

Evaluation of Instagram's popularity: Brand cue and message appeal as explanatory variables

Putri Anggraini, Muji Gunarto*

Master Management Program, Universitas Bina Darma, Palembang, Indonesia

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*Corresponding author:

mgunarto@binadarma.ac.id

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Abstract

The internet's ascent has transformed digital marketing, with social media platforms like Instagram becoming essential tools. The "Instagrammable" trend has gained traction in the food industry, using visual appeal to drive business success and expand markets. This research investigates the factors influencing Instagram's popularity metrics in the food sector, focusing on South Sumatra. A survey of 250 Instagram users was conducted using accidental sampling. The study assessed various factors on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The findings revealed that brand cue positively impacts selling strategy and information search. Additionally, message appeal positively influences selling strategy and information search but negatively correlates with the popularity of social media messages, suggesting that specific appeals might hinder social media popularity. Conversely, selling strategy and information search positively affect the popularity of social media messages, highlighting the importance of engaging consumers and providing informative content for brand popularity on social platforms. While brand cues do not directly influence the popularity of social media messages, message appeal and brand cues are crucial in shaping consumer interactions on social media. These results offer practical insights into utilizing brand cues and message appeal to cultivate consumer relationships, differentiate brands, and influence purchasing behavior through social media. The study provides valuable guidance for businesses navigating the complex world of social media marketing, emphasizing the importance of tailored messaging and brand presence in driving consumer engagement and brand perception within the competitive food industry.

Introduction

In Palembang, Indonesia, renowned for its culinary heritage, the food industry has grown substantially, featuring traditional dishes from across the country. This growth includes small and medium-scale businesses, underscoring the city's thriving culinary landscape. This compilation provides insights into Palembang's diverse culinary scene, showcasing a multitude of establishments and reflecting the city's rich culinary heritage and entrepreneurial spirit. The city's culinary richness, coupled with its potential for culinary tourism, has spurred rapid growth in the food industry, offering locals and tourists alike an authentic and varied gastronomic experience (Adam & Gunarto, 2021).

In the era of globalization marked by advances in information technology, digital marketing trends have become one of the main factors influencing the development of the global trade industry. The development of digital technology has triggered significant changes in how companies interact with customers, market products, and conduct business as a whole (Aichner et al., 2021). This has become an incentive for the creation of new Internet marketing strategies such as strategic alliances, exclusive point programs, discount coupons, banners, and even previously unused communication strategies, such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Search Engine Marketing (SEM), Social Media Marketing (SMM), or App Store Optimization (ASO) (García et al., 2019).

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Substantial advances in internet technology have led to the growing popularity of social media in various activities of daily life (Nouri et al., 2022). Social media has shaped daily routines, such as how we befriend, communicate, provide and receive services, advertise, buy and sell goods, seek and receive news, and participate in political activities (Kapoor et al., 2018). At the beginning of the development of the commercial internet, the first social media platforms were developed and launched. Over time, both the number of social media platforms and the number of active social media users have increased significantly, making it one of the most important applications of the internet (Wahid & Gunarto, 2022).

In the competitive food media landscape, “Instagrammable” food has become a marketing trend, with millions of visually appealing food images posted on social media every year. The use of social media can positively influence business judgment, increase sales, and increase market share (Philp et al., 2022). As a result, the increased use of social media has resulted in a more crowded and competitive environment. This is important, considering that the average social media user spends 147 minutes per day across platforms (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2023). As a result, one of the main challenges for food marketers is how to effectively garner engagement with their content (e.g. likes, comments, and shares) to increase audience exposure on the platform and improve business performance.

Instagram is one of the most popular social media in the world with 1.35 billion users in 2023. This puts Instagram as the social media with the 4th most users after Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Instagram users as of September 2023 by age are 12% for 13-17 years old, 38.9% for 18-24 years old, 29% for 25-34 years old, 12.4% for 35-44 years old, 4.9% for 45-54 years old, 1.6% for 55-64 years old, and 1.2% for 65 years old onwards. The highest share of Instagram users in Indonesia is 38.9%, aged 18 to 24 years old as of July 2022. Until now, there are around 111.19 million Instagram users in Indonesia, of which 55.4% are women and 44.6% are men (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2023). The advantages of Instagram are that it has a high presence in the online world, high visibility of posts, high engagement rate, target based audience, and emotional interaction. On the other hand, Instagram also has shortcomings such as limited technology, copyright, fake accounts, and social media addiction (Fuciu, 2019). A study offers new scientific insights by examining the antecedents, dimensions, and consequences of customer engagement (CE) in the context of social media. Regarding relational content, customers who want to socialize and build relationships with companies or customers on social media show positive engagement behaviors, namely positive contributions and co-creation. Relational content was found to be most influential compared to infotainment and remunerative content, generating engagement through all social media metrics – social, different, and financial– and leading to marketing results, e.g. words-of-mouth (WOM) and customer loyalty (Kulikovskaja et al., 2023).

The results revealed some differences in the popularity of brand posts for different startups Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Early measurements of popularity measures of likes, comments, and shares or retweets also fared differently (Robson & Banerjee, 2022). Consumer perception of the popularity of brand accounts on Twitter is an added value to a brand found as a moderator in a conceptual framework (Read et al., 2019).

Research on the impact of an inventive service model on consumer affect and purchase intentions in the sports field shows that sports consumers are influenced by the inventive service approach of the service-dominant logic model. This results in an increase in consumer affect and purchase intentions. The abstract and concrete aspects of the service-dominant logic can lead to various variations in sports consumer behavior. This offers an alternative view on consumer behavior processes, as well as the viability of introducing innovative service models for sports and consumer behaviors (Ramadhan & Gunarto, 2021).

This research emphasizes the significance of assessing Instagram’s popularity in the food sector to fill research gaps and provide original insights. Firstly, it brings novelty by delving into Instagram’s popularity within the food sector, an area that has not been extensively explored. Secondly, it fills another gap by thoroughly investigating the relationship between message appeal variables and selling strategy, which has been underexplored. Lastly, the study aims to expand

understanding by examining connections among variables such as brand cue, selling strategy, and information search, which have received limited attention in prior research.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Service Dominant Logic

Service-dominant (S-D) logic, a service-centered orientation that redefines the purpose and process of economic exchange. S-D logic argues for a processual view, through which exchange in pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial economies, can all best be understood in terms of service-for-service exchange (Diallo & Seck, 2018). The theory of service-dominant logic shifts the focus from physical goods exchange to services and from value production to co-creation, involving every party in value creation. It expands the view on exchange participants, viewing each actor as a value creator, emphasizing that value is co-created by all parties, including beneficiaries. This perspective also shows how differing views on exchange and value creation impact approaches to social and environmental needs (Amore et al., 2023). This service-centered view of markets and marketing is based on service-for-service exchange (rather than the more restricted goods-for-money exchange) and establishes an alternative understanding of value creation that emphasizes the systemic and institutional nature of co-created value, rather than being linear and firm-centric (Lee, 2018).

Brand Equity

In 2009, David Aaker introduced the concept of “Managing Brand Equity” which addresses assets and liabilities associated with a brand. This concept became an important foundation in the development of brand equity theory and its application in various contexts. Aaker (2009) classified brand equity assets and liabilities into five main categories: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and other property assets (Theurer et al., 2018). According to Rungtornkiet and Sirinapattapong (2019), brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name, and its symbol that increase or decrease the value provided by a product or service to the company and/or the company's customers. In brand equity theory, the concept of added value related to consumer response to the brand of a product, service, or company becomes the main focus. This theory includes assets and liabilities associated with brand identity, as well as having a differential effect on consumer responses compared to unbranded versions of products or services (Theurer et al., 2018).

Brand Cue (BC)

Brand cue contributes to an understanding of how Instagram users identify and process marketing content, and has practical implications for stakeholders, such as regulators and brands, in ensuring transparency and effectiveness in the disclosure of sponsored content (Boerman & Müller, 2022). Brand cue is a model that describes how people recognize and consider the persuasive purpose of the intended brand. This construct includes persuasive knowledge activation, persuasive goal recognition, commercial or non-commercial discrimination, critical processing, and sales goal recognition (van Berlo et al., 2021). Brand cue is a perceptual signal or clue that consumers use to make decisions or develop attitudes and evaluations towards products and brands. These cues can be extrinsic signals, such as price and brand name, or intrinsic, such as the tangible components of a product that determine its functional performance (Stewart & Perren, 2024).

Company name is a basic component of a company's brand and has a substantial impact on consumer perception, brand identity, and overall business success. It serves as a key brand cue for consumers and influences their perceptions and attitudes towards the company and its products or services. The company name is also an important element in building the company's reputation and credibility in the market. It can convey information about the company's history, values, and position in the industry. In addition, the company name plays a significant role in distinguishing the company from its competitors and creating a unique brand identity (Diallo & Seck, 2018).

Product names play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes towards products. It can convey information about a product's features, benefits, and position within its category, influencing consumer purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. The product name also contributes to the overall brand identity and can affect the success of the product in the market. In addition, the name of the product can affect consumers' perception of quality, value, and relevance, which ultimately affects their desire to buy and repurchase the product (Lidiawaty et al., 2020).

Message Appeal (MA)

Message appeal is an attempt to make a message more interesting, relevant, and persuasive. Message appeals refer to informational or emotional cues used in promotional orders to attract the interest and attention of consumers. Attention, persuade them to like the product or service and influence them to make a purchase. The purpose of a message appeal is to increase the appeal of the message and the effectiveness of communication. Appeal is the fundamental content of the message that audience marketers are trying to communicate and has the power to move them towards communication goals. The two types of message appeal are rational and emotional appeal (Fenton et al., 2023).

Rational attractiveness motivates consumers through the use of reason, facts and information that answer the needs of human cognition and logic. This intends to provide a reason to convince consumers of the attributes and benefits of the product or service can satisfy their needs. Therefore, rational attractiveness generally includes information about price, attributes, benefits, competitive advantages, product popularity, and others. In addition, they must have the ability to understand the message. In this case the consumer uses a central pathway to persuasion that applies rational appeal, resulting in lasting attitudinal change (Lindauer et al., 2020).

Emotional appeal harnesses feelings and emotions to respond to the social and psychological needs of consumers. Emotional attractiveness is more beneficial because it affects the feelings of consumers. These feelings can be further classified into positive and negative, as both can also generate a consumer response. Positive emotional appeals include humor, love, pride, joy, happiness, and more, while negative appeals take advantage of guilt, fear, anger, shame, and more. Emotional messages were found to be more effective than rational ways in stimulating positive attitudes especially for lowly people engagement products to reduce irritation and produce better attitudes towards advertising, branding, and purchase intent and reinforcing brand premiums especially in times of economic downturn (Hongcharu, 2018; Kim et al., 2020).

Selling Strategy (SS)

Sales strategy refers to the strategic choices made by sellers in determining the scope and nature of a personal success strategy. These choices include targeted customer segments, products presented or sold, time allocated to learning new product opportunities, and efforts allocated to serving existing customers. The sellers adapt strategically to the market by defining their strategic domains in terms of geographic coverage, customers, and products, and further devise an action plan to succeed in these selected domains competition (Cheng et al., 2021). Selling strategy construct is a study that involves sales strategies used by sellers to interact with potential customers (Cron et al., 2023). Sales strategy for companies is influenced by various factors, including product characteristics, sales methods, marketing strengths of key opinion leader (KOLs), and identification of direct value from consumers (Hua et al., 2021).

Information Search (IS)

According to consumer behavior theory, information search is the first stage in the consumer decision-making process, where consumers search for information about a product or service before making a purchase decision. Information searches can be done through internal sources (e.g. personal experience) and external sources (e.g. ads, recommendations from friends, or product reviews). This information search process can also be influenced by factors such as individual motivation, level of

involvement in purchases, and risk perception. Information searches can also be active (e.g. proactively seeking information over the internet) or passive (e.g. receiving information inadvertently through advertisements or promotions). This information search process can also be influenced by psychological factors, such as individual needs, motivation, and perception of a brand or product. Information search is an important stage in the consumer decision-making process, where individuals seek information to meet a need or goal, and this process can be influenced by a variety of internal and external factors (Khatwani & Srivastava, 2018).

Brand Cue and Selling Strategy

Brand cues can affect the relationship between a store's service quality and attitudes toward a store's brand. In the absence of perfect information, consumers rely on filters (such as cues, signals) to help make decisions or develop attitudes and evaluations of products and brands. Brand cues are oriented to sales strategies because when comparing a company's profits in the same sales strategy with brand cues, there is always a strategy that has a positive impact (Wu et al., 2022). Strong brand cues can support effective sales strategies in influencing consumer behavior (van Berlo et al., 2021). Brand cue can influence the selling strategy used in marketing messages. A strong brand cue can influence the selling strategy used in social media content. Therefore, brand cue and selling strategy are interrelated in forming effective marketing messages on social media (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2023).

H₁: Brand cue positively influences selling strategy.

Message Appeal and Information Search

Message appeal has an orientation towards information search because marketers must enable supporting information search to process different information resulting in different appeal emphasis (Xiang et al., 2019). The relationship between buyer dependence on facts and fact acceptance is emotion-based, so reliance on facts increases the appeal of emotional advertising (Kemp et al., 2020). Informative messages, such as product reviews or product specifications, can assist consumers in seeking further information about a particular brand or product (Zhu et al., 2022). The appeal used in social media content can affect the level of information sought by consumers. Marketing messages that use a strong appeal message encourage consumers to seek more information about the product or service offered. Therefore, message appeals can affect the level of information sought by consumers through the information search process (Hongcharu, 2018).

H₂: Message appeal positively influences information search.

Brand Cue and Information Search

Brand cue and information search have a significant influence on consumer behavior. Information obtained from brand cues can be a shortcut in consumer decision-making, especially when there is controversy or debate about an issue. Consumers tend to use consistency cue to evaluate product quality, where brand cue can be one of the heuristic cues used in the decision-making process. In addition, information obtained from brand cue can also affect consumer identification of a brand, which in turn will affect purchasing behavior (Vahdati & Voss, 2019). Brand cue can influence the level of information sought by consumers through the information search process. Strong brand cue can affect the level of information sought by consumers because brand cue can influence consumer interest in seeking more information about the product or service offered (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2023). Brand cues have a positive relationship with information search because buyers use schematic inference to identify specific brands (Lindauer et al., 2020).

H₃: Brand cue positively influences information search.

Message Appeal and Selling Strategy

Message appeal has an influence on selling strategy in marketing strategy. Marketers should use different sharing strategies to increase engagement from their posts. Therefore, messages conveyed

through social media can affect a company's sales strategy (Gönsch, 2020). Informative messages, such as product reviews or product specifications, can help consumers in seeking further information about a particular brand or product. Persuasive messages, such as price promotions or discounts, can influence consumer purchasing decisions (Kwak et al., 2019). Message appeal and selling strategy have a close relationship in the context of social media content strategy. Message appeal used in social media content can influence the sales strategy used in marketing messages. Marketing messages that use a strong appeal message tend to influence the sales strategy used. Therefore, message appeals can affect the sales strategies used in social media content (Basu, 2018).
H₄: Message appeal positively influences selling strategy.

Brand Cue and Popularity of Social Media Message (PSMM)

A strong brand cue can increase the popularity of marketing messages on social media, there by influencing the perception and engagement of consumers or potential customers toward the brand or company. Effective strategies in integrating brand cue with social media content can be key to increasing brand popularity on those platforms, shaping positive perceptions, and expanding overall brand reach (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2022). Brand cue has an influence on the popularity of social media. Previous research has shown that when brands are the main focus in posts, their popularity tends to be higher than posts where the brand only appears on the periphery. This is in line with previous findings showing that self-efficacy brands tend to be more successful in attracting the popularity of posts on social media (Robson & Banerjee, 2022). Buyers are more inclined to like and comment on social media messages containing brand cues, thereby increasing the message's popularity (Swani et al., 2021).

H₅: Brand cue positively influences popularity of social media message.

Message Appeal and Popularity of Social Media Message

A strong appeal message can influence the popularity of marketing messages on social media, and affect consumer or potential customer perceptions as well as engagement with a brand or company. In the context of social media, a message's popularity depends not only on the quality of the content but also on the message's ability to trigger interaction, sharing, and support from social media users. Therefore, message appeal can be considered an important factor influencing the popularity of messages on social media platforms, with the potential to create a greater impact and expand the reach of marketing messages (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2023). The message conveyed through social media can affect its popularity. The popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages is affected by the effects of social media marketing. In addition, messages conveyed through social media can affect user engagement and the level of virality of content. The message conveyed through social media can affect the popularity of a brand and the content posted (Bitiktas & Tuna, 2020). Buyers decode the appeal of messages based on considerations of both rational and emotional appeal, thereby increasing the message's popularity (Kim et al., 2020).

H₆: Message appeal positively influences popularity of social media message.

Selling Strategy and Popularity of Social Media Message

The sales strategy used can affect the popularity of marketing messages on social media, affect consumer or potential customer perceptions and engagement with the brand or company. In the context of social media, popular messages can amplify the impact of a sales strategy by creating greater awareness, stimulating customer engagement, and amplifying consumer loyalty through positive reactions and interactions on social media platforms. Thus, the synergy between an effective sales strategy and the popularity of social media messages can be the key to marketing success and customer relationships (Kulikovskaja et al., 2023). Sales strategies have a significant influence on the popularity of social media (Khatwani & Srivastava, 2018). Sales strategies have a significant influence on the popularity of social media. A study of the social media behavior of container shipping companies found that emotional appeal in messages increases engagement rates

(Philp et al., 2022). Buyers decode direct purchase invitations embedded in social media messages, thereby increasing the popularity of the message (Swani et al., 2021).

H₇: Selling strategy positively influences popularity of social media message.

Information Search and Popularity of Social Media Message

The psychological imperitation and engagement of social media in platform algorithms, provides further understanding of how such engagement can influence information-seeking behavior. Collectively, these studies indicate that the popularity of social media can play a crucial role in influencing information-seeking behavior, by providing insights and influences that can shape consumer perceptions and decisions (Wu et al., 2022). Information search has a significant influence on the popularity of social media messages. The information presented in social media messages can affect how popular those messages are among users. Messages that are informative and provide added value to users tend to be more popular than messages that are less informative (Read et al., 2019). Buyers aim to express their need to share information, enhance self-esteem, gain social benefits, and demonstrate expertise by sharing informative brand messages. This motivation tends to increase when audiences decode messages containing cues and links that aid in information retrieval (Zhu et al., 2022).

H₈: Information search positively influences popularity of social media message.

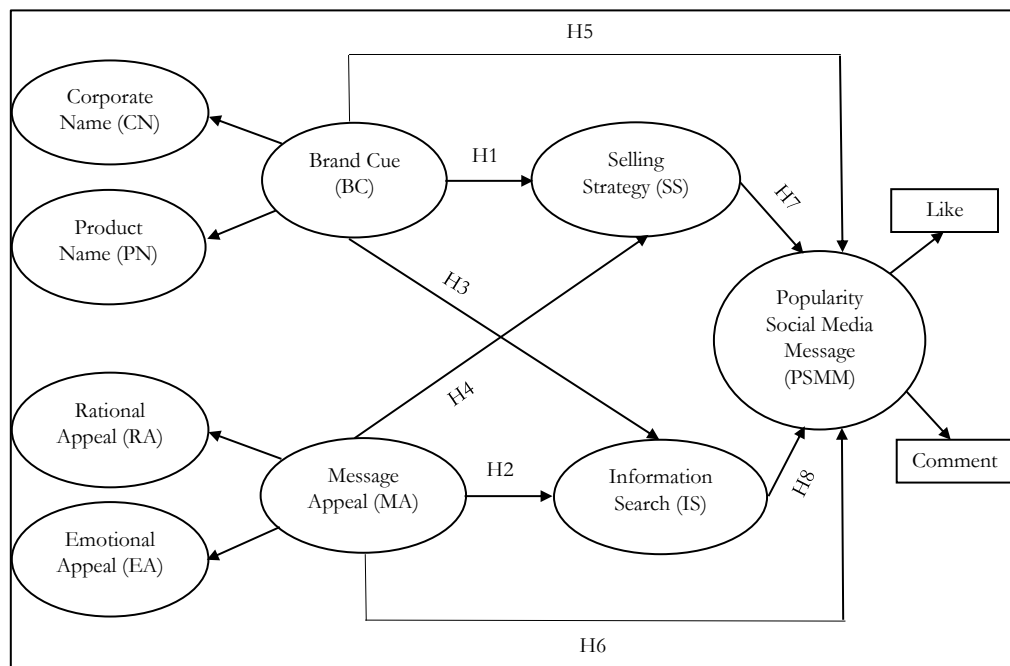


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Methods

This research was conducted by disseminating questionnaires directly to selected respondents. The use of Instagram has been a tremendous force in defining and advancing the food sector. Along with the development of technology and widespread internet penetration, restaurant owners, cafes, and food vendors are increasingly utilizing this social media platform as an effective means to promote and expand the reach of their business. The population in this study is Instagram users in Indonesia with a total of 111.19 million people. The sample unit in this study was Instagram users in South Sumatra in the food sector. The number of respondents was taken as many as 250 respondents. In determining the sample, Hair formula is used because the size of the population is not precisely known. In his book titled *Multivariate Data Analysis*, Hair et al. (2016) explained that for a study, the required sample size considered to be representative should be 5-10 times the number of indicators or a minimum of 100 samples.

The sampling technique used is accidental sampling. Subject selection methods that are easily available for samples are known as convenient, incidental, or incidental sample selection methods. In this method, the researcher tends to select sample subjects that are available in the vicinity or that do not need to follow a typical or complicated process (Shukla, 2020). Accidental sampling, also known as convenience sampling, is primarily used in quantitative research to achieve broad understanding. It prioritizes generalization to ensure representation of the population, aligning with key objectives and assumptions. However, this method may lead to unequal participation opportunities and non-generalizable results due to researchers selecting easily accessible subjects (Gönsch, 2020). The scale technique in this study uses the Likert scale with a choice of scale 7 (very strongly agree) to a score of 1 (very strongly disagree). More clearly studied variables, operational definitions, indicators, scales and reference sources can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Constructs Measurement

Research Variables	Description	Indicators	Item Ordered
Popularity of Social Media Message (PSMM) (Swani et al., 2021)	The level of fame of a message from social media used. It can be the number of likes and comments in a post displayed on a social media account.	1. Number of likes and comments 2. The number of links is spread 3. Number of visitors to the post	25 – 28
Corporate Name (CN) (Fuciu, 2019)	A brand owned by a company that produces products or services.	1. Good name 2. Widely known 3. Memorable	1 – 4
Product Name (PN) (Cron et al., 2023)	A name, term, mark, emblem or design or combination of these, which is expected to identify the goods or services of a group of sellers and is expected to distinguish those goods or services from competing products.	1. Attribute 2. Benefit 3. Value	5 – 8
Rational Appeal (RA) (Basu, 2018)	Attractiveness based on the effectiveness and efficiency of a product aimed at consumers and distributors.	1. Rational consideration of purchases 2. Tendency precedes the importance of functions	9 – 12
Emotion Appeal (EA) (Boerman & Müller, 2022)	The appeal of advertising is more focused on psychological needs.	1. The tendency to attach importance to desires based on mood 2. Expressive and impulsive	13 – 16
Selling Strategy (SS) (Hongcharu, 2018)	Planning with full calculation so that sales of a product can increase.	1. Type of purchase (online/offline) 2. The approach between seller and buyer	17 – 20
Information Search (IS) (Kapoor et al., 2018)	Activities carried out to obtain information.	1. Number of information seekers 2. Social benefits 3. The information needs that are met are increasingly informative	21 – 24

To test the hypothesis is carried out with the LISREL 8.70 analysis technique. After testing, it was concluded that all variance and questionnaire items were valid and reliable. All LISREL 8.70 assumption tests are also met. Measurement model result will be presented in Table 3 and 4 below.

Results and Discussion

The respondents in this study are Instagram users in South Sumatra in the food sector, totaling 250 individuals. The description of the respondents in this research can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents Profile

Description	Category	Frequency (N = 250)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	54
	Female	115	46
Age (years)	13 - 17	12	4.8
	18 - 24	123	49.2
	25 - 35	84	33.6
	45 - 54	25	10
	55 - 64	6	2.4
	>65	0	0
Occupation	Student	10	4
	University Student	75	30
	Employee	78	31.2
	Enterpreneur	30	12
	Civil Servant	29	11.6
	Teacher	10	4
	Housewife	3	1.2
	Other	15	6
Most frequently used social media	WhatsApp	96	38.4
	Instagram	108	43.2
	Facebook	14	5.6
	Tiktok	24	9.6
	Twitter	8	3.2

From the data in Table 2, based on the classification of gender, it is known that the majority of Instagram users in South Sumatra who have made transactions in the food sector are dominated by males. Based on the age classification, it is known that the majority of Instagram users in South Sumatra who have made transactions in the food sector are dominated by the age group of 18-24 years old. Based on the occupation classification, it is known that the majority of Instagram users in South Sumatra who have made transactions in the food sector are dominated by employees. Based on the classification of frequently used social media, it is known that the majority of Instagram users in South Sumatra who have made transactions in the food sector do indeed frequently access Instagram.

Measurement Model Examination

Analysis of measurement models is carried out with a view to evaluating the validity and reliability of the indicators applied to describe the hypothesized or formed constructs. The purpose of this test is to form a suitable model of an instrument. The validity test is carried out with the aim of showing the extent to which the scale applied can measure what should be measured. Meanwhile, reliability tests measure the degree of consistency of respondents' answers to latent variables, namely the extent to which the measures are free of random errors.

Analysis of measurement models on each variable was carried out by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) run by LISREL 8 program. Confirmatory factor analysis is used by looking at the loading factor. The value of the loading factor that is considered good is usually ≥ 0.5 . This value indicates that the observation variable has a strong relationship with the measured latent factor.

The reliability test is carried out by calculating construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) with the criterion of CR value is considered good if > 0.7 , while AVE value is considered good if > 0.5 according to Sarmento and Costa (2019). The CR and AVE values are calculated by the following formula:

$$CR = \frac{(\Sigma\lambda)^2}{(\Sigma\lambda)^2 + \Sigma\epsilon}, \Sigma\epsilon = \Sigma(1 - \lambda^2) \quad (1)$$

where $(\Sigma\lambda)^2$ is the sum of the squares of the factor coefficients; $\Sigma\epsilon^2$ is the sum of squares of the residual (error).

$$AVE = \Sigma\lambda^2 / (\Sigma\lambda^2 + \Sigma\epsilon) \quad (2)$$

where $\Sigma\lambda^2$ is the sum of squares of the factor coefficients in the model; $\Sigma\epsilon^2$ is the sum of squares of the residual (error).

The CFA model will be generated through a series of steps until it achieves CFA measurement model conformity, which means it meets a number of conformity criteria to ensure the validity and reliability of the model.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test

Variables	Indicator	Loadings	CR	AVE
Brand cue (BC)	BC1	0.74	0.90	0.56
	BC2	0.80		
	BC3	0.75		
	BC4	0.58		
	BC5	0.73		
	BC6	0.86		
	BC7	0.82		
	BC8	0.67		
Message appeal (MA)	MA1	0.59	0.82	0.36
	MA2	0.67		
	MA3	0.60		
	MA4	0.51		
	MA5	0.58		
	MA6	0.63		
	MA7	0.59		
	MA8	0.62		
Selling strategy (SS)	SS1	0.85	0.87	0.62
	SS2	0.81		
	SS3	0.82		
	SS4	0.68		
Information search (IS)	IS1	0.70	0.84	0.58
	IS2	0.79		
	IS3	0.76		
	IS4	0.80		
Popularity of social media message (PSMM)	PSMM1	0.88	0.90	0.70
	PSMM2	0.86		
	PSMM3	0.87		
	PSMM4	0.73		

Based on result of Table 3, there are no indicators with loading factor values below 0.5 so all indicators are valid. Overall, the reliability value of all variables is considered reliable because the CR value > 0.7 and AVE value > 0.5 . However, in the MA variable, the AVE < 0.5 value is declared unreliable even though the CR value is > 0.7 . Furthermore, goodness of fit (GoF) model analysis was carried out. The results of the GoF test are shown as in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that the final CFA model meets almost all statistical goodness of fit (GoF) criteria, such as RMSEA, TLI, CFI, PGFI, and PNFI except for GFI. GFI values are considered excellent if they are equal to or greater than 0.95, good between 0.9 and 0.95, less good between 0.8 and 0.9, and bad if less than 0.8 (Sarmiento & Costa, 2019). The GFI value in this study is 0.8 so that the value is included in the category of not good but in this condition it is still acceptable so that this research model is considered fit.

Table 4. Result of Goodness of Fit Test

Fit Index	Goodness of Fit	Criterion	Cut-off value	Decision
Absolute Fit	RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.07	Fit
	GFI	≥ 0.90	0.80	Marginal Fit
Incremental Fit	TLI	≥ 0.90	0.97	Fit
	CFI	≥ 0.90	0.97	Fit
Parsimony Fit	PGFI	≥ 0.60	0.68	Fit
	PNFI	≥ 0.60	0.86	Fit

Structural Model Examination

From several hypotheses proposed, the results of the full model hypothesis testing can be seen in Figure 2.

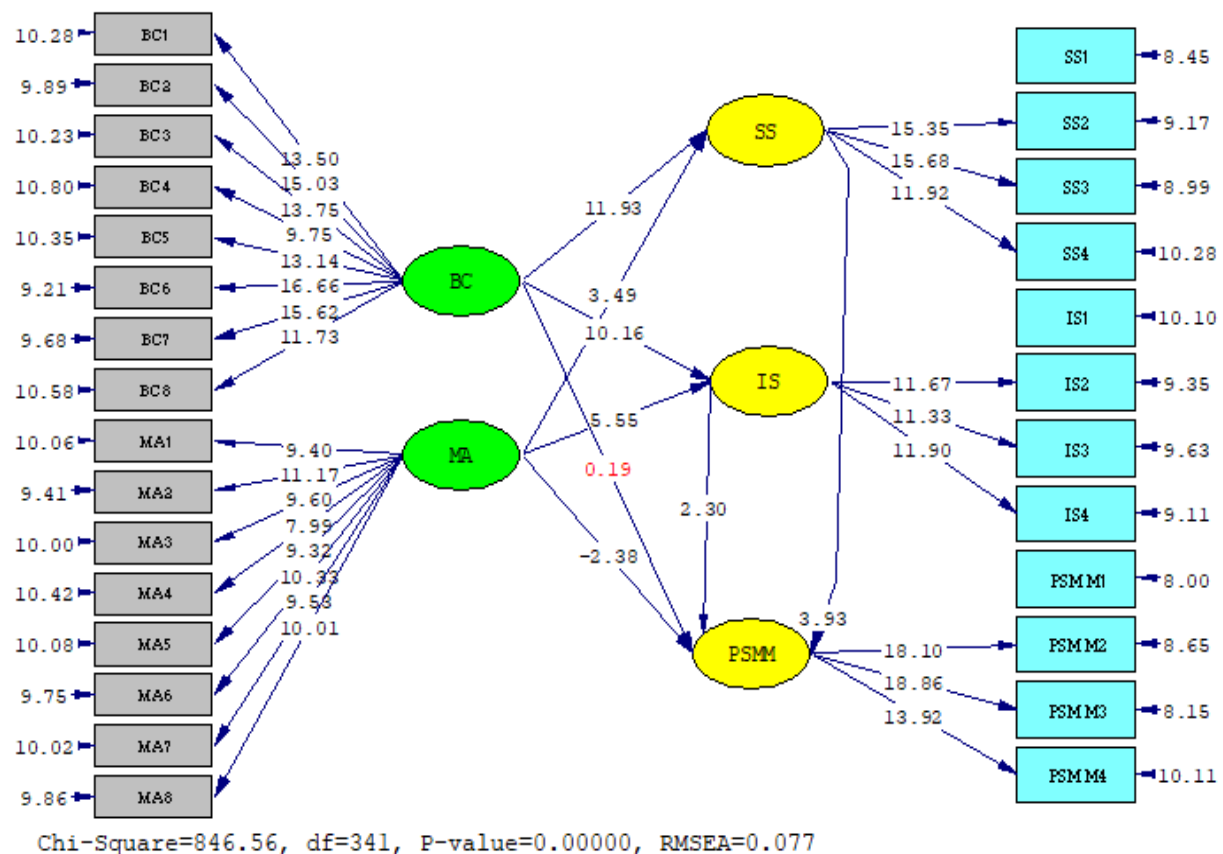


Figure 2. Full Model Test Result

Figure 2 is the test result for the measurement model and the structural model. All parameters are tested with statistical t-tests where the test is significant if the t-value obtained is more than 1.96 and vice versa if the t-count value obtained is smaller than 1.96 then the parameter is not statistically significant. The test results of each relationship between variables are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship between Variables	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	BC → SS	11.93	0.000***	Accepted
H2	MA → IS	5.55	0.000***	Accepted
H3	BC → IS	10.16	0.000***	Accepted
H4	MA → SS	3.49	0.000***	Accepted
H5	BC → PSMM	0.19	0.425	Rejected
H6	MA → PSMM	-2.38	0.010**	Rejected
H7	SS → PSMM	3.93	0.000***	Accepted
H8	IS → PSMM	2.30	0.012*	Accepted

Note. BC = Brand cue; MA = Message appeal; IS = Information search; SS = Selling strategy; PSMM = Popularity of social media message.

***p < 0.000; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.

Based on Table 5, it can be seen that of the 8 (eight) hypotheses proposed, there are 7 (seven) accepted hypotheses (significant) and 2 (two) not significant hypothesis. Here's an explanation of each hypothesis:

1. The t-value of 11.93 indicates a positive relationship between BC and SS. Statistically, it is affirmed that BC significantly impacts SS, as the t-value surpasses the critical value from the t-table (1.96). This implies that higher BC values correspond to improved SS.
2. With a t-value of 5.55, there exists a positive association between MA and IS. According to statistical analysis, it can be asserted that MA significantly influences IS, given that the t-value exceeds the critical value (1.96). This suggests that higher MA values are linked to enhanced IS.
3. The positive connection between BC and IS is evidenced by a t-value of 10.16. Statistically, it can be concluded that BC significantly affects IS, as the t-value surpasses the critical threshold (1.96). This implies that higher BC values are associated with better IS.
4. A t-value of 3.49 reveals a positive influence between MA and SS. Statistically, it can be affirmed that MA significantly impacts SS, as the t-value is greater than the critical value (1.96). This suggests that higher MA values correspond to improved SS.
5. The t-value of 0.19 suggests no statistical significance between BC and PSMM, as it is lower than the critical value (1.96). This implies that BC does not exert influence on PSMM.
6. Despite a negative t-value of -2.38, statistical analysis affirms that MA significantly affects SS, as the t-value exceeds the critical value (1.96). This indicates that higher MA values are associated with either lower PSMM. Because the test is positive in one direction, this hypothesis is rejected.
7. The positive relationship between SS and PSMM is supported by a t-value of 3.93. Statistically, it can be asserted that SS significantly influences PSMM, as the t-value surpasses the critical threshold (1.96). This suggests that higher SS values correspond to better PSMM.
8. A positive influence between IS and PSMM is indicated by a t-value of 2.30. Statistically, it can be concluded that IS significantly impacts PSMM, as the t-value exceeds the critical threshold (1.96). This implies that higher IS values are linked to improved PSMM.

Brand Cue, Selling Strategy, and Information Search

Brand cue is a particular element or characteristic of a brand that is used to influence consumer perception and response to the brand. Brand cue can also be used to build brand awareness and differentiate a brand from competitors. For example, the prominence of a particular brand's logo or colors in social media posts can help consumers identify that brand and differentiate it from other brands (Rungsisawat & Sirinapatpokin, 2019). The results of the research proved that BC had a significant positive effect on SS (H1 supported) and IS (H3 supported). These findings are relevant to the findings from the study of (Wu et al., 2022) that BC has an orientation with SS because when comparing the profits of companies in the same SS with BC, there is always a strategy that has a positive impact. This indicates that BC plays a significant role in the marketing strategies of a company. With its correlation to SS, BC can be the key to creating effective strategies to boost company profits. This finding is also in line with previous research that BC has a significant effect

on IS. IS obtained from BC can be a shortcut in consumer decision-making. These findings support the importance of BC in influencing consumer decisions. BC provides information that serves as shortcuts for consumers in product evaluations, serving as heuristic cues aiding in the evaluation process. Moreover, BC information also influences consumer brand identification, ultimately affecting purchasing behavior. Consumers tend to use consistency cue to evaluate product quality, where BC can be one of the heuristic cues used in the decision-making process. In addition, information obtained from BC can also influence consumer identification of a brand, which will ultimately influence purchasing behavior (Vahdati & Voss, 2019).

Message Appeal, Selling Strategy, and Information Search

The results proved that MA had a significant positive effect on SS (H2 supported) and IS (H4 supported). The intertwining relationship between message appeal and consumer information search underscores the pivotal role marketers play in facilitating the acquisition of supporting information. This means supporting previous research findings that message appeal has an orientation towards information search because marketers must enable supporting information search to process different information resulting in different appeal emphasis (Xiang et al., 2019) and previous research findings that messages with emotional appeal can influence the level of consumer information search, prompting them to seek further information about the promoted products or services (Amore et al., 2024). Considering that companies prioritize information sharing, utilizing MA through social media platforms can significantly influence the IS behaviors of consumers or customers. Companies use IS more often than they share commercial sales. Therefore, MA through social media can affect the IS required by consumers or customers (Bitiktas & Tuna, 2020).

Brand Cue, Message Appeal, Selling Strategy, Information Search, and Popularity of Social Media Message

PSMM refers to the level of engagement and interaction received by a message on a social media platform. This can be measured through metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and overall reach. A popular PSMM is one that resonates with an audience, generates a high level of interaction, and may go viral, reaching a wider audience. The results proved that SS and IS had a significant positive effect on PSMM, so it could be stated that H7 and H8 were accepted. The importance of effective social media strategies, such as providing high-quality content and actively interacting with users, has been proven to have a significant impact on increasing user engagement and influencing consumer purchasing behavior. This finding is relevant to the finding that effective SS on social media, such as providing high-quality content and interacting with users, can increase PSMM and influence consumer buying behavior (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). The information conveyed through social media messages can impact the level of PSMM. Information that provides added value and is informative to users tends to be preferred over less informative. This finding is also in line with previous research that IS presented in social media messages can influence PSMM among users. IS that are informative and provide added value to users tend to be more popular than IS that are less informative. In addition, research also shows that IS that is relevant and useful to users has a greater likelihood of becoming popular on social media (Cheng et al., 2021). According to Dabbous and Barakat (2020), 70% of consumers have visited social media sites for information and nearly half of those consumers have made purchasing decisions based on the information they access through social media sites.

In addition, MA has a significant negative influence on PSMM (H6 is not supported). A research explains that MA delivered through social media can affect PSMM and consumer interaction. An engaging, high-quality MA can increase the motivation of social media users to engage and share such content, which in turn can increase PSMM (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). However, the results of this research state that the influence between MA and PSMM is significantly negative. Two variables have a significant negative relationship, it means that a change in one variable is related to an opposite change in the other, and this relationship has statistical significance. In the context of this relationship between MA and PSMM, it can be interpreted that the higher or stronger the MA the lower or weaker the PSMM, or vice versa. That is, there is a

tendency that a message with a certain appeal can reduce its popularity on social media, and this relationship is considered statistically significant (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). Significant negative results were obtained because the AVE value of this variable is < 0.5 , namely 0.36. This value is considered sufficient but still acceptable. According to Hair et al. (2016) in his book *Multivariate Data Analysis*, AVE values < 0.5 can be acceptable depending on the context of the research and its objectives.

The results of the latest research turned out to prove that BC has no significant effect on PSMM (H5 rejected). This is not in line with previous research that when BC is the main focus in posts, its popularity tends to be higher than posts where the brand only appears on the periphery. This is not in line with previous findings showing that self-effacing brands tend to be more successful in attracting the popularity of posts on social media (Robson & Banerjee, 2022). PSMM is not solely determined by BC, but also by user interaction and the characteristics of the content displayed. Thus, managing user interaction and engaging content becomes the primary key in influencing the level of user engagement and PSMM. This study highlights that brand cue does not dominate in creating popularity on social media platforms, and other factors such as user interaction and content characteristics play a greater role in influencing PSMM (Nouri et al., 2022).

Implication and Conclusion

The results concluded that BC had a significant positive influence on SS and IS, MA was found to have a significant positive effect on SS and IS, but had a significant negative influence on PSMM, suggesting that messages with particular appeal can reduce their popularity on social media and vice versa. SS and IS have had a significant positive impact on PSMM, affirming the importance of consumer engagement and sharing informative information in increasing a brand's popularity on social media platforms. Although BC has no significant effect on PSMM, MA, and BC are emerging as important elements in influencing consumer interaction on social media. These results provide a practical guide to understanding the role BC and MA play in building relationships with consumers, differentiating brands, and influencing purchase behavior through social media (Kwak et al., 2019; van Berlo et al., 2021).

The consumer engagement through SS and IS, in turn, has a positive impact on PSMM, emphasizing the importance of sharing valuable information to enhance brand popularity on social media platforms. BC and MA also emerge as key elements in building relationships with consumers, potentially distinguishing brands and influencing purchasing behavior. These implications highlight the need for companies to carefully design content strategies, understand consumer dynamics on social media, and wisely leverage BC and MA to strengthen their presence in the digital era (Theurer et al., 2018). This involves identifying unique and interesting BC elements, comparative studies across social media platforms, as well as adapting to changing trends and market needs to remain relevant and effective in interactions with consumers.

This study was not without limitations. Firstly, concerning population and sample, the use of the South Sumatra population is extensive, with a sample size of 250 individuals. Secondly, the sampling technique used is accidental sampling. Thirdly, there is a relatively low AVE value. For future research, consider expanding the population coverage with a larger sample and exploring implementation in other regions. Additionally, broaden sampling techniques using methods like purposive sampling to enhance representativeness. Improve the relatively low AVE value by considering other relevant factors. These enhancements aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field.

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