

Understanding B2B Client Purchase Decisions through Social Media Usage and WhatsApp-Based Digital Sales Interaction: A Qualitative Study

Fandra Dzaky Fahiqha^a, Hanifa Nur Fadhillah^b,

^{ab}Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia

*Corresponding author e-mail: fandradf@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

DOI: 10.32832/jm-uika.v17i3.24325

Article history:

Received:

02 Juli 2026

Accepted:

09 Juli 2026

Available online:

05 Oktober 2026

Keywords:

Social media usage, digital sales interaction, client purchase decisions, whatsapp, marketing communication.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media usage and digital sales interaction on client purchase decisions within a business-to-business (B2B) context at PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira, an Indonesian tour and event organizer company. While social media and digital sales interaction have been widely examined in business-to-consumer settings, research on WhatsApp-based communication with institutional clients in the tourism and event organizer industry remains limited. This study addresses this gap by integrating the Service-Dominant Logic, Technology Acceptance Model, and Emotional Contagion Theory to explain how social media content and WhatsApp-based interaction jointly shape B2B client purchase decisions. A qualitative approach was employed through in-depth interviews and five months of participatory observation involving five informants, with thematic analysis and data triangulation used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The results show that structured social media content builds initial client interest and emotional engagement, while responsive, personal, and empathetic WhatsApp interaction fosters trust and accelerates purchase decisions, with both strategies complementing each other throughout the B2B customer journey. This study contributes theoretically by demonstrating the combined explanatory power of TAM, SDL, and Emotional Contagion Theory within a single empirical context, and practically by offering insight for B2B service providers seeking to optimize WhatsApp-based digital sales amid ongoing digital transformation.

INTRODUCTION

In the Industry 4.0 era, digital technology has fundamentally transformed business-to-business (B2B) communication patterns, including in the tourism and event organizing industry. B2B companies are increasingly required to shift from conventional face-to-face negotiation toward efficient, responsive, and personalized digital interactions that can build trust and support purchasing decisions among institutional clients (Mangus *et al.*, 2024; Bharadwaj & Shipley, 2020). This digital transformation is particularly critical in service-based B2B sectors, where long sales cycles and relationship-driven decision-making demand consistent, trustworthy digital touchpoints throughout the client journey.

The tourism sector remains a strategic contributor to Indonesia's economy through foreign exchange generation, employment creation, and the stimulation of related industries and infrastructure development (Andzani *et al.*, 2024; Yakup & Haryanto, 2021). Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that international tourist arrivals increased from 5.89 million in 2022 to 11.68 million in 2023 and reached 13.9 million in 2024, reflecting a 19.05% growth compared to the previous year (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). This trend indicates a gradual recovery of the tourism industry and evolving market demand.

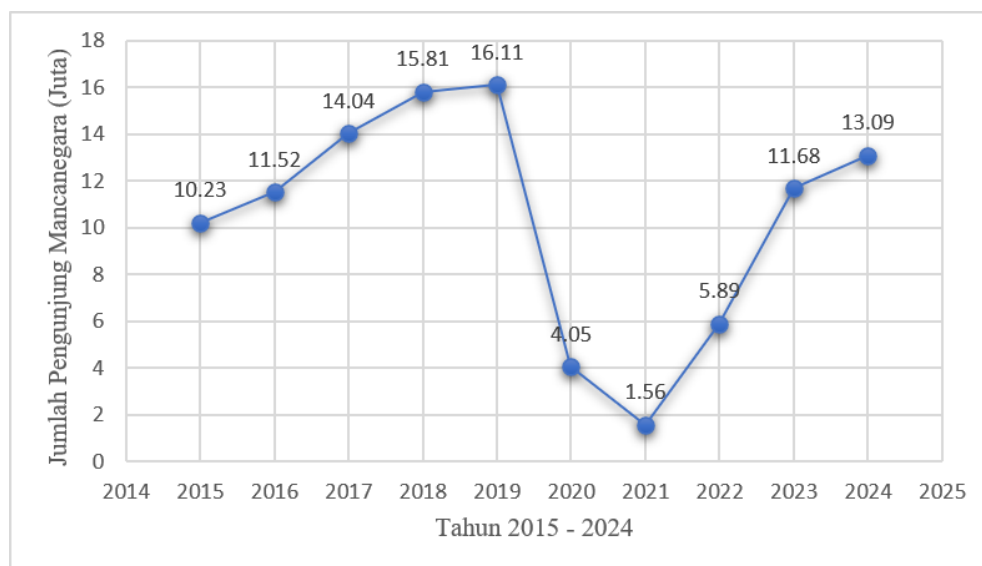


Figure 1. Foreign Tourist Visits 2015 – 2024

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2025

Alongside this growth, social media usage in Indonesia has expanded significantly. GoodStats reported that the social media usage rate is projected to increase from 47.03% in 2017 to 81.82% in 2026, and Yonatan (2023) reported that 72.7% of Indonesia's population, or more than 207 million people, actively use social media. These figures highlight the growing importance of social media as an integral platform for marketing communication and digital sales activities.

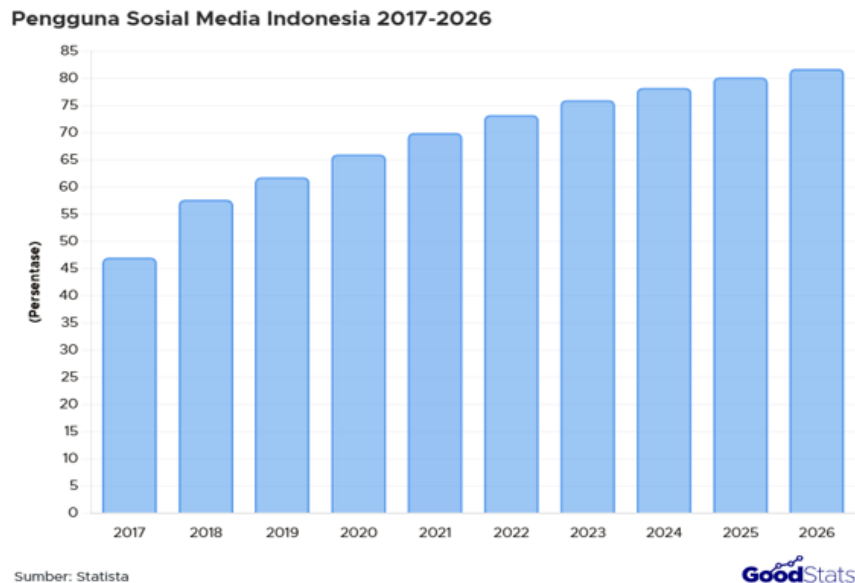


Figure 2. Social Media Users in Indonesia 2017-2026

Source: GoodStats, 2023

The increasing use of social media in Indonesia is expected to support local tourism by expanding the reach of destination promotion through visual narratives and engaging content (Andzani *et al.*, 2024). While appropriate digital marketing strategies can increase tourist visits and boost the local economy, especially among the younger generation (Saununu & Rukmana, 2023).

Social media usage refers to the use of digital platforms to engage customers, build relationships, and influence consumer decisions (Bowen *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, digital sales interaction involves online communication between sellers and clients to enhance trust and foster personalized business relationships (Bharadwaj & Shipley, 2020). Both factors are considered important drivers of purchase decisions, which are shaped by trust, perceived service quality, and interaction experiences throughout the communication process (Ying *et al.*, 2025). To date, these two constructs have largely been examined separately or within business-to-consumer (B2C) settings, leaving their joint operation within a B2B service context comparatively underexplored.

Despite growing scholarly interest in digital marketing, research on social media usage and digital sales interaction in the tourism and event organizer industry remains limited, particularly regarding how WhatsApp-based communication is used to build trust and drive purchase decisions among institutional (B2B) clients, an audience whose decision-making process differs substantially from individual consumers.

This study offers novelty by examining social media usage and WhatsApp-based digital sales interaction jointly, rather than in isolation, within a single B2B service organization. It further integrates three complementary theoretical lenses: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), and Emotional Contagion Theory to explain, respectively, the

adoption, value co-creation, and affective dimensions of the digital sales process, an integration not commonly found in prior studies on tourism and event organizer marketing.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the digital marketing and B2B digital sales literature by demonstrating how the combined application of TAM, SDL, and Emotional Contagion Theory can explain client purchase decisions in a WhatsApp-mediated B2B context. Practically, the findings are expected to provide event organizers and tourism service companies with insight into structuring social media content and WhatsApp-based interaction to more effectively build trust, shorten sales cycles, and convert leads into active institutional clients.

Building on this rationale, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) how does social media usage contribute to B2B client purchase decisions at PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira? (2) How does WhatsApp-based digital sales interaction influence B2B client purchase decisions? and (3) how do social media usage and WhatsApp-based digital sales interaction complement each other within the B2B customer journey? The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on marketing communication and digital sales effectiveness in the B2B tourism and event organizer sector.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design. This study employs a qualitative approach with participatory observation to examine the implementation of social media usage and digital sales interaction in improving client purchase decisions at PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira. The qualitative method was chosen because it enables in-depth exploration of meanings, experiences, and individual perspectives within a specific social context (Creswell, 2018). This approach is particularly appropriate given that the effectiveness of social media and digital sales strategies is substantially shaped by employee perceptions, experiences, and organizational dynamics that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative instruments alone (Assyakurrohim *et al.*, 2023). The research was conducted over five months through direct participation in the company's daily activities, allowing the researcher to observe digital communication practices and gather contextual data from within the organizational setting.

Research Subject and Unit of Analysis. The unit of analysis focuses on the implementation of social media usage and digital sales interaction within the Business Development division of PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira, a tour and event organizer company established in 2015 and based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The company operates across B2B, B2G, and international NGO market segments, offering services that include tour package management, event organizing, vehicle rental, and jeep rental. Five informants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in social media management and digital sales activities, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant Characteristics

Name	Code	Position	Role in Research
IH	I1	Chief Business Officer (CBO)	Decision maker & sales strategy
HH	H2	Digital Marketing Executive	Social media management & content creation
GT	G3	Event Operation Executive	Event execution & client coordination
IL	L4	Tour Operation Executive	Tour service & vendor management
MF	M5	Project Manager Executive	Project management

Source: Primary Data Processed by Researcher, 2026

Ethical Considerations. This study adheres to established ethical research principles. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all five informants, who were briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process by referring to informants using coded identifiers (I1–M5) rather than their full names, both in interview transcripts and in reporting findings. Formal permission was obtained from PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira management to access company documentation and WhatsApp communication archives for research purposes, with sensitive company business information anonymized or presented in aggregated form where necessary.

Data Collection Techniques. Data were collected through two primary techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with all five informants using semi-structured interview protocols covering three main themes: social media usage, digital sales interaction, and client purchasing decisions. Interview questions were designed to explore how WhatsApp functions as the primary digital sales medium and how social media content influences client engagement. Second, participatory observation was conducted throughout the internship period, enabling the researcher to directly observe digital communication patterns, sales interactions, and the operational coordination between the Business Development, Digital Marketing, and Operations divisions. Secondary data were gathered from scientific journals, company documentation, and digital platform analytics to complement primary findings (Ramadhania *et al.*, 2025). Specifically, these secondary sources included WhatsApp communication archives between Business Development personnel and prospective clients, used to trace response patterns, follow-up frequency, and the progression of the sales conversation. All communication archives were reviewed with client-identifying information anonymized in accordance with the ethical considerations outlined above.

Table 2. Interview Questions for All Informants

No.	Interview Questions	Theme
1	How frequently does the company use WhatsApp as a medium for conducting Digital Sales Interaction? Besides WhatsApp, what other platforms are commonly used to communicate with clients?	Social Media Usage
2	How do you assess the indicators of successful and unsuccessful sales communication with clients through WhatsApp?	Social Media Usage

No.	Interview Questions	Theme
3	What is your opinion regarding the coordination among Business Development, Digital Marketing, and Operations divisions in supporting communication processes through WhatsApp?	Social Media Usage
4	In your opinion, is there any form of evaluation regarding the effectiveness of WhatsApp in the sales process? Should WhatsApp be integrated with a CRM system or client database? Why or why not?	Social Media Usage
5	From a privacy perspective, are team members aware that WhatsApp interactions can be recorded or analyzed? What are your views on these privacy-related issues?	Social Media Usage
6	What role does WhatsApp play as a platform for digital sales interaction with clients?	Digital Sales Interaction
7	What are the advantages and disadvantages of Digital Sales Interaction through WhatsApp?	Digital Sales Interaction
8	To what extent do communication factors such as response speed, language style, empathy, sales gimmicks, emojis, voice notes, visual content, and chat templates influence interactions with clients?	Digital Sales Interaction
9	What strategies can be implemented to avoid spam messages, spam calls, or irrelevant communications during digital sales interactions?	Digital Sales Interaction
10	In what situations should the company choose face-to-face interaction over Digital Sales Interaction?	Digital Sales Interaction
11	Are there any specific types of messages or communication approaches that you consider effective in encouraging clients to make a purchase and reach a deal or closing stage?	Client Purchase Decisions

Source: Primary Data Processed by Researcher, 2026

Table 2 above presents the eleven interview questions administered to all five informants, organized around the three core themes examined in this study: social media usage, digital sales interaction, and client purchase decisions. These questions were designed to capture informants' first-hand experiences regarding the frequency and effectiveness of WhatsApp-based communication, the indicators used to distinguish successful from unsuccessful client interactions, and the coordination among the Business Development, Digital Marketing, and Operations divisions. Building on these general findings, Table 3 presents a more targeted set of interview questions for informants from the Business Development and Operations Division, focusing on their operational roles in initiating client contact, managing follow-up communication, and evaluating the effectiveness of digital sales interactions via WhatsApp.

Table 3. Interview Questions for Business Development and Operations Division

No.	Interview Questions	Theme
1	How frequently does the company use WhatsApp as a communication medium with clients, and what are the main reasons for choosing WhatsApp?	Social Media Usage
2	What does an effective first-contact approach with clients through WhatsApp look like?	Social Media Usage
3	What follow-up strategies do you consider effective when clients do not respond within a certain period of time?	Social Media Usage
4	Does communication through WhatsApp have an impact on client loyalty or retention? If so, what impact has been observed?	Social Media Usage
5	Is communication with clients through WhatsApp monitored or evaluated on a regular basis?	Social Media Usage
6	Are there any Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or standardized scripts used for conducting digital sales communication through WhatsApp?	Digital Sales Interaction

No.	Interview Questions	Theme
7	Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) help sales personnel improve their digital selling skills and interactions with clients? If so, how?	Digital Sales Interaction
8	How does your division ensure that data obtained during interactions with clients or vendors remains secure and is not lost?	Digital Sales Interaction
9	To what extent does communication style (e.g., language, response speed, and tone of voice) influence the likelihood of closing a deal with a client?	Client Purchase Decisions
10	What indicators are used to evaluate the success of digital interactions with clients, and what factors may cause a prospect to fail to reach the closing stage?	Client Purchase Decisions

Source: Primary Data Processed by Researcher, 2026

Table 3 above outlines the ten interview questions posed to informants from the Business Development and Operations Division, covering topics such as first-contact strategies, follow-up practices, client retention, communication monitoring, and the role of Artificial Intelligence in supporting digital sales activities. Complementing this operational perspective, Table 4 presents the interview questions developed for the Digital Marketing Division, which focus on content strategy, platform usage, personalization, and the coordination between digital marketing and business development in shaping an effective communication flow for prospective clients.

Table 4. Interview Questions for Digital Marketing Division

No.	Interview Questions	Theme
1	Is WhatsApp frequently used by the company for both personal communication and broadcasting messages to clients?	Social Media Usage
2	Is WhatsApp used to nurture leads generated from other platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or the company website? If so, how effective is it?	Social Media Usage
3	Are automation tools, such as WhatsApp Business API, utilized to enhance brand awareness and communication effectiveness? If so, how do they contribute?	Social Media Usage
4	Is there coordination between the Digital Marketing and Business Development divisions in designing an effective communication flow for prospective clients?	Digital Sales Interaction
5	To what extent is content personalized when sending messages to potential clients?	Digital Sales Interaction
6	How do clients perceive promotional messages delivered through WhatsApp, and what are their views on the use of real-time client information by sales representatives?	Digital Sales Interaction
7	Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) assist in marketing products to clients in a way that increases purchase opportunities? If so, how?	Client Purchase Decisions
8	What types of marketing content are most effective in attracting client interest and encouraging purchasing decisions through WhatsApp?	Client Purchase Decisions

Source: Primary Data Processed by Researcher, 2026

Trustworthiness. Credibility was established through data triangulation, cross-verifying information obtained from interviews, direct observation, and secondary sources such as WhatsApp communication archives, and through member checking, in which analyzed findings were presented back to informants for confirmation. All five informants endorsed and signed the member checking documents. (Neliwati *et al.*, 2025). Transferability was supported by

providing a detailed description of the research context, informants, and organizational setting, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar B2B service organizations. (Mckim, 2023). Dependability was ensured through an audit trail, whereby the entire research process, including observation notes, interview transcripts, data coding, and analytical reflections, was documented systematically to allow for transparency and consistency checking. (Carcary & College, 2020). Confirmability was maintained by grounding interpretations in raw data (interview transcripts, observation notes, and communication archives) and cross-checking these interpretations against multiple data sources to minimize researcher bias.

Data Analysis Technique. Data analysis in this study integrates narrative analysis and thematic analysis. Narrative analysis was used to interpret how informants construct meaning through their lived experiences with digital communication and sales interaction (Muti'ah, U., & Murhayati, 2025). Thematic analysis was subsequently applied to identify recurring patterns and themes across interview responses and observational data. The analytical process followed a systematic coding procedure in which raw data were condensed into meaningful categories, then organized into overarching themes about social media implementation and digital sales interaction. Coding and thematic categorization were conducted manually rather than using qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo, ATLAS.ti, or MAXQDA), allowing the researcher to remain closely engaged with the nuances of the data throughout the interpretation process. The synthesis of these two analytical approaches allowed for a holistic understanding of how digital strategies at PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira influence client purchasing behavior (Rozali, 2022).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Analytical Overview. Before presenting the findings, it is important to clarify how the reported themes emerged from the data. Open coding was first applied line-by-line to interview transcripts and observation notes, generating initial descriptive codes (e.g., "credibility check," "response speed," "AI-assisted copywriting," "chat overload"). These codes were then grouped into broader categories through constant comparison across the five informants, and cross-checked against secondary data, company documentation, digital platform analytics, and WhatsApp communication archives to strengthen the credibility of the categorization. Through iterative refinement, these categories were consolidated into the four overarching themes presented in Table 5 (social media usage) and the five themes presented in Table 6 (digital sales interaction). This coding process forms the analytical basis for the discussion that follows.

Implementation of Social Media Usage on Increasing Client Purchase Decisions. Social Media as a Credibility and Lead-Generation Tool. Analysis reveals that social media plays a pivotal role in PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira's marketing communication strategy, primarily as a tool for building corporate credibility and generating client prospects, through platforms including a website, e-catalogs, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. From the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) perspective, all informants affirm that social media is adopted due to its perceived ease of use and usefulness in expanding marketing reach

(Wicaksono, 2023). Given the company's B2B model, social media is directed primarily toward capturing the market rather than creating it. Informant I1 confirms that institutional clients routinely access Tourezia's social media as a credibility check to verify legitimacy before initiating contact, aligning with Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), wherein social media content functions as an operant resource enabling value evaluation prior to direct interaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2025).

This finding both confirms and nuances existing literature. It confirms Wicaksono (2023) argument that perceived ease of use and usefulness drive social media adoption. However, it diverges from studies conducted in predominantly B2C contexts (e.g., Bowen *et al.*, 2021; Ying *et al.*, 2025), which typically frame social media as a direct persuasion and conversion tool. In this B2B setting, social media functions less as a persuasive instrument and more as a legitimacy-verification mechanism; an institutional client rarely converts *because of* social media content alone, but may disengage entirely *without* it. This distinction extends the applicability of TAM and SDL into a B2B service context that has received comparatively little empirical attention.

Visual and Emotional Content as a Conversion Accelerator. Each platform is deployed according to its characteristics: Instagram for visual content, TikTok for short-form videos, YouTube for travel documentation, and WhatsApp for direct interaction. Informant H2 confirms that visual content images, product catalogs, and testimonial videos is significantly more effective in conveying information than text alone, helping prospective clients better understand the services offered, reducing uncertainty, and increasing confidence in the company's delivery capability (Rosalia, 2025). Short-form videos under 60 seconds were identified as the most engaging format. Consistent with Emotional Contagion Theory (Rachmad, 2023). Emotionally designed content particularly travel documentation and client testimonials, transmits positive emotions such as excitement and satisfaction to prospective clients, which strengthens purchase intention and shortens the sales cycle by reducing the amount of first-contact education required.

This finding confirms Rachmad (2023) proposition that emotional responses can be transmitted through communication media, while extending it in two ways: first, by identifying a specific content format (short-form video under 60 seconds) as an empirically effective carrier of emotional transmission in a B2B tourism context; and second, by linking this emotional transmission to a measurable sales outcome reduced first-contact education time rather than treating emotional response as an end state in itself, as much of the prior Emotional Contagion literature tends to do.

Content Personalization and the Interdivisional Feedback Loop. Social media effectiveness is further supported by the Digital Marketing team's ability to personalize content based on each audience segment's customer journey stage. Consistent with value co-creation in SDL Theory (Vargo & Lusch, 2025), content is designed as a response to audience needs rather than one-way communication: Informant H2 explains that clients at the awareness stage require light educational content, while those at the consideration stage benefit from promotions and

testimonials. A feedback loop between the Digital Marketing and Business Development divisions translates field insights into continuous content refinement; however, Informant I1 identifies structural coordination barriers, including incomplete brief handovers and inconsistent inter-divisional communication that require resolution through improved SOPs and project management tools.

This finding extends Vargo & Lusch (2025) conception of value co-creation by showing that, in practice, co-creation is contingent on internal organizational coordination and not merely on the company-client dyad; when interdivisional information flow breaks down, the co-creation process itself is disrupted before it reaches the client.

Table 5. Matrix of Findings on the Influence of Social Media Usage on Client Purchase Decisions

Theme	Key Findings	Theoretical Support	Practical Implications
Client prospecting and proven validity	B2B prospective clients access social media to verify corporate credibility before contacting Tourezia	TAM (Wicaksono, 2023); SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2025)	Active social media presence builds a positive value perception that encourages the decision to contact the company
Emotional bonds through visual content	Short videos < 60 seconds are the most engaging in attracting prospective clients' interest	Emotional Contagion Theory (Rachmad, 2023)	Accelerates purchase decisions and shortens the sales cycle
AI utilization	AI for copywriting, audience analysis, ad optimization, and pitching support	TAM (Wicaksono, 2023)	Increases inter-divisional work efficiency while maintaining a human touch

Source: Data processed by the Researcher, 2026

Implementation of Digital Sales Interaction through WhatsApp on Increasing Client Purchase Decisions. WhatsApp as the End-to-End Sales Backbone. The findings consistently show that WhatsApp is the dominant digital sales interaction platform across all stages of the sales cycle at PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira, functions not as one channel among many but as the connective infrastructure through which the entire client journey unfolds. Informant L4 revealed that WhatsApp underpins follow-up, pitching, probing, and negotiation, while Informant I1 confirmed that 70–90 percent of pre-dealing interactions are conducted digitally, with only about 10 percent involving in-person presentations or contract signings. This pattern held consistently across informants regardless of their divisional role, suggesting that WhatsApp's centrality is not confined to a single function such as marketing outreach or after-sales support but is embedded across prospecting, negotiation, coordination, and client retention alike.

Participatory observation corroborated this interview finding: across the five-month observation period, WhatsApp threads with prospective clients frequently spanned weeks or months, encompassing initial inquiries, proposal iterations, informal clarifications, and final confirmations within a single continuous conversation thread, rather than being fragmented

across email, phone calls, and in-person meetings as might be expected in more traditional B2B sales processes (Kangas *et al.*, 2017). From the TAM perspective, the high adoption rate stems from the perceived ease of use reflected in the universal familiarity with this platform, as well as the perceived usefulness demonstrated by its ability to facilitate all stages of the sales cycle (Wicaksono, 2023). At the same time, the findings extend this literature by illustrating that WhatsApp's usefulness in a B2B service setting stems not merely from convenience or familiarity, as much of the general TAM literature suggests, but specifically from its capacity to preserve an unbroken relational and transactional history across an often lengthy and non-linear B2B sales cycle a channel affordance that is particularly consequential for institutional clients whose purchase decisions typically involve multiple stakeholders, extended deliberation, and iterative negotiation over time.

Response Speed and Humanistic Communication Style. All informants identified response speed as the most critical factor in converting leads into active clients; Informant L4 emphasized that follow-ups should occur two to three times daily to prevent leads from cooling. These findings are consistent with Mangus *et al* (2024), who identified response speed as a direct indicator of technology-task fit in time-sensitive service environments. The present study provides B2B tourism-specific empirical support for that claim. Beyond speed, a humanistic and solution-oriented communication style was equally decisive: Informant L4 described the team's philosophy as selling emotions and solutions, not products, while Informant H2 noted that a formal-yet-warm tone and the deliberate use of emojis and voice notes (Informant G3) help transmit empathy and reduce miscommunication risk. As established earlier through Emotional Contagion Theory (Rachmad, 2023), these elements enable the transmission of positive emotions through digital communication, thereby strengthening client trust.

This finding also reinforces the relevance of Emotional Contagion Theory in digital sales environments. Sales representatives frequently employ empathetic language, personalized greetings, voice notes, and soft-selling techniques to create a positive emotional atmosphere during communication. These interactions help clients feel valued and understood, thereby strengthening trust toward the company. Trust subsequently becomes a critical factor influencing purchase decisions, particularly in service industries where clients cannot physically evaluate the quality of services before consumption. Therefore, emotional connection and relationship-building emerge as essential determinants of successful digital sales interaction (Ghanadiof *et al.*, 2021).

Initial Approach and the CRM Integration Gap. The quality of first contact through WhatsApp determines whether a prospective client will continue the communication. Informant I1 emphasized the importance of profiling beforehand to assess the potential of a prospective client, followed by an approach based on building rapport, which involves understanding the profession and distinct communication logic of each individual. Informant G3 recommended using an official WhatsApp number accompanied by a portfolio, a friendly yet professional communication style, and open-ended questions to explore client interest. These findings are relevant to Service-Dominant Logic Theory, which explains that first contact represents an

initial form of co-creation of value, where the team strives to build a positive communication relationship from the very first interaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

The research findings also indicated that PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira has not yet fully optimized the integration between WhatsApp and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Informant I1 revealed that CRM is needed to support structured customer relationship management, including repeat orders, greetings, and reward programs. Informant L4 explained that CRM-WhatsApp integration would enable communication history to be automatically recorded for tracking and performance evaluation (Giovannetti *et al.*, 2022). Informant H2 added that such integration would minimize the risk of overlapping communication between teams. Currently, client data management is still conducted manually through a Google Spreadsheet, which creates risks of losing prospects and communication inconsistencies. According to TAM, CRM technology that fits the task requirements will deliver optimal impact on sales performance (Wicaksono, 2023).

Strategic Choice between Digital and Face-to-Face Interaction. Although WhatsApp dominates sales communication, informants identified conditions favoring face-to-face interaction: Informant L4 noted that in-person meetings occur once collaboration probability reaches 80 percent or above, typically signaled by multiple proposal revisions. This finding confirms and extends Bharadwaj & Shipley (2020), who argued that digital sales interaction should complement rather than replace direct interaction based on transaction value and relationship stage; this study extends that claim by identifying a concrete behavioral threshold (deal probability $\geq 80\%$, proposal revision frequency) that practitioners use as a decision heuristic an operationalization not previously specified in the literature. Furthermore, the team's capability in managing digital sales interactions is a factor that requires continuous development. Informant L4 identified that product knowledge and adaptive communication patterns are fundamental competencies that must be possessed before interacting with clients. Informant I1 acknowledged that the communication SOP has not yet been established as a standardized protocol, while informant H2 emphasized the importance of periodic evaluation to ensure that WhatsApp truly becomes a strategic part of the sales process. Participatory observation results reinforced the interview findings by directly demonstrating the existence of obstacles including chat overload, a high volume of leads that do not meet company standards, and sub-optimal inter-divisional coordination. These findings confirm that the company is in a transitional phase toward more structured and measurable digital sales interaction management (Kmetz, 2021).

Table 6. Matrix of Findings on the Influence of Digital Sales Interaction via WhatsApp on Client Purchase Decisions

Theme	Key Findings	Theoretical Support	Practical Implications
WhatsApp in the customer journey	Used end-to-end; 70–90% of pre-dealing interactions are digital	TAM (Wicaksono, 2023)	Differentiated usage protocols for each sales cycle stage
Response speed and follow-up	Follow up at least 2–3 times/day; proactive initiatives maintain hot leads	Mangus <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Response SLA and structured follow-up schedule

Theme	Key Findings	Theoretical Support	Practical Implications
Humanistic communication style	Professional yet warm; emojis and voice notes reduce miscommunication	Emotional Contagion (Rachmad, 2023)	A communication framework and solution-based closing techniques
CRM-WhatsApp integration	Conversation history needs automatic recording for tracking and evaluation	TAM (Wicaksono, 2023)	Phased CRM implementation with WhatsApp Business API
Face-to-face vs. digital	Face-to-face when deal probability > 80% or in complex negotiations	Bharadwaj & Shipley (2020)	Decision matrix based on project value and client preferences

Source: Data processed by the Researcher, 2026

Comparison and Synthesis of Findings. Synthesize the two strategies, Table 7 compares their implementation across key dimensions. Social media usage (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) primarily functions as a market-capturing and lead-generation mechanism at the awareness-to-interest stage, with an *indirect* effect on purchase decisions, whereas WhatsApp-based digital sales interaction serves as the backbone of the entire sales process from first contact through after-sales, exerting a *direct* effect on purchase decisions.

Table 7. Comparison of Social Media Usage and Digital Sales Interaction Implementation

Dimension	Social Media Usage	Digital Sales Interaction (WhatsApp)
Primary function	Capture market, credibility validation, lead generation	Prospecting, pitching, negotiation, coordination, after-sales
Target sales cycle stage	Awareness → Interest	First Contact → Closing → After-Sales
Impact on purchase decisions	Indirect: shortens the education cycle at first contact	Direct: facilitates decisions through personal and responsive communication
Main challenges	Content consistency, multi-platform optimization, inter-divisional coordination	Response speed, communication consistency, CRM integration needs
Current status	Reasonably structured strategy; development potential on YouTube	Sales backbone; requires strengthening of SOP, CRM, and training

Source: Data processed by the Researcher, 2026

Taken together, the findings confirm that social media usage and WhatsApp-based digital sales interaction are complementary components of a single digital sales ecosystem, rather than independent or competing channels. Social media operates at the early customer-journey stages by building interest and emotional bonds, while WhatsApp operationalizes that interest into converted leads. This pattern confirms and extends the SDL literature Vargo & Lusch (2025) by demonstrating that value co-creation is not confined to a single touchpoint but unfolds as a continuous process spanning content exposure and personal interaction an empirical elaboration of a claim that is often stated theoretically but rarely traced across an entire B2B customer journey. Collectively, TAM explains the high adoption rate of both platforms, Emotional Contagion Theory explains the transmission of trust-building emotion at both the content and interpersonal levels, and SDL explains the continuous co-creation process linking them together, contributing empirically to digital marketing management scholarship in the tourism

and event organizer service industry, particularly regarding WhatsApp's role as the primary B2B digital sales medium (Oliveira *et al.*, 2025).

Operational Challenges, Interdivisional Coordination, and Toward a Structured Digital Sales Ecosystem. Beyond these individual dimensions, this study reveals systemic operational challenges affecting the digital sales ecosystem as a whole. Five months of participatory observation identified three recurring friction points: (1) chat overload among Business Development personnel from unprioritized lead management; (2) incomplete brief handovers between Digital Marketing and Business Development, producing content misaligned with field-level client intelligence; and (3) the absence of a standardized WhatsApp communication SOP, leaving response time, tone, and escalation to individual discretion. These operational gaps represent the most significant barrier to scaling the company's digital sales capacity without proportionate increases in human resource investment.

Addressing these challenges calls for phased organizational intervention: in the short term, a WhatsApp communication SOP covering response-time SLAs, stage-specific message templates, and lead-escalation workflows; in the medium term, a cloud-based CRM platform progressing from basic lead tracking toward full WhatsApp Business API integration, enabling centralized history management and performance analytics (Giovannetti *et al.*, 2022). Informant M5 underscored the added value of inter-divisional project management tools providing real-time visibility across Business Development, Digital Marketing, and Operations. Together, these interventions would transform the company's current ad hoc practices into a structured, scalable ecosystem aligned with its B2B, B2G, and international NGO growth ambitions (Oliveira *et al.*, 2025).

Theoretical Contribution. The broader theoretical contribution of this study lies in its synthesis of three complementary frameworks within a single empirical context: TAM explains the pervasive adoption of WhatsApp and social media across the organization; Emotional Contagion Theory illuminates the psychological mechanisms through which digital content and sales communication generate affective, trust-building responses; and SDL provides the overarching scaffolding, framing digital sales interaction as an ongoing co-creation of value rather than a transactional exchange. Each theory addresses a distinct layer of the digital sales process: adoption, affect, and relational architecture, respectively, and their integration offers a richer analytical lens than any single framework applied in isolation, extending prior single-framework applications in the tourism and event organizer literature (Granić, 2023; Ying *et al.*, 2025).

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

This study concludes that social media usage and WhatsApp-based digital sales interaction are two complementary components within an integrated digital sales ecosystem at PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira, jointly shaping B2B client purchase decisions. Social media operates at the early stages of the client journey by building credibility and emotional interest, particularly through short-form video content, while WhatsApp functions as the end-to-end backbone of the sales

process, converting that interest into trust and, ultimately, purchase decisions through responsive, personal, and solution-oriented communication. Their effectiveness, however, remains constrained by unresolved operational gaps, including the absence of standardized communication SOPs and limited CRM integration, which together represent the company's primary barrier to scaling a currently ad hoc digital sales practice into a structured and measurable one.

Beyond its empirical findings, this study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how the integration of three complementary frameworks enriches the understanding of B2B digital sales behavior in ways that no single framework achieves alone. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains why social media and WhatsApp are so pervasively adopted across the organization, grounded in perceived ease of use and task-specific usefulness; Emotional Contagion Theory explains how trust is built, by illuminating the transmission of positive affect through both visual content and interpersonal digital communication; and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) explains where this process is heading, framing digital sales interaction not as a series of discrete transactions but as a continuous, cross-touchpoint process of value co-creation between the company and its institutional clients. Applied together, these three frameworks show that technology adoption, emotional trust-building, and value co-creation are not independent processes but sequential and mutually reinforcing layers of a single B2B digital sales journey an integrative perspective that extends prior studies, which have typically applied these theories in isolation.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, it employed a single-case study design focused exclusively on PT. Tourezia Cakra Inspira, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other event organizers or tourism service companies operating under different organizational scales or market conditions. Second, the study relied on a relatively small number of informants (five), which, while appropriate for the depth required in qualitative inquiry, may not capture the full range of perspectives within the organization. Third, the study drew exclusively on internal organizational perspectives, informants, company documentation, and internal communication archives without incorporating the viewpoints of external B2B clients themselves, whose perceptions of social media content and WhatsApp interaction may differ from those of the internal team members who produce and deliver them.

In brief, the findings point toward two priority areas for organizational improvement: formalizing WhatsApp communication practices through a standardized SOP and response-time standards, and progressively integrating a CRM system with WhatsApp to enable centralized client data management and performance tracking. Complementing these operational improvements, the company would benefit from prioritizing short-form video content and periodic digital sales training for its Business Development team. Detailed

implementation steps for these recommendations are discussed in the preceding Results and Discussion section.

Building on these limitations, future research is encouraged to adopt a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative findings with quantitative survey data collected directly from external B2B clients, in order to examine how social media usage and WhatsApp-based interaction are perceived from the client side and how these perceptions correlate with actual purchase behavior. Comparative studies across multiple event organizer companies of varying scale would further help establish a more generalizable model of B2B digital sales effectiveness. Future studies may also examine the evolving role of AI in digital sales interaction, as well as the longitudinal impact of CRM–WhatsApp integration on sales cycle efficiency and client retention.

Taken together, these findings affirm that the strategic combination of social media usage and high-quality, emotionally attuned WhatsApp-based interaction constitutes a critical capability for B2B service organizations navigating an increasingly digital marketplace. By demonstrating how technology adoption, emotional trust-building, and continuous value co-creation operate jointly within a single empirical context, this study contributes to the digital marketing and B2B digital sales literature both theoretically, by offering an integrative three-framework lens for understanding B2B digital sales behavior, and practically, by providing tourism and event organizer companies with concrete direction for structuring their digital transformation efforts around trust, responsiveness, and relational value.

REFERENCES

- Andzani, D., Virgin, D., & Setijadi, N. (2024). *Peran Media Sosial Dalam Membangun Citra Destinasi Pariwisata Yang Menarik*. 11(1), 188–195.
<https://doi.org/10.35794/jmbi.v11i1.53212>
- Assyakurrohim, D., Ikhrum, D., Sirodj, R. A., & Afgani, M. W. (2023). Metode Studi Kasus dalam Penelitian Kualitatif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Dan Komputer*, 3(1), 1–9.
<https://doi.org/10.47709/jpsk.v3i01.1951>
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2025). *Statistik Kunjungan Wisatawan Mancanegara 2024* (D. Arifatin (ed.); Volume 16.). BPS-Statistics Indonesia.
- Bharadwaj, N., & Shipley, G. M. (2020). Salesperson communication effectiveness in a digital sales interaction. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 90, 106–112.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.07.002>
- Bowen, M., Lai-bennejean, C., Haas, A., & Rangarajan, D. (2021). Social media in B2B sales: Why and when does salesperson social media usage affect salesperson performance ? *Industrial Marketing Management*, 96(May), 166–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2021.05.007>
- Carcary, M., & College, M. I. (2020). The Research Audit Trail: Methodological Guidance for Application in Practice. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods (EJBRM)*, 18(2), 166–177. <https://doi.org/10.34190/JBRM.18.2.008>
- Creswell, J. D. (2018). John Creswell’s Research Design Textbook on Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed Methods Approaches. In *SAGE Publications* (Research d). SAGE Publications.
- Ghanadiof, O., Sanayei, A., & Emami, M. (2021). *Effect of Customer Perception on Salesperson*

Owned Commitment in Customer-Salesperson Relationship. 6(4), 137–142.

Giovanetti, M., Sharma, A., Cardinali, S., Cedrola, E., & Rangarajan, D. (2022). Understanding salespeople's resistance to, and acceptance and leadership of customer-driven change. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 107, 433–449. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.10.021>

Granić, A. (2023). *Technology adoption at individual level toward an integrated overview*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10209-023-00974-3>

Kangas, M., Rajala, R., & Holopainen, M. (2017). *Digitalization of Sales: A Case Study of the Effects on Sales Interaction*.

Kmetz, J. L. (2021). *The Information Processing Theory of Organization: Managing Technology Accession in Complex Systems*.

Lim Jia Ying, Lee Te Chuan, Umi Kartini Rashid, N. A. A. S. (2025). Social Media Marketing in Industry 4.0 The Role of TikTok in Shaping Generation Z ' s Purchase Intentions. *Procedia Computer Science*, 253, 2176–2185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2025.01.278>

Mangus, S. M., Shi, H., Folse, J. A. G., Jones, E., & Sridhar, S. (2024). Communicating with B2B buyers after “Dropping the Ball”: Using digital and non-digital communication formats to recover from salesperson transgressions. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 41(2), 194–219. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2024.01.005>

Mckim, C. (2023). Meaningful Member-Checking: A Structured Approach to Member-Checking. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 41–52.

Muti'ah, U., & Murhayati, S. (2025). Penelitian Naratif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 9, 13001–13009. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v9i2.26896>

Neliwati, Tamimi Mujahid, Rizqi Almaajid, Kenara, A. R. (2025). URGENSI METODE PENELITIAN DALAM MENJAMIN KEABSAHAN DATA DAN TEMUAN ILMIAH. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10, 12.

Oliveira, F., Belitski, M., & Perez-vega, R. (2025). Technological Forecasting & Social Change Sales digitization and sales process optimisation for firm performance: Evidence from European firms. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 217(April), 124–172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2025.124172>

Rachmad, Y. E. (2023). *Emotional Contagion Theory*.

Ramadhania, Nursakinah Ritonga, Nanda Ameliany, Cut Sukmawati, L. I. (2025). Kelayakan Upah dan Kepuasan Buruh Perempuan di PT. Pariwisata Seruway Aceh Tamiang. *Jurnal Inovasi Akuntansi Dan Manajemen Bisnis*, 9(3), 132–147. <https://journal.fexaria.com/j/index.php/jiamb/article/view/496>

Rosalia, D. (2025). *Strategi Komunikasi Digital dalam Pemasaran: Studi Peran Media Sosial dalam Keputusan Pembelian Konsumen*. 9(2), 488–499.

Rozali. (2022). *Penggunaan analisis konten dan analisis tematik*.

Saununu, S. J., & Rukmana, A. Y. (2023). The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Generation Z Consumer Behavior in Indonesia. *West Science Interdisciplinary Studies*, 01(10), 1028–1038.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). *Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic*. 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3>

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2025). Service-dominant logic 2025. *International Journal of Research in Marketing Journal (IJRM)*, 34(2017), 46–67.

Wang, Z., Azhar, A., Rehman, N., & Umair, M. (2025). Acta Psychologica Role of traditional vs social media on purchase intention : A sequential mediation model. *Acta Psychologica*, 260(August),

105510. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105510>

Wicaksono, S. R. (2023). *Teori Dasar Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)* (Issue December 2022). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7754254>

Yakup, A. P., & Haryanto, T. (2021). Pengaruh Pariwisata terhadap Pertumbuhan Ekonomi di Indonesia. *Bina Ekonomi*, 23(2), 39–47. <https://doi.org/10.26593/be.v23i2.3266.39-47>

Yonatan, A. Z. (2023, 21 Juni). Menilik Pengguna Media Sosial Indonesia 2017-2026. GoodStats. <https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/menilik-pengguna-media-sosial-indonesia-2017-2026-xUAlp>