

Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, and Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja Local Products: The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

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ABSTRACT

Toraja local products have strong cultural value and market potential because they represent heritage, authenticity, and regional identity. However, cultural uniqueness and digital exposure may not directly lead to purchase intention without consumer trust. This study examines the influence of Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement on Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products, with Brand Trust as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was used by distributing structured questionnaires to 150 respondents who had awareness of or experience with Toraja local products. The data were analyzed using SPSS through validity and reliability tests, normality tests, regression analysis, t-tests, F-tests, and mediation analysis. The findings show that Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement have positive and significant effects on Brand Trust. Brand Trust also has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Purchase Intention. However, Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement do not directly influence Consumer Purchase Intention. The mediation results confirm that Brand Trust mediates the relationships between Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention, as well as between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. This study highlights that consumer purchase intention toward Toraja local products is mainly formed through a trust-based mechanism. The findings contribute to cultural branding and digital marketing literature by emphasizing Brand Trust as a key mediator in transforming cultural identity and digital engagement into purchase intention.

Keywords: *Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, Brand Trust, Consumer Purchase Intention, Toraja Local Products.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Local products play an important role in representing regional identity, cultural heritage, and community-based economic development. In Indonesia, local products are not only valued for their functional benefits, but also for their cultural meaning, symbolic identity, and connection to local traditions. Toraja local products, such as coffee, woven products, handicrafts, traditional culinary products, souvenirs, and culturally inspired creative products, have strong potential to compete in broader markets because they carry distinctive cultural values, authentic regional narratives, and strong symbolic meaning.

The increasing consumer interest in local and culturally based products reflects a broader shift toward authenticity, identity, and meaningful consumption. Recent studies show that cultural elements embedded in product design can influence consumer evaluation and purchase intention because consumers often associate traditional heritage with uniqueness, authenticity, and emotional value (Kumari et al., 2025). Similarly, perceived local iconness in culturally mixed products has been found to enhance purchase intention by strengthening consumer perceived value (Zeng & Kim, 2024). These findings indicate that local cultural elements are not merely decorative attributes, but strategic branding resources that can shape consumer perception and purchase behavior.

In this context, Cultural Branding becomes an important marketing strategy for Toraja local products. Cultural Branding refers to the use of cultural identity, heritage, symbolism, storytelling, local values, and authenticity to build product meaning and brand differentiation. For Toraja local products, cultural branding can be developed through visual symbols, traditional motifs, local narratives, production heritage, indigenous craftsmanship, and cultural storytelling.

These cultural elements can help consumers perceive Toraja local products as distinctive, meaningful, and emotionally connected to regional identity.

Cultural Branding is particularly relevant for Toraja because the region has a strong cultural identity that is widely recognized through traditional houses, rituals, carving motifs, coffee heritage, textile patterns, and local wisdom. Recent research on local brands also highlights that authenticity, brand awareness, diagnosticity, and ethnocentrism can influence consumers' preference for local brands (Soliman et al., 2026). This suggests that consumers may be more willing to purchase local products when they perceive the brand as authentic, culturally meaningful, and connected to a recognizable local identity. Therefore, Cultural Branding is expected to strengthen consumer trust and purchase intention toward Toraja local products.

Alongside Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement has become increasingly important in promoting local products. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, marketplaces, and websites provide opportunities for local businesses to reach wider audiences, communicate product stories, interact with consumers, and build online communities. Digital Marketing Engagement refers to consumer involvement in digital marketing activities, including viewing content, liking, commenting, sharing, asking questions, participating in online campaigns, and responding to product storytelling. In the context of local products, digital engagement allows cultural narratives to be transformed into interactive and visually attractive consumer experiences.

Recent studies confirm that social media marketing activities can strengthen consumer responses by improving brand trust, engagement, loyalty, and purchase-related behavior. Althuwaini (2022) found that social media marketing activities such as customization, entertainment, promotion, word of mouth, and interaction positively contribute to brand trust and loyalty. Hanaysha (2022) also showed that social media marketing features can influence purchase decisions, with brand trust serving as an important mediating mechanism. These findings are relevant for Toraja local products because digital platforms can help local brands communicate cultural value, improve consumer familiarity, and encourage digital interaction.

Digital Marketing Engagement is important because consumer purchase intention is increasingly shaped by online information, digital storytelling, visual content, and social interaction. Consumers often discover local products through social media posts, influencer recommendations, customer reviews, marketplace exposure, and digital campaigns. When digital marketing content is attractive, culturally meaningful, and interactive, consumers are more likely to pay attention, develop interest, and consider purchasing the product. For Toraja local products, digital engagement can strengthen consumer awareness by presenting cultural uniqueness through visual storytelling, live selling, product demonstrations, behind-the-scenes production content, and customer testimonials.

However, Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement may not directly lead to purchase intention if consumers do not trust the brand. Brand Trust plays an important role in consumer decision-making because it reflects consumers' confidence in the credibility, authenticity, quality, and reliability of a product or brand. In the context of local products, brand trust is especially important because consumers may question product originality, quality consistency, price fairness, and the authenticity of cultural claims. If cultural branding is perceived as genuine and digital marketing communication is transparent and consistent, consumers are more likely to trust the brand.

Brand Trust can also serve as a psychological bridge between marketing activities and purchase intention. Cultural Branding may strengthen trust by communicating authenticity, heritage, and symbolic value, while Digital Marketing Engagement may strengthen trust by creating interaction, transparency, and consumer familiarity. Prior studies indicate that brand trust is an important mechanism linking social media marketing and consumer purchase behavior (Azhar et al., 2023; Hanaysha, 2022). Therefore, in this study, Brand Trust is positioned as a mediating variable that explains how Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement influence Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products.

Consumer Purchase Intention is an important behavioral outcome because it reflects consumers' willingness, interest, and readiness to buy Toraja local products. Purchase intention does not emerge only from product awareness, but also from consumers' evaluation of cultural value, digital communication, brand credibility, and emotional connection. Consumers may be interested in Toraja local products because they perceive them as unique, authentic, meaningful, trustworthy, and relevant to their preferences. Therefore, purchase intention toward Toraja local products is shaped by both cultural and digital marketing factors.

Although previous studies have examined cultural branding, digital marketing, brand trust, and purchase intention separately, limited research has integrated these variables into a single model in the context of Toraja local products. Many studies on local products focus on product quality, price, tourism promotion, or general local pride, while fewer studies explain how Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement can build Brand Trust and encourage

Consumer Purchase Intention. This gap is important because local products need not only cultural uniqueness, but also credible branding and effective digital communication to compete in modern consumer markets.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the influence of Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement on Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products, with Brand Trust as a mediating variable. Specifically, this study investigates whether Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement strengthen Brand Trust, whether both variables directly influence Consumer Purchase Intention, whether Brand Trust influences Purchase Intention, and whether Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, and Purchase Intention.

This study contributes to the literature by developing an integrated model that connects Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, Brand Trust, and Consumer Purchase Intention in the context of local products. Theoretically, this study enriches consumer behavior and local product marketing literature by positioning Brand Trust as a key mechanism that transforms cultural and digital marketing strategies into purchase intention. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for local entrepreneurs, MSMEs, cultural product producers, tourism stakeholders, and digital marketers in designing branding strategies that are culturally authentic, digitally engaging, and capable of building consumer trust toward Toraja local products.

Cultural Branding refers to the strategic use of cultural identity, heritage, symbolism, local values, storytelling, and authenticity to build brand meaning and differentiation. In the context of local products, cultural branding is not only used to promote product attributes, but also to communicate cultural narratives that represent regional identity and collective memory. For Toraja local products, cultural branding can be reflected through traditional motifs, local craftsmanship, Toraja coffee heritage, ritual symbolism, visual identity, packaging design, and cultural storytelling.

Cultural Branding becomes increasingly important because consumers today often seek products that are not only functional, but also authentic, meaningful, and emotionally connected to cultural identity. Cultural elements embedded in products can strengthen consumer perception of uniqueness and authenticity. Recent studies show that traditional cultural elements in product design can influence consumer purchase intention because consumers perceive such products as more distinctive, meaningful, and culturally valuable (Kumari et al., 2025). Similarly, perceived local iconness can strengthen purchase intention by increasing consumers' perceived value of culturally meaningful products (Zeng & Kim, 2024).

In this study, Cultural Branding is positioned as an independent variable that influences Brand Trust and Consumer Purchase Intention. The logic is that consumers first evaluate the cultural meaning and authenticity of Toraja local products before forming trust and purchase intention. When Toraja local products are perceived as authentic, culturally meaningful, and consistently branded, consumers are more likely to trust the brand and develop stronger intention to purchase.

1.1. Cultural Branding and Brand Trust

Brand Trust refers to consumers' confidence that a brand is credible, reliable, authentic, and capable of fulfilling its promises. In the context of local products, trust is highly important because consumers may question whether the product is truly authentic, whether the cultural symbols are used appropriately, and whether the brand genuinely represents local identity. Therefore, cultural branding can become an important antecedent of brand trust.

Cultural Branding can strengthen Brand Trust by communicating authenticity, heritage, local values, and symbolic meaning. When a brand consistently presents cultural identity through product design, storytelling, packaging, and communication, consumers may perceive the brand as more genuine and trustworthy. For Toraja local products, cultural branding can help consumers believe that the products are not merely commercial goods, but also authentic representations of Toraja culture.

Recent studies on local products and cultural product design show that authenticity, local identity, and cultural meaning play important roles in shaping consumer evaluation and purchase intention (Septiani et al., 2024; Kumari et al., 2025). In addition, the localness effect of branding can enhance purchase intention by strengthening perceived local iconness and positive consumer evaluation (Jaufenthaler et al., 2025). These findings indicate that cultural cues can function as trust-building signals in consumer decision-making. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Cultural Branding has a positive effect on Brand Trust.

1.2. Digital Marketing Engagement

Digital Marketing Engagement refers to consumer involvement in digital marketing activities, including viewing, liking, commenting, sharing, asking questions, participating in online campaigns, responding to product storytelling, and interacting with brand content on digital platforms. In the context of local products, digital marketing engagement enables cultural narratives to reach wider audiences through social media, marketplaces, websites, live selling, short videos, and customer-generated content.

Digital Marketing Engagement is important because consumer purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by online information and digital interaction. Consumers often discover local products through Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, marketplaces, influencer recommendations, visual storytelling, and customer reviews. When digital content is attractive, interactive, and culturally meaningful, consumers are more likely to develop awareness, interest, trust, and purchase intention.

Recent research shows that social media marketing activities can strengthen brand trust and consumer responses. Hanaysha (2022) found that social media marketing features influence consumer purchase decisions, with brand trust serving as a mediating mechanism. Althuwaini (2022) also found that social media marketing activities have a positive effect on brand trust and loyalty. These studies suggest that digital engagement can increase consumer confidence by creating interaction, familiarity, information transparency, and emotional connection with the brand.

1.3. Digital Marketing Engagement and Brand Trust

Digital Marketing Engagement can strengthen Brand Trust by increasing consumer familiarity, transparency, interaction, and perceived credibility. When consumers actively interact with a brand through digital content, they gain more information about product quality, cultural background, seller credibility, customer reviews, and brand consistency. This interaction can reduce uncertainty and increase confidence in the brand.

For Toraja local products, digital marketing engagement can build trust by presenting cultural storytelling, production processes, customer testimonials, product demonstrations, behind-the-scenes content, and direct communication with producers or sellers. Consumers who repeatedly encounter consistent and credible digital content are more likely to trust the brand. Digital engagement also allows consumers to verify product claims through comments, reviews, and social proof.

Previous studies indicate that social media marketing and digital interaction can influence brand trust and purchase-related behavior (Althuwaini, 2022; Hanaysha, 2022; Azhar et al., 2023). This implies that digital engagement is not only a promotional tool, but also a relational mechanism that helps brands establish credibility and consumer trust. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Digital Marketing Engagement has a positive effect on Brand Trust.

1.4. Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention

Consumer Purchase Intention refers to consumers' willingness, interest, and readiness to purchase a product or brand. In the context of Toraja local products, purchase intention may be influenced by cultural meaning, perceived authenticity, uniqueness, product quality, emotional value, and consumer trust. Consumers are more likely to intend to purchase local products when they perceive the products as culturally distinctive and meaningful.

Cultural Branding can influence Consumer Purchase Intention because it creates symbolic and emotional value. Products that carry cultural heritage may be perceived as more authentic and unique than ordinary mass-produced products. Toraja local products can benefit from this strategy because the cultural identity of Toraja is visually strong and widely recognized through traditional motifs, coffee heritage, local crafts, and cultural stories.

Recent studies support the role of cultural elements in shaping purchase intention. Kumari et al. (2025) found that cultural elements in product design can influence consumer purchase intention. Zeng and Kim (2024) also showed that perceived local iconness enhances purchase intention through consumer perceived value. These findings suggest that cultural branding can become a strong driver of consumer purchase intention toward Toraja local products. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Cultural Branding has a positive effect on Consumer Purchase Intention.

1.5. Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention

Digital Marketing Engagement is expected to influence Consumer Purchase Intention because consumers often rely on digital content before making purchase decisions. Engaging digital marketing can increase product awareness, product knowledge, emotional interest, and consumer confidence. When consumers actively interact with content about Toraja local products, they may become more interested in purchasing the products.

Digital engagement can influence purchase intention through visual storytelling, customer reviews, interactive communication, influencer content, live selling, and marketplace exposure. In the context of Toraja local products, digital content can highlight cultural identity, product uniqueness, local production processes, and consumer experiences. These elements can increase consumer curiosity and encourage purchase intention.

Studies in digital marketing show that social media marketing activities can influence purchase intention by improving consumer engagement, brand image, and brand trust (Hanaysha, 2022; Azhar et al., 2023). Therefore, Digital Marketing Engagement is expected to directly strengthen Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Digital Marketing Engagement has a positive effect on Consumer Purchase Intention.

1.6. Brand Trust and Consumer Purchase Intention

Brand Trust is one of the most important determinants of Consumer Purchase Intention because consumers need confidence before purchasing a product. In local product markets, trust is especially important because consumers may not always have complete information about product authenticity, quality consistency, seller reliability, and cultural originality. A trustworthy brand can reduce perceived risk and increase consumers' willingness to buy.

Brand Trust can influence Consumer Purchase Intention by strengthening consumer confidence in product quality, brand credibility, and the authenticity of cultural claims. When consumers trust a Toraja local product brand, they are more likely to believe that the product is authentic, valuable, and reliable. This trust can reduce uncertainty and encourage purchasing decisions.

Recent studies show that brand trust plays an important role in connecting marketing activities with purchase behavior. Hanaysha (2022) found that brand trust mediates the effect of social media marketing features on purchase decisions. Althuwaini (2022) also showed that social media activities contribute to brand trust and loyalty. These findings indicate that trust is a critical psychological mechanism in consumer decision-making. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Brand Trust has a positive effect on Consumer Purchase Intention.

1.7. The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

Brand Trust is expected to mediate the relationship between Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention. Cultural Branding can create perceptions of authenticity, heritage, and symbolic value. However, cultural meaning alone may not be sufficient to generate purchase intention if consumers do not trust the brand. Brand Trust helps transform cultural meaning into purchase intention by increasing consumer confidence in the authenticity and credibility of Toraja local products.

Brand Trust is also expected to mediate the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. Digital Marketing Engagement can increase consumer interaction, familiarity, and exposure to product information. However, consumers may still hesitate to purchase if they do not trust the brand. When digital engagement strengthens Brand Trust, consumers become more confident and more willing to purchase Toraja local products.

This mediation logic explains that Consumer Purchase Intention is not only formed through direct exposure to cultural branding and digital marketing engagement, but also through consumer trust. Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement first shape Brand Trust, and Brand Trust then influences Consumer Purchase Intention. Therefore, Brand Trust functions as a psychological mechanism that connects cultural and digital marketing strategies with consumer purchase behavior. Therefore, this study proposes the following mediation hypotheses:

H6: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention.

H7: Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention.

1.8. Consumer Purchase Intention

Consumer Purchase Intention is the dependent variable in this study. It reflects consumers' willingness, interest, and readiness to purchase Toraja local products. Purchase intention is important because it indicates the likelihood of consumers supporting local products through actual buying behavior.

In this study, Consumer Purchase Intention is conceptualized as the final outcome of a process involving Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, and Brand Trust. Cultural Branding provides authenticity, heritage, and symbolic meaning. Digital Marketing Engagement provides interaction, visibility, and consumer involvement. Brand Trust provides confidence and credibility. Together, these variables explain how consumers develop purchase intention toward Toraja local products.

Based on the overall literature review, the proposed research model positions Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement as independent variables, Brand Trust as a mediating variable, and Consumer Purchase Intention as the dependent variable. This model explains how cultural identity and digital interaction can strengthen consumer trust and encourage purchase intention toward Toraja local products.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts the framework presented in Figure 1 to examine how Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement influence Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products through Brand Trust. The main objective of this research is to analyze whether Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement can strengthen consumer trust, and whether Brand Trust subsequently encourages Consumer Purchase Intention. This study uses a quantitative approach because the relationships among variables are examined through measurable indicators and statistical testing.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to consumers who had awareness of or experience with Toraja local products. The respondents were selected because they were considered relevant for evaluating cultural branding, digital marketing engagement, brand trust, and purchase intention toward local products. The target respondents included consumers who had purchased, considered purchasing, or actively searched for information about Toraja local products, such as Toraja coffee, woven products, handicrafts, traditional food, souvenirs, and culturally inspired creative products.

The sample consisted of 150 respondents selected using purposive sampling. This sampling technique was used because the study required respondents who had sufficient knowledge, awareness, or experience related to Toraja local products. Several criteria were applied in selecting respondents. First, respondents had to be at least 17 years old. Second, respondents had to have awareness of Toraja local products. Third, respondents had to have purchased, considered purchasing, or searched for information about at least one Toraja local product. Fourth, respondents had to be able to evaluate cultural branding, digital marketing engagement, brand trust, and consumer purchase intention based on their experience or perception.

The questionnaire was designed to measure four main variables: Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, Brand Trust, and Consumer Purchase Intention. Cultural Branding was measured through indicators related to cultural identity, local heritage, authenticity, traditional motifs, storytelling, symbolic meaning, and the representation of Toraja culture in product branding. Digital Marketing Engagement was measured through indicators related to social media content, online interaction, digital storytelling, customer reviews, visual product presentation, digital promotion, and consumer response to online brand communication.

Brand Trust was measured through consumers' confidence in the credibility, authenticity, reliability, quality consistency, and honesty of Toraja local product brands. Consumer Purchase Intention was measured through consumers' willingness, interest, intention, and readiness to purchase Toraja local products. All measurement items were assessed using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Likert scale was considered appropriate because the variables in this study are perceptual and behavioral in nature.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. Several statistical procedures were applied in this study. First, descriptive analysis was used to describe respondent characteristics, including gender, age, education level, occupation, and experience with Toraja local products. Second, validity and reliability tests were conducted to assess the quality of the questionnaire items. Validity was assessed using corrected item-total correlation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Third, the normality test was conducted to examine whether the data fulfilled the assumption for regression analysis.

Fourth, regression analysis and t-tests were used to examine the direct effects among variables. The direct relationships tested in this study include the effect of Cultural Branding on Brand Trust, the effect of Digital Marketing Engagement on Brand Trust, the effect of Cultural Branding on Consumer Purchase Intention, the effect of Digital Marketing Engagement on Consumer Purchase Intention, and the effect of Brand Trust on Consumer Purchase Intention.

Fifth, the F-test was used to evaluate the simultaneous significance of the regression models. Finally, mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention, as well as the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. These procedures were used to determine how cultural and digital marketing strategies are transformed into consumer purchase intention through trust-building mechanisms.

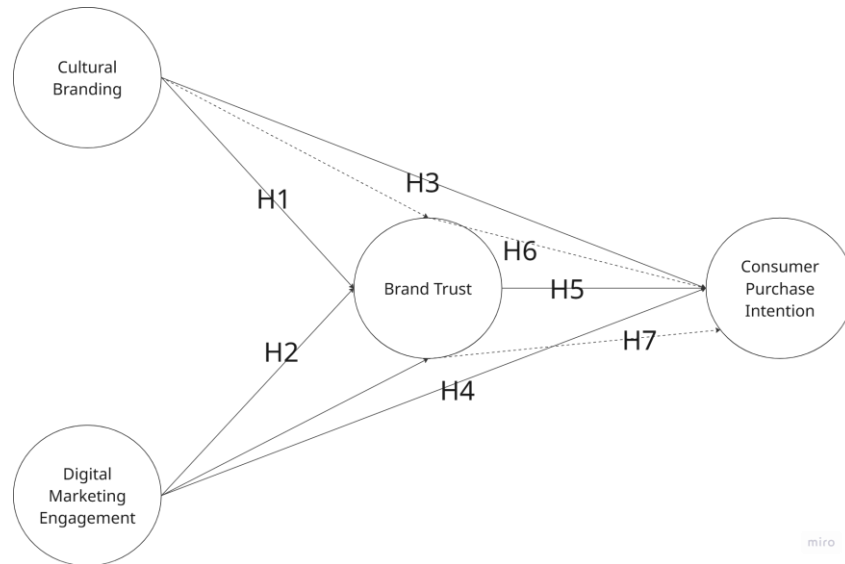


Figure 1. Research Model

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	61	40.7%
	Female	89	59.3%
Age	17–25 years	46	30.7%
	26–35 years	58	38.7%
	36–45 years	32	21.3%
	Above 45 years	14	9.3%
Education Level	Senior High School	31	20.7%
	Diploma/Bachelor's Degree	94	62.7%
	Master's Degree or above	25	16.6%
Occupation	Student	33	22.0%
	Employee	57	38.0%
	Entrepreneur	41	27.3%
	Others	19	12.7%
Experience with Traditional Culinary Products	Once	28	18.7%
	Two to three times	69	46.0%
	More than three times	53	35.3%
	Total	150	100.0%

The respondent profile shows that most respondents were female, representing 59.3% of the sample, while male respondents accounted for 40.7%. Based on age, the largest group was respondents aged 26–35 years, representing 38.7%, followed by respondents aged 17–25 years at 30.7%. In terms of education, most respondents held a diploma or bachelor's degree. The majority of respondents had purchased or consumed traditional culinary products two to three times, indicating that the sample was relevant for evaluating Cultural Branding Strategy, Digital Marketing Engagement, Brand Trust, and Consumer Purchase Intention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cultural Branding Strategy	150	2.40	5.00	3.86	0.62
Digital Marketing Engagement	150	2.20	5.00	3.74	0.67
Brand Trust	150	2.33	5.00	3.82	0.64
Consumer Purchase Intention	150	2.00	5.00	3.69	0.70

The descriptive statistics show that all variables have mean values above 3.50. This indicates that respondents generally gave positive evaluations toward cultural branding strategy, digital marketing engagement, brand trust, and consumer purchase intention. Cultural Branding Strategy has the highest mean value of 3.86, suggesting that respondents perceive cultural identity, local stories, product authenticity, and traditional culinary uniqueness as important aspects of branding.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
Cultural Branding Strategy	CBS1	0.641	0.856	Valid and Reliable
	CBS2	0.693		Valid
	CBS3	0.672		Valid
	CBS4	0.618		Valid
Digital Marketing Engagement	DME1	0.629	0.847	Valid and Reliable
	DME2	0.681		Valid
	DME3	0.657		Valid
	DME4	0.604		Valid
Brand Trust	BT1	0.668	0.862	Valid and Reliable
	BT2	0.714		Valid
	BT3	0.692		Valid
	BT4	0.631		Valid
Consumer Purchase Intention	CPI1	0.705	0.879	Valid and Reliable
	CPI2	0.742		Valid
	CPI3	0.718		Valid
	CPI4	0.684		Valid

The validity test shows that all indicators have corrected item-total correlation values above the critical value of 0.160. Therefore, all items are declared valid. The reliability test also shows that all Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.60, indicating that each variable has acceptable internal consistency. Thus, all research instruments are valid and reliable for further statistical analysis.

Table 4. Normality Test

No.	Regression Model	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Critical Value	Description
1	Cultural Branding Strategy and Digital Marketing Engagement → Brand Trust	0.200	> 0.05	Normally Distributed

2	Cultural Branding Strategy, Digital Marketing Engagement, and Brand Trust → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.187	> 0.05	Normally Distributed
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The normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov shows that all regression models have Asymp. Sig. values above 0.05. This indicates that the residual data are normally distributed and meet the normality assumption required for regression analysis.

Table 5. Regression Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship Between Variables	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H1	Cultural Branding Strategy → Brand Trust	0.389	5.192	0.000	Accepted
H2	Digital Marketing Engagement → Brand Trust	0.421	5.612	0.000	Accepted
H3	Cultural Branding Strategy → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.092	1.233	0.219	Rejected
H4	Digital Marketing Engagement → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.106	1.458	0.147	Rejected
H5	Brand Trust → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.602	7.984	0.000	Accepted
H6	Cultural Branding Strategy → Brand Trust → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.234	4.216	0.000	Accepted
H7	Digital Marketing Engagement → Brand Trust → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.253	4.587	0.000	Accepted

The hypothesis testing results show that five hypotheses are accepted and two hypotheses are rejected. H1 is accepted, indicating that Cultural Branding Strategy has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. This means that cultural identity, traditional culinary narratives, local symbols, authenticity, and product heritage can strengthen consumer trust in traditional culinary product brands.

H2 is accepted, showing that Digital Marketing Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. This indicates that social media content, digital storytelling, customer reviews, online interaction, and product visualization can increase consumer confidence in the brand.

H3 is rejected because Cultural Branding Strategy does not significantly influence Consumer Purchase Intention directly. This means that cultural identity and local culinary uniqueness alone are not sufficient to directly encourage consumers to purchase traditional culinary products. Consumers may appreciate cultural branding, but they still need trust before forming stronger purchase intention.

H4 is also rejected because Digital Marketing Engagement does not significantly influence Consumer Purchase Intention directly. This finding indicates that digital exposure, online interaction, likes, comments, and promotional content do not automatically lead to purchase intention. Digital engagement may increase awareness, but it must first build Brand Trust before it can influence consumers' willingness to purchase.

H5 is accepted, indicating that Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Purchase Intention. This result confirms that trust is a key factor in encouraging consumers to purchase traditional culinary products. Consumers are more likely to buy when they believe that the product is authentic, reliable, hygienic, consistent in quality, and credible.

H6 is accepted, showing that Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding Strategy and Consumer Purchase Intention. This means that Cultural Branding Strategy increases purchase intention indirectly by building consumer trust. Cultural branding becomes more effective when consumers believe that the culinary product genuinely represents local identity and offers reliable quality.

H7 is accepted, indicating that Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. This means that digital marketing engagement contributes to purchase intention when it

strengthens consumer trust. Digital content, product information, customer testimonials, and online interaction can encourage purchase intention if they create confidence in the brand.

Table 6. Model Summary and F-Test

Model	Dependent Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	F-value	Sig.	Description
1	Brand Trust	0.527	0.521	82.011	0.000	Significant
2	Consumer Purchase Intention	0.589	0.581	69.744	0.000	Significant

The model summary shows that Cultural Branding Strategy and Digital Marketing Engagement explain 52.7% of the variance in Brand Trust. This indicates that the combination of cultural branding and digital engagement has strong explanatory power in building consumer trust toward traditional culinary product brands.

The second model shows that Cultural Branding Strategy, Digital Marketing Engagement, and Brand Trust explain 58.9% of the variance in Consumer Purchase Intention. This indicates that the model has adequate explanatory power in explaining consumer purchase intention. However, the regression results show that Brand Trust is the most important predictor, while the direct effects of Cultural Branding Strategy and Digital Marketing Engagement are not significant.

Table 7. Mediation Analysis

No.	Indirect Relationship	Indirect Effect	z-value	Sig.	Decision
1	Cultural Branding Strategy → Brand Trust → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.234	4.216	0.000	Significant
2	Digital Marketing Engagement → Brand Trust → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.253	4.587	0.000	Significant

The mediation analysis shows that Brand Trust significantly mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding Strategy and Consumer Purchase Intention. This finding indicates that cultural branding does not directly lead to purchase intention, but it becomes effective when it first strengthens consumer trust. Consumers may be attracted to traditional culinary identity, local stories, and cultural symbols, but they are more likely to form purchase intention when they trust the brand.

Brand Trust also significantly mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. This result indicates that digital marketing engagement is more effective when it creates credibility and confidence. Digital content may attract attention, but purchase intention is more likely to occur when consumers trust the product information, seller credibility, customer reviews, and brand consistency.

Overall, the findings show that Brand Trust is the main mechanism linking Cultural Branding Strategy and Digital Marketing Engagement to Consumer Purchase Intention. Cultural branding and digital marketing engagement are important, but their effects on purchase intention are indirect. Therefore, traditional culinary entrepreneurs should not only emphasize cultural uniqueness and digital visibility, but also build trust through product authenticity, quality consistency, transparent communication, hygienic production, and credible customer testimonials.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement on Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products, with Brand Trust as a mediating variable. Based on the data analysis, Cultural Branding has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust, and Digital Marketing Engagement also has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. Furthermore, Brand Trust significantly influences Consumer Purchase Intention. However, the direct effects of Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement on Consumer Purchase Intention are not significant. These findings indicate that consumers' intention to purchase Toraja local products is not directly shaped only by cultural identity or digital interaction, but mainly through the development of trust in the brand.

The significant effect of Cultural Branding on Brand Trust indicates that cultural identity, authenticity, heritage, and local storytelling play an important role in building consumer confidence toward Toraja local products. Toraja local products are strongly associated with cultural symbols, traditional motifs, local craftsmanship, coffee heritage, ritual values, and distinctive regional narratives. When these cultural elements are communicated consistently through branding, consumers are more likely to perceive the product brand as authentic, credible, and culturally meaningful.

This finding is consistent with recent studies showing that cultural elements embedded in product design can strengthen consumer evaluation because traditional symbols increase perceived uniqueness, authenticity, and emotional value (Kumari et al., 2025). Similarly, Zeng and Kim (2025) explain that perceived local iconness can strengthen consumers' positive responses toward culturally meaningful products.

This result confirms that cultural branding is not merely a visual or symbolic strategy. In the context of Toraja local products, cultural branding functions as a trust-building mechanism. Consumers may perceive Toraja cultural symbols, product stories, traditional production narratives, and local heritage as signals that the product genuinely represents Toraja identity. This is important because local products often face challenges related to authenticity, product originality, quality consistency, and cultural representation. Therefore, the stronger the cultural branding, the stronger the consumer trust toward the brand.

Digital Marketing Engagement also has a significant effect on Brand Trust. This finding indicates that digital interaction, social media content, online storytelling, customer reviews, product demonstrations, and consumer communication can strengthen consumers' confidence in Toraja local product brands. Digital marketing engagement allows consumers to access more information about product quality, cultural meaning, production process, seller credibility, customer experience, and product origin. When digital content is informative, interactive, visually attractive, and consistent, consumers are more likely to trust the brand.

This finding is supported by studies on social media marketing and brand trust. Althuwaini (2022) found that social media marketing activities, particularly customization, entertainment, promotion, interaction, and word of mouth, contribute to brand trust and loyalty. Hanaysha (2022) also showed that social media marketing features, such as interactivity, informativeness, entertainment, and perceived relevance, can influence purchase decisions, with Brand Trust acting as an important mediating mechanism. In line with these studies, Digital Marketing Engagement in this research strengthens Brand Trust because consumers become more familiar with Toraja local product brands through digital exposure, visual storytelling, testimonials, and online interaction.

However, Cultural Branding does not significantly influence Consumer Purchase Intention directly. This finding suggests that although consumers may appreciate the cultural meaning of Toraja local products, cultural attractiveness alone is not sufficient to directly encourage purchase intention. Consumers may recognize Toraja products as unique, authentic, and culturally valuable, but they may still hesitate to purchase if they do not fully trust the brand, product quality, price fairness, seller reliability, or authenticity of the cultural claims. Therefore, Cultural Branding may create symbolic value and positive perception, but it needs to be supported by Brand Trust to produce stronger purchase intention.

This finding is theoretically meaningful because it shows that cultural identity does not automatically become purchase intention. In local product markets, consumers may admire cultural products without necessarily deciding to buy them. Purchase intention requires stronger psychological assurance that the product is credible, reliable, authentic, and worth purchasing. Thus, Brand Trust becomes a necessary mechanism that transforms cultural meaning into consumer intention. This interpretation is consistent with the view that cultural elements can influence consumer responses when they are perceived as meaningful and authentic, but their effect on purchase intention may depend on other evaluative mechanisms such as trust and perceived credibility.

Digital Marketing Engagement also does not significantly influence Consumer Purchase Intention directly. This result indicates that consumer interaction with digital content does not automatically lead to purchase intention. Consumers may view, like, comment, or share digital content about Toraja local products, but such engagement may remain at the level of awareness or interest if it does not create sufficient trust. In the digital environment, engagement can increase visibility, but visibility alone may not be enough to generate purchase intention. Consumers need confidence that the product is authentic, the seller is reliable, the information is credible, and the product quality is consistent.

This finding is relevant to the current digital marketing context, where high engagement does not always produce conversion. Digital content may attract attention, but purchase intention requires stronger consumer confidence. Hanaysha (2022) showed that Brand Trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing features and purchase decisions, indicating that digital engagement becomes more effective when it builds trust. Azhar et al. (2023) also found that social media marketing can influence purchase-related behavior through mediating mechanisms such as Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty. Therefore, the insignificant direct effect of Digital Marketing Engagement on Consumer Purchase Intention in this study strengthens the argument that digital engagement should be trust-oriented, not merely attention-oriented.

Brand Trust has a significant effect on Consumer Purchase Intention. This finding confirms that trust is the most important psychological factor in encouraging consumers to purchase Toraja local products. When consumers trust the

brand, they are more confident that the product is authentic, the cultural claims are credible, the quality is reliable, and the seller can fulfill consumer expectations. Trust reduces uncertainty and perceived risk, especially when consumers purchase local products through digital platforms or from sellers they do not know personally.

The significant role of Brand Trust also explains why Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement need to be directed toward credibility building. Cultural Branding can attract consumer interest through heritage, authenticity, and symbolic meaning, while Digital Marketing Engagement can increase exposure, interaction, and product visibility. However, both strategies become more effective when they strengthen trust. Consumers are more likely to purchase Toraja local products when they believe that the brand genuinely represents Toraja culture, provides reliable product quality, and communicates honestly with consumers.

The mediation results further show that Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention. This means that Cultural Branding influences purchase intention indirectly by first building Brand Trust. In this pathway, cultural identity, storytelling, local symbolism, heritage, and authenticity strengthen consumer confidence, and this confidence subsequently increases the intention to purchase. Therefore, Brand Trust acts as a bridge between cultural meaning and consumer behavior.

Brand Trust also mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. This indicates that digital engagement contributes to purchase intention when it strengthens consumer trust. Digital content, online interaction, visual storytelling, customer testimonials, product information, and seller responsiveness can build trust when they are consistent and credible. Once trust is established, consumers are more likely to develop purchase intention toward Toraja local products. This finding confirms that the effectiveness of digital marketing engagement depends not only on reach or interaction, but also on its ability to create credibility and confidence.

Overall, the findings indicate that Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products is mainly shaped through a trust-based mechanism. Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement are important, but their roles are stronger when they are directed toward building Brand Trust. The results suggest that consumers do not purchase Toraja local products merely because they are culturally attractive or digitally visible. Instead, consumers are more likely to purchase when they trust that the product is authentic, reliable, and meaningfully connected to Toraja cultural identity.

These findings provide important managerial implications for Toraja local product entrepreneurs, MSMEs, cultural product producers, and digital marketers. First, cultural branding should be developed carefully by emphasizing authentic Toraja identity, local narratives, traditional motifs, product heritage, and production authenticity. Second, digital marketing engagement should focus on credibility, transparency, and meaningful interaction, not only promotional exposure. Third, businesses should strengthen Brand Trust through consistent product quality, clear product information, customer testimonials, seller responsiveness, and authentic cultural storytelling. In this way, Toraja local products can compete more effectively by combining cultural authenticity, digital engagement, and consumer trust.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides important insights into how Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement influence Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products through Brand Trust. Based on the analysis of 150 respondents, the findings show that Cultural Branding has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. This indicates that cultural identity, authenticity, local heritage, symbolic meaning, traditional motifs, and storytelling are important factors in strengthening consumer trust toward Toraja local product brands.

The findings also show that Digital Marketing Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Brand Trust. This result confirms that digital interaction, social media content, online storytelling, customer reviews, product visualization, and direct communication with consumers can increase consumer confidence in Toraja local products. When digital marketing activities are informative, consistent, interactive, and culturally meaningful, consumers are more likely to perceive the brand as credible and trustworthy.

Brand Trust was found to have a positive and significant effect on Consumer Purchase Intention. This result highlights the importance of trust as a key psychological mechanism in local product consumption. Consumers are more likely to develop purchase intention when they believe that Toraja local products are authentic, reliable, culturally meaningful, and supported by credible brand communication. In this context, trust reduces consumer uncertainty regarding product originality, quality consistency, seller reliability, and the authenticity of cultural claims.

However, this study found that Cultural Branding does not have a significant direct effect on Consumer Purchase Intention. This finding suggests that cultural identity alone may not be sufficient to directly encourage consumers to

purchase Toraja local products. Consumers may appreciate Toraja cultural symbols, traditional motifs, local stories, and product uniqueness, but appreciation does not automatically lead to purchase intention. Cultural Branding needs to be supported by Brand Trust before it can become a stronger driver of consumer purchase intention.

In addition, Digital Marketing Engagement does not have a significant direct effect on Consumer Purchase Intention. This result indicates that digital visibility, content interaction, likes, comments, shares, and online exposure do not automatically lead to purchase intention. Consumers may engage with digital content about Toraja local products, but such engagement may remain at the level of awareness or interest if it does not build trust. Therefore, Digital Marketing Engagement should not only focus on attracting attention, but also on strengthening credibility, transparency, and consumer confidence.

The mediation results confirm that Brand Trust mediates the relationship between Cultural Branding and Consumer Purchase Intention. This means that Cultural Branding contributes to purchase intention indirectly by first building consumer trust. Authentic cultural narratives, traditional product identity, local heritage, and meaningful symbols can increase purchase intention when consumers trust that the brand genuinely represents Toraja culture and provides reliable product quality.

Brand Trust also mediates the relationship between Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Purchase Intention. This finding shows that Digital Marketing Engagement becomes effective when it strengthens consumer trust. Digital content, visual storytelling, testimonials, product information, and social media interaction can encourage purchase intention when they create confidence in the brand. Therefore, Brand Trust functions as the main bridge that transforms cultural and digital marketing strategies into consumer purchase intention.

Theoretically, this study contributes to consumer behavior, cultural branding, digital marketing, and local product marketing literature by positioning Brand Trust as a central mediating mechanism. The findings show that Consumer Purchase Intention toward Toraja local products is not formed merely through cultural attractiveness or digital engagement, but through the trust generated by these strategies. This supports the argument that cultural meaning and digital interaction must be translated into credibility before they can influence purchase-related behavior.

Practically, the findings suggest that Toraja local product entrepreneurs, MSMEs, cultural product producers, and digital marketers should develop branding strategies that combine cultural authenticity and digital credibility. Cultural Branding should emphasize authentic Toraja identity, local craftsmanship, traditional motifs, product heritage, and meaningful storytelling. At the same time, Digital Marketing Engagement should be designed to provide transparent product information, customer testimonials, consistent visual identity, responsive communication, and credible narratives about product origin and quality.

Overall, this study concludes that Cultural Branding and Digital Marketing Engagement are important strategies for promoting Toraja local products, but their influence on Consumer Purchase Intention depends strongly on Brand Trust. Cultural identity and digital interaction may attract consumer attention, but trust determines whether consumers are willing to purchase. Therefore, businesses seeking to increase purchase intention toward Toraja local products should prioritize trust-building strategies by ensuring authenticity, transparency, product quality, and consistency between cultural claims and actual product value.

This study has several limitations. First, the research involved 150 respondents, so future studies may use a larger and more diverse sample to improve generalizability. Second, this study focused on Toraja local products in general, while future research may compare specific product categories such as Toraja coffee, woven products, handicrafts, traditional food, and cultural souvenirs. Third, this study examined Cultural Branding, Digital Marketing Engagement, Brand Trust, and Consumer Purchase Intention, while other relevant variables such as perceived authenticity, perceived value, destination image, local pride, consumer ethnocentrism, electronic word of mouth, and customer satisfaction were not included. Future research is encouraged to develop a broader model to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior toward culturally based local products.

5. REFERENCES

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