

Social Media Content Marketing and Purchase Intention: An Analysis of the Mediating Role of Tourists' Emotional Engagement in MSME Products

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze: (1) the direct effects of social media content marketing on emotional engagement, perceived informativeness, and purchase intention; (2) the direct effects of emotional engagement and perceived informativeness on purchase intention; and (3) the indirect effect of social media content marketing on purchase intention through the two mediating variables. This study employed a quantitative approach. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 200 domestic tourists purchasing MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. The sample was determined using purposive sampling based on specific criteria. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software to examine the relationships among variables. The findings reveal that social media content marketing significantly enhances both emotional engagement and perceived informativeness but does not directly influence purchase intention. Conversely, emotional engagement positively and significantly affects purchase intention, whereas perceived informativeness shows no significant direct effect. The mediation analysis indicates that emotional engagement serves as a significant mediator in linking social media content marketing to tourists' purchase intention, whereas perceived informativeness, although positive, fails to mediate.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute significantly to Indonesia's economic growth, accounting for approximately 60.5% of the national GDP and employing more than 96% of the workforce (Bakrie *et al.*, 2024). Region-based MSMEs specializing in local products, such as culinary goods and handicrafts, are an integral part of developing culture-based tourism destinations. However, they face challenges in adapting to digitalization. To address these challenges, one possible approach is to leverage advancements in the digital sphere through social media marketing (Erwita *et al.*, 2021), which has become one of the key strategies for enhancing brand awareness and attracting new customers (Siamagka *et al.*, 2015).

In today's rapidly expanding digital economy, social media marketing has emerged as a primary channel for marketing communication at both global and domestic levels (Yuan *et al.*, 2021; Haris, 2024). For MSMEs, social media marketing is particularly effective in stimulating consumer purchasing behavior (Suherman & Susan, 2022). It enables them to introduce products, build customer relationships, and strengthen their brands (Raharjo, 2020). This is mainly due to the growing integration of social media into everyday life, offering businesses and organizations new opportunities to increase brand visibility and attract consumer interest in purchasing (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

In recent years, social media marketing has become a dominant strategy within the digital marketing communication landscape, driven by the rising penetration of social media among global and

domestic consumers (Datu, 2023). Digital content marketing allows firms to deliver information that ultimately influences purchase intention (Hasani *et al.*, 2023). Social media also provides opportunities for businesses, including MSMEs, to establish two-way interactions with consumers by delivering informative, emotional, and easily shareable content (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Dirwan *et al.*, 2025). Several studies have shown that the quality of social media marketing content significantly impacts purchase intention, either directly or indirectly through specific psychological constructs (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Manzoor *et al.*, 2020; Schoner-Schatz *et al.*, 2021). However, the literature also presents mixed findings: some researchers found that the direct influence of social media marketing on purchase intention is not always significant, depending on contextual factors such as consumer characteristics, industry type, and the quality of digital interactions (Chan *et al.*, 2020; Ellitan *et al.*, 2022). Further, prior studies have examined how social media marketing affects e-WoM, trust, and purchase intention (Ngandoh & Zaenal, 2024) as well as the role of celebrity endorsers (Kombongkila *et al.*, 2023), but with limited focus on the specific role of social media content marketing. Other research also suggests that purchase intention is driven more by consumer needs than by their behaviors (Apasrawirote & Yawised, 2022). These gaps highlight the need for more complex modeling, particularly by considering psychological mediating variables that may bridge the relationship between social media content and consumer purchase behavior.

Within this context, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is adopted as the grand theory to explain how purchase intention is shaped through the interaction of beliefs, attitudes, and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Emotional engagement is identified as a key construct linking social media content marketing to purchase intention. Emotional engagement refers to consumers' affective involvement with content, which plays a critical role in shaping attitudes and purchase intentions (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). TRA posits that behavioral intention is influenced not only by rational information but also by affective factors that shape consumer evaluations. To support this framework, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory is employed to illustrate how external stimuli, in the form of social media content marketing (SMCM), influence consumers' internal responses, emotional engagement (affective) and perceived informativeness (cognitive), which in turn shape purchase intention as a behavioral response. Previous studies confirm that emotional engagement has a stronger role than rational information in driving purchase intention, especially in content-based marketing (Cheung *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, consumer engagement has been found to significantly mediate the relationship between content marketing and purchase intention, with a Sobel test statistic of 2.02 ($p < 0.05$), reinforcing the argument that engagement amplifies the effect of social media marketing on purchase intention (Meki Munawar *et al.*, 2024). These findings confirm that emotional engagement is not only directly influenced by social media content marketing but also acts as a significant mediator in shaping purchase intention (Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Wijaya & Susilawaty, 2023).

Nevertheless, many MSMEs have yet to fully capitalize on social media's potential, particularly region-based MSMEs in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. Some still rely heavily on conventional strategies and thus fail to expand their markets digitally (Wartika *et al.*, 2023). This is evident in local MSMEs producing culinary goods and handicrafts in these regions, where social media marketing remains underutilized. Consequently, some MSMEs remain focused on offline marketing, resulting in declining sales revenue. This situation motivates the present study to examine more closely the role of social media content marketing in enhancing the purchase intention of MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. Accordingly, this research aims to investigate the effect of social media content marketing on tourists' purchase intention for MSME products in these two districts, with particular attention to the mediating roles of emotional engagement and perceived informativeness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach grounded in positivism. The positivist-based quantitative approach assumes that reality is fixed, objective, and measurable through scientific instruments (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, the researcher used research instruments such as questionnaires, and data analysis was conducted using quantitative methods to test the predetermined hypotheses. The research was carried out in Tana Toraja and North Toraja Regencies, with the study subjects being consumers of local MSME products, particularly domestic tourists. The choice of domestic tourists as the unit of analysis was based on the consideration that this segment represents the primary target market for MSMEs in these cultural tourism destinations.

The study population comprised all domestic tourists who purchased or interacted with MSME products in the two regencies. The sample size was determined based on the minimum requirements for quantitative research using multivariate analysis, which suggests five to ten times the number of indicators in the research instrument (Ghozali, 2016). With a total of 20 items representing four research variables—Social Media Content Marketing, Emotional Engagement, Perceived Informativeness, and Purchase Intention—the minimum required sample size ranged from 100 to 200 respondents. To strengthen generalizability and improve model estimation accuracy, the study employed 200 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with criteria including: (1) domestic tourists who had visited Tana Toraja and/or North Toraja within the past year, and (2) those who had purchased local MSME products in these regions (e.g., traditional food, handicrafts, or souvenirs).

Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to respondents to gather the required information. The questionnaire consisted of logically structured items related to the research problem. Respondents were asked to provide answers to statements using a five-point Likert scale (1–5) to generate interval data that could be assigned appropriate scores (Sugiyono, 2016). For data analysis, this study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures). SEM-AMOS was selected because it allows testing complex causal relationships among latent variables while simultaneously accounting for both direct and indirect effects via mediating variables. In addition, SEM enables testing both the measurement and structural models, making it suitable for research aimed at developing and validating a theoretical framework. The SEM analysis stages included: Construct validity testing through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Instrument reliability testing using Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Structural model testing to examine the significance of relationships among variables based on the Critical Ratio (CR) and p-values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study involved 200 domestic tourists who purchased MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja; Table 1 presents the distribution of respondent characteristics. The analysis results indicate that 41.5% were male and 58.5% were female. Based on age, 21% of respondents were under 31 years old, 40.5% were between 31 and 45 years old, 34% were between 46 and 60 years old, and 4.5% were over 60 years old. Furthermore, regarding educational background, 21.5% of respondents had completed senior high school or its equivalent, 6% held a diploma, 40% held a bachelor's degree, 30% held a master's degree, and 2.5% held a doctoral degree. In addition, purchasing behavior for MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja showed varied patterns: 17% reported rarely purchasing, 36.5% occasionally purchasing, 29% frequently purchasing, and 17.5% very frequently purchasing MSME products as souvenirs when visiting Tana Toraja and North Toraja.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Tourists (n = 200)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	83	41.5
	Female	117	58.5
Age	< 31 years	42	21.0
	31 – 45 years	81	40.5
	46 – 60 years	68	34.0
	> 60 years	9	4.5
Educational Level	Senior High School	43	21.5
	Diploma	12	6.0
	Bachelor's	80	40.0
	Master's	60	30.0
Purchasing Behavior	Doctorate	5	2.5
	Rarely	34	17.0
	Occasionally	73	36.5
	Frequently	58	29.0
	Very Frequently	35	17.5

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025

This study analyzed four variables, namely social media content marketing, emotional engagement, perceived informativeness, and purchase intention. The descriptive analysis of these variables was conducted to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions, specifically domestic tourists purchasing MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja, and to examine the indicators for each variable. Based on Table 2, the research variables — social media content marketing, emotional engagement, perceived informativeness, and purchase intention — were generally rated positively by respondents.

Table 2. Variable Description

Variable	Number of Items	Mean
Social media content marketing	6	4.09
Emotional engagement	4	4.06
Perceived informativeness	4	4.09
Purchase intention	6	4.09

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025

The variable of social media content marketing, measured with six items, had mean scores ranging from 4.07 to 4.11, with an overall average of 4.13. These results indicate that respondents perceived the observed social media marketing content as engaging, relevant, and positive. Such content not only entertained users but also served as a medium to showcase the uniqueness and diversity of Toraja's local products, thereby encouraging tourists to continue following tourism developments in Toraja.

The variable of emotional engagement, measured with four items, yielded mean scores of 4.03-4.11 (overall mean 4.06). This finding reflects respondents' positive emotional involvement. For instance, they felt joy, enthusiasm, and even pride, which in turn motivated them to share the content with others.

The perceived informativeness variable, measured with four items, had mean scores ranging from 4.05 to 4.13, with an overall mean of 4.09. This suggests that respondents considered the information presented sufficient to help tourists understand the characteristics of MSME products in Toraja and to serve as a trusted source of information about them.

Finally, the purchase intention variable, measured with six items, had mean scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.15, with an overall average of 4.09. These results indicate relatively high purchase intentions for MSME products among respondents in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. Respondents demonstrated a tendency to choose MSME products for future purchases, a willingness to try newly offered products, continued consideration even if the price was slightly higher, and an intention to recommend MSME products from Tana Toraja and North Toraja to others.

Table 3. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Variable	Item	Factor Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
<i>Social media content marketing</i>	Marketing content on Toraja MSME products provides valuable information for me as a tourist	0.619	0.518	0.864	0.949
	Toraja MSME content helps me to learn about local products in Toraja	0.657			
	Toraja MSME content makes me understand the uniqueness of Toraja products	0.740			
	Toraja MSME social media content is attractive to view	0.757			
	I am entertained by Toraja MSME content on social media	0.763			
	Toraja MSME content makes me want to keep following their updates	0.768			
	I feel very positive when viewing Toraja MSME product content	0.806			
<i>Emotional engagement</i>	Toraja MSME content on social media makes me happy	0.789	0.626	0.853	0.909
	I feel comfortable and pleased with the Toraja MSME product content	0.736			
	I feel proud to share Toraja MSME product content	0.750			
<i>Perceived informativeness</i>	Toraja MSME content provides relevant information about Toraja's local products	0.818	0.593	0.852	0.905
	Toraja MSME content provides the information I need	0.743			
	I consider Toraja MSME content a good source of information about local products	0.762			
	Product or service information presented by Toraja MSMEs on social media is always up to date	0.755			
	Toraja local MSME products are my primary choice for similar product categories	0.809			
<i>Purchase intention</i>	I will choose Toraja MSME products for my next purchase in the same category	0.783	0.579	0.891	0.954
	I am willing to try new products from Toraja MSMEs	0.770			
	I will pay more attention to promotions of Toraja MSME products on social media	0.752			
	I am willing to purchase Toraja MSME products even if the price is slightly higher	0.693			
	I will recommend Toraja MSME products to others or speak positively about them	0.752			

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in this study aimed to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Convergent validity was determined through the calculation of factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), construct reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha. The CFA test results are presented in Table 3. Based on the results, all items for each variable had factor loading values above the minimum recommended threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). This indicates that each item adequately represents its construct. Specifically, the items under social media content marketing showed factor loadings ranging from 0.619 to 0.768; those under emotional engagement, from 0.736 to 0.806; those under perceived informativeness, from 0.743 to 0.818; and those under purchase intention, from 0.693 to 0.809. Furthermore, convergent validity was also assessed using AVE, with the minimum required value being greater than 0.50 (Hasyim, 2025; Henseler et al., 2015). The results show that all variables met this criterion, namely social media content marketing (AVE = 0.518), emotional engagement (AVE = 0.626), perceived informativeness (AVE = 0.593), and purchase intention (AVE = 0.579). Thus, all variables in this study meet the criteria for convergent validity.

Reliability testing was carried out by referring to Cronbach's alpha and construct reliability (CR), where an instrument is considered reliable if Cronbach's alpha exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.60, and CR is greater than 0.70 (Hasyim, 2025). As shown in Table 3, all variables in this study had Cronbach's alpha values above 0.60, supported by CR values exceeding 0.70. Therefore, the measurement model used in this study is reliable and demonstrates strong internal consistency.

After conducting the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the next stage was to test the structural model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS. This testing began by evaluating the overall model fit to ensure that the research model was consistent with the observed data. A model is considered fit if it meets several goodness-of-fit criteria, including $CMIN/DF \leq 2$, $RMR < 0.05$, GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, NFI, IFI ≥ 0.90 , and $RMSEA \leq 0.08$. Based on the results of the goodness-of-fit analysis of this research model, as presented in Figure 1, several criteria were satisfied: $CMIN/DF = 1.265$; $RMR = 0.020$; $NFI = 0.922$; $CFI = 0.982$; $TLI = 0.980$; $IFI = 0.983$; $RFI = 0.910$; $GFI = 0.904$; $AGFI = 0.877$; and $RMSEA = 0.037$. These results indicate that the research model is appropriate for hypothesis testing.

Subsequently, hypothesis testing was conducted for direct effects. As shown in Table 4, first, social media content marketing (SMC) was found to have a positive and significant effect on emotional engagement (EME) with $\beta = 0.909$; $CR = 9.661$; $p = 0.000$. Similarly, social media content marketing (SMC) also had a positive and significant effect on perceived informativeness (PIN) with $\beta = 0.948$; $CR = 10.309$; $p = 0.000$. These findings support the first (H1) and second (H2) hypotheses, suggesting that social media marketing content can enhance tourists' emotional engagement and perceived informativeness, particularly regarding MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. Second, the direct effect of social media content marketing (SMC) on purchase intention (PUI) was positive but not significant, as indicated by $p > 0.05$ and $CR < 1.96$, with $\beta = 0.232$; $CR = 0.746$; $p = 0.456$. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3) was rejected.

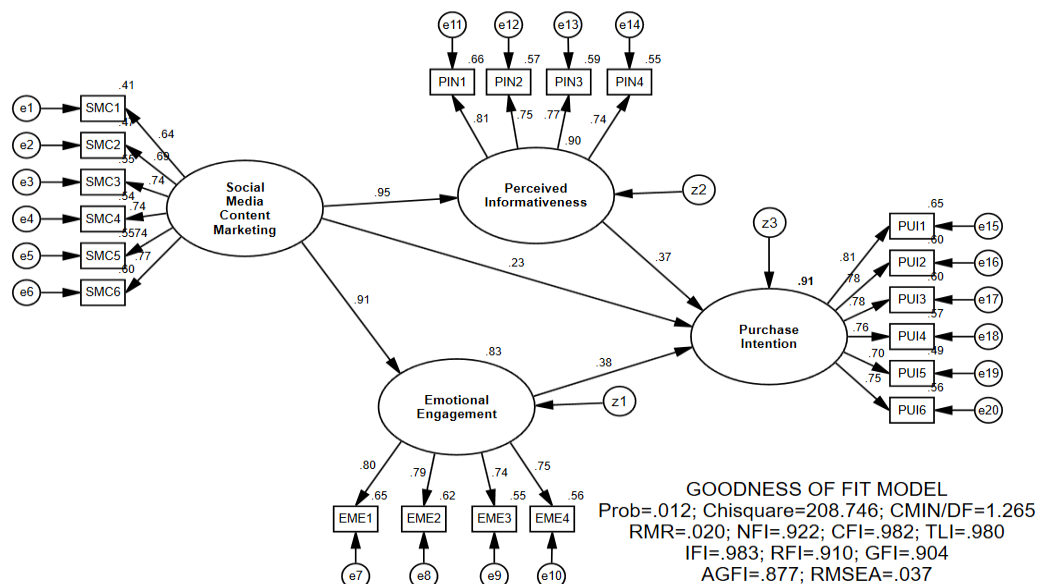


Figure 1. Results of SEM-AMOS Model Analysis

Third, emotional engagement (EME) was found to have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (PUI), with $\beta = 0.382$, $CR = 2.512$, and $p = 0.012$. This result supports the fourth hypothesis (H4), indicating that emotional engagement with MSME content on social media can enhance tourists' purchase intentions.

Fourth, the relationship between perceived informativeness (PIN) and purchase intention (PUI) yielded $\beta = 0.372$, $CR = 1.549$, and $p = 0.121$. Since $p > 0.05$ and $CR < 1.96$, the effect was not significant, leading to the rejection of the fifth hypothesis (H5). This implies that although the information provided to tourists was sufficiently clear, it did not directly influence their purchase intentions for MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja.

Finally, the direct effect of social media content marketing (SMC) on purchase intention (PUI) was again shown to be positive but not significant, with $\beta = 0.228$; $CR = 0.746$; $p = 0.456$, thus rejecting

the sixth hypothesis (H6). This finding indicates that although social media marketing content may be attractive, it does not directly impact tourists' purchase intentions for MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja.

Indirect effect testing was carried out using the Sobel test, with the results presented in Table 5. Based on the analysis, the indirect effect of social media content marketing (SMC) on purchase intention (PUI) through emotional engagement (EME) was found to be positive and significant (Sobel test = 2.427; $p = 0.008$). Thus, the sixth hypothesis (H6) was accepted. This finding indicates that the better the MSME social media marketing content in Toraja, the greater tourists' emotional engagement, which, in turn, increases their purchase intention for MSME products. This emphasizes the crucial mediating role of emotional engagement in linking social media content to tourists' purchase intentions.

Table 4. Results of Direct Effect Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship Between Variables	Std Estimate	C.R	p value	Conclusion
H1	<i>Social media content marketing → Emotional engagement</i>	0.909	9.661	0.000	Accepted
H2	<i>Social media content marketing → Perceived informativeness</i>	0.948	10.309	0.000	Accepted
H3	<i>Social media content marketing → Purchase intention</i>	0.232	0.746	0.456	Rejected
H4	<i>Emotional engagement → Purchase intention</i>	0.382	2.512	0.012	Accepted
H5	<i>Perceived informativeness → Purchase intention</i>	0.372	1.549	0.121	Rejected

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025

Table 5. Results of Indirect Effect Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship Between Variables	Std Estimate	C.R	p value	Conclusion
H6	<i>Social media content marketing → Emotional engagement → Purchase intention</i>	0.341	2.427	0.008	Accepted
H7	<i>Social media content marketing → Perceived informativeness → Purchase intention</i>	0.347	1.532	0.062	Rejected

Source: Primary Data Processed, 2025

On the other hand, the results for the indirect effect of SMC on PUI through perceived informativeness (PIN) showed a positive but nonsignificant effect (Sobel test = 1.532; $p = 0.062$). Therefore, the seventh hypothesis (H7) was rejected. This result suggests that although the information delivered through social media content is considered valuable and relevant, it is not strong enough to enhance tourists' purchase intentions indirectly. Thus, the indirect effect testing demonstrates that emotional engagement serves as an important mediator in this study. In contrast, perceived informativeness fails to mediate the influence of social media content marketing on tourists' purchase intentions toward MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja.

Discussion

This study has confirmed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as a conceptual framework for explaining the influence of social media content marketing on tourists' purchase intentions, particularly for MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. TRA emphasizes that behavioral intention is shaped through beliefs and attitudes driven by both cognitive and affective factors. The findings of this study highlight that social media content marketing (SMCM) can influence two main aspects — emotional engagement (affective) and perceived informativeness (cognitive) — which, in turn, contribute to the formation of purchase intention.

First, the analysis shows that social media content marketing has a positive and significant effect on emotional engagement. This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that well-designed, entertaining, and authentic social media content can create emotional resonance with consumers

(Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Such emotional engagement serves as an important affective component that ultimately drives tourists' purchase intentions. Other studies have also revealed that content marketing is a critical factor in building brand awareness and may even influence purchase intentions (Saharuddin *et al.*, 2025).

Second, social media content marketing also positively affects perceived informativeness. This finding aligns with the perspective that social media is an effective medium for delivering relevant and helpful product information. (Alalwan, 2018). Although perceived informativeness increased, it did not have a significant effect on purchase intention. This result indicates that consumers, particularly tourists visiting cultural destinations such as Tana Toraja and North Toraja, are more influenced by emotional appeal than rational considerations when purchasing MSME products as cultural souvenirs. In other words, information is considered important but is not the ultimate determinant of purchase intention.

Third, this study found that emotional engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention and also mediates the relationship between social media content marketing and purchase intention. This finding supports the view that affective dimensions play a greater role in bridging the relationship between digital marketing stimuli and consumer purchase intentions (Manzoor *et al.*, 2020). Thus, emotional engagement becomes a key aspect that transforms social media marketing content into a trigger for tourists' intention to purchase MSME products.

Conversely, perceived informativeness failed to mediate this relationship. The difference in results compared to several previous studies (Hasani *et al.*, 2023) This can be explained by the research context, namely, tourists in cultural destinations. Tourists tend to seek memorable emotional experiences rather than detailed rational information. This underscores the importance of considering consumer characteristics when examining the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study provides insights into how social media content marketing influences tourists' purchase intentions toward MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. The results indicate that social media marketing content significantly enhances emotional engagement and perceived informativeness, but does not directly affect purchase intention. Conversely, emotional engagement was found to have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, whereas perceived informativeness did not demonstrate a significant direct effect.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that emotional engagement serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between social media content marketing and tourists' purchase intentions. This finding underscores that the stronger the tourists' emotional engagement with social media marketing content for MSME products, the higher their purchase intentions. On the other hand, although perceived informativeness was rated positively, it failed to serve as an effective mediator in facilitating the indirect relationship between social media marketing and tourists' purchase intentions toward MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of the emotional dimension in social media marketing content. Purely informative content is not sufficient to drive tourists' purchase intentions; however, when content appeals to emotional aspects, its influence on purchase intentions becomes stronger. Therefore, MSME social media marketing strategies should not only focus on informational aspects but also prioritize creating more profound emotional experiences to enhance tourists' purchase intentions.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The research's contextual and geographical scope is limited, as the data were collected only from domestic tourists purchasing MSME products in Tana Toraja and North Toraja. This condition may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations, such as international tourists or visitors in other regions with different cultural characteristics and consumer behaviors. In addition, most respondents were

within specific age groups actively using social media, which means the findings predominantly reflect the behavior of these groups and may not apply to older age groups or consumers who are less active on social media. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve respondents with more diverse demographic backgrounds, for instance, by comparing across generational cohorts or socio-economic groups.

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