

# ANALYSIS OF STRENGTH AND PROMOTION ON CUSTOMER PURCHASING DECISIONS THROUGH CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN FUTURE MSME'S

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine directly and indirectly the relationship between strength and promotion on customer purchasing decision through customer engagement. The population in this study are MSE consumers in Medan City, the number of which cannot be known with certainty. The sample withdrawal used is purposive sampling with a classification, namely the general public who buy food from food stalls or home catering, consumers who buy clothes from small boutiques or online stores on social media, and consumers who use laundry services or home salons. The research sample was taken using the Zikmund formula so that a sample size of 100 respondents was obtained. Data analysis was carried out using structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques with Smart-PLS analysis tools to test the direct and indirect relationships between these variables. The results explain that strength directly has a significant effect on customer engagement, promotion directly has a significant effect on customer engagement, strength directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions, promotion directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions, customer engagement directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions, strength indirectly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement, and then promotion indirectly does not have a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement.

**Keywords:** *Strength, Promotion, Customer Engagement, Customer Purchasing Decision*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have a strategic role in the Indonesian economy. MSMEs contribute around 60% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorb more than 90% of the workforce. This sector is the backbone of the economy, especially in facing the global economic crisis. The ease of establishing a business, operational flexibility, and wide market reach make MSMEs a sector that continues to grow. However, MSMEs also face various challenges, such as limited capital, low digital literacy, and increasingly tight competition in the digital era. Medan City as the center of the economy in North Sumatra has a rapidly growing MSME sector. Various types of MSMEs, ranging from culinary, fashion, to handicrafts, are growing in this city. The local government also supports MSMEs through various programs, such as entrepreneurship training and access to financing. However, many MSME actors in Medan still face obstacles in marketing, digitalization, and less than optimal business management.

In the business world, customer purchasing decisions are a major factor in business sustainability. MSMEs must have the right strategy to attract and retain customers. Two important factors that contribute to purchasing decisions are the strength of the product or brand and the promotion strategy. However, the relationship between these two variables and customer engagement is often poorly understood by MSMEs, thus affecting the effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

Customer purchasing decision refers to the customer decision-making process in choosing and purchasing a product or service. Factors that influence this decision include product quality, price, ease of access, promotion, and customer experience (Mandarić et al., 2022; Al-Azzam & Al-Mizeed, 2021). In the context of MSMEs, customer purchasing decisions are greatly influenced by their interactions with the brand and how well the MSME builds strong relationships with its consumers. Many MSMEs in Medan face difficulties in understanding customer preferences and behavior. Consumers today are increasingly selective and tend to compare various options before making a purchase. If MSMEs are unable to develop the right strategy to increase

the attractiveness of their products or services, the potential for losing customers will be even greater. In addition, customer loyalty to MSMEs is often low due to minimal product differentiation and less than optimal after-sales service.

Customer engagement refers to the level of customer involvement and interaction with a brand or business (Chen et al., 2021; Barari et al., 2021). Customer engagement can increase loyalty, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth recommendations. In the digital era, customer engagement is often manifested through social media, online reviews, and direct interactions with brands through various communication channels. Many MSMEs in Medan still do not utilize strategies to increase customer engagement. The minimal use of digital technology and social media makes it difficult for MSMEs to build close relationships with their consumers. In fact, high customer engagement can increase loyalty and encourage repeat purchase decisions. In addition, less personal interactions and inconsistent communication are also challenges in increasing customer engagement.

Strength in the context of business refers to the superiority and competitiveness of a business, both in terms of products, services, and brands (Zameer et al., 2022; Tajpour et al., 2022). Factors such as product quality, innovation, reputation, and product uniqueness are the main elements that determine how strong an MSME is in attracting customers and facing market competition. Although many MSMEs have quality products, many still have difficulty building a strong competitive advantage. Several MSMEs in Medan still rely on products that are less innovative and do not have clear differentiation. In addition, the lack of an effective branding strategy makes it difficult for many MSMEs to build a strong image in the minds of consumers.

Promotion is one of the important elements in a marketing strategy that aims to increase awareness and attract customer interest (Etuk et al., 2022; Štreimikienė et al., 2021; Khuan et al., 2024). Promotion can be done in various ways, such as advertising, social media, discounts, and loyalty programs. In today's digital world, creative and data-based promotions are needed to be more targeted. Many MSMEs in Medan still rely on conventional promotions and do not make maximum use of digital media. The lack of understanding of digital marketing strategies causes promotional campaigns to be less effective and not reach a wide target market. In addition, budget constraints are often an obstacle for MSMEs in implementing optimal promotional strategies.

MSMEs have a crucial role in the Indonesian economy, including in Medan City. However, challenges in facing market competition, understanding customer behavior, and building effective marketing strategies are still major obstacles. This study aims to analyze how strength and promotion influence customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement. By understanding these factors, MSMEs can design more effective business strategies to increase competitiveness and business growth in the future.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Strength**

Strength or competitiveness is the ability of an individual, organization, or country to survive and thrive in a competitive environment. In the business world, competitiveness reflects the extent to which a company can maintain its position in the market and outperform its competitors through innovation, efficiency, and effective marketing strategies (Tuan, 2023; Camilleri, 2022). Competitiveness can also be interpreted as an advantage generated through continuous competence and innovation. In this context, the main strengths that shape competitiveness are creativity, mastery of technology, and superior quality human resources (Bany Mohammad et al., 2022; Yuliantini et al., 2023). The more innovative and adaptive an entity is, the higher its competitiveness in facing changes and challenges. On a broader scale, competitiveness is a major factor in determining a country's success on the global economic stage (Allioui & Mourdi, 2023; Sheppard et al., 2023). Countries that have high competitiveness are able to attract foreign investment, increase exports, and create a conducive business environment. This is often determined by good infrastructure, stable economic policies, and high-quality education and workforce (Turgunpulatovic, 2022; Beckmann et al., 2023).

### **Promotion**

Promotion is a strategy used by companies or individuals to introduce, offer, and increase sales of a product or service to potential customers. In the business world, promotion is an important aspect of marketing because it can help attract new customers and retain existing customers (Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022; Perifanis & Kitsios, 2023). Promotion can be interpreted as a form of communication between sellers and buyers that aims to provide information about the products or services offered (Kadir & Shaikh, 2023; Xie et al., 2022). With promotion, companies can convey the value, benefits, and advantages of the product so that consumers better understand and are interested in making purchases. In the modern business world, promotion not only functions to increase sales but also to build brand awareness. With the right promotional strategy, a brand can be better

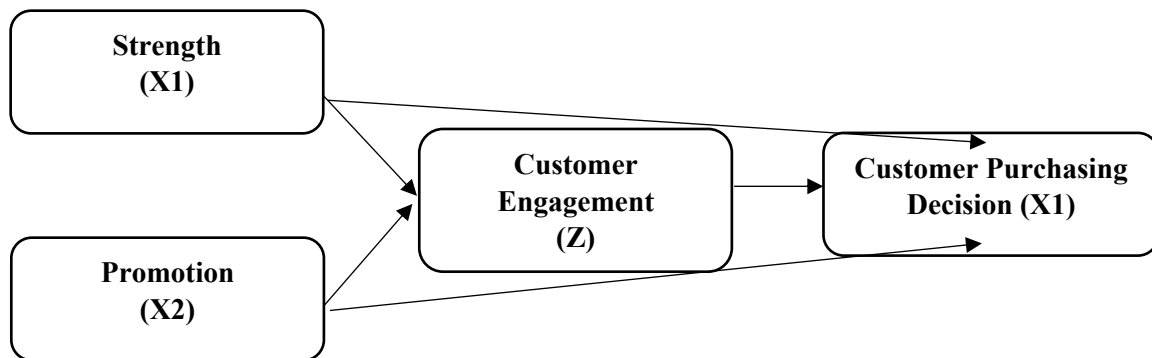
known by the public, create customer loyalty, and build a strong image in the market (Ingrassia et al., 2022; Baig et al., 2022; Lim & Guzmán, 2022).

### Customer Engagement

Customer Engagement is a continuous process of interaction between customers and companies, either through direct communication, social media, or user experience of products or services (Hollebeek et al., 2022; Rather et al., 2022). This interaction does not only occur during a purchase, but also afterward, such as in the form of customer service, feedback, and customer loyalty (McDonald et al., 2022; Ao et al., 2023). In addition to the communication aspect, Customer Engagement also includes the customer's emotional relationship to a brand. When customers feel emotionally connected to a particular brand, they tend to be more loyal, recommend the product to others, and are more resistant to offers from competitors (Valaskova et al., 2022; Watson, 2022). Customer Engagement is not just about communication, but also a strategy implemented by the company to ensure that customers continue to feel appreciated and cared for. This can be done through loyalty programs, personalization of services, or providing added value that makes customers feel special and remain loyal to the company (Ajiga et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2024).

### Customer Purchasing Decision

Customer Purchasing Decision refers to the elements that determine how and why a consumer decides to purchase a product. These factors can include individual needs, preferences, price, quality, or previous experience with the product. In addition, social influences, such as reviews from friends or family, also play a role in purchasing decisions (Ridwan, 2022; Yusuf & Matiin, 2022; Chaubey et al., 2023). Customer Purchasing Decision is increasingly influenced by technological advances. Easy access to information via the internet, digital advertising, and customer reviews on online platforms can influence a person's perception and decision about a product (Kidame & Sharma, 2016; Wang et al., 2021). Technology also allows for personalization of advertising based on individual preferences, which can increase the likelihood of purchase. Customer Purchasing Decision can also be explained through the stages in the purchasing process, namely awareness of needs, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. Each of these stages is influenced by various variables that make a person sure or hesitant to buy a product (Ali et al., 2021; Hidayat et al., 2021; Hanaysha et al., 2021).



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

Source: by researches (2025)

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This type of research is causal associative research. Causal associative research aims to determine the relationship or association between two or more variables. This type of research is usually used to see if there is a relationship, correlation, or influence between the variables under study, and how strong the relationship is (Sugiyono, 2021). The types of data used are primary data and secondary data obtained from questionnaires. The population in this study are MSE consumers in Medan City, the number of which cannot be known with certainty. The sample withdrawal used is purposive sampling with a classification, namely the general public who buy food from food stalls or home catering, consumers who buy clothes from small boutiques or online stores on social media, and consumers who use laundry services or home salons. The research sample was taken using the Zikmund formula so that a sample size of 100 respondents was obtained. Data analysis was carried out using

structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques with the Smart-PLS analysis tool to test the direct and indirect relationships between these variables.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**a. Outer Model**

**Convergent Validity**

Convergent Validity is an indicator that is assessed based on the correlation between the item score / component score and the construct score, which can be seen from the standardized loading factor which describes the magnitude of the correlation between each measurement item (indicator) and its construct. Individual reflexive measures are said to be high if they correlate > 0.7 with the construct to be measured but the outer loading value between 0.5 - 0.6 is considered sufficient (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 1. Test Results Loading Factor**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Statement Item</b>	<b>Outer Loading</b>	<b>Description</b>
Strength (X1)	S1	0.793	Valid
	S2	0.743	Valid
	S3	0.781	Valid
	S4	0.818	Valid
	S5	0.788	Valid
	S6	0.744	Valid
Promotion (X2)	P1	0.749	Valid
	P2	0.853	Valid
	P3	0.785	Valid
	P4	0.781	Valid
	P5	0.784	Valid
	P6	0.711	Valid
Customer Engagement (Z)	CE1	0.877	Valid
	CE2	0.728	Valid
	CE3	0.791	Valid
	CE4	0.748	Valid
	CE5	0.842	Valid
	CE6	0.837	Valid
Customer Purchasing Decision (Y)	CPD1	0.756	Valid
	CPD2	0.851	Valid
	CPD3	0.787	Valid
	CPD4	0.755	Valid
	CPD5	0.812	Valid
	CPD6	0.831	Valid

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Table 1. above, it is known that there are several statement items that are eliminated because they do not meet the requirements, so that after re-processing the data, all of the statement items above have an outer loading value > 0.7.

**Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant Validity is a measurement model with reflexive indicators assessed based on crossloading measurements with constructs. If the correlation between the construct and the measurement item is greater than the size of the other constructs, it shows that their block size is better than the other blocks. Meanwhile, according to another method for assessing discriminant validity, namely by comparing the squareroot value of average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 2. Test Results Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Strength	<b>0.777</b>
Promotion	<b>0.781</b>
Customer Engagement	<b>0.797</b>
Customer Purchasing Decision	<b>0.765</b>

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Table 2. above, it is known that the AVE (Average Variant Extracted) value of each variable is greater than 0.7. So it can be concluded that the variables or constructs used are valid.

**Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha**

Composite reliability is an indicator for measuring a construct which can be seen in the latent variable coefficients view. To evaluate composite reliability, there are two measuring tools, namely internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha. In this measurement, if the value achieved is > 0.70, it can be said that the construct has high reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability test that is carried out to strengthen the results of composite reliability. A variable can be declared reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha value > 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 3. Test Results Cronbach’s Alpha & Composite Reliability**

Variabel	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability
Customer Purchasing Decision	<b>0.811</b>	<b>0.878</b>
Customer Engagement	<b>0.843</b>	<b>0.842</b>
Strength	<b>0.832</b>	<b>0.919</b>
Promotion	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.922</b>

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Table 3. above, it is known that each research variable has a Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability value > 0.70. Based on the results obtained, it can be stated that the variables used in the study are declared reliable.

**Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

**Table 4. Test Results Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

	Customer Purchasing Decision	Customer Engagement	Strength	Promotion
Customer Purchasing Decision	<b>0.871</b>			
Customer Engagement	0.763	<b>0.871</b>		
Strength	0.755	0.768	<b>0.801</b>	
Promotion	0.733	0.779	0.739	<b>0.816</b>

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Table 4. above shows that the correlation value of the association construct is higher than the other constructs so that it can be said that the model has good discriminant validity. In this case, the FL Criterion value which has the lowest value is strenght 0.801 which is greater than other correlations.

**b. Inner Model**

Inner model analysis is usually also called inner relation or structural model and substantive theory which describes the relationship between latent variables based on substantive theory. Changes in the value of R-square can be used to assess the effect of certain independent latent variables on the dependent latent variable whether it has a substantive effect (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 5. Test Results R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>)**

Variabel	R Square (R <sup>2</sup> )
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Customer Engagement	0.612
Customer Purchasing Decision	0.773

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on the table above, the R Square value for the customer engagement variable is 0.612, this means that the percentage of the influence of strength and promotion on customer engagement is 61.2%, while the remaining 38.8% is explained by other variables not examined in this study. Furthermore, the R Square value for the customer purchasing decision variable is 0.773, this means that the percentage of the influence of strength, promotion and customer engagement on customer purchasing decisions is 77.3%, while the remaining 22.7% can be explained by other variables not examined in this study.

**c. Hypothesis Test**

**Direct Effect**

**Table 6. Test Results Direct Effect**

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Mean (M)</i>	<i>Deviation Standard (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistic ( O/STDEV )</i>	<i>P Values</i>
Strength -> Customer Engagement	0.331	0.340	0.215	2.877	<b>0.000</b>
Promotion -> Customer Engagement	0.255	0.543	0.264	3.125	<b>0.000</b>
Strength -> Customer Purchasing Decision	0.417	0.426	0.199	2.772	<b>0.001</b>
Promotion -> Customer Purchasing Decision	0.357	0.327	0.274	2.853	<b>0.000</b>
Customer Engagement -> Customer Purchasing Decision	0.592	0.415	0.225	3.021	<b>0.002</b>

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Table 5. above, the test results can be used to answer the hypothesis in this study. Hypothesis testing in this study by looking at the coefficient path (original sample), t-statistic value or p-value. With a significance of 5%, the hypothesis can be accepted if the t-statistic > t-table 1.66 (n-k = 100-4 = 96 at 0.5 / 5%) or the p-value < 0.05. Direct effect can be explained as follows:

- X1 against Z: T-Statistic value (|O/STDEV|) = 2.877 and P-Values = 0.000 < 0.05, meaning that strength directly has a significant effect on customer engagement.
- X2 against Z: T-Statistic value (|O/STDEV|) = 3.125 and P-Values = 0.000 < 0.05, meaning that promotion directly has a significant effect on customer engagement.
- X1 against Y: T-Statistic value (|O/STDEV|) = 2.772 and P-Values = 0.001 < 0.05, meaning that strength directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions.
- X2 to Y: T-Statistic value (|O/STDEV|) = 2.853 and P-Values = 0.000 < 0.05, meaning that promotion directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions.
- Z to Y: T-Statistic value (|O/STDEV|) = 6.314 and P-Values = 0.002 < 0.05, meaning that customer engagement directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions.

**Indirect Effect**

**Table 7. Test Results Indirect Effect**

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</i>	<i>P Values</i>
Strength -> customer engagement -> customer purchasing decision	0.417	0.471	0.133	2.117	<b>0.005</b>

Promotion -> customer engagement -> customer purchasing decision	0.532	0.618	0.184	3.728	<b>0.000</b>
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Sources: Smart-PLS (2024)

Based on Table 6. above, it is known that strength indirectly has a significant effect on customer engagement through customer purchasing decisions with a p-value of  $0.005 < 0.05$ . Furthermore, it is known that promotion indirectly does not have a significant effect on customer engagement through customer purchasing decisions with a p-value of  $0.000 > 0.05$ .

**Total Effect**

**Table 8. Test Results Total Effect**

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Mean (M)</i>	<i>Deviation Standard (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistic (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>
Strength -> customer engagement -> customer purchasing decision	0.471	0.374	0.213	2.772	<b>0.000</b>
Promotion -> customer engagement -> customer purchasing decision	0.637	0.522	0.436	3.792	<b>0.000</b>

Sources: Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Table 7. above, it can be synthesized that the total effect value is as follows:

- a. The total effect of the direct and indirect strength relationship has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement with a T-statistics value (O/STDEV) of 2.772 with p-values of  $0.000 < 0.05$ .
- b. The total effect of the direct and indirect promotion relationship has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement with a T-statistics value (O/STDEV) of 3.792 with p-values of  $0.000 < 0.05$ .

**5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on the results of the research discussion above, it can be concluded that:

- a. Strength directly has a significant effect on customer engagement.
- b. Promotion directly has a significant effect on customer engagement.
- c. Strength directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions.
- d. Promotion directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions.
- e. Customer engagement directly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions.
- f. Strength indirectly has a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement.
- g. Promotion indirectly does not have a significant effect on customer purchasing decisions through customer engagement.

Based on the above conclusions, the following suggestions can be made:

- a. The strength variables of future MSME’s consumers will be greatly influenced by digitalization trends, more personalized shopping preferences, and increasing awareness of sustainability. Consumers tend to look for products that have added value, both in terms of quality, experience, and social impact. Therefore, MSME’s need to strengthen innovation strategies, build trust through transparency, and utilize technology to improve customer experience. Adapting to changes in consumer behavior and optimizing data-based services will be key to maintaining loyalty and competitiveness in the market.
- b. Promotion variables in the context of future MSME’s consumers need to be more adaptive to changes in technology and market behavior. Digital marketing, especially through social media and e-commerce, will be increasingly dominant, so MSMEs need to utilize data-based strategies such as promotional personalization and AI-based marketing. In addition, collaboration with local influencers and the use of application-based loyalty programs can increase customer engagement. Promotions that focus on

sustainability values and customer experience will also be key factors in attracting and retaining consumers.

- c. In the future, customer engagement among MSME's consumers will be increasingly influenced by digital technology, service personalization, and community-based interactions. MSME's need to leverage customer data to create more relevant and interactive experiences, such as through AI-based marketing or customized loyalty programs. In addition, transparency and sustainability will be important factors in building trust. Collaboration with customers through social media, reviews, and product co-creation can also increase engagement. With an adaptive strategy, MSME's can maintain long-term relationships with their consumers.
- d. Consumer purchasing decisions of MSME's in the future will be increasingly influenced by digitalization, sustainability, and customer experience factors. Digitalization allows easy access to information and transactions through e-commerce and social media, so MSME's need to optimize digital marketing strategies. In addition, awareness of sustainability makes consumers more selective about environmentally friendly and ethical products. Personalized customer experience is also key, where MSMEs must understand individual preferences through data and technology. Adapting to these trends will increase competitiveness and customer loyalty.

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