(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

The role of brand image in mediating firm-created content and user-generated content on purchasing intention (A Study at Masa Masa Restaurant in Bali Province)

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Abstract

The growing use of social media as a marketing communication tool has encouraged culinary businesses to manage digital content effectively to influence consumer behaviour. Restoran Masa Masa is a culture-based restaurant that emphasises cultural values through spatial concepts, cultural artifacts, and a traditional atmosphere, while utilising social media as a marketing communication platform. This study aims to analyzeanalyse the effects of firm-created and user-generated content on purchase intention, with brand image as a mediating variable, at Restoran Masa Masa. This study is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory and employs a quantitative associative research design. The population consists of consumers or potential consumers of Restoran Masa Masa, with 100 respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzedanalysed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that firm-created content has a positive and significant effect on brand image and purchase intention. User-generated content has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, but does not significantly affect brand image. In addition, brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Mediation analysis reveals that brand image partially mediates the relationship between firm-created content and purchase intention, but does not mediate the relationship between user-generated content and purchase intention.

Keywords: Firm-created content; User-generated content; Brand image; Purchase intention

1. Introduction

Competition in the culinary industry, particularly for restaurants with cultural concepts like Masa Masa Restaurant, is intensifying as consumers have more dining options. One of the main challenges Masa Masa faces is low purchase intention from new customers. The owner stated that the majority of customers currently making purchases are from their network of acquaintances, cultural communities, and internal social circles who already understand the restaurant's values and concept. Masa Masa Restaurant has not been entirely successful in attracting new customers who lack direct connections to the cultural community.

Based on internal data estimates, Figure 1.1 shows that over the past six months, 65 per cent of repeat customers are from the artist community (28 per cent) and friends/family (37 per cent), and 35 per cent are new customers. 22 per cent learned about Masa Masa Restaurant on Instagram, and 13 per cent from Google Maps. The business phenomenon at Masa Masa Restaurant shows that most new customers learn about the restaurant through social media. Consumers learn about the restaurant through content uploaded by the official Masa-Masa Restaurant account and through content shared on platforms such as Google Reviews and Instagram posts from visitors who have made purchases.

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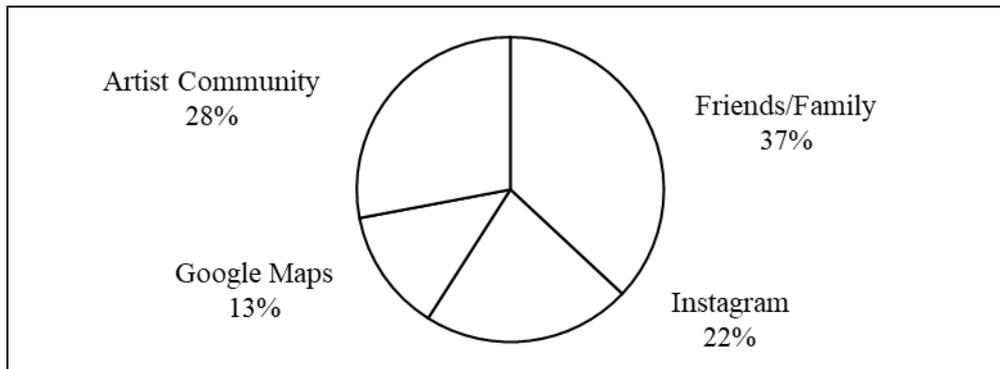
Source: Excel data of Masa Masa Restaurant visitors July – December (2025))

Figure 1 Visitor Data for the Period July - August 2025

Based on figure 1, Masa Masa Restaurant's revenue from July to December 2025 did not experience a significant increase through social media marketing, including Instagram and Google Maps. This data catalyses Masa Masa Restaurant's use of social media platforms as a marketing communication medium. Businesses must shift from simply "trying to sell" to "building connections" with consumers through brand image (Wijaya et al., 2018). In the context of digital marketing, information about a restaurant on social media can come from two sources: firm-created content and user-generated content.

Firm-created content is a crucial element in promotional strategies. Marketing managers hope that companies' social media communications can engage loyal customers, influence consumer perceptions of specific products, and disseminate information. Previous research has shown that firm-created content positively influences purchase intention when it is optimally structured and includes educational and promotional information (Putri and Sijabat, 2021). The high-quality image quality of firm-created content also has a positive and significant effect on increasing purchase intention (Joyosugito and Sobari, 2020; Shofiya and Fachira, 2021). Another study by Soekotjo et al. (2025) found that the direct effect of firm-created content on purchase intention was insignificant. Similarly, Park and Thavisay (2021) found that the role of firm-created content in purchase intention, mediated by brand trust, was insignificant. Besides firm-created content, user-generated content can also influence purchase intention on social media.

User-generated content reflects customers' active involvement in content creation, driven by various motivations, ranging from self-promotion and intrinsic satisfaction to the desire to shape their personal brand image (Morra et al., 2018). A study conducted in Kota Samarahan, Malaysia, found that user-generated content (e-WOM) has a positive but insignificant relationship with consumer purchase intention (Kumar et al., 2024). Research by Donthu et al. (2021) found that user-generated content has an insignificant relationship with consumer purchase intention.

Based on research by several scholars, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between firm-created and user-generated content and purchase intention. Considering this research gap, it is necessary to add a suitable mediating variable to influence the relationship between firm-created and user-generated content and purchase intention: brand image. This is because brand image has a positive and significant impact on purchase intention (Susanto and Siagian, 2025), and research by Sang et al. (2024) shows that brand image significantly mediates the influence of firm-created and user-generated content on purchase intention.

Brand image is a consumer's perception of a brand's overall identity and reputation, shaped by their experiences and the information they receive. Brand image reflects the image consumers hold in their minds of the brand's quality, uniqueness, and symbolic value. Brand image plays a crucial role in bridging the influence of digital information and communication quality on purchasing decisions (Saraswati and Giantari, 2022). Positive perceptions of brand image can increase trust and strengthen new consumers' desire to try the restaurant's dining experience. Brand image plays a crucial role in channelling the influence of firm-created and user-generated content on purchase intention.

Purchase intention is the process by which consumers plan to purchase a product, considering various factors, such as the number of units needed within a specific timeframe, the brand, and their attitudes toward using the product. Purchase intention is a consumer's preference to purchase a product or service (Panopoulos et al., 2023; Solihin and Ahyani, 2022).

Purchase intention can be viewed as an individual response influenced by external stimuli. Firm-created and user-generated content serve as external stimuli that influence consumers' internal reactions, shaping brand image, which then drives purchase intention as the final response. Firm-created content, created by companies, helps build positive brand perceptions through consistent visual and narrative messages. User-generated content from other consumers provides more authentic and relevant information, which can strengthen the brand image in the minds of audiences. Brand image can mediate the influence of social media and electronic word of mouth on purchase intention, as positive brand perceptions foster an emotional drive to purchase (Solihin and Ahyani, 2022). Brand image strengthens the relationship between e-WOM and purchase intention, demonstrating that favourable brand perception can significantly increase purchase intention (Sylvia and Haeba, 2023). Other research also confirms that brand image acts as a crucial mediator in the relationship between digital communication and purchase decisions, as a strong brand image increases trust and attractiveness towards a product or service (Saraswati and Giantari, 2022).

This phenomenon can be explained using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, which states that external stimuli from the marketing environment can influence consumers' internal psychological states before generating behavioural responses. In the context of this research, firm-created and user-generated content act as stimuli (S) received by consumers through social media. These stimuli are then cognitively and affectively processed by consumers to form a brand image as an organism (O), which ultimately influences purchase intention (R). Therefore, the S–O–R theory is relevant for explaining the mechanism by which digital content influences consumer purchase intention at Masa Masa Restaurant.

The balance between firm-created and user-generated content is crucial for building an effective brand image. Therefore, research into the role of brand image as a mediator between firm-created and user-generated content is highly relevant to social media-based marketing. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the combination of company-managed and consumer-generated content can synergistically shape brand perception and increase purchase intention. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for Masa-Masa Restaurant and other players in the culinary industry in designing more effective digital communication strategies to strengthen brand image and drive sales. Based on the previous research above, the first hypothesis is as follows: H1: Firm-Created Content has a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Intention, H2: User-Generated Content has a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Intention, H3: Firm-Created Content has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image, H4: User-generated content has a positive and significant effect on brand image, H5: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Intention, H6: Brand Image mediates positively and significantly the effect of Firm-Created Content on Purchasing Intention, H7: Brand Image mediates positively and significantly the effect of User-Generated Content on Purchasing Intention.

2. Research methods

This research was conducted at Masa Masa Restaurant located at Jalan Subak Telaga I No. 9, Ketewel, Sukawati District, Gianyar Regency, Bali. This location was chosen because restaurants in Gianyar often carry local cultural themes, which can influence how content, both created by the company and users, is received by potential consumers. The exogenous variables are firm-created content (X1) and user-generated content (X2). The mediating variable is brand image (Z). The endogenous variable is purchase intention (Y).

Table 1 Research Variable Indicators

Variables	Indicators	Sources
Firm-created content (X_1)	X1.1) Expectations from Masa Masa Restaurant's Instagram Account X1.2) Social Media Account Attractiveness X1.3) Masa Masa Restaurant's Instagram Social Media Performance	Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016)
User-created content (X_2)	X2.1) Read product reviews written by customers who have purchased from the brand	Cahyono (2017)
	X2.2) Read reviews from real customers who have purchased the product	
	X2.3) Be more interested in buying with genuine reviews written based on the experiences of customers who have purchased the product	
	X2.4) Created content can broaden the knowledge of potential buyers	

Brand Image (Z)	Z1.1) The company has a good market value Z1.2) The company has a good brand Z1.3) The company has a high reputation Z1.4) The brand is popular across all generations	Alcala & Menez (2024)
Purchase Intention (Y)	Y1.1) Considering Purchasing a Product Y1.2) Interested in Purchasing a Product Y1.3) Intending to Purchase a Product	Mulyaputri & Sanaji (2021)

Based on Table 1, the population in this study comprises all Instagram and Google Maps users, with an unknown population size. In this study, the data collection method used was a survey. Thus, the sample is representative of the carefully selected population. The minimum sample size required in this study is 70 respondents. To increase the reliability and accuracy of the research results, the sample size in this study was set at 100 respondents. The data collection method used in this study was a survey, with a research instrument in the form of a questionnaire designed based on the indicators of each research variable.

Table 2 Results of Discriminant Validity Test with Cross-loading

	Firm-created content	*User-generated content*	*Brand Image*	*Purchase Intention*
X1.1	**0,841**	0,403	0,457	0,468
X1.2	**0,789**	0,282	0,384	0,365
X1.3	**0,807**	0,319	0,543	0,562
X2.1	0,043	**0,571**	0,140	0,163
X2.2	0,245	**0,784**	0,271	0,2898
X2.3	0,474	**0,848**	0,408	0,447
X2.4	0,324	**0,786**	0,220	0,384
Z1.1	0,434	0,217	**0,764**	0,598
Z1.2	0,542	0,223	**0,809**	0,534
Z1.3	0,483	0,460	**0,799**	0,625
Z1.4	0,392	0,274	**0,831**	0,588
Y1.1	0,500	0,460	0,558	**0.878**
Y1.2	0,536	0,349	0,682	**0,869**
Y1.3	0,489	0,383	0,660	**0,854**

Source: Processed data, 2026

Based on table 2, the cross-loading measurement results in Table 2, the indicator statements for each construct or variable are valid because the cross-loadings of the indicator statements on that variable are greater than those on the other variables.

Testing based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion also yielded valid results, as the AVE for each variable is greater than its correlations with the other variables.

This test yielded composite reliability values for all variables greater than 0.60. These results indicate that all variables in this research model have good reliability, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	*Composite Reliability (rho_c)*
Brand Image	0,814	0,878
Firm-created Content	0,748	0,854
Purchase Intention	0,835	0,901
User-generated Content	0,757	0,838

Source: Processed data, 2026
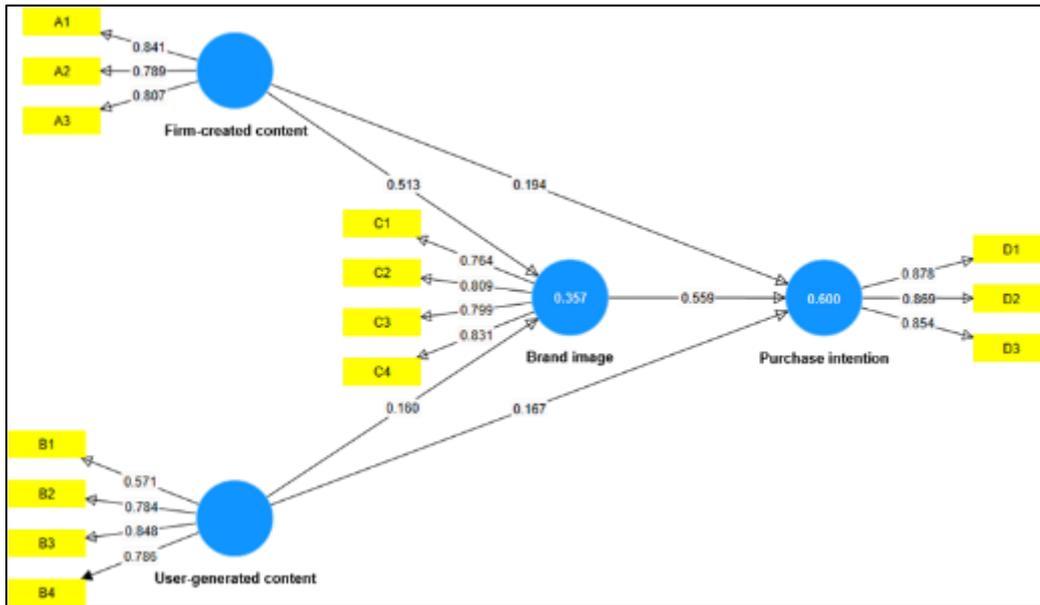
Source: Processed data, 2026

Figure 2 Inner Model

The R-square value has several categories: 0.51-0.75 indicates a strong model, 0.26-0.50 indicates a moderate model, and 0.1-0.25 indicates a weak model (Hair et al., 2017). The following are the test results on the constructs of brand image and purchase intention as endogenous variables in Table 4.

Table 4 R-square Test Results

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Image	0,366	0,344
Purchase Intention	0,590	0,588

Source: Processed data, 2026

Based on table 4, the R-square for the brand image variable is 0.366. This indicates that the research model falls within the medium model category, as 36.6 percent of the brand image variation is explained by the independent variables in the research model. In comparison, the remaining 63.4 percent is influenced by other factors outside the model that were not examined in this study. The R-square value for the purchase intention variable is 0.590. These results indicate that the research model falls in the strong model category, as 59.0 percent of the purchase intention variation is explained by the independent variables.

Table 5 Q-square Test Results

Construct / Variable	Q^2 predict

Brand Image	0,214
Purchase Intention	0,416

<div align="center">Source: Processed data, 2026</div>

Based on table 5, the Q-square value for the brand image variable was 0.220, indicating that the variable is predictive. Furthermore, the purchase intention variable had a Q-square value of 0.412, indicating strong predictive relevance.

Table 6 Results of Direct Effect Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Firm-created content -> Purchase intention	0,194	0,185	0,084	2,309	0,021
User-generated content -> Purchase intention	0,167	0,171	0,069	2,440	0,015
Firm-created content -> Brand image	0,513	0,526	0,080	6,406	0,000
User-generated content -> Brand image	0,160	0,164	0,085	1,875	0,061
Brand image -> Purchase intention	0,559	0,563	0,077	7,258	0,000

<div align="center">Source: Processed data, 2026</div>

The test results based on figure 2 and table 6 showed a positive original sample value of 0.194, indicating that firm-created content positively affects purchase intention. Bootstrapping yielded an estimated coefficient of 0.185. The t-statistic of 2.309 (> 1.96) and the p-value of 0.021 (< 0.05) indicate that firm-created content has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, thus H1 is accepted. This means that improving the quality of company-created content can increase purchase intention by 19.4 percent. The more optimal the firm-created content delivered through digital media, the greater the consumer's purchase intention for the product or service. This finding supports previous research by Fiernaningsih (2022), Putri and Sijabat (2021), and Giantari et al. (2025), which found that company-created content significantly increases consumer purchase intention.

The test results showed a positive original sample value of 0.167. The bootstrapping results yielded an estimated coefficient value of 0.171. The T-statistic of 2.440 > 1.96 and the p-value of 0.015 < 0.05 indicate that user-generated content has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, thereby supporting H2. This means that the higher the engagement and quality of user-generated content, the higher the consumer's purchase intention. Increasing user-generated content can increase purchase intention by 16.7 percent.

The effect of firm-created content on brand image was 0.513 in the original sample, indicating a positive effect. The bootstrapping calculation results show an estimated coefficient value of 0.526. The T-statistic of 6.406 > 1.96 and the p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicate that firm-created content has a positive and significant effect on brand image, thereby supporting H3. This means that the better the content a company creates, the stronger its brand image becomes. Increasing firm-created content can improve brand image by 51.3 percent. The more optimally firm-created content delivered through digital media, the stronger the brand image formed in consumers' minds. This finding supports previous research by Andriani et al. (2021) and Tan et al. (2022), which found that content managed directly by a company has a significant impact on building and strengthening brand image.

The effect of user-generated content on brand image was 0.160 in the original sample, indicating a positive effect. The bootstrapping results yielded an estimated coefficient of 0.164. However, the T-statistic of 1.875 < 1.96 and the p-value of 0.061 > 0.05 indicate that the effect is not statistically significant, thereby rejecting H4 at the 5 per cent significance level. This indicates that user-generated content did not significantly influence brand image in this study. These results align with the view that official company communications often control brand associations and symbolic meanings, while user-generated content primarily reinforces or confirms existing experiences (Morra et al., 2018; Kapera et al., 2019).

The test results showed a positive value of 0.559 in the original sample, indicating a positive effect between brand image and purchase intention. The bootstrapping results yielded an estimated coefficient of 0.563. The T-statistic value of 7.258 > 1.96 and the p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 indicate that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, so H5 is supported. This means that the better the brand image, the higher the consumer's purchase intention. Improving brand image can increase purchase intention by 55.9 percent. The results of this study align with consumer behaviour theory, which holds that brand image is a key factor influencing purchase intention. Brand image indicators that receive high ratings indicate that the brand is perceived as excellent, credible, and appealing to consumers, thereby encouraging purchase intention. This finding supports the results of previous studies by Khan et al. (2022) and Sholihah et al. (2024), which found that brand image significantly increases consumer purchase intention.

Table 7 Results of Indirect Effect Test (Mediation)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Firm-created content -> Purchase intention	0,287	0,298	0,066	4,323	0,000
User-generated content -> Purchase intention	0,089	0,092	0,050	1,798	0,072

Source: Processed data, 2026

The test results on table 7 show an original sample value of 0.287, indicating a positive indirect effect of firm-created content on purchase intention through brand image. The T-statistic value of 4.323 > t table 1.96 and the p-value of 0.000 < α 0.05 indicate that the effect is statistically significant, so that H6 can be accepted. This indicates that brand image positively and significantly mediates the effect of firm-created content on purchase intention. The better the firm's content is delivered, the stronger the consumer's purchase intention will be, as it forms a stronger brand image. This indirect effect shows that increasing firm-created content through brand image can increase purchase intention by 28.7 percent. The results of this study are in line with the concept of digital marketing communications that emphasises the importance of company content in shaping brand image as a basis for purchasing decisions. Content delivered professionally and in accordance with brand values can create positive associations, which then influence consumer behaviour at the purchase-intention stage. Thus, the more optimal the firm-created content delivered by the company, the stronger the brand image formed, and ultimately, the higher the consumer's purchase intention. This finding indicates that brand image plays a significant mediating role in strengthening the influence of firm-created content on purchase intention and aligns with previous findings by Solihin et al. (2022).

The test results showed an original sample value of 0.089, indicating a positive indirect effect between user-generated content and purchase intention through brand image. However, a T-statistic of 1.798 < t-table 1.96 and a p-value of 0.072 > α 0.05 indicated that the effect was not statistically significant, thus rejecting H7. This indicates that brand image cannot significantly mediate the effect of user-generated content on purchase intention. Therefore, the indirect effect of user-generated content on purchase intention via brand image was not significant in this study. The analysis results indicate that brand image does not mediate the effect of user-generated content on purchase intention. These findings indicate that the influence of user-generated content on purchase intention is more direct, without prior brand image formation. In the context of digital marketing, user-generated content often provides quick decision-making impetus by leveraging trust in other users' experiences, so consumers do not always need to evaluate the brand image in depth before forming purchase intentions. This suggests that the role of brand image as a mediating variable is contextual and does not always hold across all channels of digital communication, particularly when consumers place greater emphasis on the authenticity of the experience than on overall brand perception (Solihin and Ahyani, 2022).

The VAF_1 value, indicating the mediating role of brand image on the influence of firm-created content on purchase intention, was 0.597, or 59.7 per cent, thus categorizingcategorising it as partial mediation. Furthermore, the VAF_2 value for the influence of user-generated content on purchase intention through brand image was 0.314, or 31.4 per cent, thus also categorising it as partial mediation. Based on the VAF method results, it can be concluded that brand image serves as a partial mediating variable in this study, meaning it only partially explains the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables.

3. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion of the research conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn. Firm-created content has a positive, significant effect on Masa Masa Restaurant's brand image, particularly the attractiveness of its social media accounts. This indicates that the higher the quality of content created and managed directly by the restaurant, the more positive the brand image in consumers' minds. Firm-created content has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. This means that the content delivered by Masa Masa Restaurant can spark consumer interest and drive purchase intent. User-generated content has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, especially in its role as an insight into potential buyers. User-generated content has a positive but insignificant effect on brand image. Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, especially when Masa Masa Restaurant's reputation is high. Brand image partially mediates the effect of firm-created content on purchase intention. This means that firm-created content not only influences purchase intention directly but also shapes a positive brand image. Brand image is not able to significantly mediate the effect of user-generated content on purchase intention. This indicates that the influence of user-generated content on purchase intention is more dominant directly than through the formation of a brand image.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations can be made. Masa Masa Restaurant management is advised to continue improving general information, such as prices, opening hours, and amenities, in the content shared through its social media accounts. Masa Masa Restaurant should encourage consumer engagement by writing engaging reviews that highlight memorable dining experiences, thereby increasing potential customers' willingness to read reviews on its social media accounts. Strengthening Masa Masa Restaurant's brand image should be a long-term focus, not just through digital content but also through consistent service quality, restaurant atmosphere, and the overall customer experience. Responding quickly to customer feedback and complaints is also crucial to maintaining positive brand perceptions. Future researchers are advised to include other variables that may influence purchase intention, such as trust, service quality, or customer experience, and to expand the research object to allow broader generalisation of the results.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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