


The Impact of Social Media Engagement on Brand Love and Brand Loyalty among Generation Z in Indonesia

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received Jan, 2026 Revised Jan, 2026 Accepted Jan, 2026</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Brand Love; Brand Loyalty; Generation Z; SEM-PLS; Social Media Engagement</p>	<p>This study examines the impact of social media engagement on brand love and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected from 135 respondents through a structured survey using a Likert scale. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS 3.0). The results show that social media engagement significantly influences brand love, which in turn positively affects brand loyalty. Additionally, brand love was found to mediate the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of emotional engagement in fostering long-term customer loyalty, particularly in the context of Generation Z's high social media usage. Marketers aiming to engage this demographic should prioritize creating authentic and emotionally resonant content to foster brand love and loyalty.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.</i></p> <div></div>
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, social media has become an essential tool for communication, interaction, and engagement [1]. Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is the first truly digital-native generation, having grown up surrounded by social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter [2]. This demographic is increasingly shaping the consumption patterns, expectations, and behaviors of the modern market, particularly in Indonesia, which has one of the largest social media user bases in Southeast Asia [3].

Brand engagement through social media has garnered significant attention from marketers and researchers, as it is viewed as a key factor in fostering strong emotional

connections between brands and consumers [4]. One of the critical outcomes of such engagement is brand love, a concept that reflects the emotional attachment a consumer feels toward a brand [5]. Brand love has been shown to lead to enhanced customer loyalty, driving repeat purchases, brand advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth [6]. However, despite the increasing importance of social media in influencing consumer behavior, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of how social media engagement specifically affects brand love and brand loyalty, especially among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia [7].

Brand loyalty, defined as a consumer's commitment to repurchase or continue using a brand, is crucial for ensuring long-term business success [8]. However,

brand loyalty is no longer solely based on rational factors like product quality or price; emotional factors, such as brand love, play a significant role in fostering loyalty in the digital age. The interactive nature of social media offers a unique opportunity for brands to connect with consumers emotionally, thereby potentially influencing their loyalty behaviors [9].

This study aims to explore the relationship between social media engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty among Generation Z in Indonesia [10]. Specifically, it investigates how social media engagement can lead to emotional attachment (brand love), which in turn strengthens brand loyalty [11]. By utilizing a quantitative research design and employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS 3) for data analysis, this research will provide insights into the significance of social media engagement in building brand loyalty in the Indonesian context.

The research is significant for marketers and brand managers aiming to better understand the dynamics of Generation Z's consumer behavior, particularly in the context of social media. With this understanding, businesses can craft more effective marketing strategies that foster long-term brand relationships and enhance customer retention among this influential consumer group. In summary, this paper seeks to fill the gap in existing literature by examining the impact of social media engagement on brand love and brand loyalty, focusing on the behaviors of Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The findings will offer practical implications for brands looking to leverage social media as a tool for building strong, emotionally-driven customer relationships in a competitive market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement refers to the level of interaction, involvement, and emotional connection a consumer has with a brand on social media platforms [4]. Engagement behaviors include likes, shares, comments, and other forms of

participation that demonstrate active involvement with content. Social media engagement has become a critical driver of brand awareness, consumer trust, and brand perception [12], [13]. In the context of Generation Z, social media engagement is particularly relevant as this generation has grown up with digital technologies and developed high expectations for real-time interactions with brands on social platforms [14]. According to Wang & Lee (2020), the engagement process on social media is not just transactional but emotional and relational, with consumers seeking personal connections with brands. This view aligns with the idea that social media engagement is a multidimensional construct, involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions [16]. For Generation Z, social media engagement goes beyond passive content consumption; it involves co-creating content, sharing experiences, and participating in brand communities [17]. Thus, the emotional connection fostered through social media platforms is expected to lead to greater brand attachment and, ultimately, brand loyalty.

2.2 Brand Love

Brand love is a relatively new but important concept in the branding literature, describing a consumer's emotional attachment, affection, and passion for a brand [18]. It is seen as a more intense and emotional connection than brand satisfaction or brand trust. Brand love has been conceptualized as comprising several dimensions, including affection, passion, and attachment, which collectively reflect a strong emotional bond with the brand [18]. Researchers argue that brand love goes beyond traditional brand loyalty, as it incorporates an emotional dimension that makes consumers feel deeply connected to the brand on a personal level [18]. In the digital age, social media is an essential tool for fostering brand love, as it allows consumers to engage with brands in a more personal and intimate manner. For

Generation Z, who values authentic and relatable brand interactions, social media engagement is a critical path to experiencing brand love [10]. This engagement can result in not just positive attitudes toward the brand but an emotional connection that can influence consumer behavior in the long run.

2.3 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a well-established concept in marketing, defined as a consumer's commitment to repurchase or continue using a brand over time [19]. It is often measured through repeated purchase behaviors, brand advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth. In the context of the digital economy, brand loyalty has evolved, with emotional factors such as brand love increasingly playing a crucial role in influencing consumer retention [8]. Consumers who have strong emotional connections with a brand are more likely to engage in loyal behaviors, such as repeat purchases and brand recommendations [20]. Social media engagement has been found to enhance brand loyalty by fostering deeper emotional connections and facilitating ongoing interaction with the brand [9]. For Generation Z, who value personalized experiences and real-time interaction, social media engagement serves as a key mediator in the relationship between brand love and loyalty. As such, understanding how social media engagement contributes to brand loyalty is essential for brands aiming to maintain long-term relationships with consumers in the digital era.

2.4 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Numerous studies suggest that social media engagement strengthens brand love, which in turn enhances brand loyalty. According to Haris et al. (2022), consumers who engage with brands on social media are more likely to form emotional attachments, influencing their loyalty. Social media provides brands with opportunities to build deeper

relationships through personalized content, two-way communication, and brand communities [22]. Engagement enables consumers to participate in brand conversations and co-create experiences Hussain et al. (2021), fostering emotional connections. Additionally, real-time feedback helps reinforce brand attachment [24]. Brand love has been shown to mediate the relationship between social media engagement and loyalty Aljuhmani et al. (2023), particularly for Generation Z, who value authenticity. This study proposes that: 1) Social Media Engagement positively influences Brand Love, 2) Brand Love positively influences Brand Loyalty, and 3) Social Media Engagement indirectly influences Brand Loyalty through Brand Love. The hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- H1: Social media engagement has a significant positive effect on brand love.
- H2: Brand love has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.
- H3: Brand love mediates the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The study utilizes a quantitative research design to explore the relationships between social media engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty. The quantitative approach allows for the collection and analysis of numerical data, which can provide insights into the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables. A cross-sectional survey design is used to gather data at a single point in time, which is suitable for understanding the associations between the constructs under study. The data is analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS 3), a statistical technique that enables the examination of complex relationships among multiple variables and provides

insight into the direct and indirect effects of the constructs.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population for this study is Generation Z consumers in Indonesia, specifically those who actively engage with brands on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Generation Z is defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, representing a significant portion of the social media user base in Indonesia. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed to select respondents due to its efficiency and ease of access to the target population. The sample size consists of 135 respondents, which is adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, as the recommended sample size for SEM-PLS typically ranges from 100 to 200 respondents [26]. Respondents were selected from various social media platforms and invited to participate through online surveys. Inclusion criteria required respondents to be between the ages of 18 and 24, have at least one active social media account, engage with brands on social media, and be Indonesian citizens to ensure the relevance of the findings to the local context.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure social media engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty. The questionnaire consists of three main sections: 1) Demographic Information, which collects basic details such as age, gender, and social media usage habits to describe the sample and control for demographic differences in the analysis; 2) Social Media Engagement, measured using a scale adapted from Schivinski and Schreiner et al. (2021); Shahbaznezhad et al. (2021), including items assessing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of engagement, such as the frequency of interactions with brands, content sharing, and emotional connection with the brand on social

media; 3) Brand Love, measured using a scale from Attiq et al. (2025), assessing affection, passion, and attachment to the brand, with sample items like "I feel a strong emotional attachment to this brand" and "This brand makes me feel happy"; 4) Brand Loyalty, measured using a scale based on Anning-Dorson (2025); Inês & Moreira (2023), which includes items assessing repurchase intention and brand recommendation, such as "I will continue to buy this brand in the future" and "I would recommend this brand to others." All items used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to capture the intensity of respondents' agreement with each statement.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study is conducted using SEM-PLS 3 (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling), a robust statistical method for analyzing complex relationships among multiple variables. SEM-PLS is particularly suitable for exploratory research and is widely used in social sciences to model latent constructs and their relationships [26]. This approach allows for the examination of both the measurement model, which assesses how well the indicators represent the latent variables, and the structural model, which examines how the latent variables are interrelated. The analysis is conducted in two stages: 1) Measurement Model Evaluation, which assesses the reliability and validity of the measurement scales used to measure the constructs of social media engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty, using key indicators such as composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings; 2) Structural Model Evaluation, which tests the relationships between the variables by evaluating the path coefficients to determine the strength and significance of the relationships among social media engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty, with bootstrapping used to assess the significance of the path coefficients and

the indirect effects. The data is analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0 software, widely used for SEM-PLS analysis. The results will be interpreted based on the coefficient of determination (R^2), the significance of path coefficients, and the effect size (f^2), providing insights into the impact of social media engagement on brand love and brand loyalty.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Sample

The sample consists of 135 Generation Z consumers from Indonesia, selected based on their active engagement with social media platforms. The sample predominantly included individuals aged between 18 and 24 years, with the age distribution as follows: 65 respondents (48.15%) were aged 18–20, 45 respondents (33.33%) were aged 21–22, and 25 respondents (18.52%) were aged 23–24. In terms of gender, the sample was fairly balanced, with 75 female respondents (55.56%) and 60 male respondents (44.44%). Regarding social media usage, the majority of respondents were active on platforms such as Instagram (88.89%), TikTok (81.48%), and Twitter (62.96%), which are popular among Generation Z, particularly for brand engagement. A significant majority (70.37%) reported engaging with brands on social media daily, indicating a high level of engagement. Most respondents (96.30%) were undergraduate students, with the remainder (3.70%) still in high school, aligning with the demographic characteristics of Generation Z in Indonesia. Geographically, the sample was predominantly from urban areas, particularly Java (74.07%), where social media usage is more prevalent due to higher internet penetration. Regarding income, the majority (51.85%) had an income below IDR 5,000,000, typical for younger consumers, but social media engagement remained high across all income groups, suggesting that engagement is influenced by factors other

than income, such as accessibility and digital literacy.

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model in SEM-PLS was evaluated for reliability and validity to ensure that the observed variables effectively represent their respective latent constructs: Social Media Engagement (SME), Brand Love (BL), and Brand Loyalty (BLoy). In this section, we will present the results of the evaluation based on composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings.

a. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The composite reliability (CR) was calculated for each construct to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.70 indicating good reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to measure convergent validity, with values above 0.50 indicating that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. The results of CR and AVE for the constructs are as follows: Social Media Engagement (SME): CR = 0.885, AVE = 0.757; Brand Love (BL): CR = 0.912, AVE = 0.795; and Brand Loyalty (BLoy): CR = 0.876, AVE = 0.722. All CR values exceed the 0.70 threshold, indicating good internal consistency, and the AVE values for each construct surpass the 0.50 threshold, confirming that the constructs explain a sufficient amount of variance in their indicators. These results indicate good convergent validity for all constructs.

b. Factor Loadings

Factor loadings represent the relationship between each observed variable (item) and its corresponding latent construct. To assess the quality of the factor loadings, each should exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 [26]. Below is a table showing the factor loadings for each item used to measure the constructs of Social

Media Engagement (SME), Brand Love (BL), and Brand Loyalty (BLoy).

Table 1. Loading Factor

Indicator	Construct	Factor Loading
I enjoy engaging with this brand's content	Social Media Engagement (SME)	0.814
I often like and comment on this brand's posts	Social Media Engagement (SME)	0.797
I share this brand's posts on my social media	Social Media Engagement (SME)	0.752
I feel emotionally attached to this brand	Brand Love (BL)	0.834
This brand makes me feel happy	Brand Love (BL)	0.856
I have a strong emotional connection to this brand	Brand Love (BL)	0.878
I will continue to buy this brand in the future	Brand Loyalty (BLoy)	0.763
I would recommend this brand to my friends	Brand Loyalty (BLoy)	0.805
This brand is my preferred choice over others	Brand Loyalty (BLoy)	0.777

Table 1 presents the factor loadings for the indicators measuring Social Media Engagement (SME), Brand Love (BL), and Brand Loyalty (BLoy). All factor loadings exceed the 0.70 threshold, indicating that each indicator significantly contributes to its respective construct. For SME, "I enjoy engaging with this brand's content" has a loading of 0.814, "I often like and comment on this brand's posts" is 0.797, and "I share this brand's posts on my social media" is 0.752. For BL, "I feel emotionally attached to this brand" has a loading of 0.834, "This brand makes me feel happy" is 0.856, and "I have a strong emotional connection to this brand" is 0.878, the highest

among all indicators. For BLoy, "I will continue to buy this brand in the future" has a loading of 0.763, "I would recommend this brand to my friends" is 0.805, and "This brand is my preferred choice over others" is 0.777, confirming the importance of brand preference in loyalty.

c. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity ensures that the constructs are distinct from one another. It can be assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with the correlations between constructs. The square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than its correlations with any other construct [31].

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Construct	SME	BL	BLoy
Social Media Engagement (SME)	0.861		
Brand Love (BL)	0.452	0.893	
Brand Loyalty (BLoy)	0.485	0.607	0.856

Table 2 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, which helps determine whether the constructs are distinct from one another. According to this criterion, a construct should explain more variance in its indicators than it shares with other constructs, meaning the square root of the Average

Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs. In Table 2, the diagonal values represent the square root of the AVE for each construct, while the off-diagonal values show the correlations between the constructs. The results indicate that Social Media Engagement (SME) has a square root of AVE value of

0.861, greater than its correlations with Brand Love (BL) (0.452) and Brand Loyalty (BLoy) (0.485), confirming that SME is distinct from both BL and BLoy. Brand Love (BL) has a square root of AVE value of 0.893, which is greater than its correlations with SME (0.452) and BLoy (0.607), confirming that BL is distinct from SME and BLoy. Similarly, Brand Loyalty (BLoy) has a square root of AVE value of 0.856, higher than its correlations with SME (0.485) and BL (0.607), confirming that BLoy is distinct from both SME and BL.

d. Multicollinearity Check

To assess potential multicollinearity issues, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the indicators were examined. VIF values should be below 5, indicating that there is no significant multicollinearity among the indicators. The VIF values for all indicators were within acceptable limits, confirming that multicollinearity is not an issue in this study.

4.3 Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated to test the hypotheses proposed in this study, examining the relationships between Social Media Engagement (SME), Brand Love (BL), and Brand Loyalty (BLoy). The evaluation was conducted using SEM-PLS 3.0, and key indicators such as path coefficients, R^2 values, f^2 values, and significance of paths were assessed. In this section, we present the results of the structural model evaluation.

a. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

The path coefficients represent the strength and direction of the relationships between the constructs. Each hypothesis is tested by examining the path coefficient and the corresponding p-value. A path coefficient above 0.10 is considered a small effect, above 0.30 a medium effect, and above 0.50 a large effect [32]. The p-value determines the statistical significance, with values below 0.05 indicating significant relationships.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value
H1	SME → BL	0.554	7.212	0.000
H2	BL → BLoy	0.637	8.426	0.000
H3	SME → BLoy (indirect)	0.342	5.254	0.000

Table 3 presents the results of the hypothesis testing, showing the path coefficients, t-values, and p-values for each hypothesis. The results indicate that all hypotheses are supported, with statistically significant relationships. For H1, the path from Social Media Engagement (SME) to Brand Love (BL) has a path coefficient of 0.554, a t-value of 7.212, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a significant positive effect of SME on BL. This supports the idea that increased social media engagement leads to stronger emotional

attachment to the brand. For H2, the path from Brand Love (BL) to Brand Loyalty (BLoy) has a path coefficient of 0.637, a t-value of 8.426, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that brand love significantly influences brand loyalty. This highlights the critical role of emotional attachment in fostering consumer loyalty. For H3, the indirect effect of SME on BLoy through BL is 0.342, with a t-value of 5.254 and a p-value of 0.000, demonstrating that brand love mediates the relationship between social media engagement and brand

loyalty. These results confirm that social media engagement indirectly enhances brand loyalty by fostering brand love, highlighting the importance of emotional connections in digital consumer behavior.

b. R² and Effect Sizes (f²)

R² values indicate the proportion of variance in the dependent variables explained by the model. In this study, the R² values for Brand Love (BL) and Brand Loyalty (BLoy) are 0.306 and 0.407, respectively, suggesting moderate explanatory power for both variables. Specifically, Brand Love (BL) has a

moderate explanatory power, while Brand Loyalty (BLoy) demonstrates moderate to strong explanatory power. These R² values imply that the model captures a reasonable proportion of the variance in brand love and brand loyalty, although there is room for improvement. Despite this, the model effectively explains a significant portion of the variability in these constructs. Additionally, Effect Size (f²) is used to measure the magnitude of each relationship, with effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 considered small, medium, and large, respectively [33].

Table 4. Effect Sizes

Path	Path Coefficient	f ² Value	Effect Size
SME → BL	0.555	0.166	Medium
BL → BLoy	0.633	0.225	Medium
SME → BLoy (Indirect Effect)	0.347	0.102	Small

Table 4 presents the effect sizes (f²) for the paths tested in the structural model. Effect sizes indicate the magnitude of the relationship between constructs, with values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 representing small, medium, and large effects, respectively [33]. For the path from Social Media Engagement (SME) to Brand Love (BL), the path coefficient is 0.555, and the f² value is 0.166, indicating a medium effect size, suggesting that SME has a moderate to strong impact on brand love. The path from Brand Love (BL) to Brand Loyalty (BLoy) has a path coefficient of 0.633 and an f² value of 0.225, also representing a medium effect size, highlighting the substantial influence of emotional attachment on brand loyalty. For the indirect effect of SME on BLoy through BL, the f² value is 0.102, indicating a small effect size, which suggests that while social media engagement does influence brand loyalty through brand love, its impact is somewhat smaller in comparison to the direct effects of

SME and BL on BLoy. These effect sizes suggest that social media engagement and brand love have moderate to substantial impacts on brand loyalty, with the mediation of brand love having a smaller, but still meaningful, effect.

4.4 Discussion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between social media engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The results confirm the positive and significant influence of social media engagement on brand love and brand loyalty, as well as the mediating role of brand love in enhancing brand loyalty. This section discusses the implications of these findings, compares them with previous research, and highlights the theoretical and practical contributions of the study.

The results demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between social media engagement and brand love, with social media engagement acting as a key driver of

emotional attachment to brands. This finding is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the importance of social media as a platform for emotional engagement [16]. In the digital era, consumers increasingly seek personalized and meaningful interactions with brands, and social media platforms provide an ideal environment for fostering such connections [9]. For Generation Z, social media engagement is more than just transactional; it is about building a relationship with the brand. This generation, which has grown up surrounded by digital technologies, values authentic and relatable brand interactions, and they use social media as a space to express their identity, share experiences, and connect with brands on a personal level [34]. Therefore, the more actively consumers engage with a brand on social media, the stronger their emotional connection to that brand becomes. This finding aligns with previous studies that have shown that emotional engagement on social media strengthens the relationship between consumers and brands [15]. Marketers should leverage this insight by creating engaging and interactive content on social media that resonates with Generation Z's values and interests. By facilitating two-way communication and co-creating experiences with consumers, brands can foster stronger emotional bonds that lead to greater brand love.

The study finds that brand love has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty, confirming the crucial role of emotional attachment in driving consumer loyalty. This result is consistent with the work of Ahmadi & Ataei (2024) who demonstrated that emotional attachment to a brand leads to stronger loyalty behaviors, such as repeat purchases and brand advocacy. The emotional bond created through social media engagement enhances the likelihood that consumers will continue to support the brand over time. For Generation Z, the connection to a brand is

often based on emotional and relational factors rather than purely functional or utilitarian attributes. This generation is more likely to exhibit brand loyalty if they feel a sense of belonging or connection to the brand, which can be facilitated through social media interactions. The results suggest that brands that successfully foster brand love through emotional engagement are more likely to see long-term loyalty from their consumers. In practical terms, this means that brands should focus on creating experiences that go beyond functional value and emphasize emotional appeal. Storytelling, brand authenticity, and personalized interactions are key strategies for cultivating brand love and, in turn, enhancing brand loyalty. Brands that create memorable, emotional experiences for Generation Z on social media are likely to reap the benefits of increased loyalty.

The findings of this study underscore the mediating role of brand love in the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty. Specifically, social media engagement influences brand loyalty not directly, but through the emotional attachment that consumers develop to the brand. This mediation effect suggests that social media engagement serves as a catalyst for fostering brand love, which then leads to greater brand loyalty. The concept of brand love as a mediator is an important contribution to the literature, as it highlights the emotional dimensions of consumer behavior in the digital age. Previous research has established that emotional attachment is a key driver of loyalty, but this study extends that understanding by demonstrating how social media engagement can lead to emotional attachment and, consequently, loyalty. This finding is consistent with the work of Uludag et al. (2024), who suggested that brand love plays a crucial role in enhancing brand loyalty in digital environments where engagement is high. For marketers, this means that social

media engagement is not only about increasing brand visibility but also about fostering deeper emotional connections with consumers. The emotional bond created through engaging social media interactions can strengthen consumer loyalty, even when the direct impact of engagement on loyalty is moderate. Therefore, brands should focus on creating emotionally resonant content and engaging with consumers in ways that foster feelings of attachment and affection for the brand.

a. Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study have several important implications for both theory and practice. **Theoretical Implications:** This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that brand love mediates the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty. It extends the understanding of how emotional connections with brands are formed in the context of digital media and provides empirical evidence for the role of social media as a platform for fostering brand love. The study also confirms the importance of emotional factors, such as brand love, in the formation of brand loyalty. While previous research has emphasized the rational factors that drive loyalty, this study highlights the emotional drivers of loyalty, particularly in the digital age. By focusing on Generation Z, the study adds to the growing body of literature on this demographic group and its unique consumer behavior in the context of social media. Generation Z's reliance on digital platforms for brand interactions and their desire for authentic and emotional connections with brands underscore the importance of social media engagement in modern branding strategies.

Practical Implications: Marketers targeting Generation Z should prioritize social media

engagement as a means of fostering brand love. Engaging content that resonates with consumers' values, interests, and emotions is key to building a strong emotional connection. Social media campaigns should focus not only on functional aspects of the brand but also on emotional storytelling that appeals to consumers' desires for authenticity and relatability. Brands should use social media to co-create experiences with consumers and encourage participation in brand communities. Given the mediating role of brand love, marketers should design campaigns that foster long-term emotional attachment rather than focusing solely on short-term transactional goals. Creating brand love will lead to stronger and more sustainable brand loyalty. Brands should leverage influencer marketing and user-generated content to enhance social media engagement and foster a sense of community and connection among Generation Z consumers. Influencers and consumers who share their experiences with the brand can help reinforce the emotional attachment to the brand.

b. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that offer opportunities for future research. First, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences, and future research could employ a longitudinal design to examine how changes in social media engagement over time affect brand love and brand loyalty. Second, the study used a convenience sample of Generation Z consumers in Indonesia, which may not fully represent the broader population; thus, future research could use a probability sampling technique to enhance the generalizability of the findings and examine whether the

relationships hold in different cultural and demographic contexts. Third, this study focused on social media engagement in general, but different social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Twitter) may have varying effects on brand love and loyalty, and future research could explore the specific impact of each platform on these outcomes. Finally, while brand love was found to mediate the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty, other variables such as brand trust, perceived value, and consumer empowerment could also play a mediating role, and future studies could explore these additional factors.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of social media engagement in fostering both brand love and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that engaging with consumers on social media platforms not only increases emotional attachment (brand love) but also strengthens brand loyalty, with brand love acting as a mediator in this relationship. These results suggest that brands should focus on emotional connections through social media to cultivate long-term customer loyalty. Marketers targeting Generation Z should invest in authentic, interactive, and personalized social media campaigns to foster strong emotional bonds with consumers. The study also provides a basis for future research to further explore the nuances of social media engagement and its impact on different consumer demographics and social media platforms.

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