

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

Social media platforms are now the main focus of brands in efforts to build identity and increase customer engagement and brand reach in the digital age. TikTok itself, which can use short video formats and follow popular trends, easily attracts the attention of young users and therefore makes a great contribution to the development of local brands compared to other platforms.

Local fashion brands in Indonesia are currently increasingly active on TikTok where they are not only used to display products but also to build trends, collaborate, and stories tailored to the target market they are in. The success of the brand on the platform is shown by the increase in the number of followers, the level of engagement, and the consistency of the content strategy being executed.

RUCAS.official is one of the local streetwear brands that is developing so rapidly and has gained a lot of attention on TikTok. The brand itself is known for its exclusive streetwear style, limited collection launches, and consistent visual branding power so that its follower count has managed to build on a fairly wide scale. However, to be able to find out its competitive position more clearly, RUCAS needs to be compared with similar brands that are also actively using TikTok as a marketing platform.

The following table indicates a comparative picture of the RUCAS brand with the main competitors on TikTok with a focus on the number of followers and their position in the local fashion section.

Table 1. 1 Comparative Table of RUCAS Competitors (as of July 30, 2025)

No.	Brand	TikTok Username	Followers
1.	RUCAS	@rucas.official	1.5M
2.	Erigo	@erigo.store	2.5M

No.	Brand	TikTok Username	Followers
3.	No Void Minds	@novoidminds	309.7K
4.	Arkline	@arklineofficial	296.7K
5.	Signore	@signore.id	235.8K
6.	Kremlin	@kremlinclothing	155.9K
7.	Thanksinsomni a	@thanksinsomnia_tiktok	114.2K
8.	SuperSentiment alSecretTheory	@ssst_id	53.7K

From the table 1.1, illustrates that Erigo holds the top position with 2.5 million followers, making it the most prominent Indonesian fashion brand on TikTok. However, Erigo has a tendency to target the mass market with a global scale reach, while RUCAS chooses to be able to position itself as an exclusive streetwear brand. With a total of 1.5 million followers, RUCAS is placed as one of the strong players in the exclusive streetwear category.

RUCAS has managed to position its brand as an exclusive streetwear brand with a loyal customer base, especially among Gen Z and streetwear enthusiasts, although it still cannot surpass the global Erigo. Some of the competitors of the RUCAS brand include No Void Mind with the number of followers (309.7K) and Arkline with the number of followers (296.7K) which has a smaller number of followers but still offers more niche and exclusive appeal so that it becomes a competitor of RUCAS from the brand position. Meanwhile, the Signore brand which has the number of followers (235.8K) and the Kremlin with the number of followers (155.9K) which is in the middle segment and a content strategy that is quite consistent but has not exceeded the level of virality is the same as the RUCAS brand. But on the other hand, the Thanksinsomnia brand which has a number of followers (114.2K) and the

SuperSentimentalSecretTheory brand which has a number of followers (53.7K) are more focused on indie and underground aesthetics which have a target on a narrower community and have segmentation.

In general, this comparison confirms RUCAS occupies a strong position as an exclusive streetwear brand that is supported by such a large and actively engaged TikTok audience. RUCAS' competitive advantage is not only built through a creative content strategy and consistency of brand identity but also the application of the concept of scarcity of distinctive products. Each collection launched by RUCAS is made limited and not reproduced so that the exclusivity of the brand can be further strengthened. This exclusive value is clarified through the presence of special editions such as the Season 9 "Life Is Full of Surprises" t-shirt and the Skeleton "Year of Dragon" t-shirt equipped with a certificate of authenticity and making RUCAS products have a higher unique value.

In addition, the RUCAS brand distribution system is done deliberately to emphasize the impression of exclusivity by launching products that are only done with the official website so that buyers must be able to compete with a limited time in getting products. This sales pattern gives the impression of urgency with scarcity which can ultimately increase consumer interest and brand prestige. By combining creative content, a strong brand positioning strategy, and an exclusive sales mechanism, RUCAS shows great potential to further strengthen its competitiveness, especially in the fashion industry in Indonesia.

Many fashion brands choose to sell their products through various marketplaces or third-party platforms, but Rucas takes a different approach. The brand chooses to be able to sell its products exclusively through their own chosen website. This decision was given an entrance assessment because in this way the company can control how the brand is displayed to customers and how the shopping experience is lived by consumers. The appearance of the Rucas website is designed in a clean and simple style. The color palette used is mostly neutral while the product photos are clearly displayed so that visitors can see the details of the product well. When visitors open the main page, they are

usually immediately greeted by a large banner containing a display of a new collection or the latest collection. On several occasions, the banner is also equipped with a caption that is like "sold out" directly informing visitors that the product has a high level of demand. The navigation is not complicated either, since the icons for accounts and shopping carts are placed in easy spots. What is also interesting is the strict rule that customers can only buy one unit of each product. This policy makes the items feel rare and exclusive. Because the website is the only place to get RUCAS brand, it becomes very important in shaping how consumers think and make their decisions, especially when combined with promotions on social media.



Figure 1.1 Rucas.co Website (June 2025)

Source: Rucas Website (2025)

The Rucas.co brand started with Rubin Castor who made jeans to wear himself because he had difficulty finding jeans that fit his body. Currently, the Rucas.co brand is able to get a lot of attention from people around him and his social media followers so that he thought of making a fashion brand (Mulyana, 2024). This is proven by the positive development of sales. Excellent sales at Rucas.co are proven by getting two MURI records, namely the most sales for jeans as many as 2,427 jeans online on the Tokopedia platform and sold out in 1 hour, this product collaborated with Bimo Putra Dwitya or known as BimoPD who is active on the picky picks youtube channel on July 15, 2020. In addition,

this brand also received an award for the most sales for jeans as many as 3,326 jeans in 15 minutes sold out, this product collaborated with Bigetron Esport on November 21, 2021 (Muri Team, 2021).

The increasing sales of Rucas are supported by the high product searches on Google. This was conveyed by Kompas.co (2020), that the search volume for the Rucas brand on Google increased drastically (Figure 2).



Figure 1.2 Rucas Product Searches on Google in 2020

Source: Google Trends (2020), as cited in Kompas (2020)

This phenomenon identifies the high purchase of RUCAS brand. The purchase of RUCAS brand begins with the high intention to buy products in consumers. So that this is the interest of researchers to study consumer purchasing intentions.

Purchase intention refers to the very personal motivation of a consumer to acquire a certain product or service; this motivation is assessed through the consumer's positive or negative attitude towards that particular product class or brand. Purchase intention is valuable for new marketing applications testing as it will indicate the worthiness of concept and segmentation for the distribution channel (García et al., 2020). Consumer purchase intention, according to Sandala et al. (2021), is also looked at as a process that begins with the consumer perceiving a product that excites them. An interest in trying the product arises, and the next step is the development of a desire to buy it and have it. Purchase Intention Indicators are of great importance when it comes to

consumer behavior evaluation, as they can foreshadow consumer behavior in the decision-making process of buying; simply because the stronger the intention to buy, the greater the chance of a purchase (Wilfrid et al., 2023). When it comes to purchasing, the extent of consumer interest in a product is directly related to the reasons they use or buy the product. To build up purchase intention in consumers, social media marketing is the tool required, which is also the main focus of this study.

Social media marketing is one of the marketing methods carried out through online media by utilizing the use of cultural contexts that exist in social communities, including social media, cyberspace, social news sites, and sites that share social comments. The factors of social media marketing are Content Creation, Content Sharing, Connecting, and Community Building (Ngadimen & Widyastuti, 2021). One definition of social media marketing is the interaction through cyberspace where consumers are involved and value is exchanged between consumers and producers (Takdir et al., 2022). It is a type of online advertising that uses the social networks and their cultural background of the social communities to attract, inform, and build relationships with the potential consumers for the purpose of attaining marketing goals (Yunikartika & Harti, 2022). In support of this, TikTok, one of the most popular social media platforms had in July 2024, 157.6 million monthly active users in Indonesia which is the highest user base of TikTok globally (Kompas Tekno, 2024).

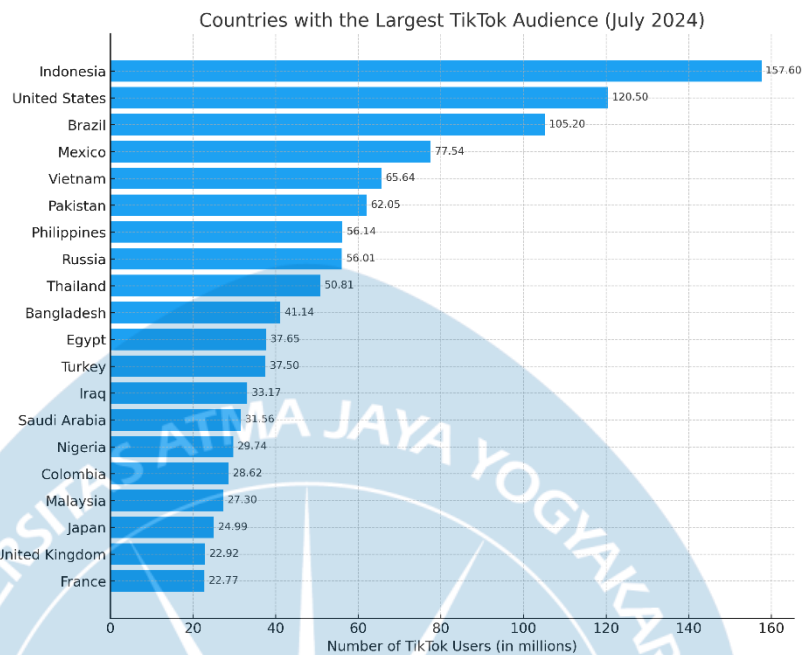


Figure 1.3 Monthly active TikTok users by country (July 2024)

Source: Kompas.com (2024)

This illustrates the vast potential and reach of social media marketing in the Indonesian context. A strong example is RUCAS, a local fashion brand, whose most viewed TikTok post reached 67 million views. The post showed a moment where a man initially asked only for a haircut but unexpectedly received a complete makeover. Beyond presenting a physical transformation, the content conveyed values of humility, hope, and self growth, which enabled RUCAS to build a strong emotional connection with its audience.

This phenomenon is supported by previous research that specifically examines makeover content on the RUCAS TikTok account. Khairunnisa and Pandrianto explain that makeover themed content functions as a strategic communication approach that integrates emotional storytelling, visual transformation, and humanistic values to strengthen audience engagement. Their study emphasizes that makeover content on TikTok is not merely entertainment or promotional material, but also delivers messages of self confidence, social empathy, and personal development, which positively shape

audience perceptions toward the brand. As a result, such content contributes to the formation of a positive brand image by positioning RUCAS as a relatable and supportive brand, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of social media marketing in influencing consumer responses (Khairunnisa & Pandrianto, 2025).

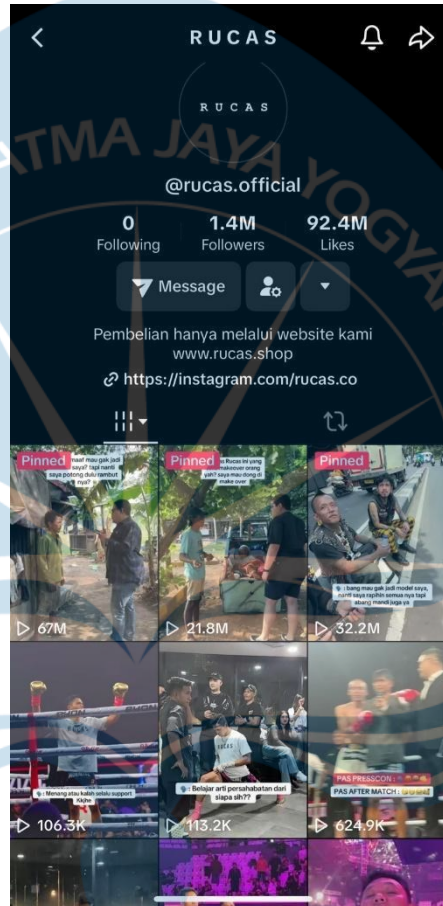


Figure 1. 4 RUCAS Official TikTok Account Displaying Its Most Viewed Post (67 Million Views)

Source: TikTok @rucas.official (2025)

This way of telling stories can actually be in line with the character of social media because the audience has a tendency to be more interested in things that feel real and easy to relate to their lives. As an example, RUCAS chose to be able to show real people and show the stylistic changes they experienced through the fashion pieces they wore. At first glance, the content may seem like

an ordinary promotion, but the message conveyed feels so profound because it does not only focus on selling products.

Posts like this can touch emotions and give a sense of togetherness, which then helps the brand get more attention and slowly build trust. In Indonesia, this works even better because people usually value shared feelings and community support. That's why content with emotional elements can spread even more quickly and get people to react in different ways. Sometimes it makes them share it with their friends, or simply talk about it, which already helps promoting the brand by giving mouth to mouth type of promotion about the brand. Previous research shows that emotionally driven and authentic storytelling on TikTok encourages higher audience interaction through comments, shares, and discussions, which helps content spread organically. This process strengthens brand awareness and gradually builds trust toward the brand, as audiences perceive the message as more genuine and socially meaningful, even when it does not immediately lead to purchase decisions (Febriyana et al., 2025). Sometimes, when people notice that a brand is not just about selling but also tries to show some concern for ordinary people, it feels a bit more caring. This kind of impression doesn't always turn viewers to buy the products right away, but it can slowly build trust, where trust is really important in building a brand. In the future, that trust might make many people be more open to try the brand's products when the chance comes.

When social media is compared to the traditional marketing methods, it is definitely the easiest and most effective way for the brands to interact with and establish a connection with their customers on a personal, emotional, and very interactive level. Most of the posts are designed to catch attention, get responses like comments, and encourage sharing. The impact might be different from one case to another, but most of the time what people see and read on social media can shape how they think and even influence whether they plan to buy a product (Yohandi, 2022). Therefore, Moslehpour et al. (2021) argue that social media marketing positively affects purchasing intentions, although Diventy et al. (2020) suggest there may be no direct influence.

Inconsistencies in research results make this study important as a gap filler in research. The influence of social media marketing may have the ability, but its impact on product purchase intention may not be direct and operates through other variables such as brand image. A well-managed brand image can have positive brand image consequences (Hien et al, 2020). Miati (2020) asserts that brand image is a reflection of consumer associations and faith in a specific brand. The image of the brand influences the perception of the product by the customers, the comparison of the customers' ratings of the products and the positioning of the brand in the customers' minds as the good brands that evoke the affective feelings of the customers towards the brand. That's why a firm's market superiority can be based on a brand image if it's positive. As per the opinion of Purwati and Cahyanti (2022), the brand image is influential in a positive and significant way when it comes to the purchase intention. However, the viewpoint is different according to Sari et al. (2022), who state that the brand image has a negative impact on the purchase intention variable.

Research conducted earlier has focused the attention on the interplay between social media marketing, brand image, and customers' buying intention in different sectors like the beauty and food industries, for example (Ali & Naushad, 2023; Ratasuk & Lyreaksmey, 2024). However, there is still limited research investigating this relationship within the fashion industry, particularly among local Indonesian clothing brands. To date, it is true that most of the investigations conducted have simply looked into the social media marketing direct influence on the purchase intentions of consumers, ignoring the role of brand image as a bridge between marketing activities and consumer behavior. Hence, this research intends to contribute to the existing knowledge by examining the effect of social media marketing on purchase intention for RUCAS products with brand image as a mediating factor, within the framework of the Indonesian fashion industry.

1.2. Research Questions

From the background above, the research question in this research are:

1. Does Social Media Marketing have an influence on the Purchase Intention of RUCAS's products?
2. Does Social Media Marketing have an influence on the Brand Image of RUCAS's products?
3. Does Brand Image have an influence on the Purchase Intention of RUCAS's products?
4. Does Brand Image mediate the effect of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention of RUCAS's products?

1.3. Research Objectives

Based on the research question, the research objectives are:

1. To find the influence of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of RUCAS's products.
2. To find the influence of Social Media Marketing on the Brand Image of RUCAS's products.
3. To find the influence of Brand Image on the Purchase Intention of RUCAS's products.
4. To find whether Brand Image mediates the influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention of RUCAS's products.

1.4. Research Benefits

This kind of a study will provide the readers' opinions on a particular criterion through empirical testing.

1. Academic Benefit

The relationship between social media marketing, brand image, and purchase intention in the fashion industry was the main issue under investigation, particularly in terms of providing empirical evidence on the effect of social media marketing on the RUCAS brand purchase intention through brand image as a mediating factor, which would help

to understand the interaction among the variables from the customer's point of view. The results are anticipated to add to the knowledge base and be a helpful guide for management students and researchers.

2. Practical Benefits

This research provides practical insights that help RUCAS improve its social media marketing strategies by identifying the most effective elements that influence consumer purchase intentions. By being able to understand the influence of different types of content, audience engagement styles, and platform choices on brand image and purchasing behavior, RUCAS can make the right decisions. The decision was made so that the effectiveness of marketing strategies can be improved and sales performance can be improved more optimally.

1.5. Research Systematics

The systematics of writing this research is described as follows:

1. Chapter I: Introduction

Presenting the background, problem formulation, research objectives, research benefits and research systematics.

2. Chapter II: Literature Review

Reviews relevant theories, including the concepts of brand image, brand trust, and brand loyalty, as well as related previous research.

3. Chapter III: Research Methodology

Describes the research methods used, including population and sample research design, data collection techniques and data analysis.

4. Chapter IV: Data Analysis & Discussion

Presenting the research results obtained, followed by analysis and discussion of findings relevant to the research objectives.

5. Chapter V: Conclusion

Summarize the research results and provide suggestions for further research as well as recommendations for companies in developing brand strategies.