

Community involvement as a mediating variable: How social media marketing activities affects customer loyalty?

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ABSTRACT

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The cosmetics industry in Indonesia has great potential, posing great challenges to maintain competitiveness. This research examines community engagement's role as a mediating factor between social media marketing activities and customer loyalty. 194 respondents completed questionnaires to provide study data, which was then analyzed using Smart PLS version 3.0. The findings showed the beneficial effects of social media marketing activities on community engagement and customer loyalty. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that community engagement increases customer loyalty. However, the results show that community engagement does not mediate between social media marketing activities and customer loyalty. This research highlights the importance of integrating social media into marketing campaigns to foster customer relationships and boost loyalty.

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1. Introduction

The increasing use of beauty products is evidence of people's increasing concern for appearance. The rapid growth of the cosmetics market indicates lucrative business opportunities for industries that offer various products and categories to consumers (Hassali & Al-Tamimi, 2015). The growth of the cosmetics industry has had a positive impact on the Indonesian economy (Jailani & Adinugraha, 2022). The export value of cosmetic products in 2021 will increase rapidly from 2020, with an increase of 30.6%. In 2021, the Digital Marketing Association of Indonesia (DMAI) stated that the beauty care category had the highest total sales in marketplaces. A high level of sales indicates high consumer interest in buying beauty products (Pudaruth et al., 2015).

The phenomenon of loyalty in the cosmetics industry is becoming increasingly challenging due to ever-changing trends (Pawar & Pawar, 2023). According to DMAI in

2023, around 63% of consumers often change their minds about the brands and shops they use in response to deals and offers from elsewhere. Weak loyalty or disloyalty is a form of loyalty that results from the desire of consumers to use various opportunities and make changes (Arslan, 2020).

Strauss and Frost (2016) added that engagement involves emotional and intellectual customer connections. This shows the need for strategies to support companies in fostering customer loyalty, such as engaging in various activities within a group to build common perceptions, thus creating mutually beneficial relationships (Adeniji et al., 2014). Community engagement reflects consumer interaction within specific online communities, discussing brands, and showing support for their choices (Matzat & Rooks, 2014; Dessart, 2017). An increasing number of companies are investing time and money in designing strategies and managing brand communities on social media to gain consumer attention and interact with them (Munnukka et al., 2015). These communities constitute new marketing research tools, as marketers can harvest reliable information about consumers and gain insights into various aspects of their everyday lives, including lifestyles, needs, desires, and consumption expectations (Coelho et al., 2018).

Godey et al. (2016) assert the importance of social media in enhancing customer loyalty and acquiring more customers. Marketing on social media is considered an effective tool for developing customer relationships (Khadim et al., 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2021). Social media offers marketers an opportunity to connect directly with customers, strengthen their communication, and pitch supreme value propositions to their top customers, irrespective of their locations (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Social media marketing activities refer to interaction and communication between consumers and brands (Ismail et al., 2018). Promotion through social media is a key metric used to promote company products, thereby building a solid brand presence. Sanny et al. (2020) found that community engagement enhances social media marketing activities. Modern marketing, shifting from traditional to digital media, has significantly influenced brand marketing (Bala & Verma, 2018).

Despite the growth, the cosmetic industry still has some problems such as a decrease in the cosmetic quality index. As customers become more aware, they evaluate the adequacy and benefits of the business, and these evaluations increase expectations of customer confidence (Iglesias et al., 2020). When customers become distrustful, they leave the company and become disloyal to the product (Arslan, 2020; Golf-Papez & Moolenaar, 2022). Research on the relationship between brand engagement and social media marketing activities frequently concentrates on consumer brand engagement over community engagement. While Fetais et al. (2023) discovered that social media marketing activities did not affect loyalty, Salem et al. (2019) revealed that social media marketing activities considerably impact loyalty. Based on the gap in previous research, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between social media marketing activities that influence customer loyalty through community engagement in beauty care products. This research focuses on local Indonesian beauty care brands that conduct marketing activities through the social media platform Instagram. Previous surveys have indicated that beauty care consumers in Bandung, Indonesia, predominantly follow brands such as Whitelab, Azarine, and Avoskin.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. Social Media Marketing Activities

Seo and Park (2018) describe social media as an internet-based application, platform, or medium that enables users to interact, collaborate, or distribute content. Ismail et al. (2018) state that social media marketing activities relate to and refer to

interactions and communications between consumers and brands. Ibrahim et al. (2021) added that social media marketing activities serve as promotional communication tools that complement a company's marketing strategy by offering increased interactivity through online relationships between the company and consumers. Godey et al. (2016) and Fetais et al. (2023) have identified five dimensions of social media marketing activities, including word of mouth, entertainment, customization, interaction, and trendiness.

2.1.2. Community Engagement

Community engagement is a continuous process that seeks to promote long-term relationships based on shared interests within the community as well as mutual goals and benefits for individuals and groups (Kumar & Kumar, 2020). Community engagement signifies the need for cooperation in various situations, issues, and challenges involved in achieving environmental and behavioral changes (Sergio et al., 2022). Duckworth et al. (2016) conceptualized three dimensions of community engagement: cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and behavioral engagement.

2.1.3. Customer Loyalty

Ong et al. (2016) state that a company must develop systematic marketing strategies to attain customer loyalty. Although indirect factors can influence consumer behavior, loyalty is associated with feelings and commitments made when repurchasing or subscribing to preferred products and services. Customer loyalty is the long-term commitment of consumers manifested in their attitudes and behaviors toward products, brands, and companies (Yulistiana et al., 2018). Meryawan et al. (2022) illustrate that high loyalty will become an essential factor for every company or business.

2.2. Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. Positive Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Loyalty

Variations in consumer behavior impact the loyalty of customers (Watson et al., 2015). Customers widely use social media platforms for communication and information sharing, which motivates businesses to actively participate in social media marketing (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). Repeated purchases indicate an attitude of loyalty (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Promoting customer loyalty through social media marketing activities is shown by Yadav and Rahman (2018) and Banerji and Singh (2024), who highlight essential elements, including trendiness, personalized content, word-of-mouth, interactivity, and informativeness. According to Dessart (2017), social media marketing initiatives boost long-term engagement and trust, increasing loyalty. According to Shanahan et al. (2019), social media marketing activities act as environmental stimulants by raising brand awareness and fostering customer relationships, increasing brand loyalty.

H₁: Social Media Marketing Activities Has a Positive Effect on Customer Loyalty

2.2.2. Positive Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Community Engagement

By offering specific content to increase brand loyalty, social media marketing activities promote social identity and interactions among community members (Nevzat et al., 2016). Customers and brands have a stronger relationship when social media marketing is done since it provides tangible benefits like recognition (Leckie et

al., 2016). According to Fetais et al. (2023), community engagement and social media marketing activities can highlight the relationship between customers and brands. Social media activity features can affect customer behavior and reveal brand preferences (Ioanăs, 2014). Social media provides a means of enhancing customer interaction. The significance of interactive consumer experiences in fostering customer-brand interactions has been highlighted by earlier engagement research studies (Bento et al., 2018; Algharabat et al., 2020).

H₂: Social Media Marketing Activities Has a Positive Effect on Community Engagement

2.2.3. Positive Effect of Community Engagement on Customer Loyalty

Customer engagement through community activities significantly increases customer loyalty (Barari et al., 2021). Several studies have emphasized the relevance of interactive and participatory components in creating customer loyalty through community engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Habibi et al. (2014) show that active engagement in brand communities significantly increases customer loyalty. The interplay between social identity, trust, commitment, and engagement emphasizes the need to develop strong community relationships to increase client loyalty. Research conducted by Algharabat et al. (2020) states a positive relationship between engagement dimensions and brand loyalty. Dwivedi (2015) also found a positive influence between engagement and loyalty.

H₃: Community Engagement Has a Positive Effect on Customer Loyalty

2.2.4. The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Loyalty with Community Engagement as a Mediating Variable

Social media marketing activities can directly influence consumer loyalty (Ebrahim, 2020). However, this relationship is significantly strengthened when consumers are actively engaged in the brand's community (Kaur et al., 2020). According to Ashley and Tuten (2015), social media marketing activities also increase community engagement by creating interactive and engaging content that encourages consumers to participate in discussions, share experiences, and form a community around the brand. The increased community engagement then leads to higher consumer loyalty, as engaged consumers are more likely to develop emotional connections with the brand. Simon and Tossan (2018) and Fetais et al. (2023) argued that consumers' value-sharing via social media can strengthen their engagement with the brand and enhance their sense of community ownership. Therefore, previous research on engagement explains the importance of interactive consumer experiences in building consumer-brand relationships, especially on social media platforms. Wibowo et al. (2021) showed that effective social media marketing and positive customer experiences enhance relationship quality, which in turn leads to higher loyalty intentions.

H₄: Community Engagement Mediates The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Loyalty

2.3. Research Framework

As demonstrated by the research framework model in Figure 1, this study examined the impact of community engagement as a mediating variable between social media marketing activities and customer loyalty based on the literature review and research hypotheses.

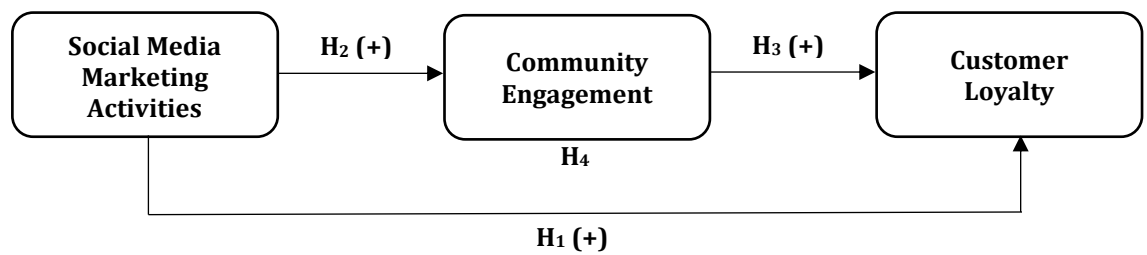


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Research Method

3.1. Population and Sampling Method

The population in this study consists of consumers of beauty care brands in Bandung, Indonesia. This study employs a quantitative approach using descriptive and verificative research methods. This study employed a purposive sampling technique by selecting respondents based on specific criteria. The criteria consist of individuals who have purchased from beauty care brands at least twice or more, followed those brands on the Instagram social media platform, and resided in Bandung, Indonesia. With 21 questionnaires from nine dimensions in this study, the minimum sample size was calculated as 105 respondents, with a maximum of 210. However, 194 respondents met the criteria, which were obtained from the distributed questionnaires.

3.2. Data Collection Method

The data collection method used in this research involved distributing questionnaires via Google Forms, where respondents were presented with questions and statements to be answered. This study utilized a Likert scale consisting of five measurement points. Social media marketing activities (SMMA) are comprised of five dimensions adopted by Jamil et al. (2022), which are entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. Community engagement (CE) consists of two dimensions adopted by Dessart et al. (2015), cognitive and affective. Meanwhile, customer loyalty (CL) consists of two dimensions adopted from Taghipourian and Bakhsh (2015), namely attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

3.3. Data Analysis Method

Data analysis and modeling were conducted using Smart PLS version 3.0. The validity test is determined by examining outer loading values, which should exceed 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). Outer loadings between 0.5 and 0.6 are still tolerable as long as the model is in the development stage, outer loadings < 0.5 can be eliminated from the analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Construct reliability can then be measured using reflective indicators by examining Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. The criterion for Cronbach's alpha value is more significant than 0.6, or by examining its composite reliability value with reliability at the threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). The hypothesis test which was employed to determine whether the hypotheses could be accepted or rejected by testing the construct p-value. This indicates that it is accepted if the influence between variables has a p-value of < 0.05 (Chin, 2013).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Validity Test

Table 1 indicates that there are still some outer loadings below 0.5, namely SMMA 6 with a value of 0.495, and it was eliminated from the analysis. This implies that the indicator cannot meet the corrected item correlation value to fulfill its indicator validity,

which may invalidate the variable (Deborah et al., 2022). Other indicators in the three variables used in this study had values > 0.5, indicating that each indicator was valid.

Table 1. Validity Test Result

Indicator	Social Media Marketing Activities	Community Engagement	Customer Loyalty
SMMA 1	0.705		
SMMA 2	0.714		
SMMA 3	0.690		
SMMA 4	0.633		
SMMA 5	0.521		
SMMA 7	0.601		
SMMA 8	0.723		
SMMA 9	0.604		
SMMA 10	0.736		
SMMA 11	0.650		
CE 1		0.691	
CE 2		0.759	
CE 3		0.818	
CE 4		0.680	
CL 1			0.765
CL 2			0.766
CL 3			0.739
CL 4			0.709
CL 5			0.787
CL 6			0.702

Source: Primary Data Processed (2023)

Figure 2 shows the results of the measurement model (outer model), which employs validity and reliability tests to ensure that the indicators provided to the respondents have appropriate values and high levels of reliability.

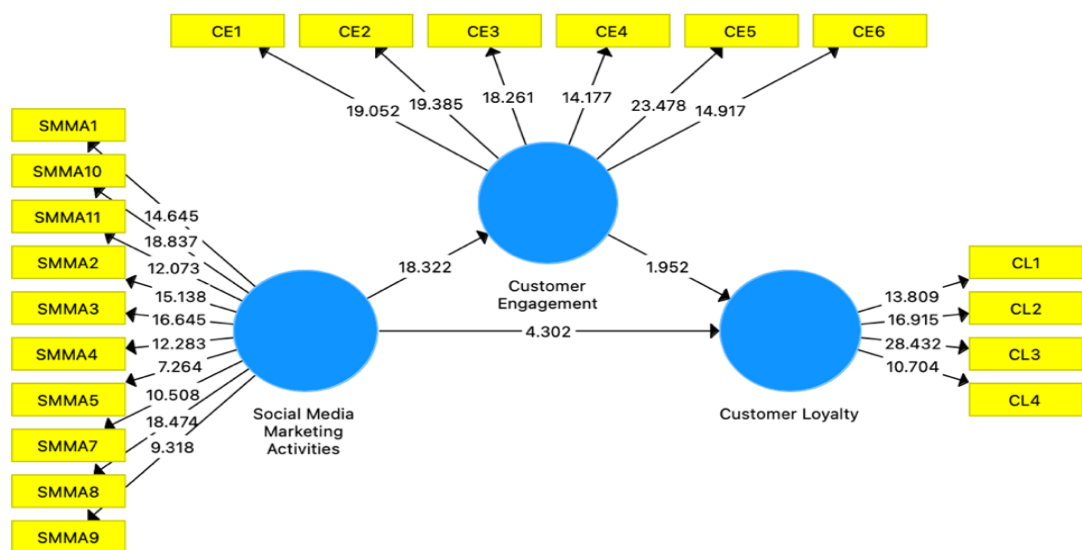


Figure 2. Outer Model

4.2. Reliability Test

Table 2 displays the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for each variable. Each variable shows a composite reliability value greater than 0.7 and Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.6, so the variables social media marketing activities, community engagement, and customer loyalty were declared reliable in this study.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Marketing Activities	0.865	0.857
Community Engagement	0.882	0.839
Customer Loyalty	0.827	0.712

Source: Primary Data Processed (2023)

4.3. Hypothesis Test

Hypotheses were tested using results from the p-value. This study uses a p-value of 0.05. Table 3 presents that social media marketing activities positively influences customer loyalty with a p-value of 0.000 (first hypothesis accepted). Social media marketing activities positively influence community engagement, with a p-value of 0.000 (second hypothesis accepted). Community engagement positively influences customer loyalty, with a p-value of 0.045 (third hypothesis accepted). The last, community engagement does not mediate the effect of social media marketing activities on customer loyalty, with a p-value of 0.054 (fourth hypothesis rejected).

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P-Value
Social Media Marketing Activities → Customer Loyalty	0.423	0.438	0.099	4.267	0.000
Social Media Marketing Activities → Community Engagement	0.758	0.761	0.038	19.741	0.000
Community engagement → Customer Loyalty	0.193	0.184	0.096	2.012	0.045
Social Media Marketing Activities → Community Engagement → Customer Loyalty	0.146	0.141	0.076	1.931	0.054

Source: Primary Data Processed (2023)

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1. The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Loyalty

Thus, businesses can boost customer loyalty by improving their marketing communications and using social media platforms to share product information (Almohaimmed, 2019). Through these interactions, companies can provide customers with specific recommendations. Customers become attracted to creating a brand community on social media platforms by the material posted there (Du Plessis, 2017). Stronger customer-brand relationships and increased loyalty are the results of an active and interactive social media presence, according to Yadav and Rahman (2018) research. Practical social media marketing activities significantly impact customer loyalty by encouraging engagement, as Khadim et al. (2018) showed.

Ebrahim (2020) proved that social media marketing activities foster community among customers and consumer loyalty.

4.4.2. The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Community Engagement

The results of hypothesis testing show that social media marketing activities have a positive effect on community involvement. Thus, improving marketing communication through social media platforms can boost customer trust in a business, expand relationships, and enhance interest in the community. Social media communities increase brand identification among consumers. Communication that is participative and interactive boosts customer engagement. Social media allows customers and brands to communicate in both directions, enabling individualized recommendations and direct communication. Stronger bonds of loyalty and community are fostered by this engagement (Chen & Lin, 2019; Fagundes et al., 2023). For example, Vinerean and Opreana (2021) show that brand communities may be built and customer loyalty increased through active social media engagement. In the same way, Abdullah and Faisal (2022) showed how social media platforms may efficiently encourage ongoing conversation and camaraderie among users, increasing company loyalty. Social identity and engagement theory emphasizes the value of interactive and participatory communication in creating a solid and committed brand community. Social media marketing activities raise community engagement.

4.4.3. The Effect of Community Engagement Activities on Customer Loyalty

The results of hypothesis testing show that community engagement positively influences customer loyalty. This means that building a long-term relationship between brands and customers is a must for companies. When a brand actively participates in its community, it creates a sense of belonging and trust among customers. Community engagement allows brands to cultivate shared goals and values to retain customers. Brands can build customer relationships and foster loyalty with direct interactions and personalized experiences within the community. For instance, Leckie et al. (2016) and Algharabat et al. (2020) showed that engagement dimensions such as cognitive processing, emotional attachment, and active participation significantly contribute to brand loyalty. Abdullah and Faisal (2022) emphasized the role of community involvement in strengthening customer loyalty by enhancing trust and satisfaction through continuous interaction and shared experiences on social media platforms.

4.4.4. The Mediating Role of Community Engagement on The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Loyalty

The findings of the hypothesis test indicate that the impact of social media marketing activities on customer loyalty is not mediated by community engagement. Customer loyalty cannot be fostered mainly through social media marketing activities and community engagement (Bilgin, 2018; Li et al., 2020). Several factors, such as insufficient customer connections or a failure to create a meaningful community influencing loyalty, are to blame. This might be because the three businesses' social media platforms need more significant user interaction, which would decrease customer engagement and loyalty (Hidayah & Esfandari, 2019).

5. Conclusion

This study proves that social media marketing activities influence community engagement while increasing customer loyalty. This means that it is essential for companies to carry out social media marketing activities as a medium to increase customer loyalty with a boost from community engagement. This finding shows that when companies frequently interact with consumers on social media, it will increase the interactive experience for consumers in building relationships between companies and consumers. Consumers who are actively engaged in brand communities on social media platforms tend to have stronger loyalty. However, this study found that community engagement does not affect the relationship between social media marketing activities and the level of consumer loyalty. Without the role of community engagement, consumer loyalty will grow along with the existence of social media marketing activities by a brand. The limitations of this study point to the need for further research to explore other factors that may influence customer loyalty in the context of social media interactions. For example, Chen and Lin (2019) investigated the impact of customer satisfaction on loyalty in the e-commerce industry. They provided insights into factors beyond community engagement and social media activities contributing to customer loyalty.

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