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Examining the Effects of Brand Awareness and Brand Association on Purchase Intention: The Moderating Effect of Social Brand Engagement

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Abstract

The rapid growth of Indonesia's fashion industry and the increasing role of social media in consumer decision-making have intensified the need for fashion brands to strengthen consumer awareness, associations, and engagement. This study examines how brand awareness and brand association affect purchase intention. It investigates the moderating role of social brand engagement in the context of SUKO, a fashion brand. A quantitative approach was employed using a non-probability sampling method. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 200 respondents aged 17 and older who were active social media users. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The results show that both brand awareness and brand association have positive, significant effects on purchase intention. However, social brand engagement does not significantly moderate either the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention or the relationship between brand association and purchase intention. These findings suggest that consumers' purchase intentions toward SUKO are more strongly driven by brand recognition, perceived product attributes, and direct experiences with the brand, particularly through physical retail stores. The findings highlight the importance of integrating strong physical retail experiences with more conversion-oriented digital marketing strategies.

Keywords brand awareness, brand association, social brand engagement, purchase intention.

1. Introduction

Indonesia's fashion sector has shown consistent growth and adapted well to evolving consumer needs. The industry was valued at IDR 114 trillion (USD 8.1 billion) in 2022, with 68% of Indonesian consumers preferring local brands over international ones (Worldmetrics, 2026). This growth is driven by rising public purchasing power, which has steadily increased demand for various fashion products. The fashion sub-sector is a key contributor to Indonesia's creative economy, accounting for approximately 17.6% of the total national creative economy value and hese findings indicate that the fashion industry is not merely evolving as a digital-driven lifestyle trend but is also actively fostering innovation and driving Indonesia's economic growth (Antaranews, 2024).

Social media users are predominantly young consumers, specifically Millennials and Gen Z, who are highly active in responding to digital fashion trends and are generally more drawn to visual content and the various forms of engagement brands offer. By 2026, the number of social

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media users is projected to reach 191.4 million, representing approximately 68.9% of Indonesia's total population (The Global Statistics, 2026). In Indonesia, social media serves not only as a means for user-to-user connection but also as a key channel for brand discovery and decision-making. At the same time, search engines remain the primary source for discovering brands (38.3%), 37.3% of consumers become aware of brands through social media advertisements, and another 32.6% discover them via comments on social media platforms (Wearesocial.com, 2025)

From a consumer behavior perspective, psychological considerations and social influences often shape purchasing decisions and how consumers perceive a brand (Dessart et al., 2015). Fashion promotion and sales activities increasingly leverage online platforms for communication and distribution, making a digital presence an integral part of fashion business operations. This trend aligns with the view that evolving digital technology and the internet have expanded how companies convey marketing messages and communicate with consumers across various digital channels (Duralia, 2024).

This context reinforces the relevance of research examining how brand awareness and brand associations influence purchase intention, as well as the role of social brand engagement in moderating this relationship, particularly for new fashion brands like SUKO. Amid rapidly shifting consumer behaviors, many retail companies are striving to strengthen their market positions by launching private-label brands with greater flexibility. As a key player in the national retail industry, Matahari Department Store introduced SUKO, a fashion brand targeting young consumers who favor casual, simple, and versatile styles. SUKO was first unveiled to the public in October 2023 as an exclusive private-label brand of PT Matahari Department Store Tbk. The brand's launch is part of the company's strategy to strengthen its internal brand portfolio and respond to evolving consumer preferences, which increasingly favor practical, flexible clothing styles. A major challenge is boosting social media engagement, which is currently low and requires a deeper understanding of consumer perceptions of the brand. Consequently, brand awareness and brand associations emerge as critical factors to investigate within the context of the brand's development.

In marketing research, brand awareness is a key element shaping consumer responses to a brand's perception and evaluation. This concept reflects a consumer's ability to identify and recall a brand when faced with multiple product choices. Consistent exposure to digital content can enhance awareness and make it easier for consumers to include the brand in their purchase considerations. Previous research has established a strong link between increased brand awareness and purchase intention, particularly within the fashion category (Baek & King, 2011). Closely related to consumer involvement, studies on social media engagement indicate that such engagement comprises cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, all vital for fostering enduring relationships between consumers and brands (Dessart et al., 2016).

Brand association plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions of a brand, including its image, value, and the impressions it leaves in their minds. Strong impressions can be cultivated through content interactions, usage experiences, and the visual image the brand

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presents. Previous research indicates that in the fashion category, purchase intention is shaped by consumers' perceptions of quality, brand image, and product value (Kim & Ko, 2012). Digital marketing studies show that a positive brand image can boost consumer trust and increase the likelihood that consumers will prioritize that brand during the selection process (Dessart et al., 2015). Furthermore, prior research shows that brand association significantly influences purchase intention in the fashion industry (Vo Minh et al., 2022). Consequently, strengthening brand association is vital for SUKO to establish a more competitive position relative to other brands. Although researchers have extensively studied the relationships among brand awareness, brand association, purchase intention, and social brand engagement, a research gap remains, particularly regarding the SUKO brand. As of this writing, no study has specifically analyzed the role of social brand engagement as a moderating variable within these relationships in the context of private-label fashion brands in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Intention. One of the primary goals of marketing strategy is to position a brand in consumers' memories so it is easily recognized when they need products in a specific category. Numerous empirical studies indicate that high levels of brand awareness correlate with a greater consumer inclination toward purchase intention (Bonhomme et al., 2010; Maemunah et al., 2023). Furthermore, brand awareness boosts consumer interest in making a purchase, as shown by its positive impact on purchase intention (Chen et al., 2024). A brand's presence on social media and its interactions with users can reinforce its position in consumers' memories; this dynamic can foster consumer interest and the desire to purchase products from that brand (Hutter et al., 2013). In digital marketing, the aforementioned studies and empirical research on the social media-based fashion industry show that brand awareness significantly influences purchase intention (Vo Minh et al., 2022). Based on the preceding explanation, the hypothesis is:

H1: Brand awareness influences purchase intention.

The Influence of Brand Association on Purchase Intention. Brand equity is a socio-cultural phenomenon that extends beyond the mere product name; brands function as symbols representing specific meanings that companies aim to cultivate (Kotler et al., 2021). Brand equity is reflected in the consumer tendency to choose branded products over similar unbranded alternatives; from a customer-based branding perspective, it comprises four key components: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association (Yoo et al., 2000). As a component of brand equity, brand association influences consumer purchase intention (Chi et al., 2009). Positive associations help consumers understand a brand's character and distinguish it from competitors, shaping how they evaluate the brand. When consumers hold favorable, strong associations with a brand, their purchase intention for that brand's products tends to increase. A positive brand image can contribute to strong brand associations, favorable quality perceptions, and consumer loyalty; collectively, these elements are crucial to building and strengthening brand equity (Uppapong et al., 2026). Previous research has also shown that brand association substantially affects purchase intention in the context of social media

marketing (Vo Minh et al., 2022). Based on the preceding explanation, the hypothesis is:

H2: Brand association influences purchase intention.

The Role of Social Brand Engagement in Moderating the Effect of Brand Awareness on Purchase Intention. Social brand engagement refers to the extent to which consumers engage with a brand through various interactions, expressed through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. In a social media environment, engagement can strengthen the bond between consumer and brand because consumers do not merely receive information but actively participate in various interactions (Dessart et al., 2016). Social brand engagement can also be understood as the consumer's emotional attachment to a brand, arising from a co-creative experience that occurs when the consumer interacts with the brand as the focal object (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014). The more consumers engage with a brand, the more likely brand awareness will strengthen purchase intention. Active consumer participation grants them an increasingly significant role in product and brand development (Hoyer et al., 2010). This occurs because intense interaction between consumers and brands fosters deeper emotional closeness, leading consumers to respond more positively to the brand's activities and marketing communications. Findings indicate that brand engagement moderates the relationship between brand equity and purchase intention (Vo Minh et al., 2022). Based on the preceding explanation, the hypothesis is:

H3: Social brand engagement moderates the effect of brand awareness on purchase intention.

The Role of Social Brand Engagement in Moderating the Effect of Brand Association on Purchase Intention. The bond established between consumer and brand is believed to enhance the effectiveness of various factors that shape purchase decisions. One such impact is strengthening the influence of consumer brand associations in driving the desire to purchase the offered products. Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between consumer brand engagement and brand associations (Bonhomme et al., 2010), while consumers today increasingly engage in more tangible and meaningful interactions with brands through their experiences, rather than merely through random interactions (Hollebeek, 2011). Furthermore, engagement can strengthen the influence of various brand equity elements on purchase intention within the digital marketing environment (Vo Minh et al., 2022). Therefore, this study employs social brand engagement to examine whether the relationship between brand association and purchase intention changes or intensifies as the level of consumer brand engagement increases. Based on the preceding discussion, the hypothesis is:

H4: Social brand engagement moderates the influence of brand association on purchase intention.

3. Research Method

Respondent Characteristics. This study involved respondents who met pre-established criteria: being at least 17 years old and active social media users. Data collection was conducted by distributing a Google Form link online via social media and WhatsApp groups. We obtained 244 responses and then screened them to ensure compliance with the established respondent

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criteria. As a result, 44 responses failed to meet the requirements, leaving a final sample of 200 eligible respondents. This sample size falls within the 160-300 range considered highly suitable for multivariate statistical analysis (Memon et al., 2020). The researchers selected the sample using non-probability sampling. To analyze the data, the study employed SmartPLS; PLS-SEM software generates explanatory models with acceptable predictive power (Hair et al., 2019; Shmueli et al., 2019).

Tabel 1. Respondent Characteristics

Category		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	104	52
	Female	96	48
Age	17 – 23 years	149	74.5
	24 – 27 years	18	9
	28 – 35 years	20	10
	>35	13	6.5
Occupation	Student	143	71,5
	Worker	50	25
	Others	7	3.5
Social Media Used by Respondents	Instagram	172	86
	Tiktok	147	73.5
	Thread	54	35
	X/Twitter	70	34.5
	Youtube	69	27.0

Source: Author's Data (2026)

4. Finding and Discussion

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs used in this study. The assessment included convergent validity through outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), internal consistency reliability through Cronbach's Alpha, Rho-A, and Composite Reliability, as well as discriminant validity using the cross-loading approach. The results of these assessments are presented in the following table. The measurement items used in this study were adapted from the questionnaire developed and validated by Vo Minh et al. (2022), with contextual adjustments made to reflect the Suko fashion brand. During the measurement model assessment, the BAW3 indicator was removed because its outer loading did not meet the recommended threshold, indicating insufficient contribution to the measurement of the Brand Awareness construct. Therefore, BAW3 was excluded from the subsequent analysis to improve the convergent validity and internal consistency of the measurement model. The remaining indicators were retained for further analysis after meeting the required validity and reliability criteria.

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Table 2. Analysis Results of Components in the Model

Constructs and Scale Items	Item Mean	Outer Loading (>0.6)	Cronbach Alpha (>0.7)	Rho_A (>0.7)	Composite Reliability (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)
Brand Association (BAS)			0.763	0.772	0.863	0.679
BAS1: I feel that the SUKO brand has a very unique brand image compared to its competitors.	3.965	0.869				
BAS2: The SUKO brand has superior product attributes compared to other brands.	3.940	0.831				
BAS3: The quality of the SUKO brand delivers customer satisfaction.	4.095	0.769				
Brand Awareness (BAW)			0.803	0.806	0.884	0.717
BAW1: I always keep an eye on the SUKO brand.	3.885	0.866				
BAW2: I am familiar with the characteristics of the SUKO brand.	3.910	0.844				
BAW4: I have a specific memory of the SUKO brand.	3.920	0.830				
Social Brand Engagement (SBE)			0.892	0.894	0.925	0.756
SBE1: I follow the SUKO brand on social media.	3.775	0.836				
SBE2: I participated in interactive activities with the SUKO brand on social media.	3.690	0.891				
SBE3: I am sharing my experience of using the SUKO brand as part of my life.	3.725	0.888				
SBE4: I tend to defend the SUKO brand when someone says something negative about it.	3.785	0.860				
Purchase Intention (PI)			0.821	0.827	0.894	0.737
PI1: If I were to weigh the options and compare brands, I would prefer the SUKO brand.	3.925	0.888				
PI2: I will buy SUKO brand	3.940	0.828				

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products.						
PI3: I am very interested in becoming a customer of the SUKO brand in the future.	4.090	0.858				

Source: Author's Data (2026)

The table above shows that the outer loading values range from 0.769 and 0.888; these results indicate that all indicators exceed the minimum threshold of 0.6. This implies that each indicator meets the minimum outer loading requirement, leading to the conclusion that the indicators are valid. The table also shows that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranges from 0.679 and 0.756, meaning all indicators exceed the minimum threshold of 0.5. Consequently, each indicator meets the minimum requirement and is valid. Regarding reliability testing, the minimum threshold for both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability is 0.7. The table shows that Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.763 and 0.892, indicating that they meet the requirement and are valid. Meanwhile, Rho-A values range from 0.772 and 0.894, and Composite Reliability values range from 0.863 to 0.925. These results demonstrate that the Composite Reliability values meet the requirement and are valid (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3. Cross Loading Result Test

	BAW	BAS	SBE	PI
BAW1	0,866	0,682	0,746	0,738
BAW2	0,844	0,651	0,627	0,670
BAW4	0,830	0,579	0,586	0,657
BAS1	0,665	0,869	0,666	0,712
BAS2	0,626	0,831	0,619	0,722
BAS3	0,569	0,769	0,510	0,598
SBE1	0,613	0,589	0,836	0,616
SBE2	0,665	0,664	0,891	0,679
SBE3	0,708	0,649	0,888	0,696
SBE4	0,707	0,636	0,860	0,647
PI1	0,750	0,740	0,714	0,888
PI2	0,657	0,635	0,596	0,828
PI3	0,687	0,744	0,641	0,858

Source: Author's Data (2026)

Discriminant Validity Test. This study uses the cross-loading method to test discriminant validity. The test indicates that each construct in the model better explains its respective indicators, satisfying discriminant validity requirements; the study's results thus meet the necessary criteria.

Coefficient of Determination. The table shows a coefficient of determination value of 0.778 for the purchase intention (PI) variable. This result indicates that the variables included in the research model, namely BAW, BAS, and SBE, largely explain purchase intention (PI). With an

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explanatory proportion of 77.8%, only a small fraction of the variation stems from factors not examined in the study. This high value shows that the research model has strong explanatory power for the purchase intention behavior that is the focus of the study.

Table 4. R-Square Result Test

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
PI	0,778	0,772

Souce: Author's Data (2026)

To test the hypotheses in SmartPLS, we used a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 subsamples to estimate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for direct and indirect effects (Hair et al., 2016). The results confirm the hypotheses regarding direct effects: brand awareness significantly influenced purchase intention (t-value = 5.289), and brand associations influenced purchase intention (t-value = 5.692). However, the results showed no significant effect of brand awareness on purchase intention when moderated by social brand engagement (t-value = 0.456), nor any significant effect of brand associations on purchase intention when moderated by social brand engagement (t-value = 0.428).

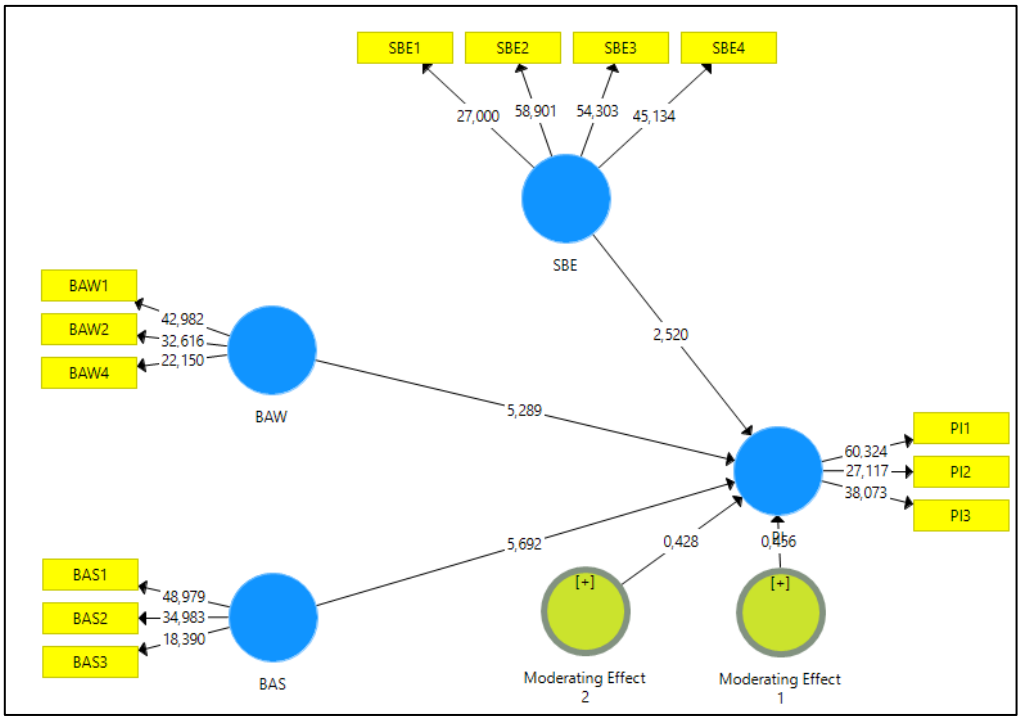

Figure 1. Output Test on SmartPLS. Source: Author's Data (2026)

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Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis		T-values	P-Values	Result
H1	BAW -> PI	5.289	0.000	Accepted
H2	BAS -> PI	5.692	0.000	Accepted
H3	SBExBAW -> PI	0.456	0.324	Rejected
H4	SBExBAS -> PI	0.428	0.334	Rejected
	SBE -> PI	2.520	0.006	

Source: Author's Data (2026)

The Effect of Brand Awareness (BAW) on Purchase Intention (PI). The first hypothesis test shows that brand awareness (BAW) significantly affects purchase intention (PI). Consumer awareness is a primary driver of the intention to purchase SUKO clothing products. In this context, repeated physical exposure at Matahari outlets through store design, clear signage, and product displays can strengthen consumers' connection with the physical retail environment, enhancing their shopping experience and brand perception (Bruckberger et al., 2023) . Furthermore, visual merchandising elements such as atmospherics, window displays, mannequins, product displays, signage, fixtures, and store props can contribute to how consumers position and distinguish a brand in their minds, thereby supporting stronger brand recognition (Bist & Mehta, 2023). This specific recognition and recall foster familiarity, which reduces uncertainty and supports SUKO's inclusion in the consideration stage when consumers evaluate alternatives before making a purchase decision. These findings support Vo Minh et al. (2022), who state that brand awareness directly influences purchase intention. Brand recognition not only helps buyers choose from various options but also increases their propensity to transact (Chen et al., 2024). Furthermore, these results reinforce (Kumar et al., 2026) , who argue that brand awareness is a crucial factor in forming purchase intention within the consumer evaluation process.

The Effect of Brand Association (BAS) on Purchase Intention (PI). The results of the second hypothesis test indicate that brand association (BAS) significantly affects purchase intention (PI). SUKO's unique image, perceived quality, and positioning as comfortable, high-quality minimalist everyday wear drive purchase intention. This indicates that consumer perceptions are shaped not only by the product's physical attributes but also by the positive meanings associated with the brand. These positive associations are further strengthened by the reputational spillover effect of PT Matahari Department Store, SUKO's parent company for this private label, which guarantees quality and boosts consumer trust. These findings are also consistent with Bruckberger et al. (2023), who highlights that physical store environments can strengthen consumers' connections to place, people, and past, thereby enhancing shopping experiences and brand perceptions. Similarly, Bist & Mehta (2023) demonstrates that visual merchandising elements can create distinctive store positioning in consumers' minds, suggesting that store design and product presentation can reinforce the unique associations consumers attach to a brand. These findings align with Vo Minh et al. (2022) , who state that strong, positive brand associations drive purchase intention. Furthermore, these results support

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Ratnasari et al. (2023) , which emphasizes the importance of brand association in building consumer confidence, strengthening the product evaluation process, and increasing purchase interest.

The Moderating Effect of Social Brand Engagement (SBE) on the Relationship between Brand Awareness (BAW) and Purchase Intention (PI). The research results indicate that social brand engagement (SBE) does not significantly moderate the effect of brand awareness (BAW) on purchase intention (PI) for the SUKO brand. These findings suggest that the level of consumer engagement on social media, such as following official accounts, interacting with content, sharing experiences, or defending the brand, has not yet strengthened the conversion of brand awareness into purchase intention. The growing use of social media has created new opportunities for companies to promote their products and influence consumers' purchase intentions through social media marketing activities (Dayoh et al., 2022). Furthermore, social media provides an interactive environment that enables brands to establish connections with consumers through communication and social interaction, thereby creating opportunities to influence consumer responses (Zhu & Chen, 2015). While consumer engagement within a community can enhance brand engagement through interaction, information exchange, and social experiences, such engagement does not always lead to a transactional response. Therefore, high brand awareness does not automatically transform that engagement into purchase intention. Brand awareness primarily reflects a consumer's ability to recognize or recall a brand, whereas purchase intention is a construct closer to the propensity to purchase (Dessart, 2017). This situation may be attributed to SUKO's position as an exclusive private label of PT Matahari. Consumer awareness of SUKO is likely shaped more by direct experiences of seeing and evaluating the products in Matahari stores. Furthermore, Matahari's reputation can instill a sense of security and a perception of quality that supports the consumer evaluation process. These findings differ from those of Vo Minh et al. (2022) , who showed that SBE could strengthen the relationship between BAW and PI, and from Dessart et al. (2016) , who emphasized the role of engagement in deepening the consumer-brand relationship. However, this study's results align with Nahor (2023), which found that SBE failed to moderate the relationship between either brand awareness or brand association and purchase intention. Thus, SBE's effectiveness as a moderator may depend on brand characteristics and the context of consumer interaction.

The Moderating Effect of Social Brand Engagement (SBE) on the Relationship between Brand Association (BAS) and Purchase Intention (PI). The results regarding the fourth hypothesis indicate that social brand engagement (SBE) does not significantly moderate the effect of brand association (BAS) on purchase intention (PI) for the SUKO brand. These findings suggest that consumers' social media engagement with the brand is insufficient to strengthen the link between positive associations with SUKO and purchase intentions. Consequently, consumers with positive brand associations do not necessarily show higher purchase intentions, even if their social media engagement increases. This finding is consistent with research by Vo Minh et al. (2022) in the Vietnamese fashion industry, which found that SBE did not significantly moderate the relationship between BAS and PI. Although social brand engagement plays a role

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in building brand equity and influences purchase intention, such engagement does not automatically strengthen every relationship within the brand equity framework. This suggests that SBE's role may vary depending on which brand equity dimension serves as an antecedent to purchase intention. The lack of a significant moderating effect is understandable, given that brand association reflects various attributes, images, and perceptions embedded in a brand. Once associations with SUKO are established, increased social media interaction does not necessarily provide a stimulus strong enough to transform those associations into purchase intentions. This finding aligns with previous research showed that brand association did not significantly affect purchase intention, whereas product quality did (Rachmanu et al., 2024). Similar findings were reported, where social brand engagement did not moderate the relationship between brand association and purchase intention (Nahor, 2023). Thus, while social brand engagement is important for building consumer-brand relationships, it does not always catalyze the conversion of brand associations into purchase intentions.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that brand awareness and brand association positively and significantly influence the purchase intention of SUKO fashion product consumers. This shows that strong brand recognition, along with perceptions of product uniqueness and quality, drives purchase intention. However, SBE did not moderate the influence of either brand awareness or brand association on purchase intention. These findings indicate that interactive engagement on social media has not yet strengthened the relationship between brand variables and purchase intention. Purchase intention for the SUKO fashion brand is driven more by direct experiences and the physical presence of stores.

This study has several limitations. First, most respondents were in the 17-23 age group (74.5%) and were university students (71.5%); consequently, the sample may not fully represent consumer characteristics across a broader demographic segment. Second, using a non-probability sampling method focused on a single object, the SUKO private label brand, limits the generalizability of the findings to the fashion industry as a whole.

To manage the SUKO brand, PT Matahari Department Store Tbk should maintain and enhance visual merchandising and brand visibility in physical stores. Because SUKO’s brand awareness and associations are strongly shaped by offline experiences, improving the in-store shopping experience is crucial to sustaining positive consumer perceptions. Meanwhile, SUKO management needs to reformulate its digital marketing strategy, shifting from a focus on mere interaction and entertainment to an approach oriented toward sales conversion. This can be achieved through exclusive digital promotions, omnichannel integration, and product information that actively drives purchase decisions. Strengthening brand awareness requires consistent marketing communication across both social media and physical points of sale. At the same time, brand association can be reinforced by maintaining consistency in product attributes, brand image, quality, and the casual-minimalist character that shapes consumer perceptions of SUKO. Furthermore, the social brand engagement strategy should focus on more interactive, consumer-relevant activities, ensuring that social media engagement not only

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generates interactions but also contributes more meaningfully to purchase intention.

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