

LEVERAGING AI IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING FOR TOURISM BUSINESS: SHAPING CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers numerous benefits across various sectors including business. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can leverage Generative AI, which is mostly free, to optimize marketing campaigns and boost sales. Kawan Cerita Outdoor, an SME specializing in hiking tours and equipment rental, has implemented AI for its content planning and design on social media Instagram. This study investigates the impact of AI-driven marketing, focusing on content creation, on consumers' perception of service quality and its subsequent influence on purchase intention. A quantitative approach was employed, gathering data from 170 respondents drawn from Kawan Cerita Outdoor's Instagram audience via an online questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) version 3.0. The findings indicate that AI-driven marketing has a significant impact on perceived service quality, which fully mediates the relationship between AI-driven marketing and purchase intention. However, AI-driven marketing does not directly affect purchase intention. There are some limitations of the study such as the limited range of variables investigated and the potential for sampling bias associated with the online survey approach. Despite these limitations, this research provides valuable strategies for SMEs to effectively integrate basic AI into their social media marketing, enhancing consumer perception and ultimately increasing purchase intention.

Keywords: AI-Driven Marketing, Perceived Quality, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has impacted various industries including marketing. AI is enabling marketers to achieve new levels of efficiency in their marketing campaign (Patil et al., 2024). The growing accessibility of AI tools enables Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to enhance their promotional activities. Generative AI platforms like Gemini are now freely available, allowing them to further boost product promotion while simultaneously achieving cost savings.

The increasing integration of AI in marketing is revolutionizing how SMEs engage customers, particularly on social media. Social media is no longer just for personal connections; it's now crucial for marketing, interacting with customers, and managing brand reputation (Chavez et al., 2020). Social media facilitates two-way communication which allows SME to build experiences and interactions by enabling consumers to provide feedback on shared marketing content (Febriansyah et al., 2024). The integration of AI into social media marketing empowers SMEs to deliver personalized content so they can develop positive customer connections and optimize their content strategies (Beyari & Hashem, 2025). Generative AI tools can analyze customer data such as demographics, behaviors, and social interactions to tailor content's tone, imagery, and messaging to the target audience. Audiences perceive product quality differently when AI-driven marketing provides highly relevant information with prompt support. Perceived quality itself refers to a consumer's evaluation of a product's overall value based on their experiences and interactions in social media (Septyani & Roosdhani, 2024; Zeithaml, 1988).

Instagram is an ideal social media platform for SME to share the content that highlights the quality of the product. In 2023, Indonesia reached 103.3 million Instagram users, placing it fourth globally in terms of total user (Annur, 2023). It stands as one of the most effective marketing channels in Indonesia, as it remains the most popular social media platform in the country in 2024 (Annur, 2024). According to Andita et al., (2024), SMEs that effectively utilize Instagram Business Insights in their marketing efforts tend to see an improvement in their business performance. Research by Tharoon & Banu Priya (2024) also indicates that Instagram product promotion boosts consumer purchase intention by influencing consumer's psychological factors and perceived credibility. Himani Devi & Kumar Uniyal (2024) state that purchase intention reflects a consumer's willingness or eagerness to buy a product or service.

Kawan Cerita Outdoor is one of the SMEs that utilizes Instagram to promote its services using creative and AI-powered content. Kawan Cerita Outdoor is an SME specializing in providing hiking tour services and renting hiking equipment. Their recent AI-driven content includes loyal customer testimonials, tips for hiking newcomers, and highlights of their service packages. According to Dias & Duarte (2022), boosting user engagement in digital media depends on meeting audiences' informational, social, and hedonic needs. The informational aspect refers to how clearly the message is understood and relates to the audience's information-seeking, which influences their service choices (Deryl et al., 2023). Kawan Cerita Outdoor analyzes its Instagram audience data—primarily Millennials and Gen Z—and customizes its marketing content to suit their preferences using AI. This integration can enable brands to identify the right message regarding audience demographics and engagement, making campaigns even more effective. Sharma et al., (2024) further emphasize that AI enhances the social aspect by mapping general consumer behavior, allowing marketers to create more socially interactive experiences. Septiarini & Ezra Karamang (2023) also highlights the important of delivering entertaining content to capture audience attention amidst the overwhelming volume of competing content. To capture more attention and increase audience involvement, Kawan Cerita Outdoor integrated animated graphics into its content. By addressing these three dimensions in their content, brands can increase purchase intention (Beyari & Hashem, 2025).



Figure 1. One of Kawan Cerita Outdoor's Animated Marketing Content

The impact of AI-driven marketing on purchase intention has been widely discussed in research. For example, research by Patil et al., (2024) who stated AI allows organizations to examine customer data and make recommendations based on customer interests, leading to more personalized content and an improved user experience. However, few studies have specifically investigated how optimizing basic AI tools, like Gemini, for delivering high-quality marketing content influences purchase intention. This approach is particularly practical and relevant for SMEs, as they often face constraints in both human and financial resources (Indra et al., 2023). This paper highlights the potential of simple and accessible AI technologies to empower SMEs in creating effective and captivating marketing content, which can enhance perceived service quality and subsequently increase purchase intention.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 AI-Driven Marketing

The growing adoption of AI in marketing marks a transformative shift in how companies engage with customers, particularly through social media. AI-driven social media marketing has the potential to revolutionize businesses-to-consumers interaction by enabling the delivery of more personalized, timely, and relevant content and offers (Bose & Thomas, 2020; Millagala, 2023). Social media analytics powered by AI can enhance marketing effectiveness through content optimization, personalized user experiences, and improved social engagement (Beyari & Hashem, 2025). SMEs that effectively interpret consumer sentiment on social media are more capable of adjusting their communication approaches to meet customer expectations (Patil et al., 2024). AI enhances marketing effectiveness by accurately segmenting audiences and leveraging behavioral data to deliver personalized and engaging messages (Himani Devi & Kumar Uniyal, 2024). Moreover, similar to traditional advertising, the use of entertaining content remains vital in digital marketing, helping SMEs stand out in a saturated content

environment and improving both message delivery and audience reception (Septiarini & Ezra Karamang, 2023).

2.1.2 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is a consumer's evaluation of a product or service's overall value (Zeithaml, 1988). This concept is closely linked to perceived value, with research by Fernandez et al., (2017) highlighting how the quality of a service significantly influences its perceived worth. To measure this abstract concept, Parasuraman et al. (2005) proposed five key dimensions: reliability (the ability to consistently and accurately perform the promised service), responsiveness (the willingness to help customers promptly), assurance (employees' knowledge, courtesy, and ability to inspire trust), empathy (a willingness to care for and provide personalized attention to customers), and tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials). Ultimately, a strong perceived quality in products or services empowers consumers to choose a brand over competitors by providing compelling reasons for purchase (Septyani & Roosdhani, 2024).

2.1.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness or desire to purchase a product or service (Himani Devi & Kumar Uniyal, 2024). According to Bushara et al., (2023), in the context of online platforms such as social media, purchase intention reflects the likelihood that a consumer will buy a specific product or service based on their observed or anticipated behavior with a particular vendor or online store (Chiu et al., 2009). Prior to making a purchase, consumers generally engage in a decisionmaking process that includes gathering information and recommendation, evaluating available alternatives, and making a final decision (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006). Various factors, such as consumer's perception of product quality, can significantly influence their intention to purchase the product (Bushara et al., 2023; Chiu et al., 2009).

2.2 Hypothesis Development

2.2.1 AI-Driven Marketing to Perceived Quality

Studies indicate AI-driven social media marketing significantly affects the perceived quality of the products. Yin & Qiu (2021) found that the accuracy, insights, and interactive experience provided by artificial intelligence positively influence how valuable a product is perceived by consumers. Research by Zhang & Li (2023) reveals that user-generated content (UGC) plays a key role in shaping perceived product quality, especially for Millennials and Gen Z. Consumers' perception of the product in social media is shaped by psychological and demographic aspects through marketing content (Tharoon & Banu Priya, 2024).

H1 : There is significant influences of AI-driven marketing to perceived quality

2.2.2 AI-Driven Marketing to Purchase Intention

The impact of AI-driven marketing to purchase intention remains debatable. Jihan et al., (2025) found that content marketing, especially personalized content, significantly enhances purchase intentions. This finding is supported by An & Ngo (2025) who found that AI-powered advertising content significantly impacts purchase intention, mediated by perceived trust in product quality. However, Ananda et al., (2023) and Septiarini & Ezra Karamang (2023) found that there is no significant effect of AI-powered content marketing on purchase intention.

H2 : There is significant influences of AI-driven marketing to purchase intention

2.2.3 Perceived Quality to Purchase Intention

Purchase interest is shaped by a consumer's attitude toward a product, stemming from their confidence in its quality (Gouwendra & Hermeindito, 2023). This statement is supported by Suhaly et al., (2020) and (Imas et al., 2022), who both found a significant positive relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention. However, a study by Jayadi & Maya Ariyanti (2019) found that perceived quality does not significantly affect purchase intention.

H3 : There is significant influences of perceived quality to purchase intention

AI-Driven Marketing to Purchase Intention Mediated by Perceived Quality

There have been several studies discussing the impact of AI-driven marketing on purchase intention mediated by perceived quality. Research by Tharoon & Banu Priya (2024) also indicates that Instagram product promotion boosts consumer purchase intention by influencing psychological factors and perceived credibility of the products. Sari et al., (2020) also found that the informativeness and entertainment value of content positively influence consumers' perceived value of social media advertising, and this perceived value subsequently has a significant impact on purchase intention.

H4 : There is significant influences of AI- driven marketing to purchase intention mediated by perceived quality

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs an exploratory quantitative research approach. The variables examined in this research are AI-driven marketing, perceived quality, and purchase intention. This study employs a research model where AI-driven marketing acts as the independent variable, perceived quality as the mediating variable, and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Figure 2 illustrates this model.

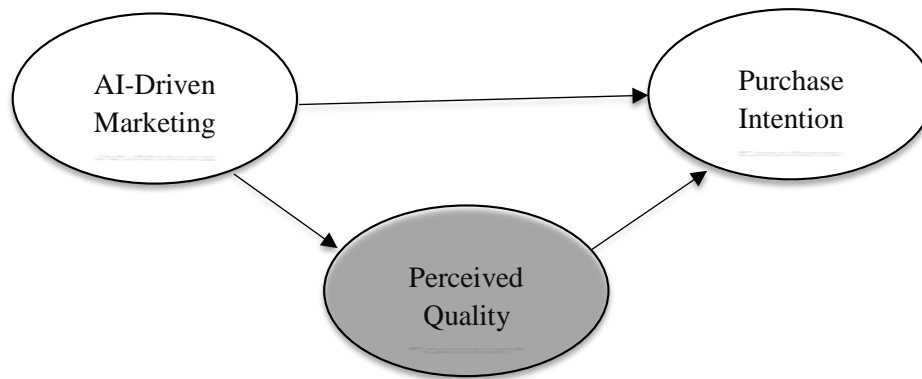


Figure 2. Research Model

The dimensions and indicators of the variables used in this study are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Variable Operationalization

No	Variable	Dimension	Indicators
1	AI-Driven Marketing (Beyari & Hashem, 2025)	Informational	Tailored Communication Relevant Content
2		Social	Enhanced Interaction Audience Engagement
3		Hedonic	Enjoyment and Entertainment Content High Quality Content
4	Perceived Quality (Parasuraman et al., 2005)	Reliable	Professional service
5		Responsiveness	Prompt helpful service
6		Tangibles	Physical appearance facilities
7		Assurance	Trustworthy
8		Empathy	Paying attention to audience's need
9	Purchase Intention (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006)	Transactional intention	Consider to buy
10		Evaluating alternatives	Become an alternative choice
11		Gathering information and recommendation	Search for more information Asking recommendation

Source : Developed by the author (2025)

The population of this study was the audience of Kawan Cerita Outdoor's Instagram account. Due to the large population size, a sample was drawn. The sample was chosen using purposive sampling, a method

requiring selected participants to meet specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2019). Data collection involved distributing online questionnaires (Google Forms) to qualified respondents: Instagram users who had viewed Kawan Cerita Outdoor's AI-powered content marketing. Statements in the questionnaire were rated on a Likert scale from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 4 ('strongly agree'). The data underwent a transformation from an ordinal to an interval scale to ensure its eligibility for subsequent analysis. The sample size was 170 respondents. This number was determined by multiplying the 17 variable indicators in the questionnaire by a multiplier between 5 and 10 (Hair et al., 2014). This sample size is further supported by Ferdinand (2014) who considers 100 to 200 respondents sufficient.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Square (PLS), an approach within Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Before analysis, the collected data underwent validity and reliability tests. Validity tests ensured the instrument accurately measured the intended variables, while reliability tests confirmed consistent results across measurements (Ferdinand, 2014). Hypotheses in the research were tested using a bootstrapping test. Microsoft Excel 2010 and IBM SMART PLS version 3.0 were utilized for data processing.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

This study involved 170 respondents, all of whom were Kawan Cerita Outdoor's Instagram audience who had previously viewed AI-powered marketing content. Data collected via online questionnaires also included the profile of respondents. A detailed description of these respondents' profile is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents' Profile

Profile	Category	Total (n=170)	Percentage
Gender	Male	106	62
	Female	64	38
Age	18 – 24 years old	114	67
	25 – 40 years old	52	31
	More than 40 years old	4	2
Occupation	Student	94	55
	Worker (fulltime and freelance)	47	28
	Business Owner	11	6
	Do not include other category	18	11
Monthly Income	Less than 3 million Rupiah	111	65
	3 – 7 million Rupiah	48	28
	More than 7 million Rupiah	11	6
Instagram Time	everyday	154	90
	More than 3 days	8	5

Access Within A Week	only 1 or 2 days	8	5
Kawan Cerita Outdoor's Instagram Content Views	1 – 10 content	76	45
	More than 10 content	94	55

Source: Processed by the researchers, 2025

Table 2 records the demographic information such as gender, age, occupation, and monthly income. As detailed in Table 2, we see that the group studied was mostly men. There were 106 men, which is 62% of the group. Women made up 38%, with 64 individuals. This is understandable, as mountain hiking is often categorized as an extreme sport. Further analysis of age distribution reveals a striking concentration of youth within the sample. The largest segment comprises individuals aged 18–24 years, making up a significant 67% (114 respondents). This indicates that the respondents of the research are largely reflective of younger consumer segments. Regarding occupation, the data highlights a strong presence of students, who form the largest group at 55% (94 respondents). A substantial majority, 65% (111 individuals), report an income of less than 3 million Rupiah. The predominance of students in the audience helps explain this, as Kawan Cerita Outdoor's service packages are budget-friendly, thus making them reachable for students for their travel plans.

In addition to demographic information, the questionnaire also captured respondents' behavioral patterns, particularly concerning their Instagram usage. Analysis of Instagram access time within a week revealed a high degree of platform engagement, with an overwhelming 90% (154 individuals) accessing Instagram daily. This underscores the platform's significant role in their digital lives. This consistent daily usage strongly reinforces Instagram's effectiveness as a marketing channel for the target audience. Furthermore, concerning Kawan Cerita Outdoor's Instagram content views, 55% (94 individuals) had viewed over 10 contents, while 45% (76 individuals) had viewed between 1 and 10 contents. This high level of content consumption indicates respondents' existing familiarity and active engagement with Kawan Cerita Outdoor's digital presence.

Validity and Reliability Test

Validity Test

The term "valid" in research signifies good or appropriate. Validity can be defined as an effective measure to assess the indicators of the variables a researcher intends to use (Ferdinand, 2014). Model measurement was conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to verify the validity of the research instrument. An indicator variable is considered valid if its factor loading value exceeds 0.5 (Ferdinand, 2014). The CFA results from this study demonstrated that all loading factor values for the constructs (independent, mediating, and dependent variables) were above 0.5. This finding strongly indicates the validity of all indicators utilized in this research.

Table 3. Validity Test

Variable	Variable Construct	Outer Loading Score
AI-Driven Marketing	X1.1	0,848
	X1.2	0,830
	X1.3	0,843
	X2.1	0,805
	X2.2	0,798
	X3.1	0,786
	X3.2	0,851
	X3.3	0,766
Perceived Quality	Z1	0,881
	Z2	0,831
	Z3	0,769
	Z4	0,850
	Z5	0,840
Purchase Intention	Y1	0,905
	Y2	0,908
	Y3	0,880
	Y4	0,904

Source : Processed by the researchers, 2025

From the table below, it can be concluded that all constructs used in the model are valid. The next step to further confirm the instrument's validity involved examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. The parameter for AVE is that its value must be ≥ 0.5 . The table below presents the AVE results for this research model:

Table 4. AVE Score of The Construct

Variable	AVE Score
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AI-Driven Marketing	0,667
Perceived Quality	0,697
Purchase Intention	0,809

Source : Processed by the researchers, 2025

Table 4. indicates that all constructs in this study possess an AVE value greater than 0.50. This finding confirms that the convergent validity criterion has been met.

Reliability Test

Reliability testing using SMARTPLS software can be performed by examining the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for each latent construct. A construct is considered to have a high level of reliability if its Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.6 and its Composite Reliability value is > 0.7 . The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for the latent constructs in this study are presented in the table 5 below.

Table 5. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Score	Composite Reliability Score
AI-Driven Marketing	0,928	0,941
Perceived Quality	0,891	0,920
Purchase Intention	0,921	0,944

Source : Processed by the researchers, 2025

Table 5 indicates that all constructs in this study have Cronbach's Alpha values > 0.6 and Composite Reliability values > 0.7 . This finding confirms that the instrument used in the research is reliable.

Hypothesis Test

This study set out to test four hypotheses: three concerning direct relationships between variables and one exploring a mediating influence. To assess the significance of these hypothesized relationships, a Bootstrapping test was employed. The output from this analysis is presented as t-statistic values (thitung), which are then compared against the t-table value of 1.96 at a 5% significance level. According to Ghozali (2014), if the t-statistic value exceeds the t-table value, the estimated path coefficient is considered statistically significant. Table 4 summarizes the Bootstrapping test results for direct influence in this study.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test for Direct Influence

Variable	<i>Original Sample</i>	t-score	<i>P Values</i>	Conclusion
AI-Driven Marketing -> Perceived Quality	0,858	41,528	0,000	Accepted
AI-Driven Marketing -> Purchase Intention	0,233	1,632	0,103	Rejected
Perceived Quality -> Purchase Intention	0,508	3,765	0,000	Accepted

Source : Processed by the researchers, 2025

The hypothesis testing results, presented in Table 6, demonstrate that AI-driven marketing positively and significantly influences perceived quality. This finding is evidenced by a positive original sample value of 0.858 and a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that an increase in AI-driven marketing leads to an increase in perceived quality. This aligns with the finding of Viki Ahmad Badri & Miftahul Huda (2024) who found that AI-driven marketing positively and significantly influences perceived quality. In social media environments, where consumers cannot directly inspect services, it is crucial to develop clear and highly informative content that allows them to perceive service details. This transparency helps consumers visualize service specifics, which is essential for them to accurately evaluate perceived quality.

Furthermore, the hypothesis test results in Table 6 indicate that AI-driven marketing does not significantly influence purchase intention. This is supported by a P-value of 0.107, which is more than 0.05. Consequently, an improvement in AI-driven marketing does not directly affect an increase in purchase intention. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Septiarini & Ezra Karamang (2023) who found that there is no significant effect of AI-powered content marketing on purchase intention. While personalized content effectively captures audience attention and enhances recall of services, the ultimate buying decision involves a more comprehensive evaluation, encompassing additional critical aspects such as perceived quality and value.

The data in Table 6 also shows that perceived quality positively and significantly influences purchase intention. This finding is substantiated by a positive original sample value of 0.508 and a significance coefficient value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that as perceived quality increases, purchase intention also increases. These findings align with previous research conducted by Imas et al., (2022), which found that perceived service quality influences purchase intention in social media contexts. This finding holds significant practical implications, emphasizing that fostering a strong perception of quality among the target audience is a critical driver for converting interest into actual purchase decisions. This finding strengthens our theoretical understanding of consumer behavior in digital media and highlights perceived quality as a critical driver of buying decisions.

Table 6. summarizes the Bootstrapping test results for the influence of AI-driven marketing on purchase intention in this study mediated by perceived quality.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test for Indirect Influence

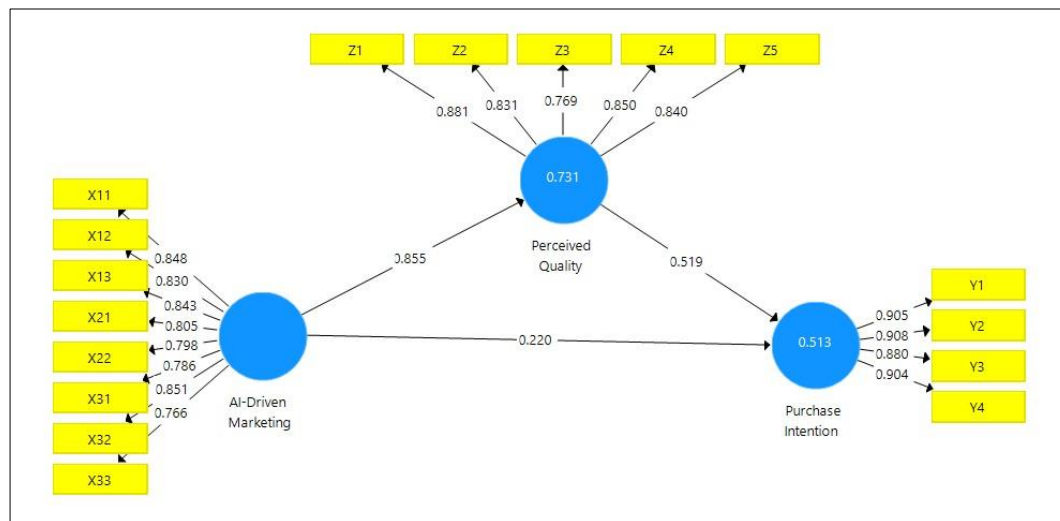
Variable	Original Sample	t-score	P Values	Conclusion
AI-Driven Marketing -> Perceived Quality -> Purchase Intention	0,435	3,779	0,000	Accepted

Source : Processed by the researchers, 2025

Table 6 data indicates that perceived quality successfully mediates in the relationship between AI-driven marketing and purchase intention. This is evidenced by a significance coefficient of 0.435 (p values < 0.05). Perceived quality serves as a full mediator in the relationship between AI-driven marketing and purchase intention, as the direct influence of AI-driven marketing on purchase intention was found to be insignificant. This finding supports the research by Sari et al., (2020), which explained that the informativeness and entertainment value of content positively influence consumers' perceived value of social media advertising, and this perceived value subsequently has a significant impact on purchase intention.

The results of the path diagram for this study are presented in the figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Path Diagram of the Research



Based on the path diagram presented in Figure 2, the greatest path coefficient among all tested relationships is 0.855. This indicates the strongest direct relationship among the tested paths in the model is the influence of AI-driven marketing on perceived quality. This suggests that AI-driven

marketing has a very substantial positive impact on how consumers perceive the quality of the tourism business. Furthermore, the effective delivery of this information must meet their specific needs and background in order to achieve greater impact of their marketing campaigns (Rafieian & Yoganarasimhan, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

This study's findings offer crucial insights into the relationship between AI-driven marketing, perceived service quality, and consumers purchase intention within the tourism business context. The research definitively indicates that AI-driven marketing significantly impacts perceived service quality, but does not impact purchase intention directly. It can be concluded that perceived service quality becomes a full mediator in the relationship between AI-driven marketing and purchase intention. This highlights that the positive influence of AI-driven marketing on a consumer's decision to purchase is entirely channeled through how they perceive the service quality of the tourism business.

The effectiveness of AI in driving purchases is contingent upon its ability to demonstrably improve how consumers perceive the quality of service offered. This underscores the strategic importance of using AI to optimize aspects that directly enhance the perceived service experience, such as personalized communication, efficient information delivery, or tailored content that builds trust and reliability. For SMEs like Kawan Cerita Outdoor, the emphasis should therefore be on leveraging AI to cultivate a superior image of their service quality, as this is the critical pathway to ultimately boosting consumer purchase intentions. This finding helps clarify how AI works its influence, offering practical insights for marketing practitioners in the tourism sector.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, its geographical scope was restricted, as the research was primarily conducted in select large cities of Indonesia, particularly the Palembang area. Since the research focused on a specific region, its results may not be applicable to the other parts of Indonesia or different cultures. New studies should investigate how AI adoption and customer behavior differ across cultures. Second, the reliance on self-reported data collected via online questionnaires introduces the potential for response biases, such as social desirability bias. Participants may provide answers that they perceive as more favorable. Third, the research's scope was limited to three primary variables. Future studies should consider exploring additional AI variables that may also influence purchase intention. Finally, a deeper exploration of the ethical boundaries and implications of AI adoption (e.g., algorithmic bias, copyright, and data security) was beyond its scope. Given the rapid advancements in AI and social media platforms, and their evolving regulatory and ethical landscapes, continuous research is essential to keep pace with technological progress and its broader societal implications.

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