

Why Brand Loyalty Matters More Than Trust: Unpacking the Relational Mechanisms of Social Media Marketing in Full-Service Airlines

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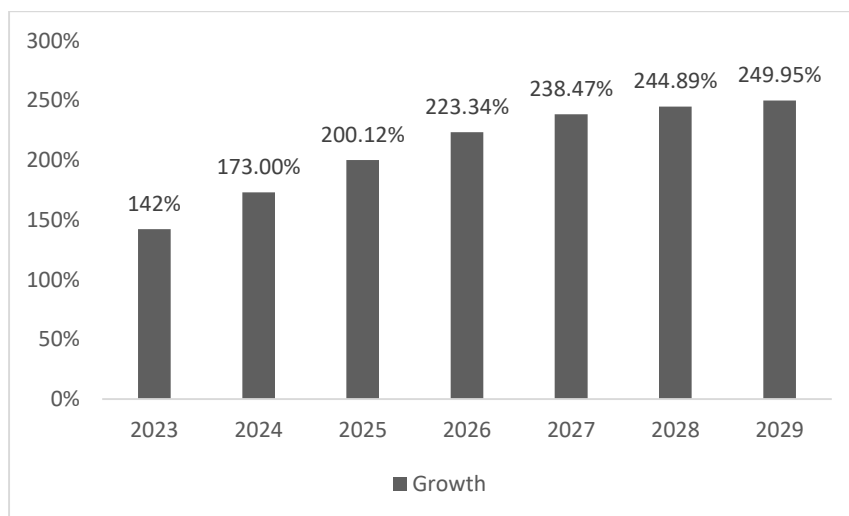
ABSTRACT

Social media marketing is widely assumed to strengthen brand trust and subsequently enhance consumers' purchasing intention. However, limited attention has been paid to whether brand trust consistently functions as the primary relational mechanism in high-risk service contexts. Drawing on social media marketing and relationship marketing literature, this study examines the distinct roles of brand trust and brand loyalty in shaping purchasing intention within the full-service airline industry. Using survey data from 193 airline consumers and PLS-SEM. The findings reveal that social media marketing significantly enhances brand trust and brand loyalty. Contrary to dominant assumptions, brand trust does not directly influence purchasing intention. Instead, brand loyalty emerges as the primary mechanism through which social media marketing translates into purchasing intention. This study contributes to service marketing theory by refining the understanding of relational pathways within high-involvement and high-risk service relationships, demonstrating that brand loyalty may supersede brand trust as the decisive driver of purchasing intention. The findings offer important implications for service firms seeking to leverage social media marketing to build enduring customer relationships and stimulate demand

Keywords: Social media marketing; brand trust; brand loyalty; purchasing intention; full-service airline; PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

Table 1. Internet user in Indonesia from 2023 to 2029



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/309024/indonesia-mobile-phone-internet-user-growth/2024>.

The rapid growth of mobile internet usage in Indonesia reflects the increasing integration of digital technologies into daily consumer activities. The number of smartphone users is projected to increase by 44.48 percent between 2023 and 2029, reaching approximately 249.95 million users (Nurhayati & Wolff, 2024). This development creates substantial opportunities for firms to intensify digital promotional efforts, particularly through social media platforms, which continue to experience parallel growth in user engagement (Li, 2021). As a result, social media marketing (SMM) has become an essential instrument for shaping consumer perceptions and influencing purchase related outcomes. SMM is the strategic use of social networking platforms to connect with audiences, enhance brand awareness, stimulate engagement, and support sales related objectives (Wibowo et al., 2021). Its effectiveness lies in the creation and dissemination of relevant content in various formats, including text, images, and videos, that align with audience preferences and platform characteristics (P. Singh, 2024). Contemporary SMM extends beyond routine posting activities to include interactive communication, targeted paid advertising, and performance evaluation through analytics to refine marketing strategies (Hu et al., 2024).



Beyond exposure to promotions, brand-related concepts like brand loyalty (BL) and trust are crucial in influencing consumers' intentions to make purchases. Based on opinions about a brand's dependability, skill, and integrity, consumers' confidence and desire to rely on it are reflected in brand trust (BT) (Handayani et al., 2022). Rather than representing a superficial preference, BT is formed through consistent positive experiences and the fulfillment of brand promises over time (Salhab et al., 2023). High levels of BT are commonly associated with repeat purchase behavior, positive word of mouth, and greater tolerance toward service failures, particularly in competitive and risk laden markets (Guerra-tamez et al., 2024; Puspaningrum, 2020).

BL represents a deeper and more sustained commitment of consumers toward a brand, characterized by both behavioral repetition and psychological attachment (Haseeb et al., 2024). Loyal consumers tend to prioritize a preferred brand despite price fluctuations or the availability of alternatives, reflecting confidence in the brand's values, quality, and image (Obiegbu & Larsen, 2025). This loyalty is often expressed through continued usage, recommendation behavior, and resistance to brand switching (Zha et al., 2025). From a managerial perspective, BL contributes to revenue stability, reduced acquisition costs, and sustained competitive advantage, particularly in service industries where long term relationships are central to value creation.

In the aviation service industry, purchasing intention is also shaped by functional and operational considerations, including price, promotion, fleet, and service performance. Price represents the monetary value assigned to airline services and is inherently complex due to the intangible and simultaneous nature of service production and consumption (Indrawati & Halima, 2024; Erpurini et al., 2023). Promotional activities serve to communicate service value and influence consumer decision making through advertising, sales promotions, public relations, and digital communication channels (Mahbub et al., 2023; Qian et al., 2023). Effective promotion requires message consistency and alignment with both market characteristics and strategic objectives (Kamyabi & Özgüt, 2025).

Fleet quality constitutes a core operational asset in the airline industry, encompassing the total collection of aircraft used to support route networks and service capacity (Pereira et al., 2021). Fleet composition is strategically managed to balance efficiency, safety, and service expectations across domestic and international routes (Safaei & Sadjadi, 2021). In addition, service performance remains a fundamental determinant of consumer evaluations. Service is defined as a set of intangible activities delivered through interactions between providers and customers, with quality assessed based on the extent to which performance meets or exceeds expectations (Mariani & Borghi, 2024; Sharma et al., 2024; Sun & Pan, 2023). Effective service delivery requires not only operational efficiency but also competent, responsive, and reliable personnel.

This study contributes to the service marketing literature in several ways. First, while prior research frequently positions BT as a key antecedent of purchasing intention, this study demonstrates that such an assumption may not hold in high involvement and high risk service contexts such as full service airlines. Second, the findings identify BL as the primary relational mechanism through SMM influences purchasing intention, offering a more nuanced understanding of relational hierarchies in service marketing. By distinguishing the differential roles of BT and BL, this study refines existing relationship marketing frameworks within the context of full service airline services.

Conceptual Background

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is the strategic use of social networking platforms to achieve organizational objectives by creating and communicating value to stakeholders ((Li, 2021; Wibowo et al., 2021). Prior studies emphasize its role in facilitating interactive communication that strengthens brand awareness, brand recognition, and consumer engagement, which may ultimately influence consumer responses toward a brand or service (Hu et al., 2024). In service industries, SMM functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a relational mechanism that shapes consumer perceptions and brand related outcomes.

Brand Trust

BT reflects consumers' willingness to depend on a brand's ability to fulfill its promises, particularly under conditions of uncertainty or perceived risk (Puspaningrum, 2020; Guerra-tamez et al., 2024). It is grounded in consumers' expectations that a brand will deliver consistent and positive outcomes, even in situations involving potential loss or vulnerability Riva (2024). In high risk service contexts, BT is often viewed as a prerequisite for developing deeper relational outcomes such as loyalty.

Brand Loyalty

BL is commonly defined as a strong commitment to repurchase or continue using a preferred brand over time despite competitive pressures (Haseeb et al., 2024). It represents both behavioral consistency and attitudinal attachment, reflecting consumers' long term preference and emotional connection to a brand (Na et al., 2023). Prior research positions brand loyalty as a strategic asset that translates favorable brand perceptions into repeat purchase behavior (Obiegbu & Larsen, 2025).

Price

Price represents the monetary value exchanged by consumers to obtain a product or service and serves as a key evaluative cue in purchase decisions (Roj et al., 2024). From a consumer perspective, price often functions as an indicator of perceived value relative to expected benefits or quality (Kalyva et al., 2024). In service settings, price sensitivity may vary depending on consumers' involvement level and perceived risk.

Fleet

In the airline industry, fleet refers to the collection of aircraft operated by an airline to deliver transportation services (Hrušovský et al., 2025). Prior research highlights fleet characteristics such as capacity, reliability, and operational efficiency as factors that may influence service performance and consumer evaluations (Othman et al., 2024). Fleet quality can also signal an airline's competitiveness and operational credibility.

Service

Service is generally defined as an intangible activity or benefit arising from interactions between providers and consumers (Mariani & Borghi, 2024). Its value lies not only in functional delivery but also in the quality of the experience perceived during service encounters (Sharma et al., 2024). In airline services, service quality is often associated with satisfaction and relational outcomes, including trust and loyalty (Sun & Pan, 2023).

Purchasing Intention

Purchasing intention (PI) refers to an individual's motivation or likelihood to engage in a future purchase and is widely recognized as a predictor of actual buying behavior (Gulzar et al., 2024; Jia et al., 2023). It reflects consumers' evaluative judgments after considering available alternatives, perceived benefits, and associated risks (Barbaritano & Savelli, 2021). In service industries, purchasing intention is shaped by both cognitive assessments and relational factors developed over time.

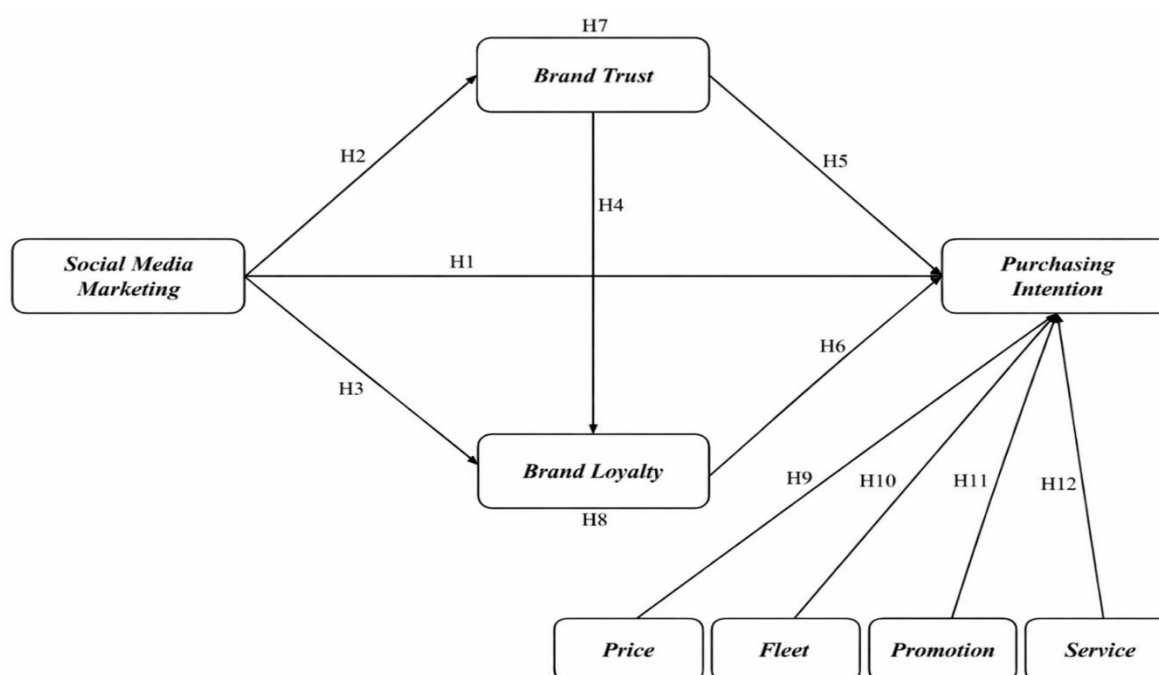


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Source: (Azhar et al., 2023)

Hypothesis Development

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Intention

SMM represents the strategic use of social media platforms to communicate brand value, facilitate interaction, and influence consumer decision making (Li, 2021; Wibowo et al., 2021). Prior studies suggest that exposure to relevant and engaging social media content enhances brand recall and reduces perceived risk, thereby increasing consumers' willingness to purchase (Mu, 2023; Alwis, 2023). Interactive features such as reviews, testimonials, and influencer endorsements further strengthen persuasive impact by providing social proof (Subawa et al., 2020). Accordingly, SMM is expected to positively influence PI. Based on previous research findings, this study hypothesizes as follows.

H1: SMM Has A Significant Positive Influence On PI.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust

Customers' desire to depend on a company based on impressions of its skill, integrity, and kindness is reflected in BT (Dam, 2020). Social media marketing facilitates trust development through transparent communication, responsiveness, and continuous engagement (Subawa et al., 2020; Rukmana et al., 2023). Online interactions and user-generated content serve as reliable signals that strengthen brand credibility and lessen uncertainty (Evelina et al., 2023). Therefore, effective SMM is expected to strengthen BT. Based on previous research findings, this study proposes the following hypothesis.



H2: SMM Has a Significant Positive Influence on BT.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty

Customers' steadfast devotion to a brand, demonstrated by recurring use and opposition to rivals, is known as BL (Quayson & Gnankob, 2025). Prior research indicates that personalized content, two way interaction, and community building through social media foster emotional attachment and long term relational bonds (Manyanga et al., 2024). Sustained engagement on SMM enables brands to cultivate loyal consumer relationships beyond transactional exchanges. Thus, social media marketing is expected to positively influence brand loyalty. This study puts up the following theory in light of the results of earlier investigations.

H3: SMM Has a Significant Positive Influence on BL.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Brand Loyalty

BT has been widely recognized as a foundational element in the development of BL (Adha, 2021). When consumers trust a brand, perceived risk is reduced and confidence in future performance increases, fostering affective commitment and preference continuity (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Zeren, 2021). This commitment strengthens consumers' willingness to maintain long term relationships with the brand. Accordingly, BT is expected to positively influence BL. Based on these findings, this study advances the following hypothesis.

H4: BT Has a Significant Positive Influence on BL.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Purchasing Intention

BT functions as a risk reduction mechanism that enhances consumers' confidence in purchase outcomes (Surucu et al., 2020). When consumers believe that a brand is reliable and acts in their best interests, they are more willing to engage in purchase decisions and consider future offerings (Nuraida et al., 2022). Trust also shapes favorable attitudes that support consumers' intention to purchase. Consequently, it is anticipated that BT will have a favorable impact on PI. Thus, the following hypothesis is put out in this study.

H5: BT Has a Significant Positive Influence on PI.

The Influence of Brand Loyalty on Purchasing Intention

BL reflects both behavioral consistency and psychological commitment, which strongly predict future purchasing behavior (Soleimani & Dana, 2025). Loyal consumers demonstrate lower sensitivity to competitive alternatives and reduced decision effort, leading to stronger PI (Kee et al., 2024). As loyalty increases, consumers are more inclined to repeatedly choose the same brand whenever purchase needs arise. Thus, BL is expected to positively influence PI. Based on these findings, this study advances the following hypothesis.

H6: BL Has a Significant Positive Influence on PI.

The Influence of Brand Trust in Mediating the Relationship Between Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Intention

Previous studies indicate that SMM enhances PI indirectly through trust development (Nur et al., 2022). Transparent communication, responsiveness, and consistent interaction on social media platforms foster perceptions of credibility and reliability, which in turn reduce perceived risk and strengthen purchase motivation (September et al., 2023). As a result, BT is expected to mediate the relationship between SMM and PI. The following hypothesis is put forth in this study based on earlier empirical data.

H7: BT Mediates the Influence of SMM on PI

The Influence of Brand Loyalty in Mediating the Relationship Between Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Intention

SMM also contributes to purchasing intention by fostering long term relational outcomes such as BL (Azhar et al., 2023). Continuous engagement, value communication, and community interaction enhance emotional attachment and behavioral commitment, which translate marketing exposure into stable purchase intention (Hanaysha, 2021). Compared to direct promotional effects, loyalty represents a more durable pathway linking SMM to PI. The following hypothesis is put forth in this study based on earlier empirical data.

H8: BL Mediates the Influence of SMM on PI.

The Influence of Control Variables on Purchasing Intention

Price, fleet, promotion, and service are included as control variables to isolate the effects of the main constructs on purchasing intention. Price is widely acknowledged as a fundamental determinant of consumer decision making and may independently influence purchase intention (Anas et al., 2023). Fleet size reflects operational capacity and reliability, which can shape consumers' perceptions of service continuity (Jannah & Sukmana, 2022). Promotional activities are known to directly stimulate short term purchase intention (Loisa, 2021), while service quality influences perceived value and satisfaction (Khatoon et al., 2020). Controlling these variables ensures that the estimated effects of SMM, trust, and loyalty are not confounded by operational or transactional factors. Based on these findings, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

H9: Price Influences PI.

H10: Fleet Influences PI.

H11: Promotion Influences PI.

H12: Service Influences PI.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach aimed at analyzing the effects of SMM, BT, and BL on PI, with price, fleet, promotion, and service included as control variables. An explanatory research design is employed, as the study seeks to explain the causal relationships among the variables.

Population and Sample

The study's population is made up of social media users who have previously used Garuda Indonesia airline services. Purposive sampling was applied using the following criteria:

1. Respondents must have purchased Garuda Indonesia services at least twice.
2. Respondents must use or be familiar with Garuda Indonesia's social media platforms. A total of 193 valid responses were obtained, satisfying the minimum sample size requirements for PLS-SEM analysis involving multiple constructs.

Variable Operationalization and Instruments

The research instrument consists of eight constructs: SMM, BT, BL, price, fleet, promotion, service, and PI. Each item was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree. The data were gathered through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms.

Validity and Reliability Analysis

Convergent validity (CV) was evaluated by analyzing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, which indicates the degree to which a construct accounts for the variance of its indicators. CV is considered adequate when the AVE value reaches or exceeds 0.50 (≥ 0.50) (Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminant validity (DV) was examined using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). DV is regarded as satisfactory when HTMT values are below 0.90 (< 0.90), whereas values above this threshold suggest insufficient discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019).

Indicator reliability is established when indicator loadings are greater than 0.708 (> 0.708). Nevertheless, indicators with loadings between 0.40 and 0.708 may be retained provided that their exclusion does not enhance convergent validity or internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using composite reliability. Composite reliability values ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 indicate acceptable reliability, while values between 0.60 and 0.70 remain acceptable in exploratory research settings (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Analysis

PLS-SEM method was used to analyze the data. There were two primary phases to the analysis:

1. Outer model analysis to assess construct validity and reliability.
2. Inner model analysis to evaluate relationships among variables and test the proposed hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity Test

Table 1 Validity Test Results

Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
SMM	SMM1	0.896	0.694
	SMM2	0.886	
	SMM3	0.794	
	SMM4	0.817	
	SMM5	0.765	
Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
BT	BT1	0.911	0.741
	BT2	0.923	
	BT3	0.785	
	BT4	0.815	
	BT5	0.860	
Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
BL	BL1	0.874	0.750
	BL2	0.797	
	BL3	0.843	
	BL4	0.896	
	BL5	0.915	

Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
Price	HT1	0.759	0.675
	HT2	0.872	
	HT3	0.830	
Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
Fleet	AR1	0.867	0.742
	AR2	0.907	
	AR3	0.806	
Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
Promotion	AR1	0.895	0.748
	AR2	0.789	
	AR3	0.907	
Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
Service	PL1	0.864	0.755
	PL2	0.853	
	PL3	0.850	
	PL4	0.906	
Variables	Items	Outer Loading	AVE
PI	PI1	0.801	0.690
	PI2	0.899	
	PI3	0.875	
	PI4	0.733	
	PI5	0.837	

Source: Processed Data (PLS-SEM)

Table 1 displays the results of the CV assessment. All indicators exhibit outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory indicator reliability. Moreover, each construct fulfills the CV requirement, as evidenced by AVE values greater than 0.50, indicating that more than half of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective constructs.

Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement indicators are statistically valid and adequately represent their intended constructs. Since all constructs meet the CV criteria, the measurement model is deemed suitable for subsequent analyses, including reliability assessment and structural model evaluation.

Reliability Test

Table 2 Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Social Media Marketing	0.889	Reliable
Brand Trust	0.911	Reliable
Brand Loyalty	0.916	Reliable
Price	0.758	Reliable
Fleet	0.824	Reliable
Promotion	0.830	Reliable
Service	0.891	Reliable
Purchasing Intention	0.886	Reliable

Source: Processed Data (PLS-SEM)

As presented in Table 2, all constructs demonstrate Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the threshold of 0.70. This indicates satisfactory internal consistency across all measurement items. Accordingly, all constructs used in this study are considered reliable and suitable for further analysis, including hypothesis testing within the structural model.

Results of Data Analysis Assumption Tests

The assumption testing results indicate that the research model satisfies all statistical requirements. No serious multicollinearity issues are detected.

Table 3 (Multicollinearity Test)

Indicators	VIF
AR1	2.147
AR2	2.531
AR3	1.593
BL1	3.080
BL2	2.120
BL3	2.988
BL4	3.911
BL5	3.963
BT1	4.741
BT2	5.340
BT3	2.595
BT4	2.407
BT5	2.862
HT1	1.408
HT2	1.844
HT3	1.594
PI1	2.272
PI2	3.846
PI3	3.355
PI4	1.999
PI5	2.899
PL1	2.594
PL2	2.279
PL3	2.481
PL4	3.311
PR1	2.545
PR2	1.506
PR3	2.650
SMM1	3.458
SMM2	3.415
SMM3	2.231
SMM4	2.044
SMM5	2.116

Source: Processed Data (PLS-SEM)

Table 3 shows that all indicators have VIF values below the threshold of 5, indicating the absence of problematic multicollinearity. Most indicators fall within the acceptable range of 2 to 5. One indicator (BT2) exhibits a VIF value slightly above 5. However, this remains acceptable given the strong AVE and reliability values of the construct and does not necessitate indicator removal.

Tabel 4 R^2 Test Results

	<i>R Square Adjusted</i>	Decision
<i>Brand Loyalty</i>	0.907	Strong
<i>Brand Trust</i>	0.767	Strong
<i>Purchasing Intention</i>	0.859	Strong

Source: Processed Data (PLS-SEM)

As presented in Table 4, BL, BT, and PI have adjusted R^2 values of 0.907, 0.767, and 0.859, respectively. All values fall within the strong category, demonstrating that a significant amount of the variance in each endogenous variable is explained by the structural model, demonstrating the model's resilience.

Table 5 Q^2 Test Results

	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
<i>Fleet</i>	
<i>Brand Loyalty</i>	0.675
<i>Brand Trust</i>	0.560
<i>Price</i>	
<i>Purchasing Intention</i>	0.584
<i>Service</i>	
<i>Promotion</i>	
<i>Purchasing Intention</i>	

Source: Processed Data (PLS-SEM)

Table 5 shows that all key endogenous constructs have Q^2 values greater than zero. This confirms the model's predictive relevance and supports its suitability for explaining and predicting consumer behavior.

Table 6 Hypothesis Testing Results (*Path Coefficients*)

	Original Sample (O)	P Values	P Values
SMM -> PI	0.067	0.297	H1 rejected
SMM -> BT	0.876	0.000	H2 accepted
SMM -> BL	0.453	0.000	H3 accepted
BT -> BL	0.531	0.000	H4 accepted
BT -> PI	-0.089	0.217	H5 rejected
BL -> PI	0.754	0.000	H6 accepted
SMM -> BT -> PI	-0.078	0.215	H7 rejected
SMM -> BL -> PI	0.342	0.000	H8 accepted
HT -> PI	0.027	0.340	H9 rejected
AR -> PI	-0.005	0.469	H10 rejected
PR -> PI	0.150	0.030	H11 accepted
PL -> PI	0.050	0.336	H12 rejected

Source: Processed Data (PLS-SEM)

Table 6 summarizes the hypothesis testing results. The discussion below focuses on statistically meaningful findings.

Discussion of Hypothesis Testing Results

H1 : SMM Has a Positive and Significant Influence on PI

SMM does not have a significant direct effect on PI, despite showing a positive relationship. This suggests that exposure to SMM by itself is not sufficient to directly stimulate immediate PI in the context of a full-service airline. Therefore, H1 is rejected.



H2 : SMM Has a Positive and Significant Influence on BT

SMM has a strong and significant influence on BT. This finding suggests that social media activities are effective in reinforcing perceptions of credibility and reliability toward the airline brand. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

H3 : SMM Has a Significant Positive Influence on BL

SMM significantly strengthens BL. This result indicates that consistent and engaging social media presence contributes to long-term relational attachment rather than short-term transactional outcomes. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

H4 : BT Has a Significant Positive Influence on BL

BT significantly influences BL, confirming that trust serves as an important foundation for the development of loyal customer relationships. This relationship supports the role of trust as an antecedent of loyalty in service-based industries. Therefore, H4 is accepted.

H5 : BT Has a Positive and Significant Influence on PI

BT does not have a significant influence on PI and does not operate in the expected positive direction. This suggests that trust alone is insufficient to directly translate into behavioral intention within the full-service airline context. Therefore, H5 is rejected.

H6: BL Has a Positive and Significant Influence on PI

BL has a strong and significant influence on PI. This finding confirms that repeated engagement and emotional attachment play a decisive role in shaping consumers' intention to repurchase airline services. Therefore, H6 is accepted.

H7 : BT Mediates the Influence of SMM on PI

BT does not mediate the relationship between SMM and PI. This result indicates that although SMM enhances trust, trust does not function as a transmission mechanism toward PI. Therefore, H7 is rejected.

H8 : BL Mediates the Influence of SMM on PI

BL significantly mediates the influence of SMM on PI. This finding demonstrates that SMM affects PI indirectly by strengthening loyalty-based relationships. Therefore, H8 is accepted.

H9 : Price Influences Purchasing Intention

Price does not have a significant influence on PI. This suggests that pricing considerations are not the primary determinant of PI for consumers of full-service airline services. Therefore, H9 is rejected.

H10 : Fleet Influences Purchasing Intention

Fleet does not significantly influence PI. This finding indicates that operational attributes related to aircraft type or condition are not central factors in consumers' purchase decision-making. Therefore, H10 is rejected.

H11 : Promotion Influences Purchasing Intention

Promotion has a significant influence on PI. This result highlights the importance of promotional activities in stimulating consumers' intention to purchase airline services. Therefore, H11 is accepted.

H12 : Service Influences Purchasing Intention

Service does not have a significant influence on PI. This suggests that service quality is perceived as a baseline expectation rather than a differentiating factor in shaping PI. Therefore, H12 is rejected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of SMM on PI in the full-service airline industry by distinguishing the roles of BT and BL. The findings show that SMM significantly enhances both BT and BL. However, only BL directly influences PI. Contrary to prevailing assumptions in service marketing literature, BT alone does not translate into purchase-related decisions in a high-risk service context. These results indicate that in high-involvement services, trust functions as a foundational condition rather than a direct driver of PI. BL instead emerges as the key relational mechanism that converts positive brand perceptions into behavioral intention. This distinction refines relationship marketing frameworks by clarifying the different roles of relational foundations (trust) and relational commitment (loyalty) in explaining consumer decision-making. Overall, this study highlights the need to reconsider trust-centered models of PI in complex service settings. By demonstrating the dominant role of BL over BT, the findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of relational hierarchies in service marketing and offer insights relevant to both academic research and managerial practice.

Recommendations

From a theoretical perspective, this study shows that in high involvement and high risk service industries such as full service airlines, SMM does not directly translate into PI. Instead, BL constitutes the primary pathway through which SMM influences consumer behavior, while the mediating role of BT is limited. This finding challenges the prevailing assumption in prior marketing literature that positions BT as the central mediator between SMM and PI, and emphasizes the importance of loyalty based relational outcomes in transforming marketing engagement into behavioral intention.

From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that airline companies should prioritize social media strategies aimed at strengthening long term loyalty rather than focusing primarily on trust oriented information or direct sales appeals. Social media initiatives that emphasize sustained engagement, emotional connection, and community development are likely to be more effective in enhancing purchasing intention than short term promotional messaging alone.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Notwithstanding its contributions, this work contains a number of shortcomings that present chances for further investigation.



First, the empirical context is limited to a single full-service airline operating in Indonesia. While this setting is appropriate for examining high-involvement and high-risk services, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other service industries or airline business models, such as low-cost or hybrid carriers. Future studies are advised to duplicate the suggested model across several aircraft types or service industries to improve external validity.

Second, this study adopts a cross-sectional research design that captures consumer perceptions at a single point in time. Given that relational constructs such as brand trust and brand loyalty develop through repeated interactions, future research could adopt longitudinal designs to better examine the dynamic evolution of these relationships and their effects on purchasing intention over time.

Third, purchasing intention is operationalized as a behavioral intention rather than actual purchase behavior. Although intention is widely used as a proxy for behavior in marketing research, future studies may strengthen empirical robustness by incorporating actual transaction data or behavioral tracking to validate the proposed relational mechanisms.

Finally, this study focuses on BT and BL as the primary relational pathways linking SMM to PI. Future research may extend the model by including additional relational or psychological constructs, such as brand attachment, emotional engagement, perceived risk, or customer satisfaction, to further refine the understanding of relational hierarchies in high-risk service contexts..

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