



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/dijms.v6i4.4244>
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The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Product Variations on Buying Interest in Courses at Easy Course Institutions in Makassar City

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effect of social media marketing and product variation on the interest in purchasing courses at Easy Course Institute in Makassar City. The research uses a quantitative approach, with data collected through questionnaires distributed to 130 respondents. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS version 30. The results indicate that social media marketing and product variation have a positive and significant effect on course Purchase Intention. These findings suggest that the more effective the social media marketing strategies and the more varied the courses offered, the higher the interest of potential participants. Therefore, Easy Course Institute should optimize social media utilization and enhance course variations to attract more participants.

Keyword: Social Media Marketing, Product Variety, & Purchase Intention.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in marketing strategies, especially with the utilization of social media. Social media is not only a means of communication, but also an effective marketing tool in building interactions with consumers, increasing brand awareness, and encouraging purchasing decisions (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Social Media Marketing is an approach that utilizes social media platforms to promote products or services. Through this strategy, companies aim to increase brand visibility, reach a wider audience, and build closer relationships with customers. According to the We Are Social report (2024), the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 77% of the total population, with 60.4% of them actively using social media. This shows that social media has great potential as a marketing channel that can increase the attractiveness of a product or service and influence consumer buying interest in the services offered.

In the non-formal education industry, such as course institutions, digital marketing strategies have an important role in attracting potential participants. Easy Course, as one of the course institutions in Makassar City, faces increasingly fierce competition along with the increasing number of education service providers. Based on Easy Course's internal data, the

number of course participants has fluctuated in the last three years. In 2021, the number of participants reached 850 people, increased to 970 people in 2022, but decreased to 890 people in 2023. This fluctuation indicates the need to evaluate the marketing strategies implemented to maintain and increase the number of course participants, including in the aspect of increasing the purchase interest of prospective participants through more effective marketing strategies.

In addition to marketing through social media, product variety is also a factor that determines the attractiveness of a course. Product variety or product diversity is a commonly used strategy in the business world, where companies increase their product diversity with the aim of meeting the needs and desires of consumers and improving their product performance. Product variety in the education industry refers to the variety of course options, teaching methods, and time flexibility offered to meet the needs of participants with different preferences.

Previous research shows that product variety has a positive influence on purchasing decisions, where the more diverse the choices offered, the more likely consumers are to make purchases (Lestari & Novitaningtyas, 2021). In this context, product variations that are attractive and relevant to the needs of course participants can increase purchase intention, because potential participants have more options that suit their preferences.

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing and product variations on buying interest in Easy Course courses. Based on consumer behavior theory, buying interest does not arise suddenly, but is influenced by various factors, including exposure to marketing information and the attractiveness of the products offered.

Purchase intention reflects a person's interest and tendency to buy a product or service based on their perception of the benefits offered. In addition, the Hierarchy of Effects theory explains that consumer purchasing decisions go through several stages, starting from awareness, interest, evaluation, and finally the decision to buy. In the context of this research, social media marketing is expected to increase the awareness and interest of potential participants, while product variety can strengthen their decision to purchase the course by providing more options that suit their needs.

By understanding the relationship between social media marketing, product variety, and purchase intention, this study is expected to contribute to course managers in developing more effective marketing strategies. In addition, the results of this study can also serve as an academic reference for related research in the field of digital marketing and consumer behavior.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive and causal methods to examine the influence of social media marketing and product variations on buying interest in courses at Easy Course (Sugiyono, 2020). The research population is students who have attended courses at Easy Course, while the sample is determined using Malhotra's formula (2006), with a total of 130 respondents selected through Malhotra.

The research was conducted at Easy Course, Makassar City, during January to February 2025. The instrument used was a Likert scale-based questionnaire (1-5), consisting of respondent identity, independent variables (social media marketing and product variety), and the dependent variable (purchase intention). Variable indicators refer to As'ad and Alhadid (2014) for social media marketing, Kotler and Keller (2012) for product variety, and Suwanti et al. (2022) for purchase intention.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 30 with validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the effect of each variable on purchase intention with the model:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1.X_1 + \beta_2.X_2 + \epsilon$$

The t test is used to see the partial effect, while the F test measures the simultaneous effect. The coefficient of determination (R^2) test is used to determine how much the independent variable affects the dependent variable. With this method, the research is expected to provide relevant findings for digital marketing strategies and product innovation in increasing buying interest in courses at Easy Course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Data Description

This study involved 130 respondents who were students who had attended courses at Easy Course. Based on the characteristics of the respondents, the majority are 18-19 years old (65.39%), with a female dominance (81.5%). Most respondents (84.6%) only attended the course once, while the rest attended more than once.

Validity Test

The validity test is carried out on condition that the calculated r value is greater than the r table value and the significance value is less than 0.05. The validity test shows that all items in the questionnaire have an r-count value greater than the r-table (0.1723) with a significance of <0.05, so all indicators are considered valid. The test results are in the table below:

Table 1. Validity Test

Variable	Indicator	r-count	r-table	Sig.	Description
Social Media Marketing (X1)	X1. 1	0,720	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 2	0,890	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 3	0,776	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 4	0,728	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 5	0,899	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 6	0,858	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 7	0,827	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 8	0,831	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 9	0,829	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X1. 10	0,761	0,1723	<.001	Valid
Product Variety (X2)	X2. 1	0,715	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 2	0,619	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 3	0,807	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 4	0,730	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 5	0,810	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 6	0,582	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 7	0,735	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	X2. 8	0,791	0,1723	<.001	Valid
Purchase Intention (Y)	Y. 1	0,608	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 2	0,700	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 3	0,597	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 4	0,654	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 5	0,574	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 6	0,784	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 7	0,620	0,1723	<.001	Valid
	Y. 8	0,633	0,1723	<.001	Valid

Source: SPSS 22

Based on the data in the table above, which shows that all r values in the social media marketing variable (X_1), product variety variable (X_2) and purchase intention (Y) are greater than r table ($r_{count} > r_{table}$) and the significance value of both variables is smaller than 0.05, so it can be concluded that all statements on the variables are valid.

Reliability Test

Reliability test is used to measure the stability or consistency of respondents in answering statements in indicators. The reliability test results can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Standard	Description
Social Media Marketing (X_1)	0,940	> 0,60	Reliable
Product Variety (X_2)	0,870	> 0,60	Reliable
Purchase Intention (Y)	0,803	> 0,60	Reliable

Source: SPSS 22

Based on the results of the reliability test above, which shows that the Cronbach's Alpha value of the social media marketing variable (X_1) is $0.965 > 0.60$ and the Cronbach's Alpha value of the product variety variable (X_2) is $0.968 > 0.60$ and purchase intention (Y) is $0.958 > 0.60$ so it can be concluded that the variables in this study are reliable.

Multiple Linear Regression Test

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to test the effect of social media marketing (X_1) and product variety (X_2) on course purchase intention (Y). The results of the regression calculation are shown in the following table:

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Test Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.855	2.702		4.388	<.001
Social Media Marketing	.133	.044	.224	3.027	.003
Product Variety	.495	.074	.498	6.720	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

The results of the analysis show that both social media marketing and product variation have a positive and significant effect on buying interest in courses. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.624 indicates that 62.4% of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by the two independent variables, while the rest is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Hypothesis Test

The t-test results show that social media marketing has a t-count value of 4.218 with a significance value of 0.000, which means there is a significant influence on buying interest in the course. Similarly, product variety has a t-count value of 3.815 with a significance of 0.000, which also shows a significant influence on buying interest in the course. Thus, both research hypotheses are accepted, namely:

1. Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on buying interest in courses at Easy Course.
2. Product variety has a positive and significant effect on buying interest in courses at Easy Course.

Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with the Hierarchy of Effects theory which states that marketing through social media can increase consumer awareness and interest before finally making a purchase decision (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). In line with previous research, digital marketing through social media allows for more intense interactions with potential customers, which increases the likelihood of purchase (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2018).

In addition, the findings regarding the effect of product variety support Kotler and Keller's (2012) research, which states that the more variety offered, the higher the appeal of a product for consumers. In the context of Easy Course, course variations that include a variety of learning methods and time flexibility are factors that increase purchase intention.

The results of this study also have practical implications for Easy Course in optimizing digital marketing strategies and product diversification to increase competitiveness. By utilizing social media more effectively and providing more varied course options, course institutions can increase purchase intention and maintain customer loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the effect of Social Media Marketing and product variations on buying interest in courses at Easy Course Institution, Makassar City. Based on the results of multiple linear regression analysis, it was found that both independent variables have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention of the course. These results indicate that the more effective the marketing strategy through social media, the higher the attractiveness of Easy Course for potential participants. Similarly, the more diverse the course options offered, especially with time flexibility and varied learning methods, the greater the interest of potential participants to purchase the course.

In the context of the education service industry, these findings confirm that optimizing social media-based digital marketing can be a key strategy in improving the competitiveness of course institutions. A more interactive and personalized marketing approach through social media allows Easy Course to reach more potential participants and increase customer engagement. In addition, product variations tailored to consumer needs and preferences proved to be an important factor in influencing purchasing decisions. Therefore, course managers are advised to continue developing learning programs that are innovative and relevant to market demand.

More broadly, this research contributes to the development of digital marketing management science and consumer behavior in the non-formal education sector. The implications of the results of this study can be a reference for other course managers in designing more effective marketing strategies and adjusting product variations to market needs. For future research, exploration of other factors that influence purchase intention, such as teacher quality and course price, can provide deeper insights into the dynamics of purchasing decisions in the course and training industry.

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