The influence of augmented reality (AR) technology on online purchase intention through customer experience as a mediating variable

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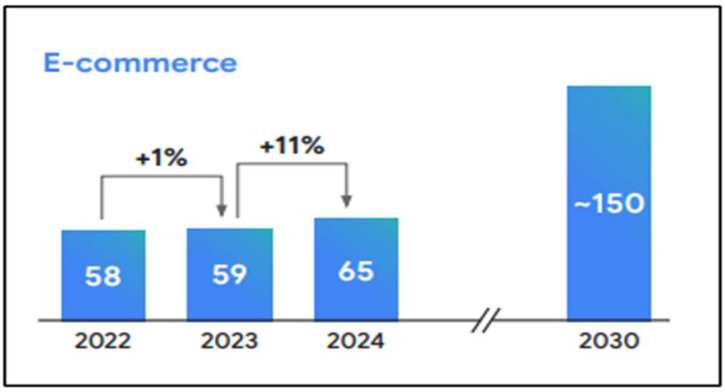
ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of augmented reality (AR) on online purchase intention, with customer experience as a mediating variable, in the context of beauty product shopping via e-commerce. The research was conducted on users who had experienced Shopee's AR features, BeautyCam and SkinCam, through a quantitative method using PLS-SEM. The findings show that AR positively influences both customer experience and online purchase intention. Furthermore, customer experience significantly mediates the relationship between AR and online purchase intention. These results suggest that AR enhances the shopping experience by making it more interactive and immersive, which in turn strengthens customers' intention to purchase. This study highlights the strategic value of AR in improving customer engagement and conversion, especially in the beauty sector. However, it is limited to a single e-commerce platform and product category. Future research may explore different contexts or compare multiple AR implementations across platforms.

Keywords: *Augmented Reality; Customer Experience; Online Purchase Intention; E-Commerce; Beauty Product*

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving digital era, technology plays a pivotal role across various aspects of life, including marketing. Digital transformation has significantly altered consumer behavior, increased online shopping activity, and expanded access to digital services (Hsu et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the rapid growth of e-commerce has become a major driver of digital economic development. According to the e-Conomy SEA 2024 report, Indonesia's digital economy is projected to reach USD 200-360 billion by 2030, with e-commerce contributing an estimated USD 150 billion. This growth is further supported by increasing internet penetration, which reached 79.5% in 2024, and the widespread digital adoption among Millenials and Gen Z.



Source: e-Conomy SEA, 2024

Figure 1
E-Commerce's Projected Role in Indonesia's Digital Economy

According to Compas Market Insight, beauty products are among the fastest-growing e-commerce categories in Indonesia, with a market value of IDR 26 trillion in the first half of 2024. However, purchasing beauty products online presents specific challenges, particularly due to the inability to physically test products beforehand, leading to uncertainty regarding suitability. To overcome this issue, many platforms have introduce augmented reality (AR) technology, which enables users to virtually try on products before making a purchase (Javornik, 2016; Yang & Lin, 2024). In the beauty industry, AR is commonly implemented through virtual try-on features, which aim to boost customer confidence and reduce purchase hesitation (Baek et al., 2018; Ebrahimabad et al., 2024).

Shopee, one of the largest e-commerce platforms in Indonesia with 2.35 billion visits in 2023 (Databoks, 2024), has adopted AR technology through features such as BeautyCam and SkinCam. These tools allow users to virtually try makeup products and receive personalized skincare recomendations. However, the use of AR on the platform remains limited, available only for selected brands or products, and faces several challenges, including imperefect visualization, applications bugs, and reliance on device specifications and internet quality (Florene, 2021). These limitations may affect the customer experience and, consequently, influence online purchase intention.

Customer experience is a key factor that shapes consumer perceptions of digital features (Hsu et al., 2021). A positive experience can foster trust and drive purchasing behavior, while a negative experience may hinder it (Hsu et al., 2021). Although prior studies have investigated the influence of AR on online purchase intention, research

examining customer experience as a mediating variable in this relationship particularly in the context of Shopee's AR features is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of AR technology on online purchase intention, mediated by customer experience. The findings are expected to contribute to the academic literature and provide practical insights for optimizing AR implementation in e-commerce to enhance customer experience and strengthen online purchase intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESES

Augmented Reality (AR) is a technology that overlays virtual elements onto the physical world in real time, creating interactive and immersive experiences (Habil et al., 2024; Whang et al., 2021). As AR becomes increasingly accessible through smartphones and tablets, its role in e-commerce has expanded, particularly in enhancing product visualization and user engagement (Konstantoulaki et al., 2024; Nawres et al., 2024). In marketing, AR has emerged as an innovative tool that bridges online and offline retail experiences. It enables consumers to virtually try on products such as cosmetics, furniture, or fashion items before purchasing, which helps reduce uncertainty and increases purchase confidence (Ebrahimabad et al., 2024; Söderström et al., 2024).

Several studies conceptualize AR features in different ways. Hsu et al. (2021) emphasize informative features, personalization, and interactivity. Söderström et al. (2024) distinguish between entertainment and information content. Building on prior models, Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) identify six key attributes: interactivity, information, enjoyment, novelty, vividness, and intrusiveness. This study adopts five of these, excluding intrusiveness as they align closely with AR features on Shopee, such as BeautyCam and SkinCam, which enable virtual try-ons and provide personalized recommendations. These five dimensions form the basis for analyzing customer perceptions of AR in online beauty product shopping.

Customer experience refers to any form of interaction between a customer and a company either direct, such as during purchasing, usage, or service encounters, or indirect, such as through exposure to the company's products, services, or brand that subsequently triggers a subjective response (Chen et al., 2022). Hsu et al. (2021) further define experiential value as how customers form perceptions of a product or service, either through direct use or by observing others' interactions.

In the digital era, customer experience is increasingly shaped by technological advancements. According to Ebrahimabad et al. (2024), in online shopping environments, experience is shaped through interactions with intelligent products or objects.

Various approaches have been proposed in the literature to measure customer experience. One relevant framework is presented by Ebrahimabad et al. (2024), who adapted indicators from Wedel et al. (2020) and Romano et al. (2021) to assess user experience. These include satisfaction, expectation confirmation, and the perceived realism of the experience.

Although "user experience" and "customer experience" are technically distinct, they are conceptually related. While user experience focuses on individuals' perceptions and reactions to digital systems, customer experience encompasses a broader scope, including interactions across the entire shopping journey. In this study, the use of AR features on e-commerce platforms is considered a digital touchpoint that contributes to the customer journey. Thus, the user experience indicators proposed by Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) are regarded as relevant and applicable for evaluating customer experience in this context.

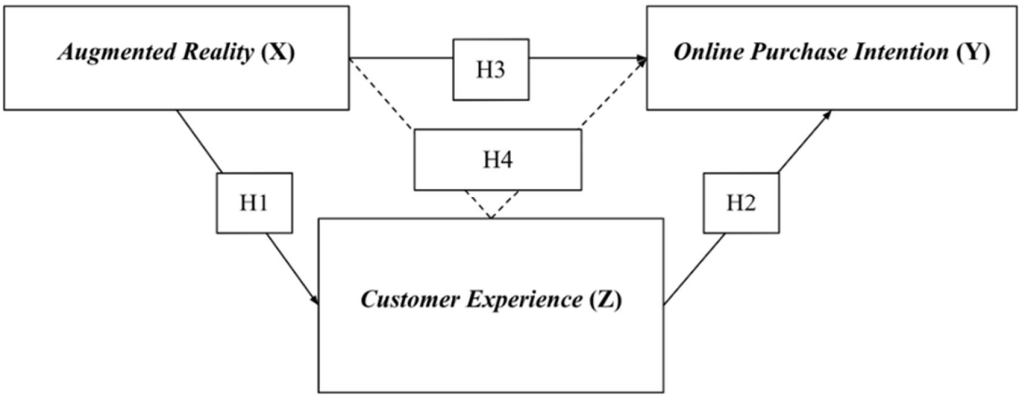
Purchase intention serves as a key indicator of an individual's desire to make purchases in online stores (Han et al., 2024). Sekri et al. (2024) define it as a behavioral tendency to buy a product, which is strongly associated with future purchasing behavior. Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) explain that purchase intention emerged through evaluating and considering multiple alternatives. In the context of technology interaction, it also reflects the level of effort a customer is willing to exert after engaging with AR applications (Lo et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2021).

To measure purchase intention, Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) highlights factors such as self-confidence, ease of decision-making, reduced search costs, and the perception that online shopping facilitates daily life. Meanwhile, Nawres et al. (2024) and Sekri et al. (2024) specifically examine purchase intention within the context of AR, using indicators such as imagining a purchase, considering AR use in future purchases, and expressing strong interest in buying through AR technology.

Although both sets of indicators share conceptual similarities, this study adopts those proposed by Sekri et al. (2024), as they are more specific and highly relevant to the research context. This selection provides added conceptual strength, ensuring the indicators are not only broadly applicable but also contextually aligned.

Research Framework

This study explores the influence of Augmented Reality (AR) on online purchase intention, with customer experience as a mediating variable. In the context of beauty product shopping via e-commerce, AR is conceptualized through five dimensions: interactivity, information, enjoyment, novelty, and vividness (Ebrahimabad et al., 2024). Customer experience reflects users' subjective evaluations and is measured using four indicators adapted from Ebrahimabad et al. (2024). Online purchase intention is assessed using three indicators adapted from Sekri et al. (2024). The research framework of this study is illustrated as follows:



Source: Adapted from Ebrahimabad et al., 2024 ; Sekri et al., 2024

Figure 2
Research Framework

Hypotheses

Augmented Reality (AR) and Customer Experience

Augmented Reality (AR) emerges as an innovative technology that enhances customer experience by enabling more interactive and engaging product interactions. Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) found that AR significantly influences user experience, which,

within e-commerce settings, contributes to shaping the overall customer experience. According to Hsu et al. (2021), AR drives greater customer engagement by allowing more active exploration of products, while also creating a shopping process that is both enjoyable and realistic. This technology offers customers a novel and immersive way to interact with products prior to purchase. Supporting this, Söderström et al. (2024) highlight that AR can improve customer perceptions and involvement throughout the purchase process, thereby positively impacting customer experience as a whole.

H1 : Augmented reality (AR) has a positive effect on customer experience on Shopee

Customer Experience and Online Purchase Intention

A positive shopping experience can enhance customer satisfaction and engagement, thereby reducing uncertainty in product evaluation and encouraging purchase interest. Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) emphasize that interactions during the purchasing process shape customers' perceptions of products or services, which in turn influence their online purchase intention. Similarly, Söderström et al. (2024) demonstrate that a positive customer experience increases the likelihood of consumers making online purchases. Supporting this view, Sahli & Lichy (2024) suggest that a favorable customer experience can reduce doubts and reinforce customers' confidence in their online purchasing decisions. The more positive the experience throughout the shopping journey, the stronger the intention to buy.

H2 : Customer experience has a positive effect on customers' online purchase intention on Shopee

Augmented Reality (AR) and Online Purchase Intention

Augmented reality (AR) demonstrates significant potential in enhancing online purchase intention, particularly through its application in the retail sector (Ebrahimabad et al., 2024). By integrating virtual elements into the real-world environment, AR creates a more immersive and interactive online shopping experience. Through real-time product information and virtual try-on features, AR supports consumer decision-making and adds value for online retailers (Hsu et al., 2021). Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) further indicate that AR-based shopping experiences can increase customer engagement, ultimately encouraging their intention to make online purchases.

H3 : Augmented reality (AR) has a positive effect on customers' online purchase intention on Shopee

The Mediating Role of Customer Experience

Augmented reality (AR) enhances customer experience by creating a more engaging, interactive, and immersive shopping environment (Söderström et al., 2024). Through features such as virtual try-on and skin analysis, as well as the provision of real-time product information, AR reduces purchase uncertainty and facilitates a more convenient and informative shopping process (Hsu et al., 2021). Within the framework of variable relationships, customer experience functions as a mediating factor that bridges the influence of AR on online purchase intention. This implies that the impact of AR on online purchase intention occurs not only directly, but also indirectly through the quality of the customer experience formed when interacting with AR features. Söderström et al. (2024) further suggest that the enjoyable experiences arising from AR interactions can strengthen customers' confidence and purchase intention. Thus, the improvement of customer experience driven by AR plays a crucial role in amplifying AR's influence on online purchase intention.

H4 : Customer experience mediates the effect of augmented reality (AR) on customers ' online purchase intention on Shopee

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a verificative research design, aiming to examine the influence of augmented reality (AR) on online purchase intention, with customer experience as a mediating variable. The scope of this research focused on users of AR features in e-commerce beauty product shopping, particularly within the Indonesian market.

The population of this study comprised Shopee users in Indonesia. A non-probability sampling technique was used, specifically purposive sampling (Sembiring et al., 2024), based on predetermined criteria to ensure the relevance of the data to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria for respondents were as follows: (1) active Shopee user, (2) users who have tried Shopee's AR features, and (3) users who have purchased beauty products through Shopee within the last three months.

The number of indicators used in the questionnaire totaled 33. Referring to the rule of thumb suggested by Hair et al. (2010), the minimum sample size should be 5 to 10 times the number of indicators (Sirianni & Sabbagh., 2020), resulting in an ideal sample range of 165 to 330 respondents. Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Respondents rated each item using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

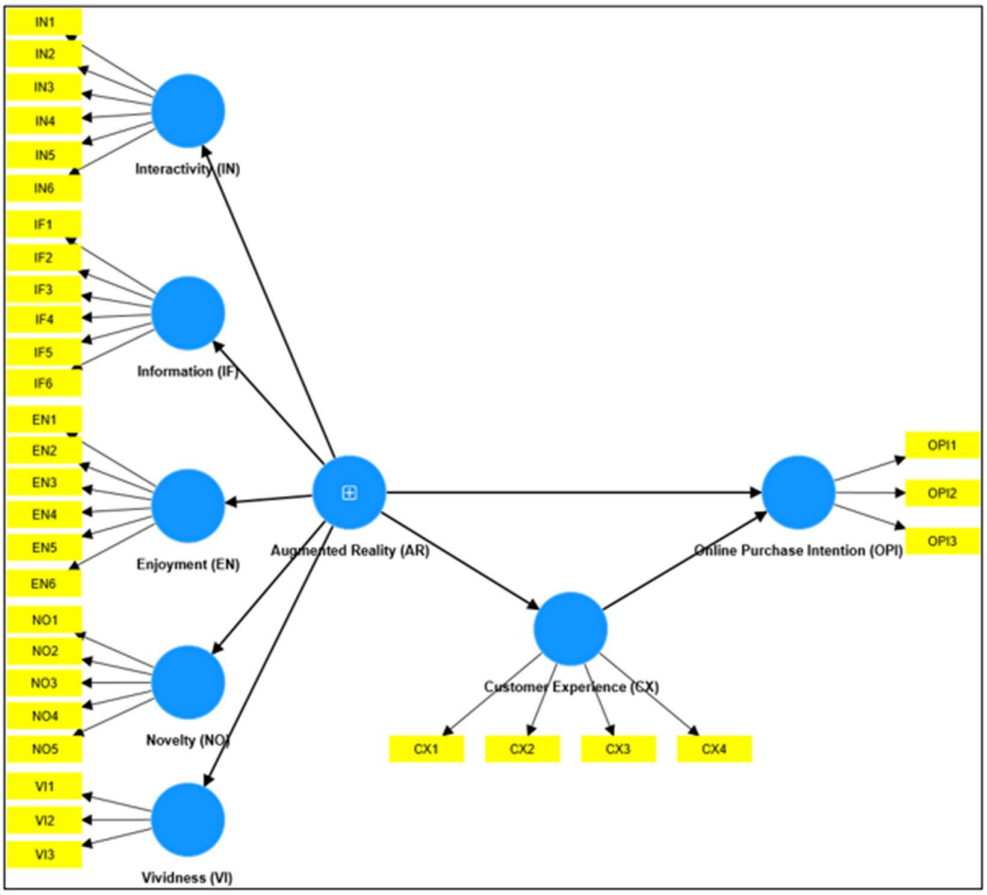
For data analysis, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using SmartPLS version 4.1.0. This study utilized an embedded two-stage approach to model the second-order construct of augmented reality (Sarstedt et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

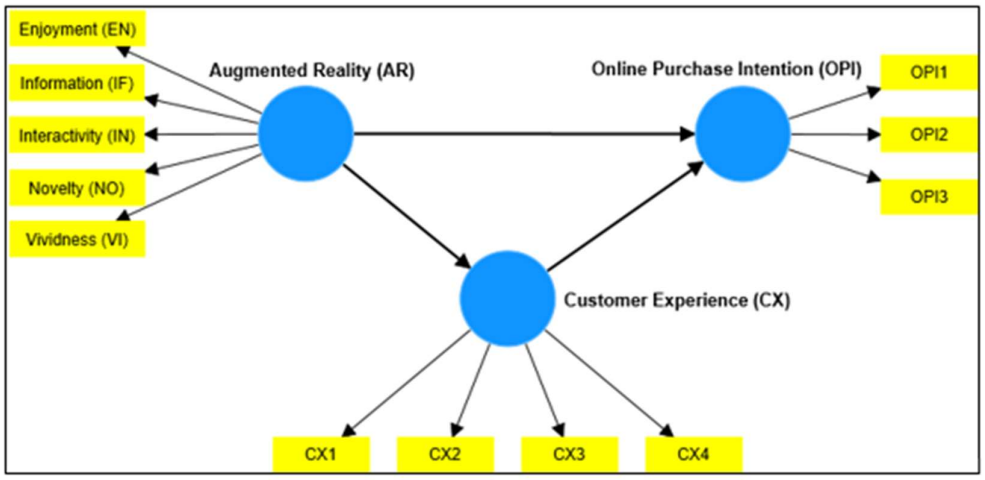
Based on the required sample size, which ranged from 165 to 330 respondents, a total of 368 questionnaire responses were collected. After filtering the data based on the predetermined inclusion criteria, 366 valid responses were retained for data analysis.

The evaluation of the measurement and structural model was conducted using a two-stage PLS-SEM approach (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Figure 3 presents the first-order path diagram, which illustrates the outer model of the augmented reality (AR) construct with its five reflective dimensions. Subsequently, Figure 4 displays the second-order structural model, showing the relationships between AR, customer experience, and online purchase intention.



Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2025

Figure 3
First-Order Path Diagram



Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2025

Figure 4
Second-Order Path Diagram

Outer Model Evaluation

This section presents the results of the measurement model assessment, including tests of convergent validity and internal reliability (Ghozali & Latan, 2015; Hamid & Anwar, 2019). All indicator loadings for the constructs of Augmented Reality (AR), Customer Experience, and Online Purchase Intention exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating strong convergent validity (Ghozali & Latan, 2015; Hamid & Anwar, 2019). This suggests that the latent constructs are well represented by their observed indicators.

Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all three constructs were above the recommended minimum of 0.50. This means that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective latent constructs, further supporting the convergent validity of the model (Ghozali & Latan, 2015; Hamid & Anwar, 2019).

The composite reliability (CR) values of all constructs also exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, reflecting a high level of internal consistency among the indicators. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha values for AR, CX, and OPI were all above 0.70, demonstrating excellent internal reliability across constructs (Ghozali & Latan, 2015; Hamid & Anwar, 2019).

The detailed results of the outer model evaluation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Validity and Reliability Results

Indicators	Validity		Reliability	
	Factor Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Variable : Augmented Reality		0.742	0.935	0.913
Interactivity (IN)	0.864			
Information (IF)	0.880			
Enjoyment (EN)	0.866			
Novelty (NO)	0.856			
Vividness (VI)	0.839			
Variable : Customer Experience		0.719	0.911	0.869
CX1	0.850			
CX2	0.838			
CX3	0.887			
CX4	0.814			
Variable : Online Purchase Intention		0.758	0.904	0.840
OPI1	0.838			
OPI2	0.876			
OPI3	0.897			

Source: Data Analyzed, 2025

Inner Model Evaluation

After all constructs in the outer model were confirmed to be valid and reliable, inner model analysis was conducted to evaluate the direction and strength of the relationships among latent constructs, as well as to assess the significance of both direct and indirect effects.

The customer experience variable obtained an R^2 value of 0.370, indicating that 37% of the variance in customer experience can be explained by augmented reality (AR).

Meanwhile, the online purchase intention variable had an R^2 value of 0.501, suggesting that 50.1% of the variance in online purchase intention is explained by the combined influence of AR and customer experience.

These R^2 values fall within the moderate category, reflecting that the structural model demonstrates a fairly strong predictive capability. This finding confirms that AR and customer experience play important roles in explaining customers' online purchasing behavior. It is particularly relevant in the context of beauty products in e-commerce, where interactive and personalized experiences significantly influence customers' purchase intentions.

The detailed results of the R^2 analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
R-Square

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Customer Experience	0.370	0.369
Online Purchase Intention	0.501	0.498

Source: Data Analyzed, 2025

Hypothesis Testing Results

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 3, which shows both the direct and indirect effects among the latent constructs.

Table 3
Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
H1 : Augmented reality (AR) has a positive effect on customer experience.	0.609	15.246	0.000	Accepted
H2 : Customer experience has a positive effect on online purchase intention.	0.463	8.293	0.000	Accepted
H3 : Augmented reality (AR) has a positive effect on online purchase intention.	0.323	6.088	0.000	Accepted
H4 : Customer experience mediates the effect of augmented reality (AR) on online purchase intention	0.282	7.287	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data Analyzed, 2025

All paths in the model show t-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05, indicating that all relationships are statistically significant at the 5% level. These findings demonstrate that augmented reality (AR) has a positive and significant direct effect on both customer experience and online purchase intention. Additionally, customer experience significantly enhances online purchase intention. Furthermore, AR also has a positive and significant indirect effect on online purchase intention through customer experience. This indicates a meaningful mediating role of customer experience in the relationship between AR and online purchase intention.

Hypothesis 1

The results support H1, indicating that AR has a positive and significant effect on customer experience ($\beta = 0.609$, $t = 15.246$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that well-developed AR features, such as interactivity, vividness, and enjoyment, enhance users' shopping experience on Shopee, especially in the context of beauty product exploration.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Ebrahimabad et al. (2024) and Hsu et al. (2021), which found that AR technology creates more personalized, dynamic, and interactive experiences by allowing customers to observe products in realistic contexts before making purchase decisions. In the context of beauty products, such experiences are particularly important because customers often require visual assurance regarding product suitability. Therefore, this result strengthens the argument that Shopee's AR features contribute directly to shaping positive customer experiences.

Hypothesis 2

H2 is accepted, as customer experience positively and significantly influences online purchase intention ($\beta = 0.463$, $t = 8.293$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that the more positive the shopping experience perceived by customers, the greater their intention to purchase products online. Enjoyable, immersive, and satisfactory shopping experiences strengthen customers' trust and reduce uncertainty, thereby increasing buying intention.

This finding aligns with previous studies conducted by Nawres et al. (2024), Sekri et al. (2024), and Söderström et al. (2024), which emphasized that positive and satisfying customer experiences significantly enhance purchase intention in online shopping environments. Theoretically, this finding supports the view that customer experience plays a central role in shaping customers' perceptions and behavioral intentions in digital commerce. In the context of Shopee, experiences created through interactive AR features and realistic product visualization are able to strengthen emotional engagement and encourage customers to complete purchases.

Hypothesis 3

The findings support H3, showing that AR has a direct and significant positive effect on online purchase intention among users of Shopee's AR features ($\beta = 0.323$, $t = 6.088$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that AR features such as BeautyCam and SkinCam are able to directly increase customers' online purchase intentions. By allowing users to virtually try beauty products and receive personalized recommendations, AR reduces uncertainty and increases customers' confidence in making purchase decisions.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Ebrahimabad et al. (2024), Sekri et al. (2024), and Qin et al. (2021), which found that AR significantly enhances purchase intention by increasing consumer engagement and confidence through immersive virtual experiences. From a theoretical perspective, AR functions not only as a visualization tool but also as a strategic digital marketing instrument capable of influencing customers' decision-making behavior. Therefore, the implementation of AR features in e-commerce platforms can strengthen online purchase intention, particularly for beauty products that rely heavily on visual evaluation before purchase.

Hypothesis 4

H4 is also accepted. AR has an indirect, positive, and significant effect on online purchase intention through customer experience among users of Shopee's AR features ($\beta = 0.282$, $t = 7.287$, $p < 0.001$). This finding confirms that customer experience plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between AR and online purchase intention. In other words, AR not only directly influences buying interest but also indirectly strengthens purchase intention by creating more engaging, immersive, and satisfying shopping experiences.

This result supports the findings of Nawres et al. (2024), Söderström et al. (2024), and Qin et al. (2021), which highlighted that customer experiences formed through

interactions with AR technology are crucial factors in driving purchase intention. Theoretically, this finding reinforces the role of customer experience as an important bridge connecting technological innovation and customers' behavioral outcomes. Through immersive and emotionally engaging experiences, AR technology is able to strengthen customers' perceptions, increase trust toward products, and ultimately encourage stronger online purchase intentions in the e-commerce environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aimed to examine the effect of Augmented Reality (AR) on online purchase intention through customer experience as a mediating variable. The research focused on Shopee users who had utilized AR features such as BeautyCam and SkinCam for beauty product exploration, employing a quantitative approach using PLS-SEM with 366 respondents.

The findings reveal that AR has a positive and significant effect on customer experience. High-quality AR characterized by interactivity, information, enjoyment, novelty, and vividness enhances the overall shopping experience, making it more engaging, personalized, and satisfying. In turn, customer experience significantly influences online purchase intention, where positive, realistic, and expectation-aligned experiences strengthen customer confidence and reduce purchase uncertainty.

Additionally, AR demonstrates a direct positive effect on online purchase intention. Features such as virtual try-on and skin analysis help customers feel more confident in their purchase decisions, thus boosting buying interest. Furthermore, customer experience plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between AR and online purchase intention. This suggests that AR not only directly drives interest in online purchases but also indirectly does so by shaping a more immersive and meaningful customer journey.

In conclusion, AR emerges as a strategic element in enhancing customer experience and driving online purchase intention, especially in the competitive e-commerce landscape for beauty products, where visual trials are critical in the decision-making process.

These findings contribute to digital marketing literature and offer practical implications for e-commerce platforms. Shopee and similar platforms are encouraged to improve their AR implementations by adding more personalized features (e.g., skin tone matching, product recommendations, diverse facial structures), ensuring high interactivity and enjoyment, and enhancing visual vividness to foster user trust. Continuous innovation, such as regular content updates and partnerships with beauty brands, can sustain novelty and engagement. Additionally, integrating feedback loops within the AR interface may help platforms understand user preferences and further refine the experience.

Future studies are advised to include additional variables such as brand trust, perceived risk, or customer engagement to uncover more nuanced behavioral mechanisms. Expanding the respondent demographics beyond Gen Z, and exploring other product categories or AR-enabled platforms, may also enhance the generalizability of findings and offer richer insights into AR-driven customer behavior.

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