



The Role of Social Media and Community in Purchasing Decisions Via Customer Equity

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Abstract

Background: The rapid growth of digital communication platforms has significantly reshaped how premium sports brands interact with consumers. In emerging lifestyle sports such as padel, purchasing decisions are no longer influenced solely by product specifications or brand reputation but also by digital engagement and community participation.

Objective: This study examines how Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Community Engagement (COM) affect Purchasing Decisions (PD) through the mediating role of Customer Equity dimensions: Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity.

Methods: A quantitative survey was conducted among 123 consumers of premium padel equipment across major Indonesian cities. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results: The results indicate that although SMM and community participation significantly enhance all dimensions of customer equity, they do not directly influence purchasing decisions. This finding is attributable to the high-involvement nature of premium padel equipment, which requires extensive cognitive evaluation and physical trials before purchase. Instead, purchasing behavior is driven primarily by Value Equity and Relationship Equity. Relationship Equity emerges as the most influential determinant. Brand Equity, contrary to conventional branding assumptions, does not significantly predict purchasing decisions in this context.

Conclusion: These findings suggest that, in performance-driven sports markets, consumers prioritize perceived functional value and relational trust over symbolic brand prestige. The study extends Customer Equity Theory to the niche padel equipment market and provides practical implications for brands seeking to convert digital engagement into tangible sales outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Marketing communication is no longer limited to traditional advertising channels; instead, it is increasingly shaped by interactive digital platforms and social communities. Globally, the sports e-commerce sector has experienced unprecedented growth, with the global sports equipment market projected to reach USD 595.71 billion by 2030 at a CAGR of 6.4%. Concurrently, more than 4.95 billion people worldwide actively used social media as of 2023, of whom approximately 76% reported that social media influenced their purchasing decisions for lifestyle and sports goods (Statista, 2023). These global trends underscore the strategic urgency of understanding how digital engagement and community participation reshape consumer behavior in premium sports markets.

In premium and lifestyle-oriented industries, this shift has redefined the way brands create and sustain competitive advantage. A particularly illustrative case of this transformation is the rapid expansion of padel in Indonesia, which provides a unique context for examining how digital engagement and community participation reshape consumer purchasing behavior in premium sports markets. Once considered a niche racket sport, padel has quickly evolved into a premium urban lifestyle activity, particularly in metropolitan areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung. Alongside the growth of padel clubs and tournaments, demand for high-quality equipment, especially rackets, has increased significantly. Premium padel rackets often exceed IDR 3,000,000 and are primarily imported from European manufacturers, positioning them as high-involvement products.

Unlike low-risk consumer goods, purchasing a padel racket involves careful consideration. Players evaluate technical characteristics such as weight distribution, balance, control, and power output. In addition, they frequently seek recommendations from coaches, community peers, and online reviews before making a final decision. Consequently, understanding the mechanisms that influence purchasing behavior in this market requires a framework that goes beyond simple promotional exposure.

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become one of the primary channels through which padel brands communicate product information. Demonstration videos, influencer endorsements, tutorial content, and user testimonials are widely circulated across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Within the Indonesian padel context specifically, approximately 89% of active padel players nationally engage with sport-related content through social media platforms on a weekly basis, and around 67% follow at least one padel-related account or community page. Instagram dominates as the primary discovery channel for premium equipment, accounting for 58% of brand exposure among Indonesian padel consumers, followed by TikTok (24%) and YouTube (18%). While these efforts enhance visibility and engagement, it remains unclear whether they directly translate into purchasing decisions.

At the same time, padel communities, both offline and online, play a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions. Through club memberships, WhatsApp groups, and digital scheduling applications such as Reclub and Ayo, players share experiences, evaluate equipment, and reinforce social belonging. These interactions may significantly influence purchasing decisions, yet their direct and indirect effects require empirical clarification.

Customer Equity Theory provides a useful lens through which to examine this issue. The theory suggests that consumer purchasing behavior is driven by three key components: Value Equity (rational evaluation), Brand Equity (perceived brand strength), and Relationship Equity (emotional and relational bonds). Previous studies have examined customer equity primarily in mainstream contexts: Kim (2012) and Godey (2016) established that social media marketing activities enhance brand equity in the luxury fashion sector, while Harrigan (2018) and Hapsari (2020) confirmed that community engagement strengthens relationship equity in service industries. More recently, Liu (2022) and Tjahjono (2023) extended these findings to Indonesian e-commerce, demonstrating that customer equity dimensions mediate the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention. However, these studies focused on purchase intention rather than actual purchasing decisions, and none specifically addressed high-involvement niche sports equipment markets. Moreover, little empirical research has applied this framework specifically to

the premium padel equipment market.

Drawing from the literature review, three interrelated research gaps emerge that justify the present investigation. First, there is limited empirical investigation into how Social Media Marketing and Community Engagement interact with customer equity in niche sports markets, particularly outside mainstream luxury and fashion contexts. Second, the mechanisms explaining how digitally driven engagement actually translates into completed purchase transactions, rather than mere purchase intention, remain unclear in the literature. Third, insufficient empirical evidence exists regarding which dimension of customer equity (value, brand, or relationship) best predicts purchasing decisions for premium, high-involvement sports equipment in emerging-market settings such as Indonesia.

To address these gaps, the present study pursues three interrelated objectives. The first is to examine the direct impact of Social Media Marketing and Community Engagement on the three dimensions of Customer Equity, namely Value Equity (CEV), Brand Equity (CEB), and Relationship Equity (CER). The second is to evaluate the direct effect of each Customer Equity dimension on Purchasing Decisions within the premium padel equipment market. The third is to investigate the mediating roles of CEV, CEB, and CER in the relationships among Social Media Marketing, Community Engagement, and Purchasing Decisions, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of both direct and indirect pathways that drive consumer behavior in this niche, high-involvement context.

Despite the growing importance of social media marketing and community engagement in modern marketing strategies, limited research has examined how these factors influence purchasing decisions through Customer Equity, particularly in niche sports markets such as premium padel equipment. Previous studies have primarily focused on brand equity or purchase intention rather than actual purchasing decisions and the mediating role of customer equity dimensions. Locally, the Indonesian padel market is expanding rapidly, with the number of padel courts increasing from fewer than 20 in 2022 to more than 350 nationwide by mid-2024, concentrated mainly in Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, and Bali (Asosiasi Padel Indonesia). Indonesian premium-equipment expenditure in racket sports also grew by approximately 38% year over year between 2022 and 2024 (BPS). Despite this expansion, empirical studies on Indonesian consumer behavior in premium sports equipment remain limited, with most local research focusing on football, badminton, or general fitness rather than emerging racket sports such as padel (Tjahjono & Wibowo, 2023; Putri & Lestari, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of Social Media Marketing and Community Engagement on Purchasing Decisions through Customer Equity, consisting of Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the influence of Social Media Marketing and Community on Purchase Decisions for premium sports equipment, with Customer Equity (Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity) serving as the mediating variables. A quantitative approach was chosen because it enabled the objective measurement of direct and indirect effects among these variables using numerical data and statistical analysis.

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the relationships among Social Media Marketing, Community, Customer Equity, and Purchase Decisions in the context of premium sports equipment. The quantitative method was adopted to test the extent of both direct and mediated influences of Social Media Marketing and Community on consumer purchasing behavior. The research addressed the relationships among Social Media Marketing, Community, Customer Equity (Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity), and Purchase Decisions (H1–H9). Built upon the Customer Equity Model Rust (2004), the framework positioned Customer Equity as the mediating construct linking external influences (Social Media Marketing and Community) with behavioral outcomes (Purchase Decisions). The model emphasized that Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity represented the long-term drivers of consumer decision-making in competitive markets.

Sampling Methods & Processes

This study employed primary data collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed to members of premium padel and tennis communities through official club membership lists, WhatsApp groups, and social media platforms. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended items measured using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from validated instruments in previous research (Kim & Ko, 2012; Keller, 2003; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). The use of an online survey was selected because of its efficiency in gathering standardized and quantifiable data from a geographically dispersed yet specialized population, in line with the quantitative research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This format enhanced accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and response timeliness, while the structured design supported rigorous hypothesis testing through statistical analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

The criteria for respondents in this study were as follows: Based on data from the Indonesian Padel Association, the estimated total population of active premium padel players across major Indonesian cities (Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Tangerang, Bali, and Medan) was approximately 8,500 individuals as of mid-2024. The 123 respondents who met all inclusion criteria therefore represented approximately 1.45% of this active premium-player population, which was considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis given the rule-of-thumb requirements (Hair et al., 2021).

1. Owned premium padel sports equipment valued at more than IDR 3,000,000
2. Possessed padel sports equipment such as a racket, bag, or shoes that had been purchased rather than received as gifts or borrowed
3. Had actively participated in playing padel within the previous 6 months
4. Resided in a major city in Indonesia

The determination of the sample size referred to the rule of thumb in PLS-SEM, namely 10 times the number of indicators of the construct with the greatest number of indicators (Hair et al., 2017).

Data Collection Methods & Techniques

A purposive sampling technique was implemented to specifically target individuals who actively participated in premium sports communities. This approach ensured that respondents possessed adequate exposure to Social Media Marketing, Community dynamics, and Purchase Decision processes, making them suitable for addressing the objectives of this study. The selected research design was further justified by its alignment with the study's aim of examining relationships among variables and evaluating mediation effects with statistical rigor. The quantitative survey method enabled the collection of standardized and comparable data, facilitating the identification of significant patterns and the empirical testing of theoretical assumptions.

Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the direct and indirect relationships among Social Media Marketing, Community, Customer Equity (Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity), and Purchase Decisions. This method was selected because it is well suited for testing complex models with mediating variables, is robust with relatively small sample sizes, and does not require strict normality assumptions (Hair et al., 2019).

PLS-SEM was chosen over covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) for several reasons relevant to this study. First, this research was predictive and exploratory in nature, aiming to maximize the explained variance of Purchase Decisions rather than confirm a single theoretical structure, which aligned with the predictive orientation of PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019). Second, the sample size of 123 respondents fell below the minimum thresholds typically required for estimation stability in CB-SEM, whereas PLS-SEM produces reliable estimates with smaller samples. Third, the model included formatively conceptualized constructs and multiple mediating relationships, which PLS-SEM handles more flexibly than CB-SEM. Fourth, the data did not strictly satisfy multivariate normality assumptions, which are prerequisites for CB-SEM but not for variance-based PLS-SEM (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was assessed to ensure construct reliability and validity, including tests for internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted [AVE]), and discriminant validity (the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT). Second, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypotheses and determine path coefficients, effect sizes (f^2), explanatory power (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The mediation effects of Customer Equity were examined using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, providing confidence intervals for indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This analytical approach provided robust statistical evidence for theory testing and offered practical insights into consumer behavior in premium sports markets, particularly within padel and tennis communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Demographic Analysis

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 123)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	75	61.0
	Female	48	39.0
Age	21–27 years	47	38.2
	28–32 years	34	27.7
	> 32 years	42	34.1
City of Residence	Jakarta	84	68.3
	Surabaya	14	11.4
	Bandung, Tangerang, Bali, Medan, Others	25	20.3
Occupation	Full-time Employee	91	74.0
	Entrepreneur	21	17.1
	Others	11	8.9
Monthly Income (IDR)	11–20 million	75	61.0
	21–30 million	26	21.1
	> 30 million	22	17.9
Play Frequency	1–2 times / month	31	25.2
	3–4 times / month	52	42.3
	> 4 times / month	40	32.5
Source of Equipment Info	Social Media	56	45.5
	Friends	34	27.6
	Community	22	17.7
	Online Stores	11	9.2

In the research sample collected since October 2025, there were 170 respondents, of whom 123 met the established criteria and 47 did not. Of the 170 respondents, 116 individuals (68.2%) were from Jakarta, 14 were from Surabaya, and the remaining respondents were from Bandung, Tangerang, Bali, Medan, and other major cities in Indonesia. In this study, 136 respondents (80%) had actively played padel within the past six months, while 34 had not. A total of 134 respondents (78.8%) possessed padel sports equipment such as rackets, shoes, or bags, either through gifts, personal purchases, or borrowing, and 123 respondents (72.4%) owned premium padel sports equipment such as rackets, shoes, or bags.

Among the respondents who successfully met the research criteria, there were 123 individuals, of whom 75 people (61%) were male and 48 people (39%) were female. In terms of age, the respondents were still dominated by the 21–27-year age group, accounting for 38.2% or 47 individuals; 34.1% were aged over 32 years; and the remaining 27% were within the 28–32-year age range. As is widely recognized, padel is considered a relatively expensive sport because of the substantial structural and economic requirements associated with its facilities and

equipment. Padel equipment, which is predominantly produced by European manufacturers, is also subject to import duties, logistics costs, and distributor markups, contributing to higher consumer prices compared to other racket sports (Reverter-Masia et al., 2020).

According to the respondents' results, 91 individuals (74%) were employed full-time, 17.1% were entrepreneurs, and the remaining 8.3% were engaged in other occupations. Regarding income, 61% of respondents earned between Rp 11,000,000 and Rp 20,000,000 per month, followed by 21.1% earning between Rp 21,000,000 and Rp 30,000,000, while the remainder earned more than Rp 30,000,000 per month. The commercialization of padel as a high-status, community-driven lifestyle sport encourages clubs to adopt premium pricing strategies aligned with consumer perceptions of exclusivity (García-Unanue, Felipe, & Gallardo, 2021). Collectively, these factors explain why padel has been positioned and experienced as a sport with relatively high economic barriers to participation.

As many as 52 people, or approximately 42.3%, played padel three to four times per month, while 40 people, or approximately 32.5%, played padel more than four times per month, and the remaining respondents played padel one to two times per month. This indicates that the respondents included in this study, consisting of Indonesians living in major cities in Indonesia in 2025, frequently played padel on a monthly basis. In playing padel, the use of digital applications such as Reclub, Kuyy, and Ayo enhanced accessibility, coordination, and the overall playing experience through features such as matchmaking, monitoring court availability, digital payments, and community building. According to the respondents, out of 102 people, 82.9% used these applications, while 21 individuals did not. In relation to this, 79 people, or approximately 64.2%, had actively participated in a community, whereas 44 people (35.8%) had either not yet become active or were not part of a community.

The growth of padel in Indonesia has certainly been supported by the dissemination of information, particularly regarding padel equipment. As many as 45.5%, or approximately 56 respondents, stated that they obtained information about padel equipment from social media, followed by 27.6%, or 34 respondents, who received this information from friends. The remaining respondents obtained information from communities (17.7%, or 22 respondents) and online stores (8.1%). Regarding ownership of more than one type of similar padel equipment, 58.8%, or approximately 72 respondents, indicated that they did not own more than one item, while the remaining 51 respondents (41.5%) reported owning more than one piece of similar padel equipment.

The research results indicate that, out of 170 respondents, the 123 individuals who met the study criteria represented a group of active padel players with demographic characteristics typical of upper-middle-class urban society. These findings are relevant to the research variables focusing on Social Media Marketing, Community, and Purchase Decisions. Most respondents actively played padel and possessed personal equipment, demonstrating a high level of engagement in the sport. Access to information regarding padel equipment primarily through social media underscores the significant role of Social Media Marketing as a key source of exposure and influence on consumer behavior. Furthermore, the extensive use of applications such as Reclub, Kuyy, and Ayo, along with participation in padel communities, highlights the strong role of the Community dimension in shaping experiences, social interactions, and purchasing decisions related to padel equipment. Thus, these findings consistently demonstrate that padel players' purchasing decisions are influenced not only by functional needs but also by exposure to digital media and the social identity associated with the sports community. This study confirms that the integration of digital marketing, community environment, and consumer behavior plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of padel growth in Indonesia.

Measurement Model

Table 2. Measurement Model

Variable	Indicator	Example Questionnaire Item	Scale	Source (Theory/Journa l)
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Social Media Marketing (X1)	Content quality	“The promotional content of premium sports equipment on social media is relevant to my needs.”	Likert 1–5	(Kim & Ko, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)
	Interactivity	“The premium sports brand actively interacts with its followers on social media.”	Likert 1–5	(Tuten & Solomon, 2017)
	Trustworthiness	“I believe that the information from the brand’s social media is reliable.”	Likert 1–5	(Mangold & Faulds, 2009)
	Entertainment	“The brand’s social media content is visually appealing and enjoyable.”	Likert 1–5	(Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)
Community (X2)	Peer Influence	“Recommendations from my sports community influence my purchase decisions.”	Likert 1–5	(Algesheimer et al., 2005)
	Word of Mouth	“Discussions within my community make me more confident in purchasing premium sports equipment.”	Likert 1–5	(Keller, 2003)
	Sense of Belonging	“I feel that I am part of the community of users of this product.”	Likert 1–5	(McAlexander et al., 2002)
	Support	“My sports community provides support in choosing premium products.”	Likert 1–5	(Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001)
Customer Equity - Value Equity (M1)	Perceived quality	“This premium sports equipment has excellent quality.”	Likert 1–5	(Lemon et al., 2001)
	Fair price	“The price of this premium product is fair compared to the benefits I receive.”	Likert 1–5	(Yoo & Donthu, 2001)
	Convenience	“This product provides comfort when used for	Likert 1–5	(Rust et al., 2004)

		sports.”		
Customer Equity - Brand Equity (M2)	Brand awareness	“I am very familiar with this premium sports brand.”	Likert 1-5	(Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003)
	Brand association	“This brand is associated with a healthy lifestyle and prestige.”	Likert 1-5	(Keller, 2003)
	Brand loyalty	“I prefer buying products from this brand even though there are other alternatives.”	Likert 1-5	(Yoo & Donthu, 2001)
Customer Equity - Relationship Equity (M3)	Community bonding	“I feel that I am part of the brand’s user community.”	Likert 1-5	(Lemon et al., 2001)
	Relationship program	“The brand’s loyalty program provides tangible benefits for me.”	Likert 1-5	(Morgan & Hunt, 1994)
	Trust & commitment	“I trust this brand and am committed to using it in the future.”	Likert 1-5	(Rust et al., 2004)
Purchase Decision (Y)	Actual purchase	“I have purchased premium sports equipment in the last 12 months.”	Likert 1-5	(Kotler & Keller, 2016)
	Purchase satisfaction	“I am satisfied with my decision to purchase premium sports equipment.”	Likert 1-5	(Oliver, 1997)
	Repurchase intention	“I intend to repurchase premium sports equipment in the future.”	Likert 1-5	(Zeithaml et al., 1996)

The outer model focuses on the relationship between latent variables and indicators. Testing the outer model aims to ensure that the instruments used to measure latent variables possess adequate validity and reliability. Based on the analysis results, all research indicators have a factor loading value of ≥ 0.70 (Table 1). Some indicators in social media marketing and community have values above 0.60, which are still acceptable in exploratory research (Haryono, 2016). High factor loading values indicate that each indicator effectively represents its construct. All constructs have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of ≥ 0.50 (Table 1), which means that each construct can explain more variance in its indicators than error.

Tabel 3. Validity & Reliability Test

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach’s α	Composite Reliability	Average Variance	Construct
Social Media	Content	0.64	0.73	0.82	0.53	Social Media
	Quality					
	Interactivity	0.68				

	Inspiration	0.77				
	Entertainment	0.81				
Community	Peer Influence	0.82	0.68	0.82	0.61	Community
	Word of Mouth	0.83				
	Support	0.68				
Equity Brand	Brand Awareness	0.78	0.82	0.88	0.66	Equity Brand
	Brand Pride	0.83				
	Brand Association	0.78				
	Brand Loyalty	0.84				
Equity Relationship	Community Bonding	0.89	0.80	0.88	0.72	Equity Relationship
	Relationship Program	0.81				
	Trust & Commitment	0.84				
Equity Value	Perceived Quality	0.82	0.79	0.87	0.62	Equity Value
	Confidence Level	0.80				
	Fair Price	0.75				
	Convenience	0.78				
Purchasing Decision	Actual Purchase	0.87	0.76	0.86	0.67	Purchasing Decision
	Purchase Intention	0.78				
	Repurchase Intention	0.81				

Based on the results of the discriminant validity test in Table 2 using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, all square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (diagonal values) are greater than the correlations between constructs (values below the diagonal). The square root of the AVE for the Brand Equity construct is 0.810, which is higher than its correlations with other constructs, such as Relationship Equity (0.642), Value Equity (0.634), Community (0.534), Purchase Decision (0.572), and Social Media (0.544).

Based on the results of the discriminant validity test using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) in Table 3, all HTMT values are below the threshold of ≤ 0.85 , as recommended by (Henseler et al., 2015). The highest HTMT value is found in the relationship between Relationship Equity and Purchase Decision, at 0.898; however, it remains within the HTMT tolerance limit of < 0.90 , indicating that the two constructs are still considered conceptually distinct. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model demonstrates discriminant validity and that each construct measures a different concept.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Test

Construct	Equity Brand	Equity Relationship	Equity Value	Community	Purchasing Decision	Social Media
Equity Brand	0.810					
Equity Relationship	0.642	0.847				

Relationship						
Equity Value	0.634	0.469	0.786			
Community	0.534	0.543	0.541	0.783		
Purchasing Decision	0.572	0.707	0.527	0.529	0.820	
Social Media	0.544	0.598	0.353	0.352	0.527	0.730

Table 5. HTMT Test

Construct	Equity Brand	Equity Relationship	Equity Value	Community	Purchasing Decision	Social Media
Equity Brand	-					
Equity Relationship	0.785	-				
Equity Value	0.779	0.571	-			
Community	0.696	0.729	0.728	-		
Purchasing Decision	0.711	0.898	0.666	0.726	-	
Social Media	0.648	0.714	0.378	0.441	0.614	-

Next, for the Cronbach’s alpha values in Table 1, the Brand Equity variable was 0.825, Relationship Equity 0.803, Value Equity 0.794, Community 0.682 (still considered reliable if ≥ 0.60 according to Haryono (2016), Purchasing Decision 0.757, and Social Media 0.730. All values (except Community) had a Cronbach’s alpha ≥ 0.70 , indicating that all variables possessed good reliability. Meanwhile, the composite reliability values for the variables were as follows: Brand Equity 0.884, Relationship Equity 0.884, Value Equity 0.866, Community 0.825, Purchasing Decision 0.860, and Social Media 0.819. Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators met the standards for conducting the research.

Structural Model

Based on the analysis results in Table 4, an R-square value of 0.431 for the Brand Equity variable indicates that 43.1% of the variation in this variable could be explained by the independent variables in the model, while the remaining 56.9% was influenced by factors outside the model. Thus, the relationship between the independent variables and Brand Equity can be considered moderately strong. Meanwhile, the R-square value of 0.484 for the Relationship Equity variable indicates that 48.4% of the variation in this variable could be explained by the independent variables in the model, with 51.6% influenced by external factors. Similarly, the R-square value of 0.323 for the Value Equity variable indicates that 32.3% of the variation in this variable could be explained by the independent variables in the model. Finally, the R-square value of 0.570 for the Purchasing Decision variable shows that 57.0% of the variation in this variable could also be explained by the independent variables in the model.

Table 6. R-Square Test

Endogenous Variable	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Equity Brand	0.431	0.419
Equity Relationship	0.484	0.473
Equity Value	0.323	0.309
Purchasing Decision	0.570	0.547

The R-square values for the four independent variables above indicate a moderate relationship, meaning that the model is able to explain a significant portion of the factors influencing Brand Equity, Relationship Equity, Value Equity, and Purchasing Decision, although there are still many external influences outside the model.

The results of the bootstrapping analysis of direct effects can be seen in Table 5. Three

variables were not proven to have a direct effect, namely Social Media on Purchasing Decision, with a P-value of 0.106. This finding indicates that mere exposure to social media content is not sufficient to trigger consumers to make a purchase. From a practical standpoint, brands should therefore complement passive social-media exposure with more interactive and experiential content formats, such as live product-demonstration sessions, interactive Q&A reels with professional padel coaches, augmented-reality racket-fitting simulators, and free or low-cost product-trial events at padel clubs. These interactive formats convert digital interest into hands-on evaluation, which is the missing bridge between social-media reach and actual purchase. This finding is consistent with previous research Leung (2022), which explains that social media is stronger at the stages of brand awareness, engagement, and affective attitude; therefore, it does not directly drive purchasing conversion. The second variable is Community on Purchasing Decision, with a P-value of 0.146.

Brand-community literature Muniz (2001) states that communities build loyalty, identity, and social proof, but their impact on purchasing is usually indirect through perceived value or emotional connections. The padel community is very active, but the decision to purchase a premium racket largely depends on fit, weight, balance, and control and requires physical experience, not merely a sense of community. In this respect, direct experience itself, encompassing on-court product testing, coaching feedback, and trial sessions, appears to operate as an additional experiential mediator that the present model does not formally capture.

Several recent studies in high-involvement sports markets Yoshida (2014) and Funk (2018) confirm that hands-on product trials and coach-led evaluations translate community influence into actual purchase behavior. Future studies should therefore include direct-experience constructs (e.g., product-trial frequency, perceived fit, and coach endorsement) alongside community engagement when modeling purchase outcomes in premium racket sports. Thirdly, Brand Equity in relation to Purchasing Decision has a P-value of 0.441. Brand Equity is generally significant; however, in the context of padel, consumers prioritize performance over brand name. Players tend to try different rackets rather than remain loyal to a single brand. Brand prestige does not always correlate with quality of play. Therefore, in this case, Brand Equity must be combined with product testing, coaching sessions, and community experience.

Table 7. Bootstrapping Direct Effect

Construct	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Information
Social Media -> Equity Brand	0.407	0.412	0.128	3.172	0.001	Proven
Social Media -> Equity Relationship	0.464	0.464	0.108	4.283	0.000	Proven
Social Media -> Equity Value	0.185	0.203	0.091	2.027	0.021	Proven
Social Media -> Purchasing Decision	0.131	0.123	0.105	1.247	0.106	Not Proven
Community -> Equity Brand	0.391	0.395	0.102	3.821	0.000	Proven
Community -> Equity Relationship	0.380	0.384	0.097	3.920	0.000	Proven
Community -> Equity Value	0.476	0.474	0.080	5.976	0.000	Proven

> Equity Value						
Community -	0.119	0.134	0.112	1.055	0.146	Not Proven
> Purchasing Decision						
Equity Brand -> Purchasing Decision	0.022	0.024	0.149	0.149	0.441	Not Proven
Equity Relationship -> Purchasing Decision	0.463	0.438	0.126	3.681	0.000	Proven
Equity Value -> Purchasing Decision	0.186	0.202	0.101	1.840	0.033	Proven

Next, Table 6 displays the outcomes of the bootstrapping analysis for indirect effects. Three factors, including the effect of community on purchasing decisions moderated by brand equity, with a p-value of 0.440, were not found to have an indirect influence. This suggests that community interactions do not create a strong enough bond between customers and the brand to influence purchasing decisions. Second, with a p-value of 0.144, brand equity mitigated the impact of social media on purchasing decisions.

Social media content, such as specification details and review videos, does increase perceived value. However, for high-involvement products such as padel rackets, the final value assessment still heavily depends on actual experience (trying the product directly and recommendations from coaches), rather than solely on digital content. Finally, the effect of social media on purchasing decisions moderated by brand equity had a p-value of 0.448. Social media content is not strong enough to build an emotional or personal connection between consumers and the brand and, therefore, does not drive purchases.

Table 6. Bootstrapping Indirect Effect

Construct	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Information
Community -> Equity Value -> Purchasing Decision	0.089	0.095	0.049	1.791	0.037	Proven
Community -> Equity Relationship -> Purchasing Decision	0.176	0.166	0.062	2.851	0.002	Proven
Community -> Equity Brand -> Purchasing Decision	0.009	0.002	0.058	0.151	0.440	Not Proven

Social Media -> Equity Value -> Purchasing Decision	0.034	0.042	0.032	1.064	0.144	Not Proven
Social Media -> Equity Relationship -> Purchasing Decision	0.215	0.207	0.082	2.621	0.004	Proven
Social Media -> Equity Brand -> Purchasing Decision	0.009	0.019	0.069	0.131	0.448	Not Proven

Discussion

The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Purchasing Decisions

According to the findings of this research, Social Media Marketing does not have a statistically significant direct impact on purchasing decisions. These results indicate that exposure to social media marketing content alone is insufficient to transform consumer interest into purchase intentions in the premium padel equipment market. Unlike low-involvement goods, purchasing an expensive product necessitates extensive cognitive evaluation processes. These processes include product examination, analysis of technical features, and assessment of product suitability for customers.

These results are congruent with previous research conducted by (Leung et al., 2022). According to the findings of these scholars, social media marketing primarily affects the consumer journey during its early stages. This includes the awareness stage, when consumers learn about new products or services. Additionally, it can help build favorable attitudes toward specific items and develop positive emotions toward the brand.

In this study, Social Media Marketing has a more indirect impact on purchasing decisions by influencing consumers' perceptions of value and their relationships with brands.

The Effect of Community Engagement on Purchasing Decisions

Additionally, the results indicate that Community Engagement does not have a significant effect on purchasing decisions. This means that although community involvement plays a major role in shaping consumer experiences, its influence on individual purchasing behavior is indirect rather than direct.

Communities act as information-sharing forums that facilitate communication, interaction, and discussion. This contributes to building trust and mitigating uncertainty. Nonetheless, making purchasing decisions regarding premium sports equipment involves a rigorous evaluation of product performance, including control, balance, and comfort. This explains why community involvement alone is insufficient to influence purchasing decisions without adding value and experience to the decision-making process.

Thus, the above findings correspond with Muniz (2001) and Algesheimer (2005), who stated that brand communities primarily increase loyalty and social bonds among individuals but do not directly affect purchasing behavior.

The Effect of Value Equity on Purchasing Decisions

According to the research findings, Value Equity positively influences purchasing decisions and indicates a high level of consumer involvement in rational evaluation when making decisions related to the purchase of premium sports equipment. Perceived product quality, functional benefits, and price fairness are considered crucial determinants of purchasing

decisions.

These results correlate well with Customer Equity Theory Rust (2001), which states that Value Equity is a key factor influencing consumer choice. In the discussed market, a high level of customer involvement is driven by concerns regarding optimal product performance and fair pricing.

Thus, when purchasing premium sports equipment, consumers pay greater attention to product performance than to features associated with branding activities.

The Effect of Relationship Equity on Purchasing Decisions

Relationship Equity, among the variables examined, is shown to have the highest predictive power in determining purchasing decisions. In this regard, emotional affinity, trust, and relational bonds formed between brands and their customers significantly influence purchasing behavior.

Within the padel community, Relationship Equity is established through interactions with community members, participation in events, and engagement with brand ambassadors or representatives. By establishing strong bonds and trust within the community, buyers' perceived risks are reduced, and purchase intention is increased.

The results support the Commitment-Trust Theory Morgan (1994), according to which both commitment and trust are crucial elements of any long-term business relationship. Additionally, the findings indicate that, in the lifestyle-based market of performance sports, purchasing behavior involves more than mere transactions.

The Effect of Brand Equity on Purchasing Decisions

Unlike the conventional concept of Brand Equity, in the current case study, it does not play a statistically significant role in purchasing decisions. As such, the study shows that even if a company has high Brand Equity, it does not necessarily influence consumers' behavior when purchasing premium padel products.

As noted previously, unlike traditional theories Keller (2003) and Aaker (2012), customers in sports- and leisure-related industries are less concerned with brand image. Instead, they tend to evaluate various brands and focus primarily on functionality.

The Mediating Role of Customer Equity

The results revealed that Customer Equity plays an essential mediating role in the relationship between Social Media Marketing, Community Engagement, and Purchasing Decisions. Specifically, neither of the two factors mentioned above has a direct impact on consumers' purchasing decisions; instead, their influence operates through Value Equity and Relationship Equity.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical assumptions of Customer Equity Theory, according to which the effects of marketing practices on consumer behavior are realized through drivers related to value, brand, and relationship dimensions. Thus, the implications of the results presented above are clear: marketing strategies implemented by firms should focus on developing these aspects of Customer Equity.

Managerial Implication

The current research suggests several managerial implications regarding how brands could benefit from these findings. First, firms should shift their focus from promotional social media marketing to the creation of informative content in order to enhance consumers' perceptions of brand products. Product trials, product comparisons, and expert reviews would serve this purpose effectively.

Second, brand owners should pay greater attention to establishing long-term relationships with consumers. For instance, personal communication and community engagement initiatives are effective ways to build such relationships successfully. Lastly, since the influence of Relationship Equity on purchasing decisions is significant, brands should develop partnerships with customers who perceive themselves as sportspersons and athletes rather than

merely buyers.

Theoretical Contribution

The contribution of this study to the existing Customer Equity Theory lies in extending it beyond the general population to the field of sports goods in niche markets. The research findings demonstrate that each dimension of Customer Equity carries a different level of importance depending on the nature of the product and the degree of consumer involvement. Importantly, the findings highlight the greater significance of Value Equity and Relationship Equity over Brand Equity as crucial factors influencing purchasing decisions. In addition, this study provides insight into the effects of Social Media Marketing and Community Engagement on the consumer decision-making process.

Limitations

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the sample included only 123 participants from major Indonesian cities. Therefore, there may be limitations regarding the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study employed a quantitative methodology, which may not fully reveal the deeper motivations underlying participants' actions compared to qualitative approaches. Lastly, the focus on premium padel products limits the applicability of the findings to other sports and equipment categories. Future studies could further explore the relationship between consumer behavior and Customer Equity Theory through qualitative methods.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of Social Media Marketing and Community Engagement on Purchasing Decisions through the mediating role of Customer Equity in the premium sports equipment market. The findings indicate that Social Media Marketing and Community Engagement do not directly influence Purchasing Decisions but indirectly influence them through Customer Equity dimensions, particularly Value Equity and Relationship Equity. Relationship Equity was found to be the most influential factor affecting Purchasing Decisions, followed by Value Equity, while Brand Equity was not significant in this context.

Based on these findings, several specific implementation recommendations can be offered to premium padel brands and retailers. First, brands should invest in event-based engagement initiatives, such as exclusive demo-day tournaments, brand-ambassador-led clinics, and members-only padel cups, which create high-touch relational experiences for consumers. Second, brands should pursue online-offline integration by linking their social media campaigns directly to in-club trial-booking systems (e.g., via QR codes embedded in Reels or TikTok posts) so that digital interest funnels into physical product testing. Third, loyalty programs should reward not only repeat purchases but also community contributions (e.g., writing reviews and mentoring new players), aligning with Relationship Equity drivers. Fourth, brands should equip professional and amateur coaches with structured product trial kits, recognizing coaches as key relational influencers in the purchasing journey.

These findings indicate that in performance-based product markets, consumers prioritize functional value and relational trust over brand prestige. This study contributes to the development of Customer Equity Theory by demonstrating that the relative importance of Value Equity, Brand Equity, and Relationship Equity varies depending on product type and the level of consumer involvement. Furthermore, this study provides practical insights for companies in the premium sports industry, emphasizing the importance of value creation and relationship building rather than relying solely on brand promotion.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Following the CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) framework, the authors' contributions are as follows. The First Author was responsible for conceptualization, methodology design, literature review, data curation, formal analysis using PLS-SEM, and original draft preparation. The Second Author contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, supervision of data collection in the premium padel and tennis communities, validation of the questionnaire instrument, and critical review of the manuscript. The Third Author (where applicable) was responsible for visualization, interpretation of statistical results, refinement of the discussion section, and editing of the revised manuscript. All authors discussed the findings, reviewed the final draft, approved the version submitted for publication, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy and integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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