“Integrated marketing communications as a strategic capability: Effects on purchase decisions via brand equity and satisfaction”

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INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AS A STRATEGIC CAPABILITY: EFFECTS ON PURCHASE DECISIONS VIA BRAND EQUITY AND SATISFACTION

Abstract

This study examines how integrated marketing communications influence purchase decisions in digitally saturated e-commerce environments, where consumers increasingly resist direct persuasion. Data were collected from 316 millennial e-commerce consumers in Jakarta, Indonesia, and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that integrated marketing communications do not have a significant direct effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.074$, $p > 0.05$). Instead, their influence operates entirely through indirect mechanisms, with customer-based brand equity ($\beta = 0.556$, $p < 0.001$) and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.144$, $p < 0.05$) acting as mediators. Customer-based brand equity emerges as the dominant cognitive pathway, while customer satisfaction provides a complementary affective mechanism. Additionally, a significant sequential mediation effect indicates that communication first shapes brand-related cognitive evaluations, which subsequently enhance satisfaction and lead to purchase decisions. These findings challenge persuasion-centric models and demonstrate that communication effectiveness in digital markets depends on building long-term brand and experiential value. The study provides theoretical and managerial insights for designing communication strategies in increasingly competitive digital environments.

Keywords integrated marketing communications, customer-based brand equity, customer satisfaction, purchase decision, mediation, e-commerce, emerging markets

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INTRODUCTION

How do integrated marketing communications (IMC) influence consumer purchase decisions in digital environments characterized by promotional overload and increasing resistance to persuasion? While prior research suggests that IMC enhances consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, it largely assumes that message consistency directly drives purchasing behavior (Febriyantoro, 2020; Chen et al., 2023). However, emerging evidence indicates that such persuasion-centric models may be inadequate in digitally mature markets, where repetitive, algorithm-driven communication reduces effectiveness and produces inconsistent empirical findings (Ha & McCann, 2008; Voorveld et al., 2023).

The rapid growth of digital technologies has transformed commerce into highly competitive, platform-driven ecosystems, intensifying competition for consumer attention (Elrod & Fortenberry, 2020; Grewal et al., 2020). Indonesia represents a particularly relevant context as one of Southeast Asia's largest and fastest-growing e-commerce

markets, characterized by rapid increases in internet penetration and online transactions (DataReportal, 2025; Statista, 2025). In such settings, constant promotional exposure contributes to message saturation, advertising fatigue, and growing consumer skepticism, which together weaken the effectiveness of marketing communication (Ha & McCann, 2008).

Within this context, millennial consumers play a central role. As digitally sophisticated users, they tend to filter promotional messages and rely more on accumulated brand knowledge and prior experiences than on direct persuasion when making purchase decisions (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Cheung et al., 2020). This shift raises fundamental questions regarding the mechanisms through which marketing communication influences consumer decision-making in contemporary digital environments.

Although IMC has evolved from a tactical coordination mechanism to a strategic organizational capability (Kitchen et al., 2004; Luxton et al., 2015; Porcu et al., 2017), empirical research continues to emphasize direct-effect models, often neglecting the underlying processes through which communication influences behavior. As a result, existing studies provide limited and sometimes inconsistent explanations of how IMC translates into purchase decisions in promotion-intensive digital environments (Voorveld et al., 2023).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) was initially viewed as a tactical tool to ensure message consistency across channels, often referred to as the "one-voice" approach (Kitchen et al., 2004). Early work focused on operational alignment to boost recall, attitudes, and short-term intentions. More recent scholarship, however, reconceptualizes IMC as a strategic organizational capability that integrates cross-functional processes, stakeholder insights, and adaptive communication across touchpoints to achieve long-term brand coherence and sustained competitive advantage (Luxton et al., 2015; Porcu et al., 2017). Despite this conceptual shift, empirical studies frequently continue to adopt tactical operationalizations and direct-effect models linking IMC to immediate outcomes (Febriyantoro, 2020; Voorveld et al., 2023). This mismatch between theory and empirical application contributes to inconsistent findings, particularly in digital environments characterized by high message volume and increasing consumer resistance.

The limitations of persuasion-centric IMC models become more evident in digitally saturated contexts. Traditional IMC frameworks assume direct stimulus-response effects from consistent messaging. However, research on advertising wearout and communication overload demonstrates that repeated exposure reduces attention, increases skepticism, and weakens marginal impact (Ha & McCann, 2008). In digitally mature markets, algorithmic amplification further intensifies repetition, thereby questioning the validity of direct effects (Voorveld et al., 2023). Empirical studies increasingly report weak or non-significant relationships between IMC and purchase decisions, suggesting that communication effects operate indirectly through psychological mechanisms rather than immediate persuasion (Kim et al., 2008). These findings highlight the need for process-oriented approaches that explain how IMC contributes to the development of enduring brand and experiential assets.

From a cognitive perspective, brand equity theory provides a robust foundation for understanding how marketing communication influences consumer behavior. Marketing activities shape brand knowledge structures that guide decision-making (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) reflects consumers' evaluations of brand credibility, value, and trustworthiness and serves as a heuristic that reduces perceived risk in complex digital environments. IMC contributes to the development of CBBE through consistent messaging that reinforces brand associations and reduces cognitive dissonance across touchpoints (Šerić et al., 2020). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates a strong positive relationship between CBBE and purchase behavior (Yoo

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& Donthu, 2001). However, IMC research often treats brand equity as an outcome rather than as an intermediary mechanism, limiting understanding of the underlying process.

In addition to cognitive mechanisms, affective evaluations play a critical role in shaping consumer behavior. Customer satisfaction captures post-consumption evaluations and has been widely recognized as a predictor of intentions, loyalty, and word-of-mouth (Homburg et al., 2006; Oliver, 1999). IMC supports customer satisfaction by delivering reliable and consistent information across the customer journey, thereby reducing uncertainty and enhancing perceived quality. Research in digital and emerging markets highlights the mediating role of customer satisfaction in communication–behavior relationships (Butkouskaya et al., 2024). However, satisfaction is rarely integrated with CBBE within a unified framework, resulting in fragmented explanations of IMC effectiveness (Luxton et al., 2015; Porcu et al., 2017).

From an organizational perspective, the effectiveness of IMC is shaped by firm-level strategic orientations. Customer orientation emphasizes understanding and responding to consumer needs to create superior value (Narver & Slater, 1990). Firms with strong customer orientation are better positioned to design coherent communication strategies aligned with customer journeys and expectations, thereby enhancing message integration across touchpoints (Mihart, 2012; Butkouskaya et al., 2024). Similarly, technology orientation involves investing in and leveraging digital tools for innovation and efficiency (Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997). It enables cross-platform integration, real-time interactions, and consistent personalization, which are essential for effective IMC in algorithm-driven environments (Luxton et al., 2015; Butkouskaya et al., 2024).

Extending these arguments to consumer-level outcomes, IMC is expected to influence both cognitive and affective mechanisms. Consistent with brand equity theory, IMC contributes to the development of CBBE by reinforcing awareness, associations, and perceived quality (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Šerić et al., 2020), while also enhancing customer satisfaction by improving informational consistency and reducing uncertainty across the customer journey (Oliver, 1999; Febriyantoro, 2020; Butkouskaya et al., 2024). Although traditional perspectives assume a direct positive relationship between IMC and purchase decisions (Febriyantoro, 2020; Ismaeel et al., 2025), such effects may weaken in promotion-saturated digital environments characterized by advertising wearout and consumer skepticism (Ha & McCann, 2008).

Furthermore, both cognitive and affective mechanisms are expected to influence purchase decisions. Customer-based brand equity reduces perceived risk and enhances confidence in decision-making (Yoo & Donthu, 2001), while customer satisfaction strengthens positive perceptions and increases the likelihood of purchase and repurchase behavior (Homburg et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2023). Emerging research suggests that IMC's influence in digital environments is largely indirect, operating through complementary cognitive (brand evaluations) and affective (experiential responses) pathways (Voorveld et al., 2023). Moreover, cognitive-affective perspectives indicate that cognitive evaluations precede and shape affective responses (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Oliver, 1999), suggesting a sequential process in which IMC first builds brand equity, which then enhances satisfaction and ultimately drives purchase behavior.

Despite extensive research on IMC, existing studies provide fragmented and sometimes inconsistent explanations of how IMC influences consumer purchase decisions, particularly in digitally saturated environments. Prior research has largely emphasized direct effects or examined cognitive and affective mechanisms in isolation, limiting a comprehensive understanding of the underlying process. This creates a clear need for an integrated, process-oriented framework that captures both parallel and sequential mechanisms through which IMC shapes consumer behavior. Addressing this gap, the present study conceptualizes IMC as a strategic capability that links firm-level orientations to purchase decisions through cognitive (CBBE) and affective (customer satisfaction) mechanisms operating in parallel and sequentially.

The aim of this study is to examine how integrated marketing communications (IMC) influence purchase decisions in digitally saturated e-commerce environments.

Based on the theoretical foundations and empirical insights discussed, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Customer orientation positively influences integrated marketing communications.

H2: Technology orientation positively affects integrated marketing communications.

H3: Integrated marketing communications positively affect customer-based brand equity.

H4: Integrated marketing communications positively influence customer satisfaction.

H5: Integrated marketing communications positively influence purchase decisions.

H6: Customer-based brand equity positively influences purchase decisions.

H7: Customer satisfaction positively influences purchase decisions.

H8: Customer-based brand equity acts as a mediator between integrated marketing communications and purchase decisions.

H9: Customer satisfaction acts as a mediator between integrated marketing communications and purchase decisions.

H10: Customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction sequentially mediate the relationship between integrated marketing communications and purchase decisions.

The proposed framework positions integrated marketing communications as a strategic capability linking firm-level orientations (customer orientation and technology orientation) to consumer purchase decisions through both cognitive (customer-based brand equity) and affective (customer satisfaction) mechanisms. These mechanisms operate in parallel as well as sequentially (IMC first builds brand equity, which then enhances satisfaction and ultimately drives purchase decisions), reflecting digital environments in which consumers increasingly rely on accumulated evaluations rather than immediate promotional cues. Figure 1 presents the study's conceptual framework and hypothesized relationships.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to examine a structural model in which integrated marketing communications (IMC) influence purchase decisions indirectly through customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and customer satisfaction, while customer orientation and technology orientation act as antecedents of IMC. The study aims to test the hypothesized relationships

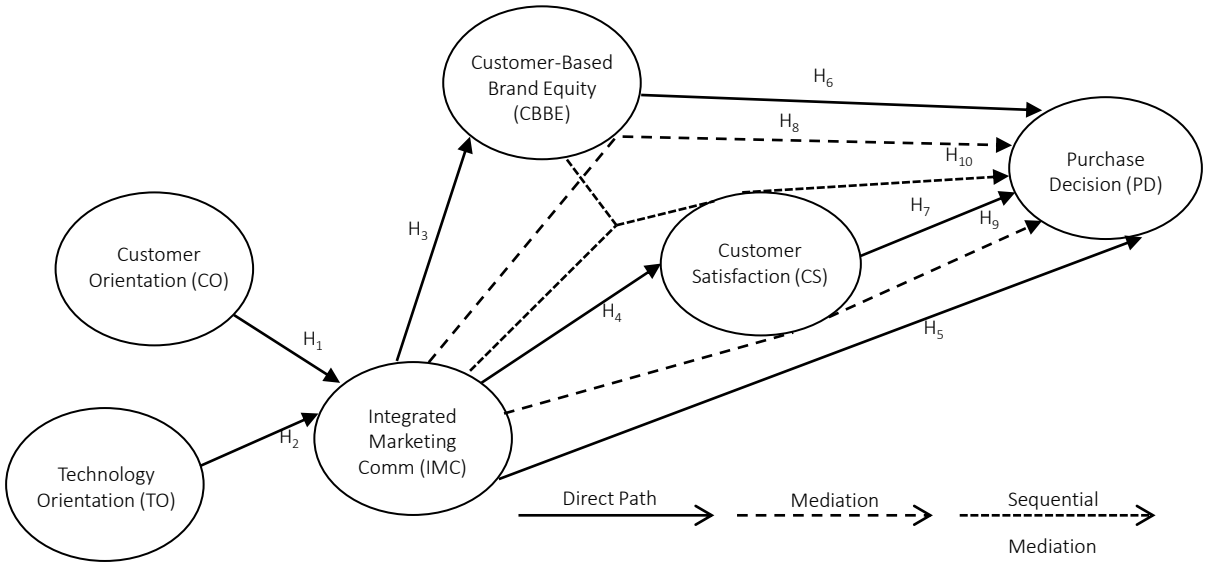

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

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(*H1-H10*) within the proposed conceptual framework. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized, as it is suitable for complex mediation models, prediction-oriented research, and data that may not follow normal distribution (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle et al., 2015).

The target population comprised millennial and young adult e-commerce users aged 18-41 in the DKI Jakarta metropolitan area, a major digital hub characterized by high levels of online commercial activity (DataReportal, 2026). Respondents were required to have made at least one online purchase within the previous three months to ensure relevant and recent experience. Data were collected using non-probability convenience and snowball sampling. An online questionnaire developed via Google Forms was distributed through social media platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok), university networks, and Jakarta-based e-commerce communities between July 2024 and March 2025.

A total of 365 responses were initially obtained. Data screening procedures involved removing incomplete responses (more than 10% missing data), straight-lining patterns, and responses with low variability, resulting in a final sample of 316 valid observations (86.6% retention rate), consistent with PLS-SEM data quality guidelines (Hair et al., 2022). The sample size exceeded recommended thresholds for statistical power and structural model estimation, supporting reliable hypothesis testing and bootstrapping procedures.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile, mirroring young, urban, digitally active Indonesian e-commerce users (Statista, 2025).

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire in Bahasa Indonesia, with back-translation applied to ensure linguistic accuracy. A pilot study involving 30 participants confirmed the instrument's clarity and cultural appropriateness. The questionnaire included demographic items and 38 measurement indicators assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants provided informed consent, and their anonymity and voluntary participation were guaranteed.

Table 1. Respondent demographic profile

Categories	Details	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-24 years	197	62.3
	25-32 years	64	20.3
	33-41 years	33	10.4
	> 41 years	16	5.1
	Other (e.g., specific ages like 18, 22)	6	1.9
Gender	Female (Wanita)	194	61.5
	Male (Pria)	121	38.4
	Missing	1	0.3
Occupation	Student (Pelajar/Mahasiswa)	181	57.3
	Private sector employee	67	21.2
	Self-employed (Wiraswasta)	21	6.6
	Civil servant (PNS)	21	6.6
	Housewife/Other	26	8.3
% monthly income spent online	< 10%	189	59.8
	10-20%	71	22.5
	20-30%	27	8.5
	> 30%	28	8.9
Most used e-commerce platforms (multi-select)	Shopee (dominant)	206	65.2
	Tokopedia + Shopee	76	24.1
	Other combinations	82	25.9
Max online purchase price	< Rp 1,000,000	191	60.4
	Rp 1,000,000-2,000,000	50	15.8
	Rp 2,000,000-3,000,000	38	12.0
	> Rp 3,000,000	36	11.4

Note: N = 316.

All constructs were measured using multi-item reflective scales adapted from established literature. Procedural remedies such as anonymity and item separation were implemented to minimize common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

- Customer Orientation (CO): Customer orientation was assessed using items adapted from market orientation frameworks, capturing the platform's commitment to understanding and fulfilling customer needs, value creation, future-oriented interest, feedback collection, and after-sales support (Narver & Slater, 1990). The construct showed strong convergent validity and internal consistency, with a Cronbach's α of 0.957, a CR of 0.966, and an AVE of 0.824.

- Technology Orientation (TO): Technology Orientation was operationalized with items adapted from innovation and technology adoption scales, reflecting the platform's proactive offering of advanced technological products, ambitious new launches, construction of novel technical solutions, and leadership in adopting emerging technologies (Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997). Measurement results indicated strong validity and reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.924; CR = 0.946; AVE = 0.815).

- Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC): IMC was measured using items adapted from firm-wide and capability-based IMC scales, capturing consistency in intended messaging, visual components (e.g., logos, colors), linguistic elements (e.g., slogans), overall brand image, and long-term image stability across all communication channels (Luxton et al., 2015; Porcu et al., 2017). The construct showed strong convergent validity and internal consistency, with a Cronbach's α of 0.947, a CR of 0.959, and an AVE of 0.826.

- Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) was developed using well-established customer-based brand equity frameworks, including dimensions such as brand awareness, reputation, loyalty, perceived quality, associations, value, and recommendation intention (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991; Buil et al., 2013; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). The measurement results indicated strong reliability and validity, with Cronbach's α of 0.965, CR of 0.970, and AVE of 0.762.

- Customer Satisfaction (CS): Customer Satisfaction was measured using items adapted from post-consumption evaluation models, assessing overall delight with products/services, satisfaction with the shopping experience, perceived service excellence, correctness of choice, and referral intentions (Oliver, 1999). The construct demonstrated high convergent validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's α of 0.967, a CR of 0.972, and an AVE of 0.834.

- Purchase Decision (PD): Purchase Decision was measured using items reflecting consumers' behavioral intentions, frequency of platform use, information search, preference, loyalty, and payment convenience in e-commerce contexts, adapted from validated consumer decision and online purchase models (Dodds et al., 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). The construct demonstrated strong reliability and convergent validity, with Cronbach's α = 0.920, CR = 0.938, and AVE = 0.715.

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS following a two-stage approach. The measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity, and the structural model was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to estimate path coefficients, significance levels, and indirect effects. Significance was evaluated using two-tailed testing at the 5% level. Model fit and predictive relevance were also examined using established PLS-SEM criteria.

The study adhered to ethical principles for social science research. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. No personally identifiable information was collected, and the study complied with relevant ethical standards for minimal-risk, non-clinical research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the PLS-SEM analysis conducted with SmartPLS, using a two-stage approach to assess the measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2022).

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Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity of the constructs

Source: Authors' analysis using SmartPLS.

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer Orientation	0.957	0.957	0.966	0.824
Technology Orientation	0.924	0.925	0.946	0.815
IMC	0.947	0.948	0.959	0.826
Customer Satisfaction	0.967	0.968	0.972	0.834
CBBE	0.965	0.966	0.97	0.762
Purchase Decision	0.92	0.922	0.938	0.715

Table 3. Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT

Construct	CBBE	CO	CS	IMC	PD	TO
CBBE	0.873	0.889	0.856	0.901	0.905	0.851
CO	0.854	0.908	0.897	0.893	0.843	0.913
CS	0.828	0.863	0.913	0.86	0.815	0.917
IMC	0.862	0.85	0.824	0.909	0.829	0.877
PD	0.854	0.792	0.77	0.775	0.845	0.806
TO	0.805	0.861	0.867	0.822	0.743	0.903

Note: √AVE on diagonal (bold). Correlations below diagonal; HTMT above diagonal.

The measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity. As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and rho_A values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was also established, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). As reported in Table 3, the square roots of AVE exceeded the inter-construct correlations, supporting discriminant validity. While most HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.90, a few values slightly exceeded this threshold. However, these values remained below the more conservative threshold of 0.95 and are considered acceptable given the conceptual relatedness of the constructs, consistent with PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair et al., 2022).

Indicator reliability and collinearity diagnostics were also examined. All standardized outer loadings exceeded 0.70, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below the critical threshold, indicating no multicollinearity concerns (Table 4). Overall, the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties and was suitable for structural model evaluation.

Table 4. Measurement model assessment: indicator loadings and collinearity diagnostics

Source: Authors' SmartPLS analysis.

No.	Indicator statement	Outer loading	VIF
	Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)		
1	The e-commerce platform where I buy from has a well-known reputation	0.864	3.614
2	The e-commerce platform where I buy from has high customer standards	0.847	3.037
3	The e-commerce platform where I buy from offers quality products.	0.865	4.481
4	Compared to other e-commerce platforms, it offers good value for its products and services	0.875	4.382
5	Customers are proud that their transactions are well-protected by the platform	0.889	4.312
6	I am willing to recommend the e-commerce platform to others	0.889	4.162
7	Customers are loyal to the e-commerce brand's platform	0.875	4.019
8	The e-commerce platform I use to buy from is well-known	0.915	6.939
9	The e-commerce platform's logo is instantly recognizable	0.871	5.04
10	The platform is among the top five options to consider for e-commerce	0.837	3.782

Table 4 (cont.). Measurement model assessment: indicator loadings and collinearity diagnostics

No.	Indicator statement	Outer loading	VIF
	Customer Orientation (CO)		
1	The e-commerce platform is strongly committed to my needs	0.907	4.273
2	The platform's products and services create value for me	0.926	5.075
3	The platform indicates interest in future content that may be relevant	0.906	4.075
4	The e-commerce platform satisfies my needs	0.909	4.233
5	The platform uses customer feedback to assess product and service quality	0.906	4.115
6	The platform provides effective after-sales support	0.893	3.544
	Customer Satisfaction (CS)		
1	From my experience, I am very satisfied with the products and services	0.930	5.614
2	I am pleased with my shopping experience on this e-commerce platform	0.928	5.304
3	Overall, the e-commerce platform delivers outstanding service	0.916	5.239
4	I made the right decision when choosing this platform	0.929	5.537
5	I would recommend this e-commerce platform to friends and family	0.874	3.378
6	Overall, I am pleased with my choice to use this platform for shopping	0.930	5.50
7	Choosing this e-commerce platform was the right decision	0.885	3.652
	Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)		
1	The platform reliably conveys its intended message through all communication channels	0.881	3.086
2	Visual elements such as logos and colors are consistent across communications	0.919	4.46
3	Linguistic elements such as slogans are consistent across all media	0.918	4.206
4	The platform maintains a consistent brand image	0.903	3.797
5	The platform maintains its brand image consistently over time	0.922	4.432
	Purchase Decision (PD)		
1	I often use an e-commerce platform to shop online	0.850	3.008
2	I usually search for information before purchasing on the platform	0.834	2.648
3	I will always shop using an e-commerce platform	0.818	2.692
4	I like shopping on an e-commerce platform	0.906	3.846
5	I seek shopping experience information from friends and relatives	0.831	2.694
6	The platform offers several convenient payment options	0.830	2.488
	Technology Orientation (TO)		
1	The platform offers products using state-of-the-art technology	0.878	2.606
2	Compared to others, the platform introduces new products more ambitiously	0.910	3.793
3	The platform proactively develops new technical solutions	0.910	3.269
4	The platform is among the first to adopt new technologies	0.913	3.913

The structural model was then assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The model demonstrated substantial explanatory power, with R2 values of 0.754 for IMC, 0.744 for CBBE, 0.679 for customer satisfaction, and 0.744 for purchase decision. Predictive relevance was confirmed, as all Q2 values were greater than zero. Effect size (f2) results indicated strong effects of IMC on CBBE and customer satisfaction, and a substantial effect of CBBE on purchase decision. Inner VIF values were below 5, indicating no collinearity issues.

Table 5. Structural model evaluation and predictive assessment

Source: Authors' analysis using SmartPLS.

Endogenous construct	Predictor	R^2	Adj R^2	Q^2	f^2	VIF
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	Customer Orientation	0.754	0.753	0.616	0.322	3.854
	Technology Orientation				0.127	3.854
Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)	Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	0.744	0.743	0.563	2.900	4.590
Customer Satisfaction	Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	0.679	0.678	0.561	2.115	3.742
Purchase Decision	Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)	0.744	0.741	0.525	0.347	4.684
	Customer Satisfaction				0.032	3.854

Note: R_2 and Q_2 values are reported once per endogenous construct. Effect size f2 values are reported at the path level. VIF values represent inner collinearity diagnostics for predictor constructs.

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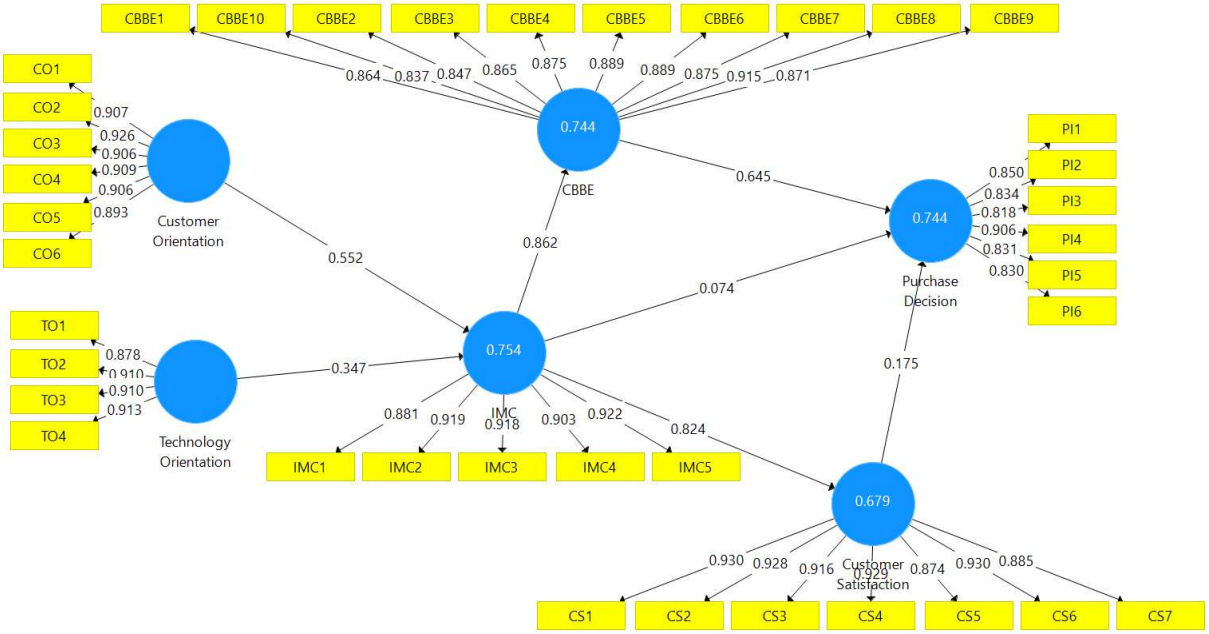

Figure 2. Inner model output (SEM-PLS)

Figure 2 presents the results of the structural model.

The results of hypothesis testing (*H1-H10*) are presented in Tables 6 and 7. Direct effects analysis (Table 6) shows that customer orientation and technology orientation have significant positive effects on IMC, supporting *H1* and *H2*. IMC also has significant positive effects on customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction, supporting *H3* and *H4*. However, the direct effect of IMC on purchase decision is not significant (β = 0.074, p = 0.184), leading to the rejection of *H5*. Customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction both have significant positive effects on purchase decision, supporting *H6* and *H7*. This pattern of results suggests that the influence of IMC on purchase decision may operate through indirect mechanisms, which are further examined in the mediation analysis.

Indirect effects were assessed using bootstrapping with bias-corrected confidence intervals (Table 7). All indirect effects were significant, as their confidence intervals did not include zero. The results indicate that IMC influences purchase decisions indirectly through customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction. Specifically, customer-based brand equity mediates the relationship between IMC and purchase decision (supporting *H8*), while customer satisfaction also acts as a mediator (supporting *H9*). Additionally, the sequential mediation path through customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction is significant (supporting *H10*).

Table 6. Direct effects results

Source: Authors' analysis using SmartPLS.

Hypotheses	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Customer Orientation → IMC	0.552	6.000	p < 0.001	Supported
H2	Technology Orientation → IMC	0.347	3.877	p < 0.001	Supported
H3	IMC → Customer-Based Brand Equity	0.862	41.753	p < 0.001	Supported
H4	IMC → Customer Satisfaction	0.824	35.785	p < 0.001	Supported
H5	IMC → Purchase Decision	0.074	0.901	p = 0.184	Not supported (direct effect)
H6	Customer-Based Brand Equity → Purchase Decision	0.645	7.896	p < 0.001	Supported
H7	Customer Satisfaction → Purchase Decision	0.175	2.209	p = 0.014	Supported

Note: Significance was assessed using two-tailed testing at the 5% level.

Table 7. Indirect effects and mediation results

Source: Authors' analysis using SmartPLS.

Hypotheses	Mediated paths	β	t-value	p-value	95% BCa CI	Result
H8	IMC → CBBE → Purchase Decision	0.556	7.246	p < 0.001	[0.430, 0.674]	Supported (full mediation)
H9	IMC → Customer Satisfaction → Purchase Decision	0.144	2.186	p = 0.015	[0.053, 0.258]	Supported (full mediation)
H10	IMC → CBBE → Customer Satisfaction → Purchase Decision	0.080	2.073	p = 0.019	[0.028, 0.148]	Supported (sequential full mediation)

Note: Indirect effects are significant when the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (BCa CI) does not include zero.

The absence of a significant direct effect of IMC on purchase decision, combined with significant indirect effects, indicates that the relationship is fully mediated by customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction.

The results indicate that the relationship between IMC and purchase decision is fully mediated by customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction, as the indirect effects are significant while the direct effect is not.

The findings support the view that integrated marketing communications (IMC) should be understood as a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a tactical communication tool. Customer orientation and technology orientation both significantly contribute to IMC, with customer orientation emerging as the stronger driver. This suggests that effective communication integration depends more fundamentally on a firm's ability to understand and respond to customer needs than on technology alone. While technological capability enables coordination across channels, the stronger effect of customer orientation indicates that coherent communication is more likely to emerge when it is anchored in a customer-centric strategic logic rather than in isolated digital execution. This result is consistent with prior work linking customer focus and communication integration to stronger strategic alignment (Narver & Slater, 1990; Luxton et al., 2015).

At the consumer level, IMC exerts a strong positive effect on customer-based brand equity (CBBE), confirming that integrated communication contributes to the formation of favorable brand evaluations. This finding supports the argument that communication consistency helps strengthen brand meaning and reduce uncertainty across touchpoints, particularly in digital environments characterized by information overload and promotional clutter (Keller, 1993; Šerić et al., 2020). Rather than functioning only as a short-term promotional instrument, IMC appears to build more durable cognitive assets by reinforcing brand-related associations, credibility, and perceived value. In this sense, the findings position brand equity not simply as an outcome of communication, but as a central mechanism through which communication influences consumer behavior.

The results also show that IMC has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. This indicates that communication consistency does not only shape cognition, but also affects consumers' evaluative responses to their experiences. In e-commerce settings, where much of the customer journey is mediated through digital interfaces and messages, reliable and coherent communication helps align expectations with actual service encounters. This reduces uncertainty and strengthens perceptions of reliability, which in turn enhances satisfaction. The result is consistent with prior research suggesting that integrated communication contributes to more favorable post-consumption evaluations by improving informational clarity and perceived service consistency (Oliver, 1999; Febriyantoro, 2020).

A central finding of this study is the lack of support for the direct IMC-purchase decision relationship (*H5*). This result is especially important because it challenges persuasion-centric assumptions that consistent communication directly triggers buying behavior. In digitally saturated markets, consumers are exposed to repetitive and algorithmically amplified messages, making them less responsive to direct persuasive efforts. The absence of a significant direct effect, combined with significant indirect effects, indicates that IMC influences purchase decisions fully through customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction. Rather than showing that IMC is inef-

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fective, this pattern suggests that its effect is more indirect and process-based, unfolding through the development of cognitive and affective consumer evaluations. This interpretation is consistent with studies that report weaker or less stable direct communication effects in more mature digital environments (Voorveld et al., 2023; Ismaeel et al., 2025).

The significant effects of CBBE and customer satisfaction on purchase decision further clarify this process. CBBE emerges as the stronger predictor, indicating that brand-related cognition plays the dominant role in explaining purchase behavior in this context. This suggests that when consumers face abundant choices and high message density, brand equity functions as a cognitive shortcut that reduces perceived risk and simplifies decision-making (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Customer satisfaction also has a significant positive effect, confirming that affective evaluations remain important. However, its comparatively smaller coefficient suggests that satisfaction operates more as a reinforcing mechanism than as the primary driver of decision-making. Taken together, these results indicate that purchase decisions in digitally saturated e-commerce environments are shaped more strongly by accumulated brand evaluations, with satisfaction strengthening the final behavioral response.

The mediation findings provide the clearest contribution of the study. Customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction both significantly mediate the relationship between IMC and purchase decision, and the direct IMC–purchase decision path remains non-significant. This confirms a full mediation pattern. The result shows that IMC does not translate into purchase behavior through immediate persuasion, but through the development of brand-based cognition and positive evaluative responses. Among the two mediators, CBBE is the stronger pathway, indicating that the brand-building role of IMC is particularly important in digital markets where consumers rely on trust, familiarity, and perceived value to guide decisions. Customer satisfaction provides a complementary affective route, showing that communication also contributes to behavior by improving how consumers feel about their overall experience.

The significant sequential mediation effect further strengthens this interpretation. The path from IMC to CBBE, then to customer satisfaction, and finally to purchase decision suggests that communication first shapes how consumers think about the brand, which then influences how they evaluate their experience, ultimately affecting purchase behavior. This sequential pattern is theoretically meaningful because it supports a cognitive-affective process rather than a direct stimulus-response logic (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Oliver, 1999). It therefore provides a more nuanced explanation of IMC effectiveness in contemporary digital markets, where communication outcomes are likely to emerge through layered psychological mechanisms rather than immediate transactional effects.

From a theoretical perspective, the study extends IMC research in three ways. First, it supports the shift from viewing IMC as a tactical coordination tool toward understanding it as a strategic capability. Second, it demonstrates that the effect of IMC on purchase behavior is better explained through a process-oriented model than through direct-effect assumptions. Third, it highlights the importance of contextualizing IMC theory within digitally mature, promotion-intensive environments, where communication effectiveness depends less on persuasive intensity and more on the ability to build durable cognitive and affective assets. In this respect, the findings contribute to a more contemporary understanding of how communication works in emerging digital economies such as Indonesia.

The managerial implications are equally important. The absence of a direct IMC effect on purchase decision suggests that firms should avoid evaluating communication effectiveness solely in terms of short-term conversion outcomes. Increasing promotional frequency or message volume may not be sufficient to influence purchasing behavior directly. Instead, communication strategies should be assessed by the extent to which they strengthen brand meaning, trust, consistency, and customer experience. For e-commerce firms operating in highly competitive digital markets, this implies prioritizing integrated communication strategies that support long-term brand development rather than relying mainly on repetitive promotional campaigns.

The findings also indicate that brand-led differentiation is especially important in promotion-saturated environments. Because CBBE is the strongest mediator, firms should invest in communication practices

that reinforce credibility, distinctiveness, and perceived value across touchpoints. At the same time, the combined effects of customer orientation and technology orientation show that communication effectiveness depends on organizational alignment. Firms need both a strong customer-centric strategic direction and the technological infrastructure required for cross-channel coordination and responsiveness. IMC, therefore, should be managed as an organization-wide capability that integrates strategy, systems, and communication processes rather than as a narrow promotional function.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations that offer directions for future research. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and future studies could use longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how IMC shapes brand equity, satisfaction, and purchase behavior over time. The sample was also limited to millennial e-commerce users in urban Jakarta, which may constrain generalizability across age groups, regions, and cultures. Additionally, while CBBE and customer satisfaction were shown to be key mediators, other variables such as brand trust, perceived authenticity, and algorithmic transparency may further explain how IMC influences consumer behavior in digital settings. Future work may also examine how AI-driven personalization and automated content generation reshape IMC capabilities and their downstream effects on consumer cognition and affect.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how integrated marketing communications (IMC) influence purchase decisions in digitally saturated e-commerce environments. The results reveal that IMC does not exert a significant direct effect on purchase decisions. Instead, its influence operates entirely indirectly through customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and customer satisfaction. Of the two mediators, CBBE emerged as the dominant pathway, highlighting the central role of brand-related cognitive evaluations, while customer satisfaction serves as a complementary affective mechanism. The findings further confirm a significant sequential mediation effect, in which IMC first strengthens customer-based brand equity, which in turn enhances customer satisfaction and ultimately drives purchase decisions. Customer orientation and technology orientation were also found to be significant antecedents of IMC as a strategic organizational capability. Overall, these results demonstrate that in contemporary digital markets, communication effectiveness depends less on direct persuasion and more on building long-term brand value and positive customer experiences. Organizations should therefore evaluate IMC strategies based on their ability to strengthen brand equity and customer satisfaction, rather than focusing primarily on short-term conversion metrics.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used generative AI tools to assist with language refinement, structural organization, and clarity of expression. All outputs were carefully reviewed, edited, and validated by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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