenomenon is the limited impact of word of mouth on brand equity. This finding presents a valuable opportunity for additional investigation.

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