



## The Role of Brand Image in Mediating the Influence of Digital Marketing and Customer Relationship Marketing on Tourist Decisions

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### Abstract

This research aims to analyze the impact of digital marketing and customer relationship marketing on the formation of brand image at the Old City of Semarang tourist attraction, identify the impact of brand image on the decisions of tourists visiting the Old City of Semarang, and assess the influence of digital marketing on tourists' decisions at tourist attractions. Semarang Old City, through the mediation of brand image. Researchers used three types of variables in this research. Validity testing was carried out using SPSS software, and the instrument was considered valid if the correlation value ( $r \geq 0.30$ ); instruments with correlation values below 0.30 are considered invalid, and these variables can be eliminated. Apart from that, the reliability value is measured by a Cronbach alpha value above 0.6. The research results show that digital marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand image. However, digital marketing does not have a positive impact on tourists' decisions. Brand image has a positive and significant influence on tourists' decisions. Apart from that, customer relationship marketing influences brand image, and customer relationships also influence tourists' decisions. However, indirectly, digital marketing does not have a positive impact on tourists' decisions through brand image, because brand image is unable to mediate the relationship between digital marketing and tourists' decisions.

## INTRODUCTION

A purchasing decision is a step in identifying all possible options to solve the problem faced by potential consumers. This involves an objective assessment of existing options, considering the benefits and drawbacks of each option (Bikart, 2019). In the purchasing decision making process, the second step is looking for alternatives, which depends on the availability of information regarding alternatives and the brand image of the product and service (Kotler et al., 2019).

Digital marketing opens up great opportunities for businesses to become known and communicate with potential customers and customers, and is very helpful in the room reservation process. However, if this opportunity is not utilized properly, it can become a threat. Business competition is getting tougher because all businesses can introduce their products to potential customers, both in domestic and international markets (Kim and Suk Kim, 2014). According to Kotler et al. (2019), marketing activities and brand image formation can no longer only be directed at consumers and potential consumers. People have been exposed to various advertisements and information on online media, so that most customers trust recommendations from friends, family, fans and followers on social media more than advertisements and expert opinions (Kotler et al., 2019).

Several elements in a digital marketing strategy, such as Social Media Marketing (SMM) and content marketing, have a significant impact on brand image formation. However, Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Pay Per Click (PPC) do not have a significant impact. Research also shows that untargeted email marketing can have a negative impact on brand image because it is considered annoying for customers (Bikart, 2019). Another research by Bilgin (2018) concluded that digital media plays a key role in shaping brand position and brand loyalty.

Duffett (2017) said that marketing via the internet can reach a wider market, including international markets, and can open up new opportunities that were previously unthinkable. The marketing process using digital technology has

changed the traditional approach to marketing (Fadjri and Silitonga, 2019).

The use of digital technology allows marketers to communicate directly with their consumers, making products and services more responsive to changing consumer needs (Smith, 2012). A more comprehensive definition of digital marketing is that it is a collaborative process between companies, marketers, customers, and partners to create, communicate, deliver, and maintain product and service value for various parties (Kotler et al., 2019).

The digital environment also facilitates customers to share their experiences and reviews about products, brands, or companies through electronic word of mouth (Kannan and Li, 2017; Smith, 2012). Thus, digital marketing involves various ways to promote products and services through digital channels, including computers, mobile phones, and other digital media. These channels are used to build brand image, establish relationships with customers, and complete transactions online (Astuti et al., 2020).

Previous research results show that all communication methods in digital marketing have a positive impact on forming a good brand image. In addition, this research highlights the role of brand knowledge and brand relationships in purchasing decision making. Current consumer satisfaction can influence future purchasing decisions (Kotler et al., 2019).

Consumer purchases are influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Apart from that, brand image and product origin also influence purchasing decisions (Adenan, 2018). Research by Widhayanti (2017) found that brand ambassadors, sales promotions, and word of mouth have a positive influence on brand image and purchasing decisions. So, the aim of this research is to analyze the influence of digital marketing and customer relationship marketing on tourist decisions in the Old City of Semarang, mediated by brand image.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a type of study that identifies cause-and-effect relationships and uses a survey method using a questionnaire as a research

instrument. Data was collected directly from respondents and guided by researchers. This research will be carried out in the Semarang Old City area, a tourism destination. Researchers use three types of variables, namely dependent variables, independent variables and intervening variables. The exogenous variable is Digital Marketing (X1), the endogenous variable is Brand Image (Y), and Tourist Decisions (Z).

The research population consists of consumers who visit tourist destinations in Semarang. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with a total of 100 respondents. The questionnaire used uses a Likert scale with five alternatives to measure respondents' attitudes, views and perceptions. To test the validity of the research instrument, analysis was carried out using SPSS statistical software. An instrument is considered valid if it has a correlation value ( $r$ )  $\geq$  0.30. If the correlation value is below this threshold, the variable in question will be eliminated. To measure reliability, a Cronbach alpha value above 0.6 (Cronbach alpha  $\geq$  0.6) is used.

Path Analysis is used to test the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables, both directly and indirectly. To evaluate the indirect relationship between exogenous variables and endogenous variables through mediating variables in path analysis, the Sobel Test is used with the appropriate formula.

$$Z = \frac{ab}{\sqrt{(b^2 SE_a^2) + (a^2 SE_b^2)}}$$

Information:

a = Regression coefficient of the exogenous variable on the mediating variable

b = Regression coefficient of the mediating variable on the endogenous variable

SEa = Standard Error of Estimate of the influence of exogenous variables on the mediating variable

SEb = Standard Error of Estimate of the influence of mediating variables on endogenous variables

The assumptions underlying decisions taken based on the Sobel Test can be formulated as follows:

a) When the Z value  $>$  1.98 at a significance level of 5%, it is assumed that the mediator variable is effective in mediating the relationship between exogenous variables and endogenous variables.

b) When the Z value  $<$  1.98 at a significance level of 5%, it is assumed that the mediator variable is not effective in mediating the relationship between exogenous variables and endogenous variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Instrument Test Results Validity Test

Validity Test is a procedure carried out to evaluate whether the statement in defining a variable can be considered appropriate or not. The purpose of a validity test is to determine the extent to which a questionnaire or measurement instrument can correctly measure what is intended. The validity test is carried out by comparing the calculated r value with rtable, which can be calculated by measuring the degrees of freedom with the formula  $df=n-2$ , where n is the number of samples. In this study, df is 93, so the rtable value is 0.168. The validity test results show that the calculated r value of all variable indicators exceeds the r table value (0.168), which indicates that all indicators have met the validity criteria of the research instrument.

Reliability Test is a measurement used to evaluate the level of stability and consistency of respondents in answering statements that are part of a variable. The reliability test was carried out by calculating the Cronbach's alpha value. If the Cronbach's alpha value on the questionnaire exceeds 0.6, this indicates that all variable indicators have an adequate level of consistency. In the context of this research, the Cronbach's alpha value for all variable indicators exceeds 0.6, so that all research instruments can be considered to have adequate reliability.

### Path Analysis

The results of the Path Coefficient calculation are the results of linear regression analysis calculations. The results of the substructure analysis can be presented in table 2.

Based on the calculation results in table 2, the R2 value is 0.621 with the value of  $\beta_0$  being

5.421, the value of  $\beta_1$  being 0.182 and the value of  $\beta_2$  being 0.616, so we get Structural equation 1:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2$$

Based on the calculation results in table 3, the R2 value is 0.624, while the value of  $\beta_0$  is 3.672, the value of  $\beta_3$  is -0.127, the value of  $\beta_4$  is 0.568

and the value of  $\beta_5$  is 0.237, so we get Structural equation 2;

$$Z = \beta_0 + \beta_3 x_1 + \beta_4 y + \beta_5 x_2 + \varepsilon_2 = 0.624 - 0.127x_1 + 0.568y + 0.237x_2 + \sqrt{1 - 0.624} = 0.624 - 0.127x_1 + 0.568y + 0.237x_2 + 0.7302$$

**Table 1 Summary and Path Coefficient 1**

Model Summary					
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted Square	R-	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.760	0.621	0.542		0.842
a. Predictors: (Constant), CRM, Digital Marketing					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5,421	1,675		3,276	0,000
Digital Marketing	0.125	0.024	0.182	2,017	0.024
CRM	0.379	0.057	0.616	6,876	0,000
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image					

**Table 2 Summary and Path 2 Coefficients**

Model Summary					
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted Square	R-	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.742	0.624	0.557		1,874
a. Predictors: (Constant), CRM, Digital Marketing					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3,672	2,887		1,452	0.190
Digital Marketing	-0.043	0.065	-0.127	-1,427	0.186
CRM	0.443	0.185	0.237	2,765	0.006
Brand Image	1,062	0.324	0.568	3,786	0,000
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image					

**Table 3 Path Analysis Results (Path Analysis Test)  
Direct Effects, Indirect Effects and Total Effects**

Relationship Between Variables	Immediate Effect	Indirect Effects	Total Effect	Sig.	Information
X1→Y	0.182	-	0.182	0.032	Significant
X2→Y	0.616	-	0.616	0,000	Significant
X1→Z	-0.127	-	-0.127	0.213	Not significant
X2→Z	0.237	-	0.237	0.004	Significant
Y→Z	0.568	-	0.568	0,000	Significant
X1→Y→Z	-	0.098	-0.023	0.072	Not significant
X2→Y→Z	-	0.376	0.674	0.012	Significant

Based on table 3, it can be explained that of the seven hypotheses there are five hypotheses that are significant and there are two hypotheses that are not significant.

## Discussion

### The Influence of Digital Marketing on Brand Image

The results of the analysis show that the first hypothesis of this research can be approved, namely that Digital Marketing has a positive impact on brand image. This means that if digital marketing efforts in the Old City of Semarang are increased, the brand image of this tourist attraction will also improve. However, the direct influence is only around 17.1%, indicating that digital marketing efforts to improve brand image in the Old City of Semarang still need to be improved.

This finding is in line with research conducted by Kevin and Sari (2018) on the Kini Capsule tourist attraction in Jakarta, which shows that marketing via online media only has an influence of around 7.9% on the formation of the tourist attraction's brand image.

However, Hermawan Kartajaya believes otherwise. He stated that with the development of digital technology, marketers and marketing businesses must quickly shift from traditional to digital approaches. This is very important for establishing a brand image, especially for potential buyers who have not had personal experience with the brand or have not been recommended by friends and family. Kartajaya also emphasized that involving customers in digital marketing by humanizing the brand, creating quality content,

and building interactions with customers in online communities can strengthen the brand image.

In conclusion, the recommendations of Kotler et al. (2019) to maximize digital marketing by humanizing brands, creating quality content, and building interactions with customers in online communities does not appear to have been implemented in this research. Other research that supports this theory is Kamil's (2019) research on the startup company GoJek and Smolkova's (2018) research which shows that digital marketing, especially through social media and content marketing, has a big impact on brand image formation.

Of the six digital marketing indicators used in research in the Old City of Semarang, namely social media, websites, digital advertising, search engines, marketing via email, and marketing via mobile devices, the results show that respondents gave the lowest ratings for social media and marketing via email. This indicates that these two channels have not been managed optimally and require improvement to make them more attractive and effective. This provides a great opportunity for tourism managers to more actively utilize social media and email marketing, ensuring that the content and context are in line with the marketing principles advocated by Kotler et al. (2019).

### The Influence of CRM on Brand Image

The results of the analysis show that the second hypothesis of this research can be approved, namely that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has a positive and significant impact on the formation of Brand Image. In other words, the CRM efforts carried out by Kota Lama Semarang

are expected to improve the Brand Image of this tourist attraction. The more intensively this tourist attraction builds relationships with customers, the stronger the Brand Image of this tourist attraction will be. In the midst of intense competition among various tourist attractions in Semarang, having a strong Brand Image is very important in order to be able to compete with rival tourist attractions. This finding is consistent with research by Dewi et al. (2016), who also stated that in the long term, CRM can increase competitiveness. They underline that trust, one of the important components in CRM, has a fundamental role in the business world. Candra Dewi's research results also show that how companies manage conflict has the most significant impact on the quality of business CRM (Dewi et al., 2016).

Research in the Old City of Semarang shows that all aspects of CRM, such as trust, commitment, communication and conflict handling, receive high ratings. This reflects the high commitment of this tourist attraction to satisfy customers in communicating and resolving problems, so that customers have strong trust in this tourist attraction. The four CRM indicators discussed in this research achieved very positive and satisfactory results, thereby directly creating a strong Brand Image of the tourist attraction. This shows that the Kota Lama Semarang tourist attraction has been successful in their CRM efforts to build, develop and maintain sustainable relationships with their customers, thereby creating a positive and strong Brand Image for this tourist attraction. This is also in line with research by Dewi et al. (2016) which shows that the level of consumer trust in a brand has a positive and significant impact on consumer preferences for that brand. In other words, the higher the level of consumer trust in a brand, the greater their preference and interest in interacting, transacting or making purchasing decisions with that brand. Apart from that, the level of trust in a brand also has a positive and significant effect on consumers' desire to make purchasing decisions. The research results also show that service quality has a positive and significant impact on brand preference, and good service quality also increases purchasing decisions. Finally, brand preference has a positive and significant impact on purchasing decisions. In other words, the higher people's preference for a

brand, the higher people's purchasing decisions for that brand.

Furthermore, these findings are in line with the opinion of Cruceru and Moise (2014) who stated that brands need to instill a strong idea in consumers' minds that the products and services they have are of high quality. This can only be achieved if customers have a positive and satisfying experience when interacting with the brand when purchasing and using the brand's products and services, or when communicating with the brand. Therefore, the formation of a good and strong Brand Image is greatly influenced by good and consistent CRM efforts.

### **The Influence of Digital Marketing on Tourist Decisions**

The analysis shows that the third hypothesis in this research cannot be accepted, which indicates that there is no direct influence from digital marketing efforts on tourists' decisions to stay in the Old City of Semarang. These results contradict the findings of previous research by Shantharam et al. (2019), which firmly states that digital marketing has an increasing influence on product and service purchasing decisions. Previous research emphasizes the large role of social media, especially experience factors and information factors, in influencing current purchasing decisions. If a company actively shares positive experiences, user testimonials, interesting photos or videos on social media, then this will be more attractive to potential customers to make purchases (Shantharam et al., 2019).

However, the results of research in the Old City of Semarang do not match the findings reported by Iswandir (2020). The research shows that content, context, and activities in digital marketing efforts have a significant influence on product and service purchasing decisions, stronger than other factors such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, or direct marketing. Furthermore, Iswandir (2020) believes that society's shift from the status of ordinary citizens who are not familiar with the internet to netizens who actively use the internet in their daily activities has changed the digital marketing landscape. Kartajaya (2018) also emphasized that the market has shifted from traditional to digital, with a focus

on the younger generation, women and loyal internet users.

The younger generation tends to be early adopters, trendsetters and trend setters. Women play an important role as information gatherers, holistic buyers and household managers, making them key to winning market share in the digital economy. Meanwhile, loyal internet users act as social connectors, advocates of expression, and contributors of content, which makes them key in building affinity with brands. All of these are potential market segments in the current digital era.

However, it should be noted that the characteristics of the majority of visitors to the Old City of Semarang today are not in line with the picture of potential market share described by Kartajaya. The majority of visitors to the Old City of Semarang are people over 46 years old, not the younger generation, the majority are men, not women, and they tend to get information about this tourist attraction through recommendations from friends and family, not through the influence of netizens. Therefore, the results of this research make sense that digital marketing does not have a significant influence on tourist decisions in the Old City of Semarang, based on the characteristics of existing visitors.

#### **The Influence of CRM on Tourist Decisions**

The results of the analysis show that the fourth hypothesis in this research is accepted, which means that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has a positive and significant impact on Tourist Decisions. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Masito (2021), which revealed that CRM also has a positive and significant impact on customer decisions. Other research that is in line with these results is research conducted by Ariyanti (2017), which states that both CRM and service quality have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. Apart from that, this research also highlights that there is a positive and significant influence of CRM on purchasing decisions. The results of this research firmly confirm that the most dominant main factor in CRM efforts is responsiveness, namely the company's ability and willingness to provide fast

and accurate service to customers by conveying clear information (Tjiptono, 2014).

For all types of businesses, it is important to retain customers who have used the product or service before, because acquiring new customers is much more expensive than retaining existing customers (Crueru and Moise, 2014). CRM can also increase customer loyalty. According to Hermawan Kartajaya, in the era before 4.0, customer loyalty was defined as repeat purchases. However, in the 4.0 era, loyal customers not only make repeat purchases, but also recommend brands to others, which is the last hope of marketers. This is reflected in the Customer Path concept which includes 5A (aware, appeal, ask, act, advocate) (Kotler et al., 2019).

The findings of this research are also in line with the characteristics of visitors to the Old City of Semarang, where around 30% of daily visitors are tourists who have previously stayed at this tourist attraction, which is represented by 25% of the respondents in this study. Apart from that, the characteristics of these tourists are also reflected in the finding that 47.4% of respondents received recommendations from family or friends who had visited this tourist attraction, and 50.5% of respondents made direct purchases from tourism managers.

#### **The Influence of Brand Image on Tourist Decisions**

The results of the analysis show that the fifth hypothesis in this research has been proven correct, which means that Brand Image has a positive and significant impact on Tourist Decisions. This finding is in line with previous research conducted by Saleh et al. (2019) on luxury car consumers in Makassar. This research confirms that all aspects of brand image, user image and product image have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions (Saleh et al., 2019). Even though this product has a high price, consumers still choose to buy the car because of the good brand image and positive contribution to the user's image. This is also in line with another study conducted by Gunawan and Sulaeman (2020) on e-commerce businesses in Jakarta. The results of this research show that brand image is more dominant and has a stronger positive influence than the price

factor in purchasing decisions (Gunawan and Sulaeman, 2020). This research also confirms that product brand image can improve user brand image, so that price is not the main factor considered by consumers.

This research reveals that the brand image of Kota Lama Semarang has a strong and positive reputation among tourists. This can be seen from the positive responses given by respondents to the three indicators in Brand Image, namely product attributes, consumer benefits and brand personality. The conclusion is that the Old City of Semarang has succeeded in building an excellent brand image, where tourists experience a service that combines traditional luxury with dedication in meeting their needs (heartfelt service) when visiting this tourist attraction. These results were also strengthened by the researcher's interviews with several tourists, some of whom were already familiar with the Kota Lama brand from previous visits to other Kota Lama tourist attractions. As a result, they decided to stay overnight in the Old City of Semarang. The same applies to tourists who were previously unfamiliar with the Kota Lama brand, but who are interested in staying at Kota Lama Semarang in the future because of the strong brand image that the tourist attraction has built.

#### **Indirect Influence of Digital Marketing on Tourist Decisions through Brand Image**

The results of the analysis in this research indicate that the sixth hypothesis has been refuted, which means that Digital Marketing efforts in this tourist attraction have no indirect impact on purchasing decisions. This finding is different from previous research conducted by Martin Consuegra et al. (2018), which focuses on fashion brands in Spain. The study shows that digital marketing activities, especially through social media, have a direct positive influence on brand image and purchasing decisions (Martin Consuegra et al., 2018).

Another research conducted by Tilasenda et al. (2019) on purchasing mobile phones found that online celebrity endorsers, as part of the digital marketing strategy of mobile phone companies, succeeded in improving their brand image and ultimately had a positive impact on the decision to purchase mobile phones (Tilasenda et al., 2019).

However, based on the results of questionnaires in research at the Kota Lama Semarang tourist attraction and the results of interviews, tourists feel that digital marketing efforts are still not effective enough in influencing their purchasing decisions at this tourist attraction, even though the brand image of this tourist attraction is strong. This is caused by some tourists who do not fully believe in digital marketing, while others feel that the digital marketing efforts of this tourist attraction are still less than optimal and less attractive.

This distrust of some tourists towards digital marketing is in line with the views of Kotler et al. (2019) that in the 4.0 era, customers trust information that comes from friends, family, fans and followers, or brand communities more than advertising or expert views. Nevertheless, tourist attractions need to continue to improve their digital marketing efforts by humanizing their media and content, making them appeal to customers and potential customers on a personal level, and encouraging customer engagement, rather than just being seen as a mere sales tool (Kotler et al., 2019).

#### **The indirect influence of CRM on Tourist Decisions through Brand Image**

The results of the analysis in this study show that the seventh hypothesis is accepted, which means that CRM has a positive impact on tourists' purchasing decisions and experiences an increase when mediated by brand image. According to Hermawan Kartajaya, customer loyalty before the 4.0 era could be measured by customers who return to make purchases, but in the 4.0 era, loyal customers not only make repeat purchases but also recommend brands. The customer path currently consists of 5 stages: aware, appeal, ask, act, and advocate (Kotler et al., 2019).

The results of questionnaire analysis in research conducted in the Old City of Semarang show that tourists consider the CRM efforts carried out by this tourist attraction to be very effective. Success in implementing CRM makes tourists feel that this tourist attraction provides superior service compared to its competitors, thereby increasing tourists' perceptions of the brand image of this tourist attraction. The results of interviews with several tourists also support this finding, where



some of them know the Kota Lama Semarang brand through their experiences while staying and interacting with other Kota Lama tourist attractions. This even encouraged them to choose to stay in the Old City of Semarang. Additionally, tourists who were initially unfamiliar with the Kota Lama brand previously were also interested in staying there in the future, thanks to their satisfaction with the strong CRM efforts that support the Kota Lama brand image.

## CONCLUSION

marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand image. This indicates that if efforts in digital marketing are increased, the brand image can be improved too. However, digital marketing does not have a positive impact on tourists' decisions. This implies that current digital marketing efforts are not effective enough in influencing tourists' decisions, because they do not provide adequate distribution in increasing room occupancy at this tourist attraction. Brand image has a positive and significant impact on tourists' decisions. This means that the better the brand image of the tourist attraction, the greater the likelihood of a positive decision by tourists. Customer relationship marketing has a positive impact on brand image and also has a positive impact on tourists' decisions. Indirectly, digital marketing does not have a positive impact on tourists' decisions through brand image, because brand image is unable to bridge the relationship between digital marketing and tourists' decisions. This is caused by the current low level of digital marketing efforts.

Based on these findings, there are several recommendations that can be given to tourist attractions in the Old City of Semarang as follows: Tourist attractions need to better utilize the potential of various digital marketing channels. Based on the research results, it appears that the lowest contribution is in the presence on social media, which is currently still very minimal, and the quality of the newsletter is less attractive. This can be seen from the results of questionnaires, interview results, and the number of followers on social media for this tourist attraction which is much less than other tourist attractions. Therefore,

the first recommendation is to increase the number and quality of posts on social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and so on).

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