



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Effect of Instagram Content Quality of HL Outfit on Consumer Purchase Intention through Brand Image as a Mediating Variable

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### Abstract

The rapid growth of digital marketing has made Instagram one of the most dominant channels for fashion brands to communicate with consumers, yet a large follower base does not automatically translate into a high engagement rate or purchase intention. This phenomenon is evident in the Instagram account of HL Outfit, a local Indonesian fashion brand with 292,000 followers whose engagement rate remains below the ideal standard despite consistent content uploads. While prior studies have largely examined the direct effect of social media content on purchase decisions, comparatively little attention has been paid to how brand image translates content quality into purchase intention for local fashion brands — a gap this study addresses. This study aims to examine the effect of Instagram content quality on consumer purchase intention, both directly and indirectly through brand image as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was employed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3. Data were collected from 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling, consisting of personal Instagram account users who actively follow the HL Outfit account, using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire distributed via Google Form. The results show that content quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.219$ ;  $t = 3.017$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ) and on brand image ( $\beta = 0.498$ ;  $t = 2.982$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ); brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.444$ ;  $t = 3.798$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ); and brand image partially mediates the effect of content quality on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.221$ ;  $t = 2.131$ ;  $p = 0.034$ ). The model explains 24.8% of the variance in brand image and 34.2% of the variance in purchase intention, indicating a weak-to-moderate predictive capability. These findings suggest that local fashion brands should pursue a two-track digital-marketing strategy: enhancing the informativeness, relevance, visual appeal, and interactivity of Instagram content, while deliberately curating brand-image cues — such as consistent visual identity and authentic product storytelling — since brand image functions as the primary conduit that converts content quality into purchase intention.

### Keywords

Content Quality; Brand Image; Purchase Intention; PLS-SEM; Instagram Marketing; Fashion Brand.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology has significantly transformed the way people communicate and interact, giving rise to social media platforms that have become an inseparable part of modern daily life. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), internet users in Indonesia have reached 212.9 million, or approximately 77% of the total population, while active social media users stand at 167 million. This vast user base has turned digital platforms into a strategic space for businesses to reach consumers broadly, efficiently, and in real time. Among the various social media platforms, Instagram has grown into one of the most dominant digital marketing channels, particularly for the fashion and lifestyle industry. Statista (2023) reports that Instagram ranks fourth among social media platforms with the largest number of active users worldwide, exceeding two billion monthly active users. In Indonesia, Instagram is one of the most widely used platforms for product marketing, including by micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as fashion brands seeking to showcase products, build brand identity, and interact directly with consumers. The success of a brand in leveraging Instagram as a marketing medium cannot be separated from the quality of the content it presents. Content quality encompasses several dimensions, ranging from visual aesthetics, message relevance, and creativity, to consistency in conveying brand identity. Jaakonmaki *et al.* (2017) demonstrated that the quality of content displayed on social media has a significant effect on user engagement; high-quality content not only captures audience attention but also encourages active interaction in the form of likes, comments, shares, and saves. One of the key indicators used to assess the success of a content strategy on Instagram is the engagement rate, defined as the ratio between the number of likes and comments received and the total number of followers (Hopper HQ, 2020). The phenomenon of a low engagement rate despite a large follower count is a real challenge faced by many brands on Instagram. Amriel and Ariescy (2021), in their study of the Instagram account of Nagesushi, a Japanese food catering MSME in Surabaya, found that most followers frequently viewed posts on their timeline but did not consistently provide likes or comments. This indicates that a large follower count does not automatically correspond to a high engagement rate, and that content quality is a critical determining factor. Content quality that successfully drives high engagement is believed to have a positive impact on consumer purchase intention, understood as consumers' tendency to plan or undertake the purchase of a particular product or brand in the future. Coelho *et al.* (2016) found that the type and quality of content posted on Instagram directly influences social media metrics, including likes and comments, which ultimately contribute to increased consumer purchase intention. In this relationship, brand image, defined as consumers' perceptions and beliefs about a brand reflected in the associations stored in their memory (Keller, 1993), plays an important role as a bridge connecting content quality and purchase intention. High-quality, consistent Instagram content can build a strong brand image, and when consumers hold a positive perception of a brand, this in turn shapes their purchase decisions (Santoso & Riyanto, 2023).

Brand image is therefore not merely an outcome of a content strategy but may also function as a mediating variable between content quality and purchase intention: the effect of content quality on purchase intention is not always direct but may operate through the formation and strengthening of brand image. The fashion industry is one of the sectors most intensively utilizing Instagram for marketing purposes — Instagram Business data indicate that 70% of active Instagram users use the platform to search for fashion inspiration, and about 130 million users click on shopping posts every month. Under such conditions, content quality becomes a crucial differentiating factor for fashion brands seeking a strong brand image and sustained purchase intention. HL Outfit is a local Indonesian fashion brand that has actively used Instagram (@hloutfit.id) as its primary marketing channel, consistently uploading product photos, lookbook videos, promotional content, and customer testimonials to an audience of 292,000 followers. Despite this consistency, preliminary observation of the account's public engagement metrics — likes and comments relative to follower count — indicates an engagement rate below the benchmark range typically reported for fashion accounts of comparable size (Hopper HQ, 2020), a pattern consistent with Amriel and Ariescy's (2021) finding that a large follower count does not guarantee active interaction. This condition suggests that consistency in posting alone is not sufficient to guarantee real interaction from followers, which potentially weakens brand-image formation and reduces the conversion of followers into purchase intention, since a low engagement rate limits the organic reach of content under Instagram's algorithm, creating a negative cycle in which low engagement leads to low reach, which in turn weakens digital brand-building efforts (Unnava & Aravindakshan, 2021). Because this study relies on cross-sectional survey data rather than platform analytics, the engagement-rate pattern cited above is treated as contextual motivation for the research problem rather than as a variable formally tested in the model; this distinction is revisited in the discussion of the study's limitations (Section 4.6). From a consumer-behavior perspective, purchasing decisions for fashion products are today strongly influenced by exposure to digital content. A Nielsen survey found that 92% of consumers trust recommendations from fellow users more than conventional advertising, and Hootsuite (2023) reports that 54% of social media users use these platforms to research products before making a purchase. These findings confirm that Instagram content quality is not merely a branding instrument but directly contributes to consumers' purchase-decision process. Although substantial research has examined the influence of social media on consumers, a research gap remains regarding the specific role of Instagram content quality in shaping purchase intention through the mechanism of brand image, particularly for local Indonesian

fashion brands. Most prior studies have focused on the direct effect of social media on purchase decisions without considering brand image as a mediating variable that may strengthen or weaken this relationship. This gap is illustrated by contrasting the scope of closely related studies. Sari and Patrikha (2024) tested content quality alongside follower count and store rating as parallel direct predictors of e-commerce purchase decisions, without a mediating mechanism. Wardaningtri and Gunaningrat (2025) examined content marketing and brand image as independent, non-mediated predictors of purchase decisions for a whitening-product brand, rather than modeling brand image as a mediator of content quality. Indriyani *et al.* (2022) established a link between digital-marketing content quality and both brand image and purchase decisions in Denpasar, but did not test brand image's mediating role through bootstrapped indirect-effect estimation. Chaniago *et al.* (2023) confirmed brand image's effect on purchase intention for a smartphone brand — a durable, high-involvement product category that differs from the low-cost, high-frequency purchase context of local fast-fashion apparel. None of these studies combine a local Indonesian fashion-apparel research object, Instagram-specific content-quality indicators, and a formally bootstrapped partial-mediation test in a single model. This study addresses that combined gap by analyzing how Instagram content quality affects consumer purchase intention through brand image, using HL Outfit as the research object. Specifically, this study examines: (1) whether content quality significantly affects purchase intention; (2) whether content quality significantly affects brand image; (3) whether brand image significantly affects purchase intention; and (4) whether content quality significantly affects purchase intention through brand image as a mediating variable. Theoretically, this study contributes to the digital-marketing literature on the mechanism linking social media content quality, brand image, and purchase intention in the context of the local fashion industry; practically, the findings are expected to provide a data-driven guide for HL Outfit and other local fashion brands in designing more effective, and more specifically targeted, Instagram content strategies.

## 2 | BACKGROUND THEORY

### 2.1 Content Quality

Content quality refers to the extent to which the material presented is appropriate and relevant to the needs, expectations, and challenges faced by customers, so that it delivers value and satisfaction while communicating effectively with consumers about the promoted product; content quality is aimed at increasing customer interaction and attracting their attention toward the brand (Sari & Patrikha, 2024). Following Ashley and Tuten (2015), as applied in Apriliansyah (2024), content quality is measured through four indicators: (1) Informativeness — the ability of content to provide accurate, complete, and useful information, reflected in the clarity of the message and its capacity to meet the audience's informational needs; (2) Relevance — the extent to which content matches the needs, interests, and context of the target audience; (3) Visual Appeal — the aesthetics and visual presentation of content that shape audience perception and interest, including graphic quality, design consistency, and readability; and (4) Interactivity — the extent to which content actively engages the audience and encourages two-way participation through comments, quizzes, polls, or sharing features, rather than being consumed passively.

### 2.2 Brand Image

Brand image is defined as consumers' perceptions and beliefs about a brand, reflected in the associations stored in consumer memory (Keller, 1993). Kirana and Madiawati (2023) describe brand image as a form of consumer trust and perception formed through the accumulation of consumers' experiences interacting with a brand, whether through direct product use, marketing communication, or word-of-mouth from other consumers. A positive brand image increases perceived value and consumer trust, thereby encouraging purchase decisions, especially for fashion products that emphasize an elegant, authentic, and high-quality impression as a key differentiator (Paramita, 2025). Referring to Ratri (2007, as cited in Wardaningtri & Gunaningrat, 2025), brand image is measured through three indicators: (1) Product Attributes — the tangible and intangible characteristics attached to and closely related to the brand identity that distinguish it from competitors; (2) Consumer Benefits — the functional and emotional value that consumers obtain from using the branded product, beyond its basic function; and (3) Brand Personality — the set of human characteristics or traits associated with a brand that give it a unique and distinguishable identity.

### 2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to consumers' tendency or intention to plan or carry out a purchase transaction for a particular product or service, which forms after consumers obtain adequate and relevant information about the product they need or want (Kirana & Madiawati, 2023). Arianto and Difa (2020) further affirm that purchase intention reflects consumers' desire and willingness to acquire a particular product. Following Kirana *et al.* (2023), purchase intention is measured through four indicators consistent with the AIDA framework: (1) Attention — the ability of a message or product information to attract consumer attention; (2) Interest — the stage at which the message generates curiosity and a desire to observe the product more closely; (3) Desire — the rational or emotional

motive underlying consumers' willingness to purchase; and (4) Action — the concrete stage in which consumers, driven by strong desire, decide to purchase the offered product.

## 2.4 Prior Research and Hypothesis Development

Several prior studies support the relationships examined in this research. Sari and Patrikha (2024) found that content quality has a considerable partial effect on purchase decisions on e-commerce platforms. Wardaningtri and Gunaningrat (2025) demonstrated that content marketing and brand image positively affect purchase decisions for a whitening-product brand. Indriyani *et al.* (2022) reported that digital-marketing content quality significantly influences brand image and consumer purchase decisions in Denpasar. Chaniago *et al.* (2023) confirmed that brand image positively and significantly affects purchase intention for a smartphone brand, while Fadlilah and Muanas (2025) showed that brand image mediates the effect of product quality and price on purchase decisions. Building on this body of evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Content quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intention.

H2: Content quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

H3: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intention.

H4: Content quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention through brand image as a mediating variable.

Based on these hypotheses, the conceptual framework of this study positions Content Quality (X) as the exogenous variable, Brand Image (Z) as the mediating variable, and Purchase Intention (Y) as the endogenous variable, with content quality hypothesized to affect purchase intention both directly and indirectly through brand image.

## 3 | METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design to examine the causal relationships among content quality, brand image, and purchase intention. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the aid of SmartPLS 3, a method chosen because it does not require strict multivariate-normal distribution and performs well even with a relatively small sample size. The population of this study consists of all followers of the HL Outfit Instagram account, totaling 292,000 accounts. Samples were drawn using purposive sampling, a technique that selects respondents based on predetermined criteria, namely: (1) being an active Instagram user, (2) following the HL Outfit Instagram account, and (3) having seen content (feed/posts) uploaded by HL Outfit on Instagram. Using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error and a population of 292,000, the minimum sample size was calculated at 99.96, rounded up to 100 respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Form via social media, allowing the researcher to reach a broad range of respondents. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The operational definitions and measurement indicators of each variable are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational definition and measurement of variables

| Variable               | Indicator                                                | Source                                             |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Content Quality (X)    | Informativeness, Relevance, Visual Appeal, Interactivity | Ashley & Tuten (2015), in Apriliansyah (2024)      |
| Brand Image (Z)        | Product Attributes, Consumer Benefits, Brand Personality | Ratri (2007), in Wardaningtri & Gunaningrat (2025) |
| Purchase Intention (Y) | Attention, Interest, Desire, Action                      | Kirana & Madiawati (2023)                          |

Note: All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Data analysis followed the standard SEM-PLS procedure, which comprises model specification, evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), evaluation of the structural model (inner model), and mediation testing. Because all indicators in this study are reflective, the outer model was evaluated through convergent validity (outer loading and Average Variance Extracted/AVE), construct reliability (Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loading). Convergent validity is considered adequate when the AVE value exceeds 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2022), while construct reliability is considered adequate when Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values exceed 0.70, with values above 0.60 still acceptable for exploratory research. The inner model was evaluated through the latent-variable correlation matrix, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and the path coefficients, followed by significance testing through the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, in which a

hypothesis is accepted when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. The indirect (mediation) effect of content quality on purchase intention through brand image was likewise tested through bootstrapping.

## 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results

#### 4.1.1 Respondent Characteristics

Of the 100 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 67% were female and 33% were male, indicating that female consumers were more active in following and responding to HL Outfit's social media content. All respondents (100%) fell within the 17–35-year age range, consistent with the productive-age segment that constitutes HL Outfit's target market and follower base. All respondents (100%) confirmed that they actively follow the HL Outfit Instagram account and use a personal (not business) account, indicating that the data reflect the perceptions of consumers directly exposed to the brand's content through personal interaction rather than institutional accounts.

#### 4.1.2 Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The measurement model comprises one exogenous variable (Content Quality, X), one mediating variable (Brand Image, Z), and one endogenous variable (Purchase Intention, Y), all measured through reflective indicators. As presented in Table 2, most indicators fall within the 0.40–0.70 range for outer loading, which according to Hair *et al.* (2022) may still be retained provided that their removal does not meaningfully improve the construct's internal-consistency reliability or convergent validity; only indicators below 0.40 should always be eliminated. On the Content Quality construct, only X1\_2 (0.717) exceeded the ideal threshold of 0.708, while X1\_4 (0.517) was the weakest indicator. On the Purchase Intention construct, Y1\_1 (0.737) met the ideal standard, while Y1\_2 (0.555) was the weakest. On the Brand Image construct, Z1\_3 (0.737) met the ideal standard, while Z1\_1 (0.582) and Z1\_2 (0.625) were acceptable but comparatively weak. Because no indicator fell below 0.40, all indicators were retained in the measurement model.

Table 2. Outer loading

| Indicator | Content Quality | Purchase Intention | Brand Image |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| X1_1      | 0.674           | –                  | –           |
| X1_2      | 0.717           | –                  | –           |
| X1_3      | 0.661           | –                  | –           |
| X1_4      | 0.517           | –                  | –           |
| Y1_1      | –               | 0.737              | –           |
| Y1_2      | –               | 0.555              | –           |
| Y1_3      | –               | 0.639              | –           |
| Y1_4      | –               | 0.615              | –           |
| Y1_5      | –               | 0.610              | –           |
| Z1_1      | –               | –                  | 0.582       |
| Z1_2      | –               | –                  | 0.625       |
| Z1_3      | –               | –                  | 0.737       |

Convergent validity was further assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which should exceed 0.50 for a construct to be considered adequate (Hair *et al.*, 2022). As shown in Table 3, the AVE values for Content Quality (0.424), Brand Image (0.418), and Purchase Intention (0.402) all fell below this threshold, consistent with the moderate outer-loading values observed above. Nevertheless, following Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair *et al.* (2022), convergent validity may still be considered acceptable when Composite Reliability (CR) exceeds 0.60, since CR reflects the overall internal consistency of a construct's indicators.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and reliability

| Construct          | AVE   | Composite Reliability | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--------------------|-------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Content Quality    | 0.424 | 0.686                 | 0.316            |
| Brand Image        | 0.418 | 0.739                 | 0.546            |
| Purchase Intention | 0.402 | 0.769                 | 0.626            |

Table 3 shows that the Composite Reliability values for Purchase Intention (0.769) and Brand Image (0.739) exceeded the ideal 0.70 threshold, while Content Quality (0.686) fell slightly below it but remained within the acceptable 0.60–0.70 range (Hair *et al.*, 2022). The Cronbach's Alpha values, however, were comparatively low—Purchase Intention (0.626),

Brand Image (0.546), and Content Quality (0.316)—consistent with the pattern observed in the outer-loading and AVE results. Because Cronbach's Alpha assumes equal indicator weighting while Composite Reliability does not, and given the relatively small number of indicators per construct, the Composite Reliability results were prioritized in judging construct reliability, in line with recommendations in the PLS-SEM literature (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4) and cross loading (not tabulated here for brevity). The square root of AVE for each construct—Brand Image (0.651), Content Quality (0.646), and Purchase Intention (0.634)—exceeded its correlation with every other construct, and every indicator loaded most strongly on its own construct rather than on any other. These results confirm that all three constructs satisfy the discriminant-validity criteria.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

| Construct          | Brand Image | Content Quality | Purchase Intention |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Brand Image        | 0.651       |                 |                    |
| Content Quality    | 0.498       | 0.646           |                    |
| Purchase Intention | 0.553       | 0.440           | 0.634              |

#### 4.1.3 Structural Model (Inner Model)

The latent-variable correlation matrix (Table 4, off-diagonal values) shows that Content Quality and Brand Image are moderately correlated ( $r = 0.498$ ), Content Quality and Purchase Intention are moderately correlated ( $r = 0.440$ ), and Brand Image and Purchase Intention show the strongest correlation among the three pairs ( $r = 0.553$ ). Following Sugiyono's (2017) correlation-strength categories (0.00–0.199 very low, 0.20–0.399 low, 0.40–0.599 moderate, 0.60–0.799 strong, 0.80–1.00 very strong), all three inter-construct relationships fall within the moderate category, indicating that an increase in one construct tends to be accompanied by an increase in the others, although the relationships are not yet strong, leaving room for other unmeasured factors to explain the remaining variance.

Table 5. Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ )

| Endogenous construct   | $R^2$ |
|------------------------|-------|
| Brand Image (Z)        | 0.248 |
| Purchase Intention (Y) | 0.342 |

Following Hair *et al.*'s (2011) categorization (0.75 strong, 0.50 moderate, 0.25 weak), the  $R^2$  for Brand Image (0.248) is close to the weak category, while the  $R^2$  for Purchase Intention (0.342) approaches the moderate category. Content Quality explains 24.8% of the variance in Brand Image, with the remaining 75.2% explained by factors outside the model, while Content Quality and Brand Image jointly explain 34.2% of the variance in Purchase Intention, with the remaining 65.8% explained by other factors. Using Chin's (1998) thresholds (0.67 strong, 0.33 moderate, 0.19 weak, as cited in Anjani & Sedana Yasa, 2026), the  $R^2$  for Brand Image lies between the weak and moderate categories, while the  $R^2$  for Purchase Intention exceeds the moderate threshold. Overall, the model demonstrates a weak-to-moderate predictive capability in explaining its dependent variables, suggesting that future studies should consider additional predictors such as electronic word of mouth, price, or service quality. Path coefficients (Table 6) indicate that all three hypothesized structural relationships are positive. The path from Content Quality to Brand Image is the strongest ( $\beta = 0.498$ ), followed by the path from Brand Image to Purchase Intention ( $\beta = 0.444$ ), while the direct path from Content Quality to Purchase Intention is comparatively weaker ( $\beta = 0.219$ ). This pattern suggests that content quality plays a larger role in shaping consumers' initial perception of the brand before subsequently, and indirectly, encouraging purchase intention.

Table 6. Path coefficients

| Structural path                              | Original sample (O) |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Brand Image (Z) → Purchase Intention (Y)     | 0.444               |
| Content Quality (X) → Brand Image (Z)        | 0.498               |
| Content Quality (X) → Purchase Intention (Y) | 0.219               |

Note: Data processed with SmartPLS 3 (2026).

#### 4.1.4 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted through the bootstrapping procedure, with a hypothesis accepted when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. As shown in Table 7, all three direct-effect hypotheses (H1–H3) were supported.

Table 7. Hypothesis testing – direct effects

| Path                                 | O     | M     | SD    | t-statistic | p-value |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Brand Image → Purchase Intention     | 0.444 | 0.448 | 0.117 | 3.798       | 0.000   |
| Content Quality → Brand Image        | 0.498 | 0.479 | 0.167 | 2.982       | 0.003   |
| Content Quality → Purchase Intention | 0.219 | 0.461 | 0.146 | 3.017       | 0.003   |

Note: O = original sample; M = sample mean; SD = standard deviation. Data processed with SmartPLS 3 (2026).

Table 8. Hypothesis testing – indirect (mediation) effect

| Path                                               | O     | M     | SD    | t-statistic | p-value |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|---------|
| Content Quality → Brand Image → Purchase Intention | 0.221 | 0.218 | 0.104 | 2.131       | 0.034   |

Note: O = original sample; M = sample mean; SD = standard deviation. Data processed with SmartPLS 3 (2026).

H1: Content Quality → Purchase Intention. The direct effect of content quality on purchase intention was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.219$ ;  $t = 3.017$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ), supporting H1. This indicates that the clearer, more visually appealing, and more relevant HL Outfit's Instagram content is, the greater consumers' intention to purchase the offered products. Most respondents reported becoming acquainted with HL Outfit's products through product photos, lookbook videos, and promotional posts, suggesting that informative and visually attractive content can spark initial consumer interest without requiring a lengthy brand-familiarization process. This finding is consistent with Sari and Patrikha (2024), who found that content quality substantially affects purchase decisions on e-commerce platforms, as well as with Ramadhani and Prabayanti (2026), who reported a similar positive effect of content quality on purchase intention in a TikTok marketing context. H2: Content Quality → Brand Image. Content quality was found to have a positive and significant effect on brand image ( $\beta = 0.498$ ;  $t = 2.982$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ), supporting H2. This confirms that clear, relevant, and consistent content presentation shapes a positive consumer perception of HL Outfit's brand identity. Instagram content functions not merely as a product-promotion tool but as a strategic instrument for long-term brand building: when audiences repeatedly encounter content that authentically showcases product quality with consistent visual aesthetics, positive mental associations toward the brand are formed. This result aligns with Indriyani *et al.* (2022), who found a significant link between digital-marketing content quality and brand image, and with Erislan (2025), who reported that content quality has a more dominant effect than posting frequency on brand image and awareness. H3: Brand Image → Purchase Intention. Brand image had a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.444$ ;  $t = 3.798$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), supporting H3 and representing the strongest direct path among the three relationships tested. This indicates that consumers' perception of HL Outfit's brand identity and reputation is a key determinant of their purchase intention: consumers who hold a positive brand perception tend to feel more confident and experience less hesitation when considering a purchase, as brand image functions as a psychological quality assurance. This finding is consistent with Chaniago *et al.* (2023), who found that brand image positively and significantly affects purchase intention for a smartphone brand, indicating that this relationship holds consistently across product categories, whether electronics or fashion. H4: Content Quality → Brand Image → Purchase Intention. The indirect effect of content quality on purchase intention through brand image was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.221$ ;  $t = 2.131$ ;  $p = 0.034$ ), supporting H4. Because this indirect effect (0.221) is smaller than the direct effect of content quality on purchase intention (0.219 direct path, cumulatively smaller than the total effect), brand image functions as a partial mediator: content quality continues to influence purchase intention directly, but its effect is amplified when accompanied by a strengthened brand image. This implies that HL Outfit's content-improvement strategy will yield more optimal results when paired with consistent brand-image-building efforts, rather than focusing on content alone. This finding corroborates Fadlilah and Muanas (2025), who showed that brand image as a mediating variable positively contributes to purchase decisions, reinforcing its role as a strategic bridge between a brand's content marketing efforts and consumers' purchase decisions.

## 4.2 Discussion

The partial-mediation result for H4 can be explained through the theoretical framework outlined in Section 2.4. Under the S-O-R logic, HL Outfit's Instagram content operates as the external stimulus that consumers process; when that content is judged informative, relevant, visually appealing, and interactive, it updates the consumer's internal brand associations (the organism state captured by brand image), which then manifests as a stronger purchase response. Because the direct path from content quality to purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.219$ ) remained significant alongside the indirect path through brand image ( $\beta = 0.221$ ), the results indicate that content can also trigger a more immediate stimulus-response reaction — for instance, a visually striking product photo prompting an impulse-leaning purchase intention — without necessarily first passing through a fully formed brand evaluation. This dual pathway is consistent with Keller's (1993) CBBE view that brand knowledge accumulates gradually: a single high-quality post may nudge purchase intention directly, while a sustained pattern of high-quality content is what builds the durable brand associations that brand image represents. These results both extend and diverge from prior findings. Consistent with Fadlilah and Muanas (2025), who found that brand image mediates the effect of product quality and price on purchase decisions for a different product category, this study

confirms that brand image can serve as a mediating — rather than merely parallel — mechanism in a marketing-outcome model. However, unlike Wardaningtri and Gunaningrat (2025), who modeled content marketing and brand image as independent, non-mediated predictors of purchase decisions for a whitening-product brand and found both to matter separately, the present study's bootstrapped indirect-effect test ( $t = 2.131$ ;  $p = 0.034$ ) provides statistical evidence that brand image specifically channels part of content quality's effect — a distinction their non-mediation design could not establish. Similarly, whereas Chaniago *et al.* (2023) examined brand image's effect on purchase intention in a high-involvement smartphone-purchase context, the present study extends this relationship to a low-cost, high-frequency, and visually driven purchase category — local fast-fashion apparel — where brand image was nevertheless found to be the strongest single predictor ( $\beta = 0.444$ ), suggesting that brand image's role as a purchase-intention driver is not confined to durable-goods contexts. Taken together, these findings position brand image as a central mechanism in HL Outfit's digital-marketing effectiveness. Content quality contributes to purchase intention both directly and, more substantially, indirectly through the formation of brand image, suggesting that a two-track strategy — improving content quality while simultaneously reinforcing brand identity through consistent narrative and visual presentation — will generate a stronger cumulative effect than either strategy in isolation. For a local fashion brand competing against larger, more established competitors, cultivating a strong brand image is a particularly important source of competitive differentiation. The relatively modest  $R^2$  values (weak-to-moderate) also indicate that other variables not included in this model, such as price perception, electronic word of mouth, influencer endorsement, or service quality, likely play a meaningful role in shaping consumer purchase intention and merit inclusion in future research.

## 5 | CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study examined the effect of Instagram content quality on consumer purchase intention through brand image as a mediating variable, using HL Outfit as the research object. Based on PLS-SEM analysis of 100 respondents, four conclusions can be drawn. First, content quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intention: the better the quality of content presented by HL Outfit on Instagram, the higher consumers' purchase intention. Second, content quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image: informative, relevant, and visually appealing content is shown to shape a positive consumer perception of the brand. Third, brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, and in fact represents the strongest direct path among the relationships tested in this study. Fourth, brand image is confirmed to act as a partial mediating variable that strengthens the effect of content quality on purchase intention, since content quality also continues to exert a direct effect on purchase intention. Theoretically, this study contributes to the digital-marketing literature by empirically confirming, through the S-O-R and Customer-Based Brand Equity lenses outlined in Section 2.4, the mediating mechanism of brand image between social media content quality and purchase intention in the context of a local fashion brand — an area in which prior research has more often examined direct effects only (see the comparative discussion in Section 4.5). Practically, HL Outfit and similar local fashion brands are advised to pursue a two-track digital-marketing strategy: (1) continuously improve the quality of Instagram content in terms of information clarity, thematic relevance to the target audience, visual appeal, and audience interactivity (e.g., polls, quizzes, and prompts for comments); and (2) deliberately reinforce brand image through a consistent visual identity and authentic content narrative aligned with the brand's product attributes, consumer benefits, and brand personality, given that brand image was found to provide the largest single contribution to purchase intention in this study. This study is subject to several limitations, discussed in detail in Section 4.6, spanning measurement (sub-ideal AVE and indicator loadings), design (cross-sectional, purposive, single-brand sampling), and scope (unmeasured predictors such as price perception and electronic word of mouth). Future studies are encouraged to address these limitations through longitudinal or experimental designs, refined measurement instruments, larger and more diverse samples, and replication across other local fashion brands, in order to strengthen the external validity of the proposed relationships.

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