

**THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY AND CONTENT MARKETING ON
THE PURCHASE DECISION IN USING THE MENGGALA EXPRESS BUS
SERVICE ON THE SURABAYA – MALANG ROUTE**



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Abstract

This research aims to determine the effect of Service Quality and Content Marketing on purchasing decisions in using PO Menggala bus services among users on the Surabaya–Malang route. A quantitative methodology was employed in this study, where data were gathered through questionnaire distribution and subsequently analyzed using the PLS-SEM approach via the SmartPLS application. The research involved 105 participants selected based on purposive sampling criteria. The results indicate that both Service Quality and Content Marketing have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that excellent service and informative, engaging digital content play a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences toward transportation services. Promotion strategies emphasizing passengers' real-life experiences through social media have proven effective in influencing purchasing decisions for PO Menggala bus services.

Keywords: Generation Z, Purchase Decisions, Online Customer Review, Social Media Influencer

INTRODUCTION

High mobility in metropolitan cities such as Surabaya requires the availability of adequate and efficient modes of transportation. As an economic and educational hub, Surabaya experiences an annual population growth of 3% or approximately 80,000 people, driven by high migration rates compared to birth and death rates (Maulidia and Wulandari 2022). This mobility creates a need for fast, comfortable, and affordable transportation. Various modes of transportation are used by the public, such as private vehicles, trains, planes, and inter-city buses within the province. However, not all modes of transportation are suitable for medium-distance inter-city travel, such as the Surabaya–Malang route. In this context, buses are one of the most efficient options because they offer a combination of affordable costs, easy departure procedures, and flexible schedules.

Parabaya Terminal, Bungurasih, as the largest terminal in East Java, plays a central role in connecting various cities in the province. This terminal has 34 routes and over 600 operational vehicles daily (East Java Class II BPTD 2025). According to BPTD data, the Surabaya–Malang route is the AKDP route with the highest number of vehicles, totaling 172 buses. This indicates that the route is highly congested and has significant demand from the public. The large number of vehicles reflects intense competition among bus companies operating on this route. Therefore, bus companies must be able to compete not only through vehicle availability but also through service quality and competitive promotional strategies.

One of the bus companies serving the Surabaya–Malang route is PO Menggala, which competes with other major bus companies such as Restu, Kalisari, and Tentrem. A preliminary survey of 35 respondents showed that PO Menggala ranked second in terms of frequency of use by consumers. Although it is not in first place, PO Menggala remains a choice for most passengers due to its reputation for service and comfort. With 10 operational units serving the route, the company remains committed to improving service standards. Understanding what drives consumer purchase behavior is essential for staying ahead in a competitive market.

Based on internal data from PO Menggala (2025), the company experienced fluctuations in passenger numbers throughout 2024. The highest number of passengers occurred in April (10,601 passengers), but there was a significant decline in October (6,798 passengers). This downward trend indicates the presence of factors influencing purchase decisions. The fluctuations in passenger numbers may be attributed to several factors affecting purchase decisions, such as negative reviews from customers regarding seat comfort, which serve as an indicator of consumer dissatisfaction. However, despite some negative reviews, PO. Menggala has made various efforts to improve the passenger experience, as reflected in the positive reviews also found on social media. There are also customers who express satisfaction with Po. Menggala's services. The variation between negative and positive reviews indicates that while Po. Menggala has loyal customers, there are aspects of its services that still need improvement.

Service quality is an important aspect that influences purchase decisions, especially in public transportation services. Based on research by Aryanto and Purwanto (2022), service quality reflects a company's efforts to meet consumer expectations by providing the best service. In the context of PO Menggala, facilities such as modern toilets, USB chargers in every seat, and ergonomic seating configurations are unique advantages. The toilets are located in the middle of the bus to avoid unpleasant odors that could disturb passenger

comfort. This premium facility distinguishes PO Menggala from other buses in its class and serves as a major attraction for potential passengers.

In the digital age, the use of social media as a marketing tool has become crucial. PO Menggala utilizes Instagram to share information about departure times, bus facilities, and more. According to (Ramadan and Fatchiya 2021), content marketing on social media can increase brand awareness and assist consumers in the decision-making process. In addition, the strategic use of hashtags helps potential customers easily obtain information about PO Menggala's services. In this context, this study aims to analyze how service quality and content marketing influence consumer purchase decisions when using PO Menggala bus services on the Surabaya–Malang route. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights, both practical and theoretical, to improve marketing strategies in the transportation industry.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Service Quality

Service quality is one of the key elements that influence customer satisfaction and purchase decisions, as it reflects how well a company is able to meet the needs and expectations of its customers. Supriadi and Winda (2024) define service quality as intangible actions offered by one party to another without resulting in ownership. Meanwhile, Budiarno et al. (2022) and Sari et al. (2023) emphasize that service quality is an important strategy for creating customer satisfaction and building long-term relationships. Wahyuni and Praninta (2021) propose that service quality be evaluated using five key dimensions: (1) physical evidence, (2) assurance, (3) reliability, (4) responsiveness, and (5) empathy. These indicators represent various aspects of service, including physical appearance, reliability, dependability, speed of response, and personalized care.

Content Marketing

Content marketing refers to a digital promotional approach centered on developing and sharing valuable, relevant content aimed at capturing audience interest, build engagement, and encourage consumer actions that benefit the company (Riangga, 2024). This strategy aims to convey information that suits the needs of the audience through various digital platforms consistently. According to Asnawati (2022), content marketing can be measured through five indicators: (1) easy to find, (2) relevant, (3) accurate, (4) easy to understand, and (5) consistent, which reflect ease of access, information relevance, data accuracy, content readability, and consistency in information delivery.

Purchase Decisions

A purchase decision refers to the process consumers go through in choosing and committing to buy a product or service that aligns with their needs, preferences, and rational considerations of the product's utility (Piyoh et al., 2024). This process reflects the results of consumers' evaluations of information, experiences, and perceptions formed prior to the transaction. According to Saputra & Mahaputra (2022), purchase decisions can be measured through five main indicators, namely

(1) selecting a product, (2) choosing a brand, (3) determining the purchase timing, (4) deciding on the quantity to buy, and (5) selecting a method of payment, which reflect consumers' decisions in choosing products, brands, time of purchase, quantity purchased, and payment methods used.

The Influence of Service Quality on Purchase Decisions

Service quality is an important factor that influences consumer purchase decisions because it reflects a company's ability to provide high-quality and professional services (Faradila et al., 2022). Services such as friendliness, speed of response, and professional attitude can build customer trust in a brand, so consumers with positive experiences are more likely to make purchases than those with negative experiences (Azizati, 2023). Satisfaction derived from service quality that meets expectations will encourage repeat purchase decisions and impact on increased company revenue (Perdanakusuma, 2024). Previous studies have shown that service quality significantly and positively influences consumer purchase decisions (Wahyuni & Praninta, 2021).

H1: Service quality positively influences the decision to purchase.

The Influence of Content Marketing on Purchase Decisions

Content marketing refers to a strategic approach used in marketing that utilizes advances in communication technology to attract attention and build positive relationships with a specific audience, with the aim of encouraging beneficial consumer actions (Aryasa & Roosdhani, 2024). Through digital content such as articles, videos, or text on various platforms, companies can convey relevant and interesting information that helps consumers understand the benefits of a product and make purchase decisions (Atika, 2024). Studies have shown that content marketing has a significant and positive impact on consumer purchase decisions, as supported by research by Asnawati (2022) and Karismawan (2023).

H2: Content marketing positively influences consumer purchase decisions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative method with a causal design intended to determine the effect of service quality and content marketing on purchase decisions in using the Menggala bus service on the Surabaya–Malang route. Data was collected by distributing questionnaires via Google Forms to respondents who met the specified criteria, namely being at least 17 years old, having a social media account, and having used the Menggala bus service on the Surabaya–Malang route. Sample selection used a non-probability approach, specifically using purposive sampling. The sample size was calculated based on the indicator calculation method multiplied by the parameter, resulting in 105 respondents. The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software to evaluate the validity, reliability, and interactions between variables in the research framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.
Convergent Validity Test Results Table (Outer Loading)

	Service Quality (X1)	Content Marketing (X2)	Purchase Decisions (Y)
X1.1	0,911		
X1.2	0,896		
X1.3	0,861		
X1.4	0,917		
	Service Quality (X1)	Content Marketing (X2)	Purchase Decisions (Y)
X1.5	0,875		
X2.1		0,854	
X2.2		0,909	
X2.3		0,907	
X2.4		0,891	
X2.5		0,879	
Y1.1			0,822
Y1.2			0,755
Y1.3			0,808
Y1.4			0,813
Y1.5			0,831

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the test results, all indicators have an outer loading value of more than 0.7. This condition shows that the indicators for service quality, content marketing, and purchase decision variables meet the validity requirements and are able to accurately describe each variable. Thus, all indicators are declared valid and suitable for use in the next stage of analysis.

Table 2.
Discriminant Validity Test Results Table (Cross Loading)

	Service Quality (X1)	Content Marketing (X2)	Purchase Decisions (Y)
X1.1	0,911	0,177	0,606
X1.2	0,896	0,214	0,667
X1.3	0,861	0,168	0,659
X1.4	0,917	0,156	0,617
X1.5	0,875	0,133	0,603
X2.1	0,191	0,854	0,567
X2.2	0,113	0,909	0,568
X2.3	0,120	0,907	0,544
X2.4	0,221	0,891	0,585
X2.5	0,197	0,879	0,602
Y1.1	0,606	0,569	0,822
Y1.2	0,560	0,431	0,755
Y1.3	0,580	0,522	0,808
Y1.4	0,599	0,512	0,813
Y1.5	0,507	0,564	0,831

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Referring to the cross-loading values listed in the table above, all indicators in the service quality, content marketing, and purchase decision variables show higher loading factor values in their respective variables compared to other variables. Thus, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study have met the criteria for discriminant validity and have good validity.

Table 3.
Table of Discriminant Validity (AVE) Test Results

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Service Quality (X1)	0,796
Content Marketing (X2)	0,757
Purchase Decisions (Y)	0,789

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the AVE values listed in the table, all variables in this study have met the convergent validity criteria with values greater than 0.5. The AVE score corresponding to the purchase decision variable is 0.789, service quality is 0.796, and content marketing is 0.757. Therefore, it can be concluded that the indicators for each variable have been able to represent their constructs well and meet the requirements for discriminant validity.

Table 4.
Composite Reliability Test Results Table (Construct Reliability and Validity)

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Service Quality (X1)	0,936	0,937	0,951	0,796
Content Marketing (X2)	0,933	0,933	0,949	0,789
Purchase Decisions (Y)	0,865	0,867	0,903	0,650

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Referring to the information presented in the table, all variables show a Composite Reliability (CR) value ≥ 0.7 . The construct reliability (CR) score for the purchase decision variable is recorded at 0.903, service quality 0.951, and content marketing 0.949. This indicates that all indicators used in this study are consistent and reliable in measuring each variable.

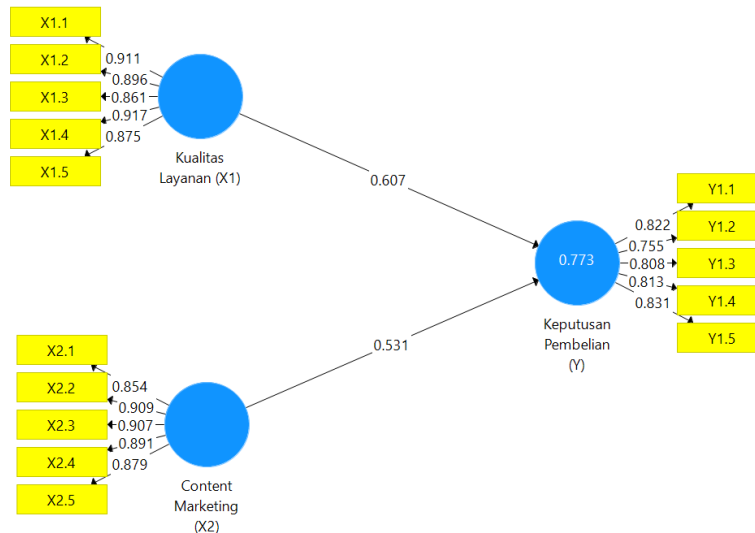


Figure 1.
Path Diagram of PLS Output Results
 Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

The PLS output displays the loading factor value for each indicator, represented by numbers on the arrows connecting the indicators to their respective variables. In addition, the R-Square value shown in the circle on the dependent variable, namely the purchase decision, Shows the extent to which independent variables contribute to or influence certain variables in the research model.

Table 5.
R-Square

	R Square
Purchase Decisions (Y)	0,773

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Referring to the data listed in the table, the R-Square value for the purchase decision variable (Y) is 0.773. This shows that 77.3% of the variation in purchase decisions is explained by the Service Quality (X1) and Content Marketing (X2) variables. The remaining 22.7% is caused by other factors not included in the model. With this high R-Square value, the model is considered strong and effectively captures the impact of the two independent variables on purchase decisions.

Table 6.
Path Coefficients (Mean, STDEV, T-Value, P-Value)

	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Service Quality (X1) - > Purchase Decisions (Y)	0,601	10,805	0,000	Accepted
Content Marketing (X2) -> Purchase Decisions (Y)	0,531	9,046	0,000	Accepted

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Referring to the path coefficients table, the results of hypothesis testing in this study can be summarized as follows:

- H1 : The hypothesis which posits that Service Quality positively influences Purchase Decisions in using the Menggala express bus service on the Surabaya–Malang route has been proven to be acceptable. This is indicated by the path coefficient value for the Service Quality variable (X1) of 0.601, with a T-Statistic value of 10.805, which is greater than 1.96, and a P-Value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Service Quality (X1) variable has a positive and significant influence on Purchase Decision (Y).
- H2 : The hypothesis proposing that Content Marketing positively impacts Purchase Decisions in using the Menggala express bus service on the Surabaya–Malang route can be accepted. This is supported by the path coefficient value of the Content Marketing variable (X2) of 0.531, with a T-Statistic value of 9.046, which is greater than 1.96, and a P-Value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Content Marketing variable (X2) has a positive and significant influence on Purchase Decisions (Y).

The Influence of Service Quality on Purchase Decisions

This study shows that service quality significantly contributes to shaping consumer purchase decisions for Patas Menggala bus services on the Surabaya–Malang route, where the higher consumers' perception of the service provided, the greater their tendency to make a purchase. The test results reveal that the indicator with the highest contribution is assurance, which is reflected in the statement that consumers feel safe because drivers obey traffic rules. This suggests that safety and professionalism of the crew are key considerations for passengers, especially on busy routes like Surabaya–Malang. The assurance of a safe journey

strengthens consumers' trust in the services provided. These findings are consistent with the results of studies by Wahyuni and Pranita (2021) and Saldanha et al. (2024), highlights that service quality is a very important determinant that influences purchase choices, especially in the transportation services industry.

The Influence of Content Marketing on Purchase Decisions

The findings of this study indicate that content marketing has a considerable influence in encouraging consumers to make purchase decisions for Patas Menggala bus services on the Surabaya–Malang route, where informative and relevant content strategies can increase consumers' propensity to buy. The indicator with the highest contribution in shaping perceptions of content marketing is relevance, as reflected in the statement that information about Menggala buses on social media is considered useful by consumers. Content such as departure schedules, facilities, and travel tips provides added value because it practically and personally addresses the needs of potential passengers. In the competitive digital age, relevant content is a key element in influencing purchase behavior. These findings align with the studies by Asnawati (2022) and Angkasa et al. (2022), who argue that content marketing positively influences consumer behavior, particularly in service industries, as it serves as an effective communication medium between service providers and consumers.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that both service quality and content marketing positively influence outcomes on the decision to purchase Patas Menggala bus services on the Surabaya–Malang route. Service quality, which reflects safety, punctuality, and comfort, successfully builds consumer trust, while relevant and consistent content marketing strategies on social media are able to increase purchase interest. However, the limited scope of the study, confined to specific regions and variables, constitutes a limitation that requires careful consideration. Therefore, PO Menggala is advised to continue improving service quality and optimizing digital content through more interactive and informative approaches. Future research may consider additional variables such as price, satisfaction, or brand image, and explore the influence of emotional and participatory content in digital transportation marketing.

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