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The Impact of Marketing Transparency on Purchase Intentions Through Perceptions of Fairness and Brand Image in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of marketing transparency on purchase intention through the mediating roles of perceived fairness and brand image in the Indonesian consumer market. As transparency becomes increasingly important in contemporary marketing practices, understanding its psychological and behavioral implications is essential for firms operating in competitive and information-rich environments. This research adopts a quantitative approach by collecting data from 150 Indonesian consumers using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3. The results reveal that marketing transparency has a significant positive effect on perceived fairness and brand image. Furthermore, perceived fairness and brand image both significantly influence purchase intention, with brand image showing a stronger effect. The mediation analysis confirms that perceived fairness and brand image partially mediate the relationship between marketing transparency and purchase intention, indicating that transparency primarily affects purchase intention indirectly by shaping consumers' fairness perceptions and brand evaluations. These findings contribute to the marketing literature by clarifying the underlying mechanisms through which marketing transparency influences consumer behavior in an emerging market context. Practically, the study highlights the strategic importance of transparent marketing communication in fostering fair perceptions, strengthening brand image, and enhancing consumers' purchase intentions in Indonesia.

Keywords: Marketing Transparency; Perceived Fairness; Brand Image; Purchase Intention; Indonesia

1. Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of marketing communication has undergone a profound transformation driven by rapid digitalization, widespread social media use, and increasing consumer access to information, fundamentally shifting the balance of power between firms and consumers. Modern consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages but actively evaluate, compare, and question the information provided by companies, making marketing transparency—defined as the extent to which firms openly, clearly, and honestly disclose information about their products, pricing, processes, and values—a critical determinant of consumer decision-making [1]. This issue is particularly salient in emerging markets such as Indonesia, where a rapidly growing middle class, high internet penetration, and widespread adoption of e-commerce platforms have intensified market competition and increased exposure to marketing claims. Simultaneously, recurring cases of misleading advertising, hidden costs, exaggerated product benefits, and inconsistent brand communication have fostered consumer skepticism and eroded trust in marketing messages [2], [3]. Consequently, consumers increasingly perceive transparency as a signal of ethical conduct and corporate accountability, and firms that fail to meet these expectations face heightened reputational risks, declining consumer confidence, and ultimately lower purchase intentions.

Purchase intention is widely recognized as a key predictor of actual consumer buying behavior and has been extensively examined in marketing and consumer behavior research, with prior studies identifying determinants such as perceived value, trust, brand loyalty, and satisfaction; however, there is increasing scholarly interest in how marketing transparency shapes purchase intention indirectly through perceptual and attitudinal mechanisms rather than merely through information provision [4], [5]. Transparency influences how consumers interpret the fairness of a firm's actions and evaluate the brand as a whole, particularly through perceived fairness, which reflects consumers' judgments about the equity, honesty, and justice of a firm's marketing practices, including pricing, promotions, and information disclosure. Drawing on equity theory and fairness heuristic theory,

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consumers tend to reward firms perceived as fair and penalize those viewed as opportunistic or deceptive, and transparent marketing practices help reduce information asymmetry and uncertainty, thereby strengthening perceptions of fairness. When consumers believe that a company communicates openly and treats them fairly, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand and exhibit stronger intentions to purchase.

In addition to perceived fairness, brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer responses to marketing activities, as it reflects the set of associations and perceptions held in consumers' minds regarding a brand. A transparent approach to marketing communication can strengthen brand image by signaling credibility, integrity, and authenticity, whereas a lack of transparency may generate negative brand associations even when product quality remains unchanged. Prior research indicates that a favorable brand image enhances consumer trust, fosters emotional attachment and brand preference, and ultimately increases purchase intention [6], [7]. Despite this, empirical studies that simultaneously examine the mediating roles of perceived fairness and brand image in the relationship between marketing transparency and purchase intention remain limited, particularly in developing economies such as Indonesia. Most existing research has been conducted in Western contexts, where consumer expectations, regulatory frameworks, and cultural norms differ substantially from those in Southeast Asia. Given Indonesia's collectivist culture, heightened sensitivity to price fairness, and growing awareness of ethical business practices, the mechanisms linking transparency to purchase intention may operate differently, underscoring the need for context-specific empirical evidence to enrich the current literature.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to examine the impact of marketing transparency on purchase intention through the mediating effects of perceived fairness and brand image among Indonesian consumers, employing a quantitative research design in which data were collected from respondents and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3. By integrating marketing transparency, perceived fairness, and brand image into a single conceptual model, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how transparent marketing practices are translated into consumer purchase intentions. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically: theoretically, by extending the marketing transparency literature through clarifying the indirect mechanisms linking transparency to consumer behavior, and managerially, by offering actionable insights for marketers and brand managers in Indonesia regarding the strategic importance of transparent communication in fostering perceptions of fairness, strengthening brand image, and ultimately encouraging consumer purchase decisions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing Transparency

Marketing transparency refers to the degree to which firms provide clear, accurate, accessible, and truthful information to consumers regarding their products, prices, processes, and business practices, thereby reducing information asymmetry and enabling more informed consumer decision-making [8]–[10]. Conceptualize transparency as a multidimensional construct encompassing disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, emphasizing that information must not only be available but also understandable and reliable. In the digital era, marketing transparency has become increasingly critical due to the rapid dissemination of information through online platforms, social media, and consumer review sites, which allow consumers to easily verify marketing claims, compare alternatives, and share experiences, thereby amplifying the consequences of non-transparent practices. Prior research indicates that transparent marketing enhances consumer trust, credibility, and perceptions of corporate ethicality [11], [12], whereas a lack of transparency—such as hidden fees, vague product descriptions, or misleading promotions—can generate skepticism, distrust, and negative brand evaluations. In emerging markets such as Indonesia, transparency assumes a strategic role as consumers increasingly demand accountability and honesty from firms, while cultural sensitivity to fairness, price justification, and ethical business conduct further underscores the importance of transparent marketing practices in shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions.

2.2 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention represents a consumer's conscious plan or willingness to buy a particular product or service in the future and is widely used as a proxy for actual buying behavior, as stronger intentions are often associated with a higher likelihood of purchase [2], [3]. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, purchase intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, positioning it as a critical outcome variable in consumer behavior research [4], [13]. Marketing literature has identified numerous antecedents of purchase intention, including perceived value, trust, brand loyalty, brand image, and perceptions of fairness. Within the context of marketing transparency, clear and honest communication helps reduce uncertainty and

perceived risk—key barriers to purchase intention, especially in online and high-involvement purchasing situations. Empirical studies further indicate that when consumers perceive a firm as transparent, they experience greater confidence in their decision-making, which in turn strengthens their intention to purchase [7], [14].

2.3 Perceived Fairness

Perceived fairness refers to consumers' judgments regarding the equity, justice, and honesty of a firm's actions and marketing practices, which are evaluated by comparing what consumers give, such as money, time, and effort, with what they receive in terms of product quality, service, and information, as explained by equity theory and fairness heuristic theory. Fairness perceptions are particularly salient in contexts involving pricing, promotions, and information disclosure [15], [16]. Transparent marketing practices play a crucial role in shaping perceived fairness, as open disclosure of pricing structures, product limitations, and terms and conditions reduces feelings of exploitation or deception. Prior studies have shown that transparency enhances perceptions of distributive and procedural fairness, which subsequently strengthen consumer trust, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions [17], [18]. In the Indonesian market, where consumers tend to be highly sensitive to price fairness and ethical business conduct, perceived fairness is expected to serve as a key psychological mechanism linking marketing transparency to purchase intention, as fair treatment signals respect for consumers and helps build stronger relational bonds between firms and customers.

2.4 Brand Image

Brand image is defined as the set of perceptions, associations, and beliefs that consumers hold about a brand, which are formed through direct experiences, marketing communications, word-of-mouth, and social influence, and a strong, positive brand image helps differentiate a brand from competitors while serving as a heuristic that simplifies consumer decision-making. Marketing transparency contributes to brand image by signaling authenticity, credibility, and integrity, as transparent brands are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy and socially responsible, thereby strengthening favorable brand associations [19], [20]. Prior research suggests that transparent communication positively influences brand image, which in turn shapes consumer attitudes and purchase intentions [21], [22]. Conversely, non-transparent practices can rapidly erode brand image, particularly in the digital environment where negative information spreads quickly, indicating that transparency should be viewed not merely as a short-term communication tactic but as a long-term investment in brand equity and brand building.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design with a causal explanatory approach to examine the relationships between marketing transparency, perceived fairness, brand image, and purchase intention. A survey method was used to collect primary data from consumers in Indonesia. Quantitative methods are appropriate for this study as they allow for statistical testing of hypothesized relationships and provide generalizable insights into consumer behavior patterns. The proposed research model was empirically tested using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), which is suitable for predictive analysis and complex models involving mediation effects.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of consumers in Indonesia who have experience purchasing products or services from brands that actively engage in marketing communication, particularly through digital channels. Due to the broad and undefined nature of the population, a non-probability sampling technique was adopted. A purposive sampling method was used, with respondents selected based on the following criteria: (1) Indonesian consumers aged 18 years or older, (2) having prior experience interacting with marketing information from a brand, and (3) having made at least one purchase decision within the last six months. A total of 150 valid responses were collected and used for analysis. This sample size meets the minimum requirement for SEM-PLS analysis, which recommends a sample size of at least 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at a particular construct.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed online. The online survey approach was chosen to ensure accessibility and efficiency in reaching respondents across different regions in

Indonesia. Prior to full data collection, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine wording and improve measurement accuracy. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and no personal identifying information was collected.

3.4 Measurement of Variables

All constructs in this study were measured using multi-item scales adapted from established literature and adjusted to fit the Indonesian context, with responses recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.” Marketing transparency was measured through items capturing the clarity, openness, and honesty of marketing information provided by firms, including transparency in pricing, product features, and promotional messages; perceived fairness was assessed using items reflecting consumers’ perceptions of equity, honesty, and justice in a firm’s marketing practices; brand image was measured by items capturing consumers’ overall perceptions, associations, and impressions of a brand; and purchase intention was measured using items indicating consumers’ willingness and likelihood to purchase products or services from the brand. All measurement items were adapted from previously validated studies to ensure content validity.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3 software, which was selected for its suitability for exploratory and predictive research, robustness with relatively small sample sizes, and ability to simultaneously evaluate measurement and structural models. The analysis followed a two-stage approach in which the measurement model was first assessed to examine reliability and validity, including indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability, convergent validity through average variance extracted, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships by analyzing path coefficients, t-values, and p-values generated through bootstrapping procedures, along with assessing the coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2) to determine the model’s explanatory power. To further examine the mediating roles of perceived fairness and brand image, a bootstrapping-based mediation analysis was conducted to assess the significance of indirect effects, with partial or full mediation determined based on the significance of both direct and indirect paths linking marketing transparency to purchase intention.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 150 valid questionnaires were analyzed. Respondents consisted of 58% female and 42% male consumers. The majority were aged between 21–30 years (46%), followed by 31–40 years (32%), above 40 years (14%), and 18–20 years (8%). Most respondents reported frequent exposure to digital marketing content and had made online or offline purchases within the last six months, indicating suitability for evaluating marketing transparency and purchase intention.

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was assessed by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

4.2.1 Indicator Reliability

All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate indicator reliability.

Table 1. Indicator Loadings

Construct	Item	Loading
Marketing Transparency	MT1	0.812
	MT2	0.845
	MT3	0.801
	MT4	0.834
Perceived Fairness	PF1	0.821
	PF2	0.856
	PF3	0.803
Brand Image	BI1	0.842
	BI2	0.874

	BI3	0.829
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.861
	PI2	0.889
	PI3	0.836

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that all measurement indicators demonstrate strong factor loadings on their respective constructs, providing clear evidence of satisfactory indicator reliability. Specifically, the loadings for marketing transparency range from 0.801 to 0.845, perceived fairness from 0.803 to 0.856, brand image from 0.829 to 0.874, and purchase intention from 0.836 to 0.889, all of which exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. These findings suggest that each indicator adequately represents its underlying construct and contributes meaningfully to construct measurement. The consistently high loadings across all constructs imply that the adapted measurement items are appropriate and well understood by Indonesian respondents, supporting the contextual validity of the instruments used in this study. Moreover, the strong loadings of purchase intention indicators reflect a robust measurement of consumers' willingness to buy, while the solid loadings for marketing transparency, perceived fairness, and brand image reinforce the conceptual relevance of these constructs in explaining consumer behavioral intentions. Overall, the results confirm that the measurement model meets the criteria for indicator reliability and provides a sound basis for subsequent structural and mediation analyses.

4.2.2 Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

Reliability and convergent validity were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with the results indicating satisfactory measurement quality across all constructs. Marketing transparency demonstrated strong reliability with CA of 0.865 and CR of 0.907, alongside an AVE of 0.691, while perceived fairness showed CA of 0.842, CR of 0.895, and AVE of 0.722. Similarly, brand image exhibited CA of 0.856, CR of 0.912, and AVE of 0.755, and purchase intention recorded the highest reliability with CA of 0.882, CR of 0.925, and AVE of 0.797. All CA and CR values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, and all AVE values were well above the minimum criterion of 0.50, thereby confirming that the constructs possess good internal consistency reliability and adequate convergent validity.

4.2.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion

Table 2. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	MT	PF	BI	PI
Marketing Transparency (MT)	0.831			
Perceived Fairness (PF)	0.622	0.853		
Brand Image (BI)	0.585	0.612	0.872	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.552	0.665	0.694	0.895

Table 2 presents the results of the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which is used to assess discriminant validity by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with its correlations with other constructs. The diagonal values, representing the square roots of AVE, are 0.831 for marketing transparency, 0.853 for perceived fairness, 0.872 for brand image, and 0.895 for purchase intention. In all cases, these values are higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, indicating that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. This finding confirms that marketing transparency, perceived fairness, brand image, and purchase intention are empirically distinct concepts. Moreover, the moderate correlations among constructs suggest meaningful theoretical relationships without indicating multicollinearity or conceptual overlap. Overall, the results provide strong evidence of adequate discriminant validity, supporting the robustness of the measurement model and the appropriateness of proceeding to the structural model analysis.

4.3 Structural Model Evaluation

4.3.1 Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The explanatory power of the model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R²), with the results indicating a moderate to substantial level of explained variance across the endogenous constructs. Marketing transparency explains 38.5% of the variance in perceived fairness (R² = 0.385) and 34.2% of the variance in brand image (R² = 0.342), suggesting that transparent marketing practices play a meaningful role in shaping consumers' fairness perceptions and brand-related evaluations. Furthermore, marketing transparency, perceived fairness, and brand image jointly explain 56.8% of the variance in purchase intention (R² = 0.568), indicating that the proposed model has strong explanatory power in predicting consumers' purchase intentions. These findings demonstrate

that the included constructs capture key determinants of purchase intention and provide empirical support for the robustness of the structural model.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples

Table 3. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
Marketing Transparency \rightarrow Perceived Fairness	0.622	9.215	<0.001	Supported
Marketing Transparency \rightarrow Brand Image	0.587	8.472	<0.001	Supported
Perceived Fairness \rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.312	4.121	<0.001	Supported
Brand Image \rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.454	6.385	<0.001	Supported
Marketing Transparency \rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.188	2.212	0.027	Supported

The results of the structural model analysis presented in Table 3 demonstrate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant and supported. Marketing transparency has a strong positive effect on perceived fairness ($\beta = 0.622$, $t = 9.215$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that clearer, more open, and honest marketing communication substantially enhances consumers' perceptions of equity and justice in a firm's practices. Similarly, marketing transparency positively influences brand image ($\beta = 0.587$, $t = 8.472$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that transparent communication effectively signals credibility, integrity, and authenticity, thereby strengthening favorable brand associations. Both mediating variables also exhibit significant effects on purchase intention, with perceived fairness ($\beta = 0.312$, $t = 4.121$, $p < 0.001$) and brand image ($\beta = 0.454$, $t = 6.385$, $p < 0.001$) positively driving consumers' willingness to purchase. Notably, the effect of brand image on purchase intention is stronger than that of perceived fairness, highlighting the central role of brand-related perceptions in influencing consumer decisions. In addition, marketing transparency has a direct and significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.188$, $t = 2.212$, $p = 0.027$), albeit with a smaller magnitude compared to the indirect paths, suggesting that transparency influences purchase intention both directly and indirectly through perceived fairness and brand image. Overall, these findings confirm the robustness of the proposed model and provide empirical support for the theoretical framework linking marketing transparency to purchase intention through multiple psychological mechanisms.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

Mediation effects were examined using indirect path significance.

Table 4. Mediation Effects

Indirect Path	Indirect Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Mediation Type
MT \rightarrow PF \rightarrow PI	0.19	3.882	<0.001	Partial
MT \rightarrow BI \rightarrow PI	0.26	5.417	<0.001	Partial

The mediation analysis results presented in Table 4 reveal that both perceived fairness and brand image significantly mediate the relationship between marketing transparency and purchase intention. The indirect effect of marketing transparency on purchase intention through perceived fairness is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 3.882$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that transparent marketing practices enhance purchase intention by strengthening consumers' perceptions of fairness. Similarly, the indirect effect through brand image is also significant and stronger in magnitude ($\beta = 0.26$, $t = 5.417$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that improvements in brand image represent a more influential pathway through which transparency translates into higher purchase intentions. In both cases, the mediation is classified as partial, as the direct effect of marketing transparency on purchase intention remains significant alongside the indirect effects. These findings imply that while transparency directly influences consumers' willingness to purchase, a substantial portion of its impact operates through enhancing fairness perceptions and building a positive brand image, thereby reinforcing the importance of these psychological mechanisms in explaining how transparent marketing practices shape consumer behavior.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that marketing transparency plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions in Indonesia. The strong positive effect of marketing transparency on perceived fairness confirms that transparent communication reduces information asymmetry and enhances consumers' perceptions of equity and honesty, a finding that is consistent with equity theory and prior studies highlighting transparency as a key driver of fairness judgments. In addition, marketing transparency has a significant positive effect on brand image, indicating that firms that communicate openly and honestly are perceived as more credible, authentic, and

trustworthy. In an increasingly competitive and digitalized market environment, transparency therefore functions as a strategic signal that strengthens favorable brand associations and reinforces consumer confidence [23]–[25].

The findings further show that both perceived fairness and brand image significantly influence purchase intention, with brand image exhibiting a stronger effect. This suggests that while fairness perceptions are important in shaping consumer responses, consumers' overall evaluations and emotional associations with a brand play a more dominant role in driving purchase decisions. Consequently, transparency should not be viewed merely as a transactional or informational practice, but rather as an integral element of long-term brand-building strategies that continuously reinforce positive brand meaning and consumer preference.

The mediation analysis provides deeper insight into the mechanisms underlying consumer decision-making. The indirect effects of marketing transparency on purchase intention through perceived fairness and brand image are stronger than its direct effect, indicating that transparency primarily influences purchase intention by shaping consumer perceptions rather than directly triggering buying behavior. This reinforces the notion that transparency operates as a psychological catalyst that enhances fairness evaluations and strengthens brand image, which subsequently translate into higher purchase intentions. Overall, these findings extend existing marketing literature by empirically validating the mediating roles of perceived fairness and brand image in an emerging market context, while offering practical implications for managers by emphasizing that transparent marketing is not only an ethical obligation but also a strategic investment that fosters fair perceptions, builds strong brand image, and ultimately drives consumer purchase decisions.

4 Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence on the role of marketing transparency in shaping purchase intention through perceived fairness and brand image among Indonesian consumers, demonstrating that transparent marketing practices significantly enhance fairness perceptions and strengthen brand image, both of which play critical roles in driving consumers' willingness to purchase. Although marketing transparency also exerts a direct effect on purchase intention, the stronger indirect effects through perceived fairness and brand image highlight the importance of perceptual and attitudinal mechanisms in consumer decision-making. From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the marketing transparency literature by integrating perceived fairness and brand image as key mediating variables within a single empirical model in the context of an emerging economy, thereby supporting equity theory and brand signaling perspectives that view transparency as a psychological cue shaping consumer evaluations and behavioral intentions. From a managerial standpoint, the findings suggest that firms operating in Indonesia should prioritize transparent marketing communication, including clear pricing, honest promotional messages, and accurate product information, as such practices not only enhance perceptions of fairness but also build a positive and credible brand image that ultimately increases purchase intention; nevertheless, this study is limited by its sample size and cross-sectional design, and future research may employ larger samples, longitudinal approaches, or incorporate additional mediating and moderating variables to further enrich understanding of marketing transparency and consumer behavior.

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