

STORYTELLING MARKETING AND SERVICE USAGE DECISIONS : THE MEDIATING ROLE OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT IN GOJEK'S JO DAN JEK ADVERTISEMENT AMONG GEN Z IN SOLO RAYA

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Abstract: The rise of digital technology has reshaped marketing paradigms, with Generation Z emerging as a strategic segment due to their high social media usage and preference for authentic visual content. In this context, Gojek employs storytelling marketing through the “Jo and Jek” advertisement to build emotional connections with audiences. However, prior studies report mixed findings regarding the influence of storytelling marketing on service usage decisions, often emphasizing the critical role of audience engagement. The study examined whether customer engagement influences purchase intention among Gen Z in SoloRaya. Using this approach, the data were gathered from 165 respondents aged 17–27 who had both watched Gojek advertisements and used its services. The study employed purposive non-probability sampling, and data analysis was carried out using SEM PLS version 3.0. Results indicate that storytelling marketing exerts a positive and significant influence on service usage decisions, with audience engagement playing a mediating role.

Keywords: Storytelling Marketing, Service Usage Decisions, Audience Engagement

1. Introduction

The development of digital-era technology has transformed marketing paradigms. According to data, social media now has 5.24 billion users, representing 63.9% of the world's population, which marks a 4.1% increase compared to last year, with 206 million new users added.(We are social, 2025). Generation Z is recognized as a generation born and raised in the internet era; they are highly familiar with social media, internet-based applications, and various forms of digital content. A survey shows that Gen Z is a group of digital users with a high frequency of social media usage, averaging more than 8 hours per day. (Andiena et al., 2024). In the Solo Raya region, the Gen Z population is also significant, accounting for approximately 29.92%, making it a strategic segment for research.(BPS Surakarta, 2025).

Digital marketing in the online transportation service industry, particularly Gojek, plays a vital role. Gojek is one of the dominant platforms competing closely with Grab in capturing the attention of young consumers. A national survey places Gojek as the preferred application among Millennials and Gen Z, as it is considered capable of providing services relevant to their digital lifestyle. (IDN Times, 2022).To strengthen its brand image and build emotional closeness with the audience, Gojek released the “Jo and Jek” advertisement, which applies a storytelling marketing approach. This advertisement not only delivers information about the services but also embeds moral messages and strong character portrayals to create an emotional connection with the audience.

Several scholars suggest that storytelling marketing serves as an effective approach to building a sustainable foundation for brand reinforcement and influencing consumer behavior, which ultimately supports decision-making in service usage. (Rizkia & Oktafani, 2020). Moreover, storytelling marketing not only impacts consumers' purchasing choices but also fosters stronger engagement with a company's brand and products.(Mahendra et al., 2021).

Storytelling marketing refers to the practice of delivering messages through narratives, settings, and dialogues, enhanced by tone, style, and supporting media such as videos or animations, with the purpose of entertaining, educating, and inspiring audiences. (Amorta et al., 2022). In this way, storytelling-based content marketing can strengthen customer engagement with a brand and shape their purchasing decisions. Moreover, when consumers interact with storytelling content shared by companies, It has the potential to drive future sales expansion and improve overall business profitability. (Vivek et al., 2012).

Research conducted by Rizal, (2024) and Cahyati, (2024) also emphasizes that digital marketing and promotional strategies are often examined as the main factors driving service usage decisions. This indicates that the use of storytelling as a key factor in service usage decisions remains limited. Few studies have explored the specific influence of storytelling and engagement within the online transportation service sector. According to Alfito, (2025) research that analyzes the impact of Research on the impact of storytelling marketing on service usage decisions, especially considering audience engagement as a mediating variable, is still relatively scarce In fact, the characteristics of Generation Z who are easily bored, critical of conventional advertising, and prefer authentic, visual, and relatable content make storytelling a potential strategy for building emotional bonds. (Ananta et al., 2024). Another study conducted by Dewi & Herman, (2021) The study also examined the use of storytelling marketing as conveyed through websites, Instagram, TikTok, and brief television advertisements in relation to brand perception and service usage decisions.

As reported by Febrianti et al.,(2024) the research shows that effectiveness of storytelling-based advertising does not necessarily have a direct impact on service usage decisions, as the level of engagement becomes a determining factor in whether the advertising message can drive actual behavior. Without high engagement, storytelling risks becoming mere entertainment without generating real conversion in purchasing decisions or service usage. (Riswanto et al., 2023).

Previous studies indicate the existence of a gap that serves as an important reason for conducting this research. Studies conducted by Chang, (2025); Mavilinda et al.,(2023); Tsai, (2020;) It was found that storytelling marketing has a direct and meaningful impact on decisions regarding service usage. Research by Pratama & Riofita,(2025); Xin et al.,(2023)also revealed that visual storytelling can enhance audience engagement. However, this contrasts with the findings of Joanna Carter,(2020) who explained that character-based storytelling does not always guarantee high engagement, especially when the characters are not sufficiently appealing to audience preferences. In addition, studies by Chung & Kim, (2022); Yang & Lin, (2024) showed that engagement significantly influences service usage decisions. These findings differ from Sugandi et al.,(2025), who found that engagement does not significantly affect decisions regarding service usage.

Based on the explanation of the phenomenon and the research gap above, this research aims to examine whether audience engagement mediates the relationship between storytelling marketing and service usage decisions in Gojek advertisements among Gen Z in Solo Raya. This research can assist companies in creating marketing content that is both engaging and valuable for consumers. Such efforts may have implications for strengthening the company's brand identity, improving sales performance, and enhancing profitability. This research may inspire businesses to implement narrative-driven marketing strategies as a means of enhancing customer engagement and reaching their sales goals. From a scholarly perspective, these results can contribute to the academic literature by further developing theories and models associated with narrative-driven marketing.

2. Literature Review

Teori SOR Stimulus-Organisme-Respon

This study employs the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, first introduced by Hovland (1953). The theory assumes that communication involves an action–reaction process through specific verbal words and symbols. Furthermore, the theory explains how a stimulus (S) influences an individual (O), which then generates a particular response (R). (Effendy, 2009).. In the context of this research, the message (S) delivered through storytelling content can create emotional audience engagement (O), which in turn leads to an audience response (R) to use the service.

Storytelling Marketing

A marketing strategy that uses narratives or stories to convey brand messages emotionally enables the audience to create a stronger sense of connection and recall the brand, with the aim of building emotional bonds and encouraging service usage decisions. (Yueh & Zheng, 2019). Research by Chang, (2025); Joshi et al., (2022) storytelling exerts a positive and significant influence on decision-making related to usage. Similarly, studies by Puri, (2025); Xin et al., (2023) Research findings suggest that storytelling plays a significant and favorable role in enhancing audience engagement. Accordingly, the proposed hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Storytelling marketing has a positive and significant impact on consumers' decisions to use a service

H2: Storytelling has a positive and significant impact on audience engagement.

Audience Engangment

He degree of audience engagement indicates how deeply the audience actively interacts and responds to content, for example by giving comments, likes, and shares. The goal is to ensure that marketing messages are not only viewed but also felt by the audience, thereby increasing the likelihood of influencing their behavioral attitudes in making service usage decisions (Tyas et al., 2025). Research by Yang & Lin, (2024); Marc & Rasul, (2022) The findings indicate that audience engagement positively and significantly influences service usage decisions. Based on previous studies, the following hypothesis has been developed:

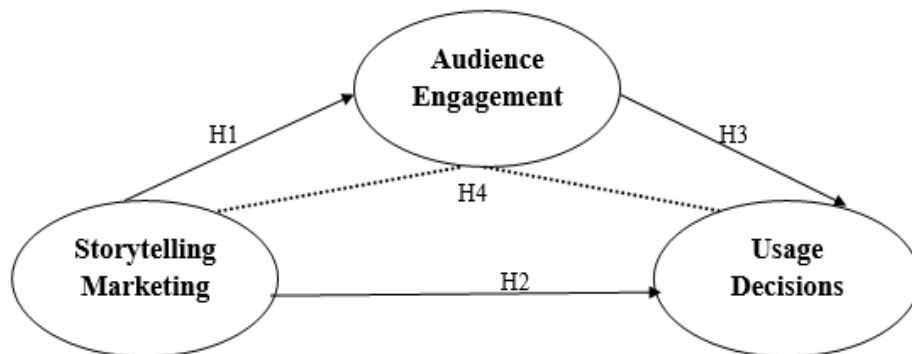
H3: Audience engagement has a significant and positive influence on decisions to use the service.

Usage Decision

The stage at which consumers or audiences make decisions to select or use a particular service involves several steps, including recognition, information search, evaluation, and final decision, with the aim of identifying factors that can be enhanced to increase service usage decisions (Keller, 2016). The use of storytelling helps brands establish emotional engagement with consumers., which in turn is reflected in actions such as giving likes, commenting, and sharing stories with others, ultimately influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Djatola & Hilal, 2023). According to Mavilinda et al., (2023; Harinder, (2019) storytelling marketing exerts a meaningful and favorable impact on decisions to use the service, with audience engagement serving as a mediating factor. Building upon these prior findings, the proposed hypothesis is as follows:

H4: Storytelling has a positive and significant effect on service usage decisions through audience engagement as a mediating variable.

Based on the hypotheses outlined above, the researcher has formulated the following framework:



Source: Author (2025)

Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Method

Data Collection Technique

This research employs a quantitative associative method, as it research demonstrates indirect relationships through a mediating variable. Primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires, using a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data collection was conducted using a combination of online and offline questionnaires. In addition, the researcher also utilized secondary data obtained from scientific journals, articles, and books.

Operational Definition of Variables

This research utilizes Storytelling Marketing (X) as the independent variable, Service Usage Decision (Y) serving as the dependent variable, Audience Engagement (Z) as the mediating variable.

Table 1. Operational Variable Definitions

Variables	Definitions and Indicators	Question items
Storytelling Marketing	Storytelling is a technique of presenting content through narratives, scene settings, and dialogues with style, intonation, and supporting tools (such as videos and animations) aimed at entertaining, educating, and inspiring the audience. (Amorta et al., 2022).	SM 1 SM 2 SM 3 SM 4 SM 5
	Indicators: 1. Action 2. Communication 3. Value Transmission 4. Knowledge 5. Aspek pencapaian digital (Zainurossalamia et al., 2021)	

Variables	Definitions and Indicators	Question items
Audience Engagement	Audience engagement refers to the extent and intensity of the audience's involvement with the content they consume. This not only includes physical attention but also the emotional, cognitive, and even interactive levels of the audience toward the content. (Tyas et al., 2025)	AE 1
		AE 2
		AE 3
		AE 4
		AE 5
Usage Decision	Indicators: 1. Antusiasme 2. Attention 3. Absorption 5. Identification (Kam et al., 2016)	
		UD 1
		UD 2
		UD 3
		UD 4
		UD 5
		UD 6

Source: Author (2025)

Sample Collection Techniques

The population of this study consists of the recommended sample size is typically determined by multiplying the number of indicators by five to ten. With 16 indicators in this study, the suggested sample size would fall within the range of 80 to 160 respondents by 5 to 10 times the total number of indicators, With 16 indicators in this study, the suggested sample size would fall within the range of 80 to 160 respondents. This research involved 165 respondents, selected through purposive non-probability sampling, with the criteria focusing on Gen Z individuals aged 17–27 years.

Data Analysis Technique

This research applies the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique with the assistance of SmartPLS 3.0. The analysis includes the measurement model, This process examines the reliability and validity of the measurement tools, and also assesses the structural model to determine how the variables are interconnected. For models with mediating variables, path analysis is applied to determine both direct and indirect relationships

between variables. Path coefficient testing is used to evaluate the hypotheses. Hypothesis testing is conducted by examining the significance of relationships among variables through p-values and t-statistics using the bootstrapping method.

4. Result and Discussion

Data Analysis

Based on Table 2, the majority of respondents (69%) are female, with 45.8% being students, and most of them (65.5%) are aged 17–22 years. In terms of domicile, the largest proportion of respondents (17.3%) comes from Boyolali Regency. In addition, out of 165 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 52.4% have watched the advertisement more than once while also using Gojek services.

Tabel 2. Karakteristik Responden

Category	Alternative Response	Frequency (N=165)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	116	69 %
	Male	49	31 %
Age (Years)	17-22 years	110	65,5%
	23-27 years	55	34,5%
Domicile	Kota Surakarta	23	13,7%
	Boyolali	29	17,3%
	Sukoharjo	26	15,5%
	Karanganyar	21	13,1%
	Sragen	22	13,7%.
	Klaten	24	14,9%
	Wonogiri	20	11,9%
Occupation	Pelajar	25	16,1%
	Mahasiswa	77	45,8%
	Bekerja	63	38,1%
Frequency of Usage	One time	77	47,6%
	More than one time	88	52,4%

Source: Author (2025)

Outer Model

Validity Test

Convergent validity was evaluated using the loading factor values. The findings indicate that every construct with reflective indicators obtained loading factor values above 0.70, which demonstrates that the indicators are considered valid.

Tabel 3. Loading Factor and AVE

Variables	Indicators	Loading Factor	AVE	Status
Storytelling Marketing (X)	X1	0.938	0.879	Valid
	X2	0.941		Valid
	X3	0.946		Valid
	X4	0.927		Valid
	X5	0.936		
Audience Engagement (Z)	Z1	0.946	0.908	Valid
	Z2	0.950		Valid
	Z3	0.948		Valid
	Z4	0.956		
	Z5	0.963		
Usage Decision (Y)	Y1	0.941	0.897	Valid
	Y2	0.948		Valid
	Y3	0.950		Valid
	Y4	0.960		Valid
	Y5	0.941		
	Y6	0.943		

Source: Author (2025)

Based on the criterion that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should exceed 0.5 serves as an additional measure of validity alongside the loading factor. Based on the table, all indicators surpass this cutoff value, which means they can be considered valid.

Reliability Test

This test is conducted to make sure the instrument accurately reflects the construct being measured consistently. An instrument can be regarded as reliable when its Composite Reliability score exceeds 0.70 and its Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.60 across all constructs

Table 4. Reliability test results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Storytelling Marketing (X)	0.966	0.973
Audience Engagement (Z)	0.975	0.980
Usage Decision (Y)	0.977	0.981

Source: Author (2025)

The results of the reliability assessment show that all variables meet the required standards, with reliability values above 0.7, indicating a high level of consistency. In addition, each construct achieves a Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.6, which further verifies its reliability and validity.

Inner Model

The structural or inner model assessment is carried out to evaluate the model's consistency and precision. Within PLS analysis, the suitability of the model is assessed through the R-Square value and the predictive relevance measure, Q-Square (Q^2). (Rani et al., 2023).

Tabel 5. R2 and Q2 Test results

Variables	R2	Q2
Audienc Engagement (Z)	0.696	0.627
Usage Decision (Y)	0.718	0.639

Source: Author (2025)

The R^2 value based on the table above shows that audience engagement influences usage decisions by 71.8%, while the remaining percentage is influenced by other variables. The Q^2 value indicates that the variables of audience engagement and usage decision have Q^2 The values obtained are above zero, indicating that the model possesses predictive relevance.”

Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis testing results reveal that the t-value is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, which indicates statistical significance the hypothesis is supported and the tested variables exhibit a positive and significant relationship.

Tabel 6. Hypothesis test

Hypothes	Effects	Original Sample	T Statistis	P Value	Statemet
1	$X \rightarrow Z$	0.834	37.339	0.00	Significant
2	$X \rightarrow Y$	0.456	5.365	0.00	Significant
3	$Z \rightarrow Y$	0.429	4.885	0.00	Significant
4	$X \rightarrow Z \rightarrow Y$	0.358	4.857	0.00	Significant

Source: Author (2025)

Discussion

Effect of Storytelling Marketing on Audience Engagement

The findings reveal that storytelling exerts a positive and significant influence on audience engagement, as demonstrated by the t-statistic of 37.339 and a p-value of 0.000. This result suggests that higher levels of storytelling are associated with stronger audience engagement. quality of storytelling presented in Gojek's “Jo and Jek” advertisement, the higher the engagement of Gen Z audiences in Solo Raya. These findings align with the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory, where the stimulus in the form of advertising narratives can generate emotional responses that influence audience engagement (Effendy, 2009). This result is also supported by the studies of Puri (2025) and Xin et al. (2023), which indicates that storytelling marketing significantly influences audience engagement. particularly with Gen Z as a digital-native generation that tends to be more attached to visual, authentic, and relatable

content (Ananta et al., 2024). This explains that through storytelling strategies, Gojek is able to create strong interactions and identification with its audience.

Effect of Storytelling Marketing on Usage Decision

"The findings indicate that storytelling marketing exerts a positive and significant influence on usage decisions, as demonstrated by a t-statistic of 5.365 and a p-value of 0.000. This result implies that narratives presented in Gojek's advertisements are able to influence Gen Z audiences in making decisions to use the service. The results align with previous research of Chang (2025) and Joshi et al. (2022), which found that storytelling can enhance consumers' emotional appeal, thereby encouraging service usage decisions. In this regard, Gojek's "Jo and Jek" advertisement is not merely a form of entertainment but also serves to build positive perceptions that foster trust in the brand, ultimately leading to service usage. However, this result also complements the research gap highlighted by Febrianti et al. (2024) and Riswanto et al. (2023), who argue that storytelling does not always directly lead to usage decisions without the role of engagement. In this study, although Storytelling exerts a direct and significant influence, while the coefficient value highlights that engagement continues to play a crucial role in reinforcing the impact of storytelling on decision-making in usage.

Effect of Audience Engagement on Usage Decision

The hypothesis testing results reveal that audience engagement significantly and positively influences usage decisions, as evidenced by the t-value of 4.885 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the increase has a statistically significant effect audience engagement leads to a higher likelihood of making usage decisions audience engagement—through enthusiasm, attention, interaction, or identification with the advertisement—the greater the likelihood that they will decide to use Gojek's services. These findings support the studies of Yang & Lin (2024) and Marc & Rasul (2022), which found a significant relationship between storytelling and usage decisions. In the context of Gen Z, engagement plays an important role, as they tend to actively respond to content emotionally. In contrast, the findings are not in line with the study conducted by Sugandi et al. (2025), which found that engagement is not always significant, possibly due to differences in service context or audience characteristics. In Gojek's "Jo and Jek" advertisement, the high emotional involvement of Gen Z has been proven to drive actual decisions to use the service.

Storytelling Marketing and Service Usage Decisions: Exploring Audience Engagement as a Mediating Factor

The findings reveal that audience engagement serves as a crucial mediator between storytelling marketing and usage decisions, as reflected by a t-value of 4.875 and a p-value of 0.000. This implies that storytelling alone is insufficient to directly impact usage decisions; the presence of active audience engagement is essential studies of Mavilinda et al. (2023) and Harinder (2019), which found that consumer involvement serves as an important bridge linking the effectiveness of storytelling to service usage decisions. In other words, Gen Z not only watches the story but also engages emotionally, which ultimately drives them to use Gojek's services.

5. Conclusions & Sugestion

The findings of this study reveal that storytelling marketing has a positive and significant impact on customer engagement as well as on consumers' decision to use Gojek's services. This proves that the "Jo and Jek" advertisement narrative is capable of building emotional closeness while also encouraging actual decisions among Gen Z audiences. In addition, audience engagement is also found to significantly influence usage decisions, making audience

involvement an important factor in building the effectiveness of storytelling. The mediation test further confirms that audience engagement mediates the effect of storytelling marketing on usage decisions, indicating that without active involvement, storytelling risks becoming mere entertainment without generating actual conversion.

Overall, these findings support the SOR theory, in which the stimulus in the form of storytelling influences the organism (engagement), which subsequently leads to decisions regarding usage also fills a gap in previous studies by emphasizing that the success of storytelling strategies greatly depends on the level of audience engagement, particularly among Gen Z, who are critical and value authentic content.

According to the study's results, businesses are suggested to continue optimizing storytelling marketing strategies by presenting authentic stories that are relevant to everyday life and closely aligned with the values of Gen Z audiences. Moreover, it is important for Gojek to create interactive spaces that encourage audience involvement, such as through comment features, social media challenges, or other interactive content, in order to further increase engagement. Future studies could broaden the research to encompass other online transportation platforms or incorporate additional factors, such as brand trust or brand loyalty, offering a more complete understanding of how storytelling marketing impacts consumer behavior.

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