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Understanding E-Paper Engagement: The Interplay of Product, Promotion, Culture, and Social Contexts in the Digital News Market

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of technology has compelled the media industry to shift toward digital-based platforms. Achieving success in this transition requires an effective strategy that considers consumer behavior variables. Given that consumers respond differently to technology, it is essential to identify behavioral factors that have the potential to significantly impact digital media access. This study aims to examine the influence of product and promotional strategies on the decision to purchase e-paper from Bisnis Indonesia, with cultural and social characteristics of consumers as intervening variables. Products and promotions are external stimuli that influence consumer behavior and are shaped by the strength of individual cultural and social contexts. An associative research design was employed to test the hypotheses, involving 155 e-paper subscribers of Bisnis Indonesia from ten representative cities. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used for analysis via LISREL software. The results indicate a positive and significant effect of product and promotional variables on purchasing decisions, which is further strengthened by cultural and social consumer characteristics. Overall, the model explains 89% of the variance in the purchase decision variable.

Keywords
Consumer Behavior
Cultural Factors
Digital Media
E-Paper
Product Promotion

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has driven a wave of innovations across various sectors, including the media industry. One significant innovation is the transformation of print newspapers into digital formats, commonly known as electronic papers (e-papers). E-papers are digital versions of traditional newspapers that can be accessed electronically through online platforms, allowing users to read content via digital devices [1]. According to Praditya [1], this shift toward digital media represents a form of paperless communication, which improves accessibility and convenience.

Sucahya [2] emphasizes that the emergence of digital newspapers is not only a response to technological advancement but also a strategic move to enhance the bargaining power of news organizations with advertisers. E-papers offer added value, as advertisements appear both in the print and online editions, potentially expanding their reach and increasing advertising revenue. Furthermore, digital newspapers resolve logistical challenges associated with the distribution of physical newspapers, particularly in remote areas where transportation and delivery schedules may hinder timely access [1].

Despite the practical benefits of e-papers, their adoption in Indonesia faces challenges related to low reading literacy. As highlighted by Suswandari [3], Indonesia's literacy rate remains a barrier to e-paper consumption. On average, one newspaper in Indonesia is read by 45 people, in contrast to countries like Sri Lanka where the figure is significantly lower, at 38 readers per copy. Moreover, annual newspaper expenditure in Indonesia is approximately Rp. 1.9 trillion, a stark contrast to cigarette expenditures reaching Rp. 47 trillion annually [3].

From an organizational perspective, the development of digital newspapers is driven not only by consumer demand but also by internal motivations to reduce storage and distribution costs, enhance media quality, and enable personalized information dissemination [1]. Prior studies by Bahriyah and Tamunan [4] and Ibrahim et al. [5] indicate that the adoption of e-papers can enhance brand image and customer loyalty [6].

Nonetheless, Indonesia's overall reading culture remains underdeveloped. UNESCO reports that Indonesia ranks second-lowest globally in literacy, with only 0.001% of the population classified as active readers, implying that just 1 in 1,000 people reads regularly [7]. A 2019 PISA study by the OECD placed Indonesia 62nd out of 70 countries in reading

proficiency [7]. Despite low literacy rates, Indonesia has over 60 million gadget users, placing it fifth globally in digital device ownership [8].

A Nielsen Consumer & Media View survey conducted in 2016 across 11 Indonesian cities found that only 9% of Generation Z still consume print media, with most preferring to access information via television or the internet [9]. Cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors influence the use of e-papers, as noted by Kusmanto and Subagio [10]. Social influences such as family and peer groups affect purchasing behavior, although Bernoulli [11] found these effects to be statistically insignificant. Despite this, social proximity may facilitate e-paper sharing among users and non-users.

Furthermore, Herdiyan et al. [12] found that personal factors such as occupation and age significantly affect e-paper readership, with a concentration among professionals in banking (34%), real sector industries (28%), finance (23%), government (13%), and tourism (2%). Product appeal continues to be a dominant factor in e-paper adoption. Studies by Wicaksono et al. [13] and Ahamed et al. [14] reveal that website quality and online customer reviews significantly influence online consumer purchase intention for digital newspapers. Lastly, promotional strategies play a vital role, as consumer attitudes toward advertising strongly impact advertisement effectiveness [15].

Literature Review

Consumer behavior is a dynamic field that requires marketers to observe macro-external factors as the basis for predicting and responding to change. These factors—economic, technological, political, social, cultural, natural, and competitive—are central in shaping consumer behavior [13]. In recent years, technological developments have drastically altered consumer behavior patterns. Kotler and Keller classify the influencing factors into marketing stimuli, external stimuli, buyer characteristics, and the decision-making process, each of which varies among individuals depending on the product type and purchase context [14].

Among these, product is a key factor influencing purchase decisions. Product attributes such as brand, packaging, and additional services are deliberately designed to affect consumer perceptions and behavior [14]. Cultural context may further strengthen or weaken this influence. When consumers discover new, more practical consumption methods, they may abandon older habits. Hence, we propose:

> **H1**: There is a product influence on the culture of reading the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Similarly, promotion is another internal marketing element that plays a vital role in expanding market influence, especially in borderless digital markets [14]. Promotional strategies can reshape consumer habits, particularly when targeting daily-use convenience products. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2: There is an influence of promotion on the culture of reading the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

The proliferation of product usage within a community may also enhance collective understanding and perception. Diverse individual evaluations will eventually converge into dominant group preferences, affecting purchasing decisions. Therefore:

H3: There is a product influence on social factors in reading the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Promotional activities can further shape social perception, as community discussions and reference group choices are often guided by advertising. When the consumer's personal preferences align with those of their social group due to promotional exposure, it leads to a strengthened decision-making process. Hence:

H4: There is an influence of promotion on social factors in reading the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Culture is a foundational determinant of consumer behavior. According to Schiffman and Kanuk, culture reflects societal personality and is difficult to define narrowly [15]. Unlike psychological factors which affect individuals personally, culture influences consumption habits through group interactions. Therefore:

H5: There is a cultural influence on the purchase decision of the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Social environment plays a significant role in shaping consumer decisions. Family, friends, and colleagues act as reference groups that provide trusted guidance [16]. Consumer choices are often influenced by the recommendations of these primary groups. Accordingly:

H6: There is a social influence on the purchase decision of the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Product characteristics—when aligned with consumer needs—form the basis for evaluating and selecting products. The more features that match the consumer’s expectations, the higher the likelihood of purchase. Thus:

H7: There is a product influence on the purchase decision of the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Promotional efforts also play a critical role in providing product information. The clarity, accuracy, and relevance of promotional messages are vital to consumer decision-making. Therefore:

H8: There is an influence of promotion on the purchase decision of the *Indonesian Business* e-paper.

Methods

This study is an associative causal research employing a quantitative approach. Associative causal research seeks to determine the influence between two or more variables [17]. In this case, the study investigates how product and promotional factors influence the

purchasing decision of the *Indonesian Business* e-paper, with cultural and psychological consumer characteristics serving as intervening variables. The quantitative approach allows for the analysis of relationships between variables using numerical data and statistical methods [18]. The object of this research is the *Indonesian Business* e-paper customers across ten representative cities—Medan, Pekanbaru, Palembang, Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, Bali, Balikpapan, and Makassar—amounting to a total population of 1,546 customers. A sample size of 10% of the total population, or 155 respondents, was selected randomly to represent the broader customer base.

The research variables include buying decision, product, promotion, culture, and social factors, each operationalized through specific indicators (see Table 1). For example, buying decision is measured through product choice, brand choice, and payment methods, while product and promotion are assessed through quality, features, sales promotion, and advertising. Cultural dimensions include aspects of culture, sub-culture, and social class, whereas social influences are explored through reference groups, roles, and social status. These indicators were further developed into descriptive items used to construct a structured questionnaire for primary data collection. The analytical technique employed is Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which enables the examination of complex relationships among observed and latent variables.

Table 1. Variables and Indicators

No	Variables	Indicator
1	Buying decision	• Choice product • Choice brand • Payment methods
2	Product	• Quality Product • Feature
3	Promotion	• Promotion Sale • Advertising
4	Culture	• Culture • Sub Culture • Social Class
5	Social	• Group reference • Role and Status

Results

A. Respondent Profiles

The respondents of this study are predominantly male (71.6%) and hold at least a bachelor's degree (81.9%), with the remainder having completed diploma-level education. In terms of age, most participants are over 45 years old (52.3%), followed by those aged 30–45 years (45.2%). Income-wise, the majority earn between IDR 5 million and IDR 20 million per month (81.3%). Regarding subscription duration, most respondents (46.5%) have been subscribed to Bisnis Indonesia's e-paper for 1–3 years, while a considerable number have

maintained their subscription for over three years. The majority are private sector employees (65.2%), and their preferred content includes banking, industry, macroeconomics, and market-related topics (see Table 2).

Table 2. Respondent Profiles

Profile	Criteria	Amount	
		Person	Percentage
Gender	Man	111	71.6%
	Woman	44	28.4%
Education	SD	0	0.0%
	Junior High School	0	0.0%
	Senior High School	3	1.9%
	Diploma (D1/D2/D3)	25	16.1%
	Graduate (S1/S2/S3)	127	81.9%
Age	20-30 Years	4	2.6%
	30-45 Years	70	45.2%
	> 45 Years	81	52.3%
Income	< 5 Million	13	8.4%
	5-10 Million	78	50.3%
	10-20 Million	48	31.0%
	> 20 Million	16	10.3%
How long subscribe	< 1 Year	32	20.6%
	1-3 Years	72	46.5%
	3-5 Years	34	21.9%
	> 5 Years	17	11.0%
Work	Civil Servants/Army/ Police	10	6.5%
	Employee Private	101	65.2%
	Students	0	0.0%
	Other	44	28.4%
The rubric that be liked	Market	20	12.9%
	Banking	31	20.0%
	Macroeconomics	24	15.5%
	Industry	27	17.4%
	Investment	8	5.2%
	Corporation	11	7.1%
	Financial	14	9.0%
	Other	20	12.9%
	Total	**155**	**100%**

B. Instrument Test Results and Hypothesis Testing

Instrument testing was conducted to examine convergent validity and construct reliability using SEM analysis. All constructs demonstrated strong validity, with standardized loading factors (SLF) exceeding 0.5 as shown in Table 3, and average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.5 alongside construct reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.9818 to 0.9902 (Table 4), indicating high internal consistency.

Table 3. Evaluation Validity based on Standardized Loading Factor (SLF)

Variables	Indicator	Standardized Loading Factor (SLF)	SLF^2	Error
Product	X11	0.979	0.959	0.075
	X12	0.969	0.940	0.054
	X13	0.977	0.954	0.087
	X14	0.968	0.936	0.050
Promotion	X21	0.966	0.933	0.080
	X22	0.975	0.950	0.070
	X23	0.972	0.946	0.071
	X24	0.972	0.945	0.059
Culture	Z11	0.962	0.925	0.072
	Z12	0.972	0.946	0.062
	Z13	0.956	0.913	0.092
	Z14	0.975	0.950	0.062
	Z15	0.959	0.920	0.038
	Z16	0.964	0.930	0.043
Social	Z21	0.964	0.929	0.050
	Z22	0.970	0.941	0.051
	Z23	0.963	0.928	0.041
	Z24	0.969	0.938	0.060
Buying decision	Y1	0.953	0.908	0.046
	Y2	0.968	0.938	0.064
	Y3	0.981	0.962	0.067
	Y4	0.979	0.957	0.050
	Y5	0.975	0.950	0.054
	Y6	0.974	0.949	0.055

Table 4. Testing Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Construct Reliability (CR)

Variables	Number of Standardized Loading Factors (SLF)	Number of SLF^2	Number of Errors	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Construct Reliability (CR)
Product	3.8931	3.7892	0.2668	0.9342	0.9827
Promotion	3.8852	3.7737	0.2797	0.9310	0.9818
Culture	5.7876	5.5830	0.3684	0.9381	0.9891
Social	3.8660	3.7365	0.2025	0.9486	0.9866
Buying decision	5.8295	5.6644	0.3359	0.9440	0.9902

Model fit indices such as RMSEA (0.088), NFI (0.9329), and CFI (0.9608) met acceptable thresholds, confirming that the model fits the data well (Table 5).

Hypothesis testing further revealed significant positive effects of product and promotion on cultural and social variables, and that all four constructs—product, promotion, culture, and social—influenced purchasing decisions significantly (Table 6). The R-squared values indicate that culture (50.07%) and social factors (52.58%) are moderately explained by product and promotion, while 89.31% of the variance in purchasing decisions is accounted for by the combined effect of the four independent variables.

Table 5. Overall Model Fit Test

Size Compatibility	Mark	Benchmark Value	Model Fit to Data
RMSEA	0.088	< 0.1	Yes (Fit)
NFI	0.9329	> 0.9	Yes (Fit)
RFI	0.9238	> 0.9	Yes (Fit)
CFI	0.9608	> 0.9	Yes (Fit)
IFI	0.9610	> 0.9	Yes (Fit)
NNFI	0.9555	> 0.9	Yes (Fit)
RMR	0.069	< 0.1	Yes (Fit)
SRMR	0.043	< 0.1	Yes (Fit)

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results

Path	Path Coefficient	T-Values	R-Squares
Product -> Culture	0.3786	4.5028	0.5007
Promotion -> Culture	0.4283	5.0004	
Product -> Social	0.4139	4.9822	0.5258
Promotion -> Social	0.4184	4.9509	
Culture -> Purchasing Decisions	0.1868	4.8053	0.8931
Social -> Purchase Decision	0.225	5,618	
Product -> Purchase Decision	0.3429	7.5416	
Promotion -> Purchase Decision	0.3207	6.8513	

Discussion

This study confirms that all examined variables—product, promotion, culture, and social—have a statistically significant influence on consumers' decisions to use the *e-paper* service provided by *Bisnis Indonesia*. Collectively, these factors account for 89.31% of the variance in purchasing decisions, making them the dominant determinants in shaping consumer behavior toward digital news products (Table 6). This finding emphasizes the integrated role of marketing elements and socio-cultural attributes in driving digital product adoption.

The significance of product and promotional factors aligns with the findings of Bahriyah and Tambunan [4], Prakoso and Jumhur [19], Herdiyan *et al.* [12], Chavadi *et al.* [20], and Wicaksono *et al.* [13]. In their studies, effective product presentation and targeted promotional strategies were found to increase the attractiveness and perceived value of digital services. In the context of this study, product attributes such as user-friendly interfaces, timely updates, and credible news content are likely to contribute significantly to consumer satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, well-designed promotions—whether in the form of discounts, free trial periods, or loyalty programs—serve as persuasive tools that encourage trial and long-term subscription.

Moreover, product and promotion influence may be enhanced or limited by consumer characteristics. As Kusmanto and Subagyo [10] highlighted in their qualitative analysis,

cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors act as mediating variables that shape the internal acceptance of marketing messages. While they observed strong influence from all four dimensions, Herdiyan *et al.* [12] reported that personal and psychological factors had no significant effect in their quantitative model, a finding that this study also corroborates.

These differences can be partially attributed to the respondent profile in this study. As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents are established professionals, over the age of 30, and long-term users of *e-paper*. Therefore, personal factors—such as age, occupation, and income—exhibited limited variability across the sample and are less likely to differentiate user behavior. This homogeneity suggests that *Bisnis Indonesia* has already reached its intended target market, making demographic distinctions less impactful in explaining digital reading preferences.

Likewise, psychological factors, including individual attitudes and motivations, may be subdued due to the alignment between respondents' professional needs and the function of the e-paper itself. For example, since the *e-paper* delivers market, banking, and industrial content—topics directly relevant to most users' professions (65.2% work in the private sector)—their use is less driven by personal preference and more by necessity and routine. This embedded utility aligns with prior research showing that utilitarian motivations can override psychological novelty in professional content consumption [21].

Cultural and social factors also demonstrate significant influence, further supporting the idea that shared values and peer influences play essential roles in digital product engagement. While Indonesian reading culture may not universally support digital reading habits [10], the respondent profile here suggests an exception. These users are already active readers who subscribe to digital newspapers, implying that their reading culture supports ongoing engagement with the *e-paper* format. Hence, culture in this context serves not as a barrier but as an enabler of technology adoption.

The influence of social factors is similarly pronounced. With 93.6% of respondents sharing similar occupational backgrounds and reading preferences, the effect of social networks becomes evident. In professional settings where information about economics, industry, and finance is both critical and frequently shared, peer influence likely strengthens adoption and continued use of digital platforms. This mirrors earlier findings that peer groups and social identity are important in shaping tech-related behaviors, especially among professionals [22].

In summary, the study's findings highlight a highly integrated and mutually reinforcing relationship among product quality, promotional efforts, cultural alignment, and social context in influencing *e-paper* usage. The high R^2 value confirms the robustness of the model and suggests that strategies aimed at enhancing product experience, leveraging professional

networks, and aligning with users' cultural expectations are likely to be the most effective in maintaining and growing the *e-paper* user base.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that product, promotion, culture, and social factors have a significant and simultaneous influence on consumer decisions to use the *Bisnis Indonesia* e-paper service, with a combined explanatory power of 89.31%. Among these, product and promotional factors are critical in attracting and retaining users, particularly in a digital news context where quality, reliability, and user experience determine value perception. The significance of cultural and social influences reflects how established reading habits and professional networks contribute to sustained e-paper engagement.

Conversely, personal and psychological factors were found to be statistically insignificant, likely due to the homogeneity in respondents' demographic and professional profiles. This suggests that *Bisnis Indonesia* has effectively reached a well-defined target audience, rendering individual differences less impactful in usage behavior.

The findings underscore the importance of integrating marketing strategies with an understanding of cultural and social dynamics, especially in targeting professional users with strong informational needs. Future marketing and product development efforts should continue to focus on enhancing digital content relevance, optimizing user experience, and leveraging social ecosystems to strengthen user loyalty and market expansion.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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