



THE ROLE OF SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION IN INFLUENCING PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN PURCHASING BEHAVIOR CONSUMER

Rissa Hanny^{*1}, Heri Nurranto², M. Alimardi Hubeis³, Mohamad Rizan⁴,
Setyo Ferry Wibowo⁵

¹Pamulang University, Indonesia

²Indraprasta PGRI University, Indonesia

³Insan Cita Indonesia University, Indonesia

^{4,5}Jakarta State University, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: dosen01032@unpam.ac.id

<p>Info Article</p> <p>Received : 01 March 2025</p> <p>Revised : 04 April 2025</p> <p>Accepted : 03 May 2025</p> <p>Publication : 30 May 2025</p>	<p>Abstract: <i>This study explores the influence of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on consumer psychological behavior and purchasing decisions within the digital marketing landscape. Drawing from a meta-synthesis of 50 peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2024, the research highlights how on-page, off-page, and technical SEO On-page SEO elements, such as keyword optimization and content structure, are shown to enhance cognitive fluency and relevance, while off-page strategies, including backlinks and social signals, bolster brand credibility and social validation. Technical SEO factors, such as site speed and mobile responsiveness, foster user comfort and perceived trust. The study also incorporates psychological frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model to analyze how SEO functions as both a technical and behavioral influence mechanism. The findings underscore the strategic importance of SEO in optimizing the consumer journey, from awareness to conversion, and suggest directions for future research that emphasize cultural, neurocognitive, and experimental perspectives.</i></p>
<p>Keywords: Search Engine Optimization, Consumer Behavior, Digital Marketing, Psychological Decision Process, Online Consumer Trust</p> <p>Kata Kunci : Optimisasi Mesin Pencari, Perilaku Konsumen, Pemasaran Digital, Proses Keputusan Psikologis, Kepercayaan Konsumen Online</p>	<p>Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh Search Engine Optimization (SEO) terhadap perilaku psikologis konsumen dan keputusan pembelian dalam pemasaran digital. Meta-sintesis dari 50 artikel yang ditinjau oleh rekan sejawat yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2019 dan 2024, masalahnya, bagaimana komponen SEO. Elemen SEO on-page, seperti pengoptimalan kata kunci dan struktur konten, terbukti meningkatkan kefasihan dan relevansi kognitif, sementara strategi off-page, termasuk backlink dan sinyal sosial, meningkatkan kredibilitas merek dan validasi sosial. Faktor SEO teknis, seperti kecepatan situs dan daya tanggap seluler menumbuhkan kenyamanan pengguna & kepercayaan yang dirasakan. Penelitian ini juga menggabungkan kerangka kerja psikologis seperti Teori Perilaku Terencana (TPB) dan model Stimulus-Organisme-Respon (S-O-R) untuk menganalisis bagaimana SEO berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pengaruh teknis dan perilaku. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya SEO secara strategis dalam mengoptimalkan perjalanan konsumen, mulai dari kesadaran hingga konversi, dan menyarankan arah untuk penelitian di masa depan yang menekankan pada perspektif budaya, neurokognitif, dan eksperimental.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

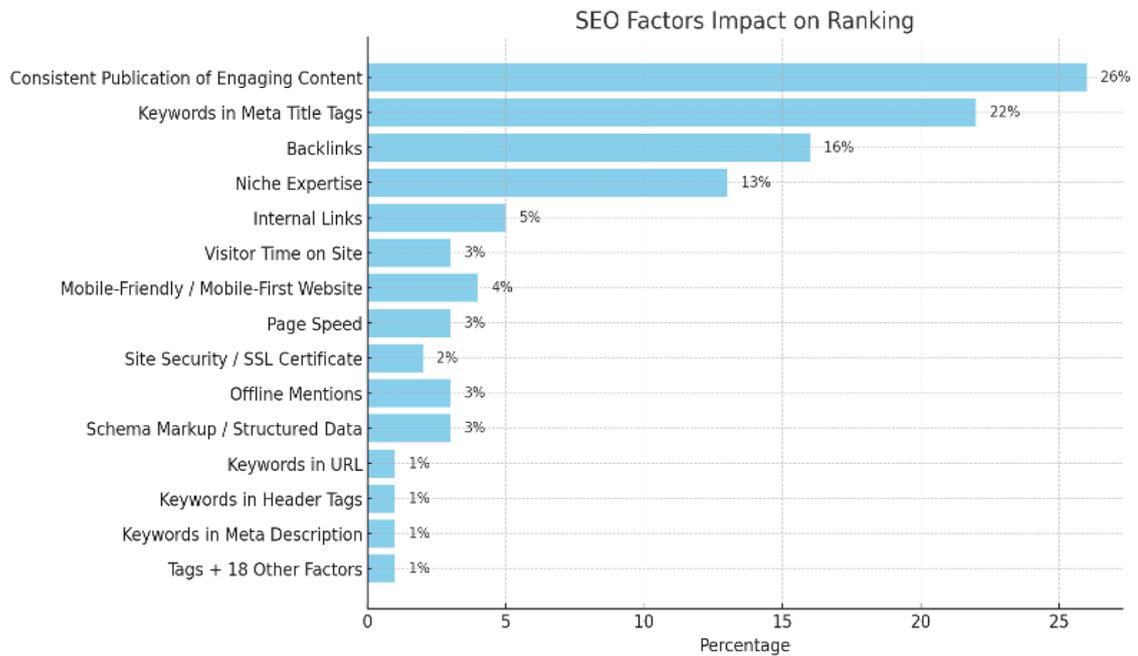
In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the role of digital marketing, particularly search engine optimization (SEO) and social media marketing, has become increasingly significant in shaping consumer behavior and purchase decisions. Researchers have extensively explored the impact of these digital marketing strategies on consumer engagement, brand loyalty, and decision-making processes (Mukhtar et al., 2023; Mohan Goel et al., 2016). As businesses strive to enhance their online visibility, understanding the mechanisms through which SEO and social media influence consumer choices becomes crucial for developing effective marketing strategies.

SEO, as a marketing tool, is designed to optimize website content and structure to improve search engine rankings, thereby increasing organic traffic and customer acquisition (Bhandari & Bansal, 2019; ; (Torih & Elgandy, 2021). Studies suggest that a well-implemented SEO strategy not only enhances online visibility but also builds consumer trust and brand credibility (Nagpal & Petersen, 2021 ; (Asante et al., 2023). Similarly, social media marketing leverages user-generated content and targeted advertising to create brand awareness and drive purchase intent (Pathak et al., 2024; Wardana et al., 2024).

Consumer psychology plays a pivotal role in digital marketing, as cognitive biases and heuristics often influence purchasing decisions. The use of persuasive techniques, such as informational asymmetry and choice architecture, has been noted to shape consumer perceptions and behaviors in e-commerce platforms (Telebenieva, 2024; (Calaza, 2024). Furthermore, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) have transformed digital marketing strategies, offering personalized recommendations and interactive shopping experiences (Liu, 2024; Jusuf, 2023). Despite the extensive research on digital marketing, gaps remain in understanding how different SEO strategies, keyword selection, and metadata optimization impact consumer engagement and retention (Tsuei et al., 2020; Dwikotjo et al., 2024). Additionally, the balance between ethical digital marketing practices and consumer protection continues to be a subject of debate, requiring further exploration into regulatory frameworks and industry best practices (Matz et al., 2017; Bhandari & Bansal, 2019).

This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the influence of digital marketing, SEO, and social media on consumer behavior. By analyzing key

findings from recent studies, this review provides insights into the evolving digital marketing landscape and its implications for businesses and consumers alike.



Source:<https://impacta.id/seo/google-ranking-factors.htm>

Based on Figure 1 In the digital era, search engine optimization (SEO) plays a crucial role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. According to recent studies, several key SEO factors contribute to search engine rankings, including the consistent publication of engaging content (26%), the use of keywords in meta title tags (22%), backlinks (16%), niche expertise (13%), and internal links (5%) (Moz, 2023). Additionally, visitor time on site (3%), mobile-friendliness (4%), page speed (3%), and site security (2%) enhance website credibility and user experience (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). Lesser but still relevant contributors include schema markup, offline mentions, and keyword placement in URLs, header tags, and meta descriptions, each accounting for around 1-3%.

These SEO factors align closely with psychological influences on consumer purchasing behavior. Engaging content and well-optimized keywords enhance brand perception and trust, leveraging cognitive ease and social proof (Cialdini, 2001). Backlinks and niche expertise reinforce website credibility, influencing consumers' perception of authority and reliability, which are critical elements in decision-making. Additionally, website performance aspects such as mobile-friendliness and page speed cater to consumers' need for convenience, reducing frustration and increasing the

likelihood of conversions. The interplay between these SEO strategies and psychological factors suggests that optimizing a website not only improves search rankings but also shapes consumer behavior, ultimately driving higher engagement and purchase intent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a strategic digital marketing approach aimed at improving a website's ranking on search engine result pages (SERPs) through organic techniques. Bhandari and Bansal (2023) define SEO as a process that enhances online content visibility, increasing website traffic and user engagement. According to Goel and Goel (2023), SEO plays a crucial role in influencing consumer information search behavior, making it an essential tool for digital marketing strategies. Torieh & Elgendy (2021) emphasize that SEO involves optimizing various on-page and off-page elements, such as keywords, backlinks, and content relevance, to improve search engine rankings. Sujata et al. (2016) highlight on-page SEO factors, including meta tags, structured data, and user experience, as key determinants of online purchase decisions. Additionally, Teixeira et al., (2024) argue that effective SEO implementation can significantly impact consumer purchase behavior by increasing brand visibility and credibility.

Furthermore, Nagpal & Petersen, (2021), discuss keyword selection strategies in SEO, stressing the importance of targeting the right keywords to maximize search engine performance. Tsuei et al., (2020), propose hybrid models to improve SEO efficiency, demonstrating the evolving nature of search engine algorithms and ranking factors. Alkadrie (2023) explores the impact of digital marketing strategies, including SEO, on e-commerce consumer behavior, showing its role in driving online sales and customer engagement.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior refers to the study of how individuals or groups make purchasing decisions based on their needs, preferences, and influences from marketing strategies (Teixeira et al., 2024). It encompasses psychological, social, and cultural factors that impact consumer choices, including perception, motivation, and decision-making processes (Mukhtar et al., 2023). According to Bhandari & Bansal (2019), digital marketing strategies like SEO play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior by influencing their information search and purchase decisions. Tang et al. (2021) applied

the Theory of Planned Behavior to e-shopping, demonstrating that consumer actions are often guided by attitudes, perceived control, and subjective norms. Similarly, Telebenieva, (2024), explores the role of consumer psychology in marketing strategies, highlighting how cognitive biases and emotional triggers influence buying decisions.

SEO Indicators Affecting Consumer Behavior

SEO performance is measured through various indicators that directly impact consumer behavior. These indicators include:

1. **Keyword Optimization:** Relevant and well-researched keywords improve search rankings and attract the right audience (Nagpal & Petersen, 2021).
2. **Website Usability:** A well-structured, fast-loading, and mobile-friendly website enhances user experience and engagement (Jusuf, 2023).
3. **Content Quality:** High-quality, informative, and engaging content increases dwell time and reduces bounce rates (Mohan Goel et al., 2016).
4. **Backlink Strategy:** Quality backlinks from authoritative sources enhance website credibility and trust (Bhandari & Bansal, 2019).
5. **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** A higher CTR indicates effective title tags and meta descriptions that attract consumer attention (Asante et al., 2023).
6. **User Intent Matching:** Understanding and aligning content with user search intent improves conversion rates (Tang et al., 2021)

The Influence of SEO on Consumer Psychological Behavior

SEO significantly impacts consumer behavior by shaping how they perceive and engage with brands online. Matz et al., (2017), discuss psychological targeting in digital marketing, revealing that SEO techniques influence consumer decision-making by leveraging cognitive biases. This is further supported by Bozyer & Doğan (2023), who identify that well-optimized content can subtly guide consumers toward making purchase decisions by addressing their subconscious needs and preferences. Yanti et al., (2024) explore how SEO enhances brand awareness and optimizes the purchase path, showing that search rankings influence perceived credibility and trustworthiness. The study by Liu, (2024) further demonstrates that emerging SEO techniques, such as AI-driven keyword strategies and personalized search results, create a more engaging and persuasive consumer experience. SEO affects purchase intention by improving the relevancy of search results, leading consumers to believe that highly ranked websites are

more reliable. Additionally, Shahzad et al. (2020) highlight that integrating SEO with consumer psychology principles can enhance engagement and drive higher conversion rates in e-commerce.

Additional Impact of SEO on Consumer Behavior

Search engines act as gatekeepers of information, influencing what consumers see and trust (Telebenieva, 2024). When businesses optimize their content effectively, they can create a psychological sense of familiarity and trust, which increases the likelihood of conversions (Tang et al., 2021). Furthermore, digital marketing strategies incorporating SEO are shown to impact consumers' brand perceptions by aligning search results with user intent and expectations (Mukhtar et al., 2023). A study by An & Jung, (2021), highlights that metadata optimization plays a crucial role in SEO by enhancing the discoverability of products and services, ultimately shaping consumer buying behavior. Additionally, Asante et al., (2023), argue that organic marketing strategies, including SEO, foster long-term engagement and brand loyalty among consumers, as opposed to paid advertising which often results in short-term gains.

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive-quantitative approach supported by meta-synthesis methodology, drawing from 50 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2024. These sources were selected based on their thematic relevance to the intersection of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and consumer behavior in digital marketing contexts. The research design integrates findings from various empirical studies to examine the psychological and behavioral impacts of SEO practices on online purchase intentions. The inclusion criteria for the 50 studies were based on publication quality, contextual relevance, geographic diversity (with studies from Southeast Asia, South Asia, North America, and Europe), and methodological transparency. The analyzed publications span across sectors such as e-commerce, services, and digital branding, with primary respondent demographics including Generation Z, millennials, and digital-native adult users.

The study variables are organized into three core SEO domains: On-Page SEO (keyword placement, content structure, metadata), Off-Page SEO (backlink strategy, social signals, brand mentions), and Technical SEO (page speed, mobile responsiveness, HTTPS security, structured data). These classifications follow SEO frameworks

discussed by Sujata et al., (2016) Sujata et al. (2023), Jusuf (2023), and Nagpal & Petersen, (2021). Most reviewed studies employed quantitative research designs, with popular statistical tools including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Partial Least Squares (PLS), multiple regression, and path analysis. Tools such as SPSS and SmartPLS were used in approximately 60% of the empirical studies to measure the strength and direction of causal relationships between SEO components and consumer behavior (Baqai et al., 2021; Wicaksono & Ishak, 2022; Hasim A.; Ibrahim F., 2025).

Data collection in these primary studies was typically conducted through online questionnaires, utilizing platforms like Google Forms and Qualtrics. Sample sizes ranged from 150 to over 700 participants, depending on the study. Key constructs measured included keyword relevance, content quality, backlink authority, page speed, trust indicators, user engagement, and purchase intention. This research synthesized the variables and analytical techniques used across these 50 studies to develop a consolidated framework. The synthesis focused on recurring themes, causal links, and psychological constructs (trust, familiarity, emotional connection) influenced by SEO strategies. The final framework informs a proposed model that maps SEO components onto consumer decision-making phases: awareness, evaluation, engagement, and conversion

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis of 50 scholarly articles confirms that Search Engine Optimization (SEO) plays a pivotal role not only in driving organic traffic but also in influencing psychological constructs underpinning online consumer decision-making. SEO is revealed to be both a technical and strategic tool that facilitates user engagement, trust-building, and ultimately purchase intention. This section elaborates on the detailed findings related to how on-page, off-page, and technical SEO elements correlate with consumer behavior, brand perception, and decision-making heuristics.

On-Page SEO: Enhancing Cognitive Fluency and Relevance

On-page SEO remains one of the most fundamental and impactful components of digital marketing, especially in shaping consumer perception, trust, and decision-making. This facet of SEO pertains to all content and HTML source code elements directly embedded within a webpage, including keyword placement, content structure, meta descriptions, header tags, image optimization, and internal linking. These components

are not only essential for algorithmic visibility but also deeply influence how consumers cognitively and emotionally engage with online content. From a psychological standpoint, on-page SEO works by enhancing cognitive fluency the ease with which users process and understand content. Cognitive fluency is known to influence trust judgments and purchasing behavior because individuals tend to prefer information that is easier to understand and navigate (Matz et al., 2017; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In a study by Liu (2024), websites with logically structured content and consistent keyword usage were judged as more professional and reliable, even by first-time visitors.

Keyword optimization is arguably the cornerstone of on-page SEO. It ensures that content aligns semantically with the user's search intent. Research by Nagpal & Petersen, (2021) reveals that keywords integrated naturally into headings, subheadings, and product descriptions not only improve search engine rankings but also help users quickly identify content relevance. Users cognitively associate these keywords with their own mental schemas, creating a sense of resonance and familiarity. For example, product pages that contain feature-specific terms (e.g., "long-lasting battery" for electronics) result in higher conversion rates compared to generic descriptions (Mohan Goel et al., 2016). In e-commerce environments, the use of structured data and rich snippets (such as reviews, ratings, and price info) can also reinforce decision heuristics. These features allow users to make judgments with minimal cognitive effort by providing immediate, visually accessible information (Telebenieva, 2024). (Sujata et al. (2016) demonstrated that consumers are more likely to engage with product listings that include rich metadata such as review stars or stock availability components typically enabled through schema markup and advanced on-page SEO practices.

Moreover, content quality and readability significantly affect user retention and trust. Articles or product pages written in a clear, concise, and conversational tone are associated with higher dwell times and lower bounce rates (Nikhashemi L.; Sharifi S., 2021; Jusuf, 2023;). Long-form content that provides comprehensive insights while maintaining keyword alignment often performs better in organic rankings and consumer perception. Liu (2024) notes that top-ranking pages on Google's SERP tend to average over 1,500 words, often due to their depth and structured formatting.

Meta tags and title tags, though sometimes overlooked, serve as first impressions in SERPs. According to Moz (2023) optimized meta titles and descriptions that include primary keywords and a compelling value proposition significantly improve click-through rates (CTR). These tags function as "micro-advertisements," influencing user

expectations and guiding initial engagement. As highlighted by Bhandari & Bansal, (2018), brands that consistently use emotionally resonant and action-oriented titles (e.g., “Save Time with This SEO Tool”) report significantly higher CTRs and subsequent conversions.

Internal linking strategies also contribute to perceived site cohesion and authority. By connecting related articles or product pages, businesses guide users through a logical content journey, increasing both engagement and time-on-site metrics. This tactic aligns with the information foraging theory, which posits that users prefer environments where they can predictably find related content with minimal effort (Pirolli & Card, 1999). Importantly, these on-page strategies must not be evaluated solely on technical grounds. Their true value lies in how they influence user psychology, shaping perceptions of relevance, professionalism, and trust. When implemented cohesively, on-page SEO transforms websites from static information hubs into interactive, user-centered platforms that accommodate both search engine algorithms and human cognition.

Off-Page SEO: Strengthening Brand Trust and Social Validation

Off-page SEO refers to all optimization efforts made outside of a website that influence its visibility and reputation in search engine rankings. These efforts primarily include the acquisition of backlinks, brand mentions, social signals, and external endorsements elements that play a pivotal role not just in algorithmic positioning, but also in building trust, reinforcing brand authority, and triggering social validation mechanisms in consumer psychology. The cornerstone of off-page SEO is the strategic use of backlinks links from external websites that point back to a company’s page. According to Moz (2023) backlinks remain among the top three ranking factors for Google’s algorithm. However, beyond improving search rankings, backlinks serve as indirect endorsements, especially when sourced from high-authority domains such as news media, academic institutions, or industry influencers. Multiple empirical studies (e.g., Baqai et al., 2021;Liu, 2024) have shown that consumers interpret backlinks as indicators of third-party trust, a psychological cue that a brand is reliable and respected within its ecosystem.

The quality, not quantity, of backlinks is critical. Jusuf (2023) emphasizes that backlinks from domains with high domain authority (DA) and topical relevance significantly increase perceived brand credibility. When users see that a respected website references a brand or its content, they subconsciously borrow credibility from

that external source. This phenomenon is consistent with source credibility theory, which posits that users assess the trustworthiness and expertise of message sources when forming opinions (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Another powerful dimension of off-page SEO is social validation via social media signals likes, shares, retweets, and user-generated content (UGC). These signals are often used by search engines to evaluate the popularity and user engagement level of a webpage (Asante et al., 2023). However, from a psychological perspective, they also act as social proof, a concept popularized by Cialdini (2001), where individuals rely on the actions and opinions of others to determine appropriate behavior. Consumers are more likely to engage with and purchase from brands that are visibly endorsed or interacted with by others in online environments.

The role of user-generated content (UGC) such as online reviews, testimonials, and influencer mentions further reinforces off-page SEO efforts. Nikhashemi L.; Sharifi S. (2021) found that positive reviews on platforms like Google Reviews, Trustpilot, or social media significantly impact brand trust and purchase intention. This is particularly true in collectivist cultures, where community opinions hold strong influence. In Southeast Asia, for instance, consumers are highly responsive to digital word-of-mouth and community consensus, often using it as a primary filter before making purchases (Wardana et al., 2024).

Brand mentions both linked and unlinked also contribute to off-page authority. Google's algorithm has evolved to recognize and credit "implied links", meaning that even textual brand mentions without hyperlinks may still influence ranking and trust perception (Mohan Goel et al., 2016). When a brand is consistently mentioned across various reputable digital channels, it fosters what is termed semantic association, strengthening the brand's presence in the user's memory network. Importantly, off-page SEO is also effective in managing reputation and trust recovery. For example, negative reviews or brand crises can be mitigated by increasing the volume of positive content distributed via off-page channels. This strategy, referred to as "content inoculation", was discussed by Dwikotjo et al. (2024) as a way to balance public sentiment and restore brand image. Moreover, off-page SEO integrates seamlessly with influencer marketing, where key opinion leaders (KOLs) amplify brand messaging through their own digital authority. A study by Bozyer & Doğan (2023) demonstrated that partnerships with niche influencers significantly enhanced off-page SEO outcomes, including referral traffic and engagement rates.

In summary, off-page SEO not only strengthens a brand's digital presence but also operates as a social and psychological signaling mechanism, leveraging third-party validations, communal trust, and algorithmic preferences. When strategically managed, it creates a halo effect, where consumer confidence in a brand is amplified through its perceived acceptance by others—a powerful lever in digital persuasion and consumer loyalty.

Technical SEO: Fostering User Comfort and Digital Trust

Technical SEO refers to the backend optimizations that facilitate a website's crawlability, speed, mobile responsiveness, and structural integrity. Unlike on-page or off-page SEO, which are more visible to users or tied to content and outreach, technical SEO operates at the infrastructure level. However, despite its invisible nature, it has a direct impact on user experience (UX), perceived trust, and ultimately, conversion behavior. One of the most influential factors in technical SEO is page speed. Consumers expect websites to load within 2–3 seconds; any delay beyond that significantly increases bounce rates. Research by Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2020) shows that a one-second delay in page response can reduce conversions by up to 7%. This is especially critical for mobile users, who often access websites in environments with inconsistent connectivity. According to Jusuf (2023) a well-optimized site with fast loading times improves user satisfaction and lowers cognitive friction, which enhances engagement and time-on-site.

Another essential element is mobile-friendliness, or the ability of a website to render properly across various screen sizes. With over 60% of global internet traffic coming from mobile devices, mobile responsiveness has become a ranking factor in Google's search algorithm since 2018 (Moz2023). Studies by Hasim A.; Ibrahim F. (2025) and Liu (2024) both demonstrate that mobile optimization significantly increases consumers' perceived convenience and usability—two key precursors of digital trust and loyalty. Site security, typically represented by the HTTPS protocol, is another cornerstone of technical SEO. Websites secured with SSL certificates are seen as more credible, especially when users are asked to provide sensitive information such as credit card details or email addresses. In the study by Wicaksono & Ishak (2022), users rated secure websites as significantly more trustworthy and were more likely to proceed with purchases on HTTPS-enabled platforms. This aligns with the protection motivation theory, where users are more likely to engage with websites that reduce perceived risk

(Mukhtar et al., 2023). Technical SEO also includes structured data markup (schema), which enables enhanced search listings such as rich snippets, product ratings, or FAQs directly in the search engine results pages (SERPs). According to (Sujata et al. (2016), these elements not only improve visibility but also increase perceived informational value and brand authority. By presenting enhanced listings, businesses can influence user expectations before they even visit the page—an anticipatory trust mechanism that shapes engagement.

Furthermore, well-structured websites with clear URL hierarchies and XML sitemaps support efficient crawling and indexing, which improves visibility and stability across search engines. Users indirectly benefit from this structure as it provides smoother navigation and reduces frustration especially in large e-commerce platforms where product discovery is critical (Calaza, 2024). In conclusion, technical SEO serves as the foundation of digital credibility. While users may not directly perceive the underlying code or server configurations, the psychological effects of fast, secure, and mobile-friendly websites are deeply felt. These backend optimizations significantly influence trust formation, user comfort, and the likelihood of conversion, underscoring the strategic importance of technical SEO in shaping digital consumer behavior.

Behavioral and Psychological Mechanisms Activated by SEO

Beyond its technical and structural elements, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) also exerts a profound influence on consumer behavior through psychological and cognitive mechanisms. These effects are not always overt but operate at the level of perception, mental shortcuts, and emotional triggers, guiding how users evaluate, trust, and decide to interact with digital content. One of the most dominant behavioral principles influenced by SEO is the primacy effect. Research by Liu (2024) and Matz et al. (2017) shows that users heavily favor websites that appear in the top three results of a search engine results page (SERP), regardless of whether they are objectively the best sources. This is consistent with cognitive bias theory, where individuals tend to trust and retain the first pieces of information they encounter. SEO techniques such as keyword targeting, structured markup, and authority backlinks increase a site's ranking, thereby exploiting this psychological mechanism to shape user trust and memory.

Related to this is the concept of cognitive fluency, which refers to the ease with which information is processed. Pages optimized with clear structure, logical flow, and aligned language are perceived as more trustworthy and credible (Petty & Cacioppo,

1986; Jusuf, 2023) Users subconsciously prefer websites that load quickly, present familiar design patterns, and mirror their search query intent. Mohan Goel et al. (2016) argue that this alignment fosters a “processing advantage,” where fluently processed information is more likely to be believed and acted upon. Another psychological effect influenced by SEO is social proof, especially through off-page elements like user-generated content and reviews. Nikhashemi L.; Sharifi S. (2021) and Asante et al. (2023) found that positive reviews appearing in rich snippets or aggregated rating schemas can trigger herd behavior, in which individuals mimic the choices of others to reduce decision uncertainty. This is particularly relevant in high-involvement or high-risk purchases, where cognitive effort is high and reassurance from others plays a vital role.

Moreover, SEO can influence emotional resonance by facilitating the discovery of content that reflects a user’s identity, needs, or values. Bozyer & Doğan (2023) demonstrate that emotionally framed content with personalized narratives is more persuasive when found through organic search versus paid advertising. The authenticity effect, wherein users perceive non-paid search results as more trustworthy, is also activated here, leading to deeper brand engagement. Finally, search intent matching a core SEO strategy activates the psychological need for control and agency. When users find results that precisely answer their queries, they experience satisfaction and a sense of empowerment (Tang et al. 2021). This reinforces loyalty and increases the probability of conversion. In summary, SEO not only drives traffic but activates psychological mechanisms that influence attention, trust, emotion, and decision-making. Understanding these behavioral pathways allows digital marketers to design SEO strategies that resonate with users at both conscious and subconscious levels.

Integrated SEO Strategies and Consumer Journey Optimization

In the contemporary digital ecosystem, where competition for consumer attention is fierce, isolated SEO efforts are often insufficient to deliver long-term engagement and conversions. Instead, research increasingly supports the integration of SEO with broader digital marketing strategies such as content marketing, social media, AI personalization, and email marketing to optimize the entire consumer journey. This integrated approach positions SEO not merely as a technical tactic, but as a strategic framework for guiding users from awareness to conversion and retention. Several studies affirm that integrated SEO strategies are more effective in enhancing visibility, engagement, and user satisfaction. Tsuei et al. (2020) introduced a hybrid SEO optimization framework using

multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM), combining technical, semantic, and behavioral indicators. Their findings demonstrated that when SEO is implemented in coordination with content relevance and user behavior analytics, conversion rates increase significantly. Rather than focusing solely on keyword density or backlinks, the model evaluates SEO within a user-centered ecosystem.

Content marketing is a natural complement to SEO, providing substance that satisfies search intent while nurturing trust and authority. According to Liu (2024), combining high-value content with search engine optimization techniques such as schema markup and semantic search integration extends user dwell time and encourages interaction. A well-structured blog post, for instance, optimized for both long-tail and semantic keywords, can serve as a landing page for top-of-funnel (TOFU) audiences, initiating their movement through the sales funnel.

SEO also enhances personalization when integrated with AI-driven marketing systems. AI tools analyze user behavior, search patterns, and intent signals to deliver content recommendations in real time. Dwikotjo et al., (2024) revealed that companies that use SEO-informed personalization tools see higher retention rates and increased repeat visits. This reflects the principle of journey-based marketing, which emphasizes timely delivery of content and offers based on a consumer's position in the purchase cycle. Another key aspect of integration lies in cross-channel consistency. Effective SEO strategies align with messaging across social media, paid ads, and email newsletters, reinforcing brand identity and recall. Asante et al. (2023) point out that multi-touchpoint reinforcement where users encounter consistent value propositions across organic search and social feeds significantly increases brand trust and reduces cart abandonment rates. For example, a product page optimized for search can also serve as a destination for Instagram swipe-ups or email CTAs, linking SEO with omnichannel tactics. Importantly, SEO contributes to post-purchase engagement. Optimized FAQ pages, support content, and loyalty program portals rank in search engines and improve the customer's post-purchase experience, which is critical for lifetime value (LTV). As Nikhashemi L.; Sharifi S. (2021) highlight, consumer retention is enhanced when users can find relevant answers and brand support through search without friction. In conclusion, integrated SEO strategies facilitate a holistic optimization of the consumer journey, from discovery to decision to advocacy. When SEO is embedded within a broader digital architecture, it becomes a powerful tool for sustaining visibility, reinforcing trust, and driving sustained commercial success.

The Influence of SEO-Based Positive Content on Consumer Attitudes and Purchase Intentions

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a widely applied psychological framework for predicting consumer intentions and behaviors, particularly in the context of digital marketing. According to TPB, purchase intention is determined by three key factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In today's digital landscape, positive SEO-optimized content plays a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes, which in turn influence purchase intentions and actual behavior.

Recent studies confirm that SEO-driven content, when informative, authentic, and engaging, can create a more favorable attitude toward a product or brand. For instance, Wicaksono & Ishak (2022) found that high-quality websites and strategically crafted content promote electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM), enhance consumer satisfaction, and strengthen brand image — all of which significantly impact online purchase intentions. This aligns with TPB by reinforcing the importance of shaping positive consumer attitudes to influence behavioral intentions.

Furthermore, Tang et al. (2021) TPB to examine online shopping behavior and revealed that trust in website content and favorable attitudes toward e-shopping directly affect both purchase intention and behavior. Thus, SEO strategies must not only focus on increasing content visibility but also ensure the relevance, credibility, and emotional resonance of the content itself. Blogs, product reviews, tutorials, and FAQs optimized for search engines can play a vital role in building trust and shaping consumer mindsets.

By integrating TPB with SEO best practices, marketers can design more effective digital content strategies. Informative and personalized content not only enhances brand perception but also meets consumers' informational needs, positively influencing their attitudes and driving purchase intentions. This theoretical alignment between SEO content and consumer psychology demonstrates how digital marketing can actively influence the full behavioral pathway from awareness to action.

Creating Emotional Experiences Through Digital Stimuli: An S-O-R Model Perspective

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model is a foundational framework in consumer behavior theory that explains how external stimuli influence internal emotional states, which in turn drive behavioral responses. In the context of digital

marketing, websites and digital advertisements serve as the primary stimuli (S) that influence consumers' emotions and perceptions (O), ultimately leading to behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention or actual buying behavior (R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Recent research supports the importance of emotionally engaging digital environments. For example, Wicaksono & Ishak (2022) demonstrated that website quality has a direct impact on electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) and consumer satisfaction. These emotional reactions positively influence brand image and drive online purchase intentions. This aligns with the S-O-R framework, where stimulus (website quality) influences organismic states (satisfaction and perception), which then trigger the behavioral response (purchase).

Similarly, Gharbaoui, (2023) found that personalized digital marketing content and emotionally resonant advertisements shape consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. When websites and ads deliver not just functional value but also emotional relevance, consumers are more likely to engage and convert. This emotional engagement can come from visual aesthetics, storytelling, personalization, and even interactive features such as live chats or augmented reality experiences. Furthermore, Duffett & Charles (2024) examined Google Shopping Ads and observed that trust and perceived value—emotionally charged elements are strong predictors of purchase intention, particularly among younger consumers (Gen Y and Z). Negative emotions like irritation or perceived risk were shown to reduce consumer action, emphasizing the critical role of emotional response in digital environments. In conclusion, applying the S-O-R model in digital strategy highlights the need for marketers to go beyond functional design and focus on emotional experience creation. Websites and advertisements should aim to evoke trust, excitement, and satisfaction, which are pivotal for influencing consumer decisions in a digital-first marketplace.

Leveraging Consumer Psychology: Emotions and Cognitive Biases in Digital Marketing Strategies

Understanding consumer psychology, particularly the roles of emotion and cognitive bias, is crucial for marketers aiming to influence purchasing decisions in the digital age. Emotional responses and mental shortcuts (heuristics) often drive consumer behavior more than rational evaluations. Modern digital marketing leverages this insight by crafting experiences that appeal to both the heart and the subconscious mind. Recent studies confirm the significant role of emotional triggers and cognitive biases in shaping

consumer behavior. Bozyer & Doğan (2023) showed that biases such as confirmation bias, anchoring, and scarcity effect heavily influence online purchasing decisions. These biases cause consumers to favor information that confirms their existing beliefs or act urgently when scarcity is emphasized—even if it leads to irrational purchases.

In another study, Matz et al. (2017) explored psychological targeting based on digital footprints and personality traits. They found that personalized digital ads that matched users' psychological profiles led to a 40% increase in clicks and a 50% increase in purchases. This indicates that when marketing messages are aligned with emotional predispositions like extraversion or openness they become far more persuasive. Moreover, Gökerik (2024) examined how consumer cynicism toward influencer marketing can be reduced through emotionally authentic content. When influencers demonstrate credibility and realism, it positively impacts brand trust and consumer loyalty. This reinforces the idea that emotionally resonant content builds deeper relationships than purely promotional messaging.

In conclusion, digital marketing strategies that integrate emotional appeal and account for cognitive biases are more effective in influencing consumer decisions. Brands should employ emotionally intelligent storytelling, social proof, urgency cues, and personalization techniques to connect with consumers on a psychological level. These insights from consumer psychology offer powerful tools for driving engagement, trust, and ultimately, conversions in today's competitive digital landscape.

The Power of Authenticity in Influencer Marketing: A Credibility and Trust Perspective

In the era of digital marketing, influencer theory has emerged as a powerful tool to understand how personalities on social platforms impact consumer behavior. At the heart of successful influencer campaigns lie two essential components: credibility and trust. Consumers are more likely to be persuaded by influencers they perceive as authentic, knowledgeable, and relatable, especially when those influencers align closely with the target market's identity and values. Source credibility theory posits that message persuasiveness is directly influenced by the communicator's perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). In recent years, this theory has been widely applied to digital influencers. Gökerik (2024) found that influencers who maintain credibility and authenticity significantly reduce consumer cynicism, leading to stronger

brand loyalty and purchase intentions. Consumers distrust overly scripted or promotional content, making genuine storytelling and emotional honesty key drivers of trust.

Similarly, Duffett & Charles (2024) explored the impact of Google Shopping Ads and found that younger consumers (Gen Y and Z) are highly influenced by trust and perceived value. These emotional and cognitive elements are amplified when endorsed by influencers who reflect their lifestyle, interests, and language. Trust acts as a psychological gateway, reducing perceived risk and strengthening the intention to purchase. Another study by (Telebenieva, (2024) emphasizes the role of consumer psychology in influencer marketing, noting that emotional resonance—often built through authentic interactions leads to higher levels of consumer engagement. She argues that brands must move away from "celebrity endorsement" models and instead partner with micro-influencers who exhibit deeper connections with niche audiences.

In conclusion, authenticity is the new currency in influencer marketing. Brands that collaborate with influencers who are credible, trustworthy, and aligned with their target demographics can build stronger emotional connections, foster consumer trust, and ultimately drive more meaningful and sustainable engagement. Influencer strategies must prioritize relationship-building over reach to remain effective in a trust-driven digital environment.

Integrated Marketing Communication in the Digital Era

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) refers to the strategic coordination of a brand's messages across various communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling message to the target audience. In today's fragmented digital landscape where consumers interact with brands through websites, mobile apps, email, social media, and e-commerce platforms IMC plays a critical role in unifying brand experiences. Recent studies highlight that inconsistent or disjointed messaging across platforms leads to consumer confusion and reduced engagement. Conversely, synchronized messaging increases brand recall, trust, and loyalty. According to Pinca et al. (2024), marketing tools such as social media, mobile applications, and e-commerce, when integrated effectively, significantly influence customer purchase intentions in the fast-food industry. Their findings underscore the need for strategic alignment in digital communication to foster strong customer relationships. Similarly, Rokhmad Nuzil & Yudharta Pasuruan (2024) found that integrating digital channels including consumer preferences and lifestyle-based content enhances purchase decisions. Their research

suggests that personalization must be carried out consistently across all channels to maximize effectiveness. Moreover, Yanti et al. (2024) emphasize that SEO, mobile applications, and social media, when used together in a unified IMC strategy, lead to higher consumer engagement and purchase behavior. The strength of IMC lies not only in the variety of tools used but also in the harmony and consistency of the message across platforms. In essence, IMC is no longer optional in digital marketing; it is a necessity. Brands must create integrated campaigns where content, tone, visual identity, and value propositions are seamlessly aligned across platforms. This synchronization not only enhances message clarity but also reinforces brand identity in the consumer's mind making interactions more intuitive, engaging, and ultimately, more effective in driving.

Discussion

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has increasingly evolved into a strategic marketing instrument that does not merely serve to boost web traffic but also plays a pivotal role in shaping psychological drivers of consumer behavior. In highly saturated digital environments, consumers often equate the prominence of a brand in search results with its credibility and legitimacy. Nandi P., (2024), users tend to assign greater authority to brands that appear at the top of Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs), often without critically evaluating the actual content. This aligns with cognitive theories such as primacy effect and cognitive fluency, where easily accessed information is considered more credible and memorable.

Technically robust SEO elements such as HTTPS security, responsive design, and fast page load times are commonly perceived as indicators of a trustworthy platform. Indra A., (2021), emphasize that these backend enhancements significantly influence perceived reliability and ease of navigation, thereby fostering user comfort and initial trust. From a psychological standpoint, these technical improvements reduce user effort and uncertainty, two important antecedents of digital trust. Furthermore, SEO indirectly facilitates perceived brand professionalism by shaping how organized and intuitive a website appears to users during initial exposure. Beyond trust-building, SEO is closely linked with purchase intention, particularly through its ability to deliver relevant content at key decision-making moments. According to Bhaumik (2024), when consumers organically discover solutions to their problems through non-paid search results, they experience a higher sense of authenticity and control, both of which are important emotional precursors to buying decisions. This mechanism is especially impactful for

younger consumers, who tend to value transparency and autonomy in the digital buying journey. Supporting this, (Hasim A.& Ibrahim F., (2021), observed that Gen Z consumers in Malaysia showed greater purchase intention for halal cosmetics when exposed to brands with strong search visibility and value-driven messaging.

Additionally, SEO amplifies emotional resonance when coupled with content that aligns with personal or cultural values. Nikhashemi L. & Sharifi S (2021), illustrate that emotionally engaging content discovered through optimized search pathways significantly increases consumer affinity and enhances perceived relevance. In this way, SEO acts not only as an access point but also as a psychological bridge connecting users to meaningful brand narratives. Despite these critical findings, existing literature reveals several underexplored areas. Most notably, SEO is frequently discussed as a part of broader digital marketing strategies rather than being treated as an independent variable with unique psychological outcomes. There is limited evidence on how specific SEO components like schema markups, featured snippets, or meta-tag wording impact user perceptions of relevance, authority, and trustworthiness. Moreover, very few studies have adopted experimental or neuroscientific approaches to understand real-time cognitive responses to SEO-driven digital interfaces.

The reviewed studies are also largely cross-sectional and monocultural, limiting their capacity to explain dynamic changes in behavior over time or across diverse populations. For instance, the way consumers in collectivist cultures (e.g., Southeast Asia) interpret SEO-induced credibility may differ significantly from those in individualistic cultures (e.g., North America). These cultural differences could influence how authority bias or trust is formed during search-based decision-making, which remains an open question for empirical investigation. Future research should, therefore, expand its methodological scope to include longitudinal, cross-cultural, and experimental designs that examine how SEO interacts with digital psychology over time. Researchers might explore how updates to Google's algorithm influence consumer decision confidence or how voice search and AI-personalized results alter the trust dynamics in consumer journeys. Understanding these evolving interactions will enable marketers to better tailor SEO practices that not only attract but psychologically engage consumers in more meaningful and lasting ways.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the existing literature confirms that Search Engine Optimization plays a vital role in influencing various psychological dimensions of consumer behavior in digital environments. SEO supports the formation of consumer trust by enhancing visibility, technical credibility, and perceived authenticity, while also increasing the relevance of search results in line with consumer intent (Nandi P., 2024; Indra A., 2021). Additionally, SEO impacts purchase intention by improving discoverability and fostering more meaningful engagement with brand content (Hasim A.; Ibrahim F., 2021; Nikhashemi L.; Sharifi S., 2021). However, the role of SEO is still underexplored in terms of its specific psychological pathways. Most existing studies address SEO only implicitly, and there is a need for more focused research that examines the psychological mechanisms linking SEO performance with consumer outcomes. Future research should embrace neurocognitive, longitudinal, and cultural frameworks to better understand how SEO functions not just as a traffic tool, but as a behavioral influence mechanism shaping consumer trust, emotional connection, and buying decisions in the digital age.

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