

## The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty with the Mediation of Brand Love and Brand Trust among Minimarket Consumers

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### Abstract

In the digital era, Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become a primary tool for businesses to convey information and build relationships with consumers. This study aims to explore the relationships among Social Media Marketing, Brand Love, Brand Trust, and Brand Loyalty within the retail industry context, focusing specifically on the minimarket sector. The sample consisted of 147 respondents who were customers of minimarkets in West Jakarta, followed the minimarkets' Instagram accounts, and had made at least five purchases within the past three months. Data were analyzed using Path Analysis with PLS-SEM, including tests for validity, reliability, and hypothesis testing. Based on the literature review and proposed hypotheses, this study examined the direct and mediating effects of Brand Love and Brand Trust on the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty. The findings indicate that Social Media Marketing has a positive effect on both Brand Love and Brand Trust, which in turn enhance Brand Loyalty. Furthermore, both Brand Love and Brand Trust were found to mediate the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty. This research provides valuable insights for retail companies in leveraging social media to improve customer loyalty and strengthen brand-consumer relationships.

**Keywords:** *social media marketing, brand love, brand trust, brand loyalty, social media, customer loyalty.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, with increasingly advanced technological and communication developments, the use of Social Media Marketing has become the primary choice for businesses to deliver information to consumers (Haudi et al., 2022). Social Media Marketing provides a much-needed digital marketing approach and has added a new dimension to the modern marketing landscape (Koay et al., 2020). Social Media Marketing refers to the utilization of various social networking platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest to promote a company's products and services (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Successful social media communication can enhance brand marketing loyalty efforts (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2020). In the context of social media, consumers' responses to various interactions depend on trust. This plays a crucial role in influencing online activity and transforming marketers' efforts into equity and loyalty. Therefore, it can be stated that social media marketing acts as a driving force that shapes customer sentiment toward a brand (Langaro et al., 2018).

Several researchers consider Brand Love as a more effective factor and element in predicting brand loyalty (Bairrada et al., 2018). The concept of Brand Loyalty has been widely studied in different environments and frameworks, yet few studies have been conducted to understand the impact of consumers' brand love on loyalty (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018). Brand love can be regarded as the formation of positive feelings or emotions that exist on a spectrum opposite to brand hate (Sarkar et al., 2020). According to Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh (2021), when consumers experience love toward a brand, they develop an emotional attachment to it, which enhances their commitment to repurchasing and continued use.

Moreover, Brand Trust is another critical factor in enhancing Brand Loyalty (Akin, 2017). Puspaningrum (2020) and Sanny et al. (2020) confirmed that brand-related information across various social media platforms creates strong trust in consumers' minds. When consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, they are more likely to make repeat purchases from that brand (Putra et al., 2019). Consequently, consumers who rely on a brand are more willing to remain loyal, buy newly promoted products under the same brand, pay a premium price, and share their preferences with others (Mabkhot et al., 2017). Companies that utilize social media platforms to communicate, interact, and engage with customers are likely to increase customer responsiveness and trust in the brand (Ebrahim, 2020).

In addition to examining the direct relationships among Social Media Marketing, Brand Love, and Brand Trust toward Brand Loyalty, this study also positions Brand Love and Brand Trust as mediating variables to help explain the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty through these two variables. According to Ahmed (2022), consumers are more likely to love a brand when they perceive Social Media Marketing efforts. Therefore, Social Media Marketing plays a significant role in enhancing customer loyalty (Khan et al., 2022). This has created opportunities for marketers, including those in the retail sector, such as Indomaret, which has leveraged platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook as tools to communicate brand-related information and build relationships with customers. The credibility built through Indomaret's social media presence can foster consumer awareness and trust, encouraging continued patronage (Wahyudiputra & Setiawati, 2023).

Previous studies related to the variables of Social Media Marketing, Brand Love, Brand Trust, and Brand Loyalty have been conducted. Social Media Marketing has been shown to positively influence Brand Loyalty (Ibrahim, 2022; Algharabat, 2017; Ebrahim, 2020; Khan et al., 2022). Social Media Marketing also positively affects Brand Love (Ahmed, 2022; Mayasari et al., 2023; Algharabat, 2017; Vutri & Komariah, 2023; Sarkar et al., 2020; Hafez, 2021). Brand Love positively influences Brand Loyalty (Bairrada et al., 2018; Eklund, 2022; Babu & Babu, 2021; Huang, 2017). Social Media Marketing also positively impacts Brand Trust (Puspaningrum, 2020; Sarin & Sharma, 2023; Althuwaini, 2022; Elaydi, 2018; Haudi et al., 2022). Additionally, Brand Trust has a positive influence on Brand Loyalty (Lien, 2015; Park & Kim, 2016; Atulkar, 2020; Lin et al., 2017; Pandiangan et al., 2021; Mabkhot et al., 2017; Meilani & Suryawan, 2020). However, to complement previous research, the author selected the retail industry, specifically one of the leading minimarket brands in Indonesia, as the research object. The author chose this minimarket over other similar retailers because it is one of the most widely distributed and familiar franchise brands in Indonesia.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to examine the positive relationships among Social Media Marketing, Brand Love, and Brand Trust toward Brand Loyalty in the retail industry. Furthermore, it is expected that this research will provide valuable contributions to management practices.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach, and the data collection method was carried out through an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The measurement of statements for each variable was conducted using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4, starting from the lowest score (Strongly Disagree) to the highest score (Strongly Agree). In this study, the measurement for the Brand Loyalty variable was adopted from Atulkar (2020) and Ebrahim (2020), consisting of 3 statements. The Social Media Marketing variable was adopted from Hafez (2021), consisting of 11 statements. Furthermore, the Brand Trust variable was adopted from Solihin (2020), which included 4 statements. Finally, the measurement for the Brand Love variable was adopted from Khan et al. (2021), which consisted of 3 statements. Thus, the total number of statements amounted to 21.

The population in this study consisted of consumers who use social media and follow the official Indomaret Instagram account. In selecting the sample, the researcher employed a non-probability sampling method with a purposive sampling technique. Purposive Sampling is a technique used to select a population based on specific predetermined criteria (Uma & Bougie, 2016). The criteria for respondents in this study were Indomaret consumers located in West Jakarta, aged 17 years and above, who follow the official Indomaret Instagram account, and have made purchases at Indomaret at least five times within the past three months. The required sample size for this study was based on Hair & Brunsveld (2019), which suggests a minimum of seven times the number of analyzed indicators ( $21 \times 7$ ), resulting in a required total of 147 respondents.

This study applied the Path Analysis method using PLS-SEM, which involves two stages of data analysis. The first stage is the outer model analysis to ensure that the measurement used is both valid and reliable. This includes the Convergent Validity test, where indicator loading factors must be greater than 0.7, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for reflective constructs must exceed 0.5. Subsequently, the Discriminant Validity test indicates that the square root of AVE for each construct should be higher than its correlations with other latent variables, and the cross-loading values should also be higher for each indicator on its respective construct than on other constructs (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. An indicator is considered reliable if the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are each  $\geq 0.7$ .

The second stage is the inner model analysis. According to Hair et al. (2017), the R-Square value is categorized as strong if it exceeds 0.50–0.75, moderate if it ranges from 0.25–0.50, and weak if it is between 0.00–0.25. A Q-Square value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance, while a Q-Square value less than 0 indicates a lack of predictive relevance. For hypothesis testing, the calculated path coefficient is compared with the t-table value of 1.96 ( $\alpha = 5\%$ ). If the T-statistic exceeds the t-table value, the initial hypothesis can be accepted. Furthermore, the p-value must be  $< 0.05$  to

reject H0 and indicate that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is significant.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, a total of 147 respondents were collected. All respondents were consumers who use social media and follow the official Indomaret Instagram account (100%). In addition, the majority of respondents were female, with a total of 99 individuals (67.3%), and the age group of 17–26 years dominated the study with 73 individuals (49.7%). Most respondents were private-sector employees, totaling 92 individuals (62.6%), and resided in the West Jakarta area.

The analysis results show that social media marketing has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through brand love, with a T-statistic of 2.201, which is greater than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.028, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there is an indirect influence of social media marketing on brand loyalty through brand love. Overall, social media marketing has a positive effect on brand loyalty (H1), and there is an indirect effect through brand love (H4). Thus, brand love functions as a partial mediator between social media marketing and brand loyalty, suggesting that whether brand love exists or not, if Indomaret carries out effective social media marketing, consumers will remain loyal to Indomaret.

The test results indicate that there is no indirect effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty through brand trust. The T-statistic value of 1.154 and the p-value of 0.249 indicate that this indirect effect is not significant. Therefore, brand trust does not influence brand loyalty (H5) and does not function as a mediator (H7) between social media marketing and brand loyalty. Accordingly, brand trust does not serve as a mediator between social media marketing and brand loyalty.

**Table 1.** Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	P-Value	T-Statistic	Description	Conclusion
H1	Social Media Marketing has a direct effect on Brand Loyalty	0,000	8,473	Data supports the hypothesis	H1 accepted
H2	Social Media Marketing has a direct effect on Brand Love	0,000	17,867	Data supports the hypothesis	H2 accepted
H3	Brand Love has a direct effect on Brand Loyalty	0,024	2,254	Data supports the hypothesis	H3 accepted

H4	Social Media Marketing affects Brand Loyalty through Brand Love	0,028	2,201	Data supports the hypothesis	H4 accepted
H5	Social Media Marketing has a direct effect on Brand Trust	0,000	81,193	Data supports the hypothesis	H5 accepted

In this study, the first hypothesis proposed that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand loyalty. The better Indomaret implements the social media marketing, the higher the level of consumer loyalty. Enhancing the quality of Indomaret's social media marketing contributes to increased consumer loyalty. Currently, Instagram is a highly effective social media platform in attracting consumer attention. Therefore, Indomaret needs to optimize its Instagram feed display with engaging content, such as photos, videos, and reels that are relevant to current trends. Continuously updated content will keep consumers interested in following and interacting with Indomaret's Instagram account. By consistently posting new content, consumers will continue to anticipate and revisit Indomaret's Instagram posts. This finding is in line with Ebrahim (2020), who stated that social media marketing positively influences brand loyalty. The positive experience consumers have when viewing the appearance and content on Indomaret's Instagram can encourage them to keep monitoring the latest posts from the account.

Furthermore, the second hypothesis testing found that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand love. This indicates that the better Indomaret's social media marketing, the stronger consumers' affection toward the brand. Most respondents, particularly women from various age groups, felt that the services provided through Indomaret's Instagram helped them exchange information and offer feedback that the company received well. With the comment section feature on Indomaret's Instagram, consumers can exchange opinions about their shopping experiences at Indomaret. As a result, consumers who have information such as complaints or promotions can share it with others. Indomaret's comment section also welcomes criticism regarding new products or advertised promotions, allowing the company to learn from customer feedback about what improvements are needed. Indomaret responds to all such input and criticism with polite and solution-oriented replies, which makes consumers feel appreciated and valued. This aligns with the study of Ahmed (2022), which found that social media marketing positively affects brand love. When customers leave comments on Indomaret's Instagram and receive kind responses, they feel appreciated and are more likely to develop a lasting affection for the brand.

The third hypothesis of this study found that brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty. This means that consumers who love Indomaret's products tend to make repeat purchases because they are satisfied and comfortable with the products offered. The importance of brand love in enhancing brand loyalty highlights the need for Indomaret to focus not only on the functional aspects of its products but also on emotional elements that build a strong relationship with customers. By consistently maintaining

product quality, offering responsive customer service, and implementing emotionally resonant marketing strategies, Indomaret can strengthen brand love among consumers, which in turn boosts brand loyalty. Indomaret offers premium products not available in other minimarkets, such as Point Coffee, Say Bread, Mister Donut, and others. This satisfies customers by allowing them to fulfill their daily needs while also purchasing ready-to-eat and ready-to-drink products in one place. This convenience makes Indomaret a more appealing choice for consumers. Consumers also become enthusiastic about purchasing products from Indomaret, and such enthusiasm contributes to brand loyalty. This is supported by Eklund (2022), who found that brand love positively influences brand loyalty. Positive experiences when using Indomaret products can encourage consumers to continue making repeat purchases.

The fourth hypothesis of this study confirmed that brand love mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty. This finding shows that effective social media marketing not only directly enhances customer loyalty but also does so indirectly by increasing brand love. When Indomaret conducts effective social media marketing, consumers respond by developing a deeper emotional attachment to the brand. This affection acts as a bridge that strengthens the emotional bond between consumers and Indomaret, encouraging repeat purchases and long-term loyalty. Positive experiences created through social media interactions, such as engaging content and responsive feedback, contribute to brand love, which in turn reinforces brand loyalty. This is consistent with the findings of Salem et al. (2019), who stated that brand love mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty. When consumers enjoy Indomaret's Instagram posts that consistently provide the latest promotional information, they are more likely to monitor and engage in repeat purchases from Indomaret.

In the fifth hypothesis, this study found that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand trust. The better Indomaret's social media marketing efforts, the higher consumers' trust in the brand. The study revealed that Indomaret's social media marketing efforts, such as delivering clear and responsive information on Instagram, significantly contributed to consumers' trust in the brand. Respondents felt supported by the presence of Indomaret's Instagram, as it enabled them to share information with other consumers. Consumers felt more confident in Indomaret due to transparent interactions and quick responses to questions or complaints on social media. Features like an active comment section and helpful responses from Indomaret further strengthened customer trust in the brand's reliability and integrity. This finding is consistent with Puspaningrum (2020), who stated that social media marketing positively affects brand trust. Positive consumer experiences, such as leaving comments on Indomaret's Instagram and receiving prompt responses, can enhance trust in the advertised products or promotions.

Additionally, the sixth hypothesis showed that brand trust does not influence brand loyalty. This finding indicates that although brand trust is an important component in building consumer-brand relationships, trust in Indomaret does not directly affect customer loyalty to the brand. This may be due to other factors that play a greater role in determining customer loyalty, such as product quality, store location, available promotions, or higher pricing compared to competitors. This study also demonstrates that although brand trust is important, consumer loyalty can be more significantly influenced by other factors that may be more relevant to customer behavior and satisfaction in the minimarket context.

In the final finding, social media marketing does not directly influence brand loyalty through brand trust. This implies that brand trust does not serve as a mediator between social media marketing and brand loyalty. The results suggest that while social media marketing contributes to increased brand trust, trust in the brand does not act as a significant mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty. In other words, even if social media marketing efforts improve consumer trust in Indomaret, this increased trust does not directly lead to greater loyalty. This may be due to various other factors affecting customer loyalty, such as shopping experiences, product quality, or emotional factors that are stronger than trust alone. This study suggests that to build strong customer loyalty, Indomaret should adopt a holistic approach that focuses not only on building brand trust but also on enhancing other elements that influence customer loyalty. These results contradict the findings of Khadim et al. (2018), who stated that brand trust indirectly mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty. Their research explained that loyalty fundamentally involves repeat purchases from the same brand or company, and consumer attitudes toward a brand vary depending on both cognitive and emotional components.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that social media marketing has a positive influence on brand loyalty. This means that the better Indomaret's social media marketing, the higher the consumer loyalty. Furthermore, social media marketing has a positive influence on brand love. This implies that the more effective the social media marketing carried out by Indomaret, the stronger the consumer's affection toward the brand. Brand love also has a positive effect on brand loyalty. In other words, the better Indomaret is at offering its best products, the more loyal the consumers become.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that social media marketing indirectly affects brand loyalty through brand love. The more effective Indomaret is in promoting its products and sharing promotions through social media, the more positively consumers will perceive the brand and the more likely they are to develop brand affection. Additionally, social media marketing positively affects brand trust. The more effective Indomaret's social media marketing is, the greater the consumer trust in the brand.

Furthermore, the results indicate that brand trust does not influence brand loyalty. This suggests that brand trust is not a determining factor of customer loyalty. Lastly, social media marketing does not have a direct influence on brand loyalty through brand trust. This means that brand trust does not serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty.

One of the limitations of this study is that it only focuses on the variables of social media marketing, brand love, and brand trust. At the same time, many other variables could influence brand loyalty. To address this limitation, future research could include other variables that are suspected to enhance brand loyalty, such as brand familiarity, brand involvement, brand communities, and consumers' psychological responses. Moreover, this study only targeted consumers located in West Jakarta. In contrast, Indomaret's customers who purchase products or promotions and frequently engage with Indomaret's social media come from various regions across Indonesia. This may lead to research results that are less representative of Indomaret's overall customer base. Another challenge in this study was the difficulty in finding respondents who actually follow

Indomaret's Instagram account, which may affect the data's representativeness and the accuracy of findings. To overcome these limitations, several steps can be taken, such as expanding the research scope to other regions in Indonesia to improve representativeness, collaborating with Indomaret to gain access to their Instagram followers, offering incentives to qualified respondents, or promoting the survey across multiple social media platforms to attract more relevant respondents. Future research could also use different research objects and employ other analytical tools besides PLS-SEM, such as AMOS or LISREL, to analyze the data.

This study has significant managerial implications for the retail industry. From the perspective of social media marketing, Indomaret's social media has made considerable efforts to engage its customers. However, many consumers still do not follow the latest updates from Indomaret's Instagram. Therefore, Indomaret's social media needs to further improve its marketing communication effectiveness by creating more engaging and up-to-date content that highlights service advantages or promotional offers on Instagram. Collaborating with several content creators could also help reach a wider audience. Additionally, although Indomaret consistently offers high-quality products, some consumers prefer products sold by competitors. This could be due to trending products not being available at Indomaret or because consumers feel more suited to competitors' offerings. Thus, Indomaret must actively monitor trends and understand which products are currently popular in order to attract more customers to like and purchase its offerings. In terms of brand trust and brand loyalty, Indomaret has been successful in creating content and offering quality products. However, Indomaret has not yet become the top choice for Indonesians in fulfilling their daily shopping needs. Therefore, Indomaret must continue to enhance the reliability of its content and the appeal of its product information. By consistently delivering the highest quality in all of its efforts, Indomaret can further strengthen its position, gain more affection and trust, and become the primary shopping destination for consumers in Indonesia.

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