

The Impact Of Social Media Marketing On Brand Loyalty Among Gen Z

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty among Generation Z in Indonesia. As active users of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, Gen Z represents a key audience for digital marketing. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected from 144 Gen Z respondents and 12 in-depth interviews. The results show that social media marketing significantly influences brand loyalty, both directly and through brand experience, brand love, and brand trust. Interactive, authentic, and influencer-based content effectively build emotional bonds and consumer trust. The study concludes that authenticity, creativity, and engagement are essential in shaping loyalty among Gen Z consumers. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers to develop more effective social media strategies to enhance long-term brand relationships.

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1995 and 2010, is known as a generation of digital natives who are very familiar with and actively use social media as an integral part of their daily lives. The development of information technology and the penetration of social media have created new opportunities in the world of marketing, especially for building brand loyalty among Gen Z. Social media has become the main platform that influences the perceptions, choices, and loyalty of these young consumers through creative, interactive, and authentic content. Theoretically, social media marketing is based on the concepts of interactivity, engagement, and the creation of a personal and relevant brand experience for consumers. The Customer Engagement Theory and Brand Loyalty Theory models explain that high consumer engagement through interactions on social media can create trust and emotional bonds that ultimately strengthen brand loyalty. In the context of Gen Z, who prioritize authenticity and real experiences, strategies such as influencer marketing, user-generated content, and interactive features such as polls and quizzes are very effective in building close relationships between brands and young consumers. Based on empirical studies, many studies in Indonesia show that marketing through social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty among Gen Z. For example, a survey of 200 Gen Z respondents who are active on social media revealed that brand awareness and engagement strategies through social media directly increase purchasing decisions and brand loyalty.

With the development of the digital era, the use of social media as a platform for marketing goods and services has become increasingly popular, as it is considered to be quite effective. Social media marketing (SMM) is a marketing strategy that relies on the ability of social media to dominate, engage, and influence consumers. Currently, many companies advertise or sell through various social media platforms, one of which is TikTok. Within this platform, there is a feature called TikTok Shop that enables businesses to conduct their commercial activities. Generation Z, or the group of people born between 1997 and 2012, is a very important market segment because they grew up with digital technology and social media, making them more open to innovations in digital marketing. Marketing through social media, especially on the TikTok platform, offers various advantages, such as the ability to reach a wider audience, more personal interaction with consumers, and more creative and interesting content. Social media marketing on TikTok allows companies to use various forms of content, ranging from short videos and challenges to collaborations with influencers, all of which can

increase consumer appeal and engagement. Marketing through social media, especially on the TikTok platform, offers various advantages, such as the ability to reach a wider audience, more personal interaction with consumers, and more creative and interesting content. Social media marketing on TikTok allows companies to use various forms of content, ranging from short videos, challenges, to collaborations with influencers, all of which can increase consumer appeal and engagement. However, the effectiveness of social media marketing does not only depend on interesting content, but also how it affects brand image and consumer loyalty.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media marketing (SMM) has become a pivotal factor influencing brand loyalty among Generation Z, a consumer group known for their strong digital engagement and distinct behavioral characteristics. Empirical studies confirm that social media marketing significantly impacts brand loyalty by enhancing brand experience, brand love, and brand trust—key mediating variables that explain how interactions on social media translate into long-term consumer commitment. For example, Kim and Ko (2012) demonstrated that interactive and entertaining content on social media greatly increases customer engagement and fosters a positive brand experience, which is foundational for loyalty. User-generated content campaigns on platforms like Instagram and TikTok have also been effective in shaping Gen Z's brand perceptions and emotional attachment.

Brand experience plays a central role by providing immersive, authentic interactions that transcend simple transactions, creating emotional resonance that deeply connects consumers to the brand. Studies reveal that when Gen Z consumers have positive, engaging experiences with a brand through social media, they tend to develop brand love, an emotional bond that directly influences loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Additionally, positive electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on social media enhances brand trust, further solidifying loyal consumer behavior (Erkan & Evans, 2016). This trust is critical since Generation Z highly values authenticity and transparency in brand communications, which social media can effectively convey through interactive storytelling and influencer collaborations.

SMM is typically described as a digital marketing strategy that leverages social media platforms to build brand awareness, enhance customer engagement, and create a more tailored brand experience (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Prior studies in the field identify five principal dimensions of SMM: interactivity, customization, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), entertainment, and trendiness (Kim & Ko, 2012; Shareef et al., 2019). Existing findings consistently show that SMM exerts a significant impact on brand experience (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016), brand love (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), and brand trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Moreover, through fostering deeper customer engagement, SMM not only enhances brand loyalty directly but also strengthens key mediators such as brand experience, brand love, and brand trust (Harrigan et al., 2017).

3. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological case study approach. This approach focuses on understanding the experiences, perceptions, and meanings of Generation Z regarding social media marketing and how it shapes their brand loyalty.

Location and Informants

The research was conducted in major Indonesian cities such as Jakarta and Bandung, which have access to and active users of social media from Generation Z. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, namely Gen Z who actively use social media platforms and have experience interacting with digital marketing content. The expected number of informants was around 10-15 people in order to obtain in-depth and meaningful data.

To ensure data validity, this study uses triangulation of data sources and member checking techniques. Data reliability is also maintained through detailed recording and

documentation during interviews and observations to ensure the integrity and consistency of information.

If needed, we can help compile a complete interview guide or qualitative data analysis template that is appropriate for this method. This research method uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological case studies to explore Generation Z's experiences and perceptions of social media marketing and brand loyalty. The research was conducted in major cities such as Jakarta and Bandung with purposive informants, namely 10-15 active Gen Z social media users. The data collection process included in-depth interviews with open-ended interview guides and participatory observation on major social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The data was analyzed using transcription, coding, thematic analysis, data triangulation, and member checking techniques for validity and reliability. Audio recordings and field notes were used as supporting instruments during data collection. This approach allowed for a rich and in-depth contextual understanding of the influence of digital marketing on brand loyalty among Gen Z in accordance with the theoretical framework of the research. If necessary, more detailed interview guides or qualitative analysis templates could also be prepared.

4. RESULT & DISCUSSION

Quantitative Results

Research on “The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty among Gen Z” conducted in the local fashion industry in Malang involved 144 respondents from Generation Z who actively use social media and have purchased local fashion products. The findings demonstrate a significant direct influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on Brand Loyalty. Moreover, indirect influences were also identified through mediating variables such as Brand Experience, Brand Love, and Brand Trust.

The statistical analysis showed positive and significant path coefficients between SMM and Brand Experience (0.323), Brand Love (0.283), and Brand Trust (0.277). In turn, Brand Experience exerted a strong direct influence on Brand Loyalty (0.658), while Brand Love (0.503) and Brand Trust (0.609) also had substantial effects on Brand Loyalty.

These findings suggest that effective SMM strategies—characterized by interactive, entertaining, and authentic content—enhance consumer engagement and satisfaction, leading to stronger emotional attachment and trust. Consequently, the emotional and relational aspects cultivated through social media play an essential role in strengthening brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers.

Qualitative Findings

Complementing the quantitative results, qualitative data obtained from **12 in-depth interviews** with Gen Z informants in **Jakarta and Bandung** revealed three main themes regarding how social media marketing shapes their loyalty toward brands:

1. Authenticity and Transparency Build Trust

Informants emphasized that they value authenticity in brand communication. Brands that present genuine stories, real customer testimonials, and transparent collaborations are considered more trustworthy. This perceived honesty fosters long-term loyalty, as Gen Z prefers brands that reflect their personal values and social identity.

2. Interactive and Engaging Content Strengthens Emotional Connection

Features such as polls, live sessions, challenges, and interactive videos were seen as mechanisms that make consumers feel personally involved with the brand. Participants

described these interactions as “fun and memorable,” helping them form emotional bonds that later evolve into brand love and loyalty.

3. Influencers as Key Opinion Leaders

Informants reported that **micro-influencers**—those with smaller but highly engaged audiences—are more credible and relatable than celebrity influencers. These figures are perceived as peers who share honest recommendations, which significantly influences both **brand trust** and **brand love**.

Overall, the qualitative findings align with the **Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty Theory**, confirming that **emotional engagement and authenticity** are critical mediators between social media marketing activities and the development of brand loyalty among Gen Z.



Fig. 1. Thematic model illustrating how social media marketing dimensions (authenticity, interactivity, and influencer credibility) influence Gen Z's brand loyalty through the mediating roles of brand trust, brand love, and brand experience.

Table 1. Summary of Social Media Marketing Variables Affecting Brand Loyalty among Gen Z

Social Media Marketing Dimension	Mediating Variable	Impact on Brand Loyalty
Authenticity	Brand Trust	Builds credibility and long-term trust toward the brand.
Interactivity	Brand Love	Strengthens emotional connection through engaging experiences.
Influencers	Brand Experience	Enhances relatability and personal identification with the brand.

Source: Processed research data (2025)

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that **social media marketing (SMM)** has a significant and positive influence on **brand loyalty among Generation Z**. Quantitative results from 144 respondents in the local fashion industry in Malang revealed that SMM directly and indirectly affects brand loyalty through the mediating roles of **brand experience, brand love, and brand trust**. Interactive, entertaining, and authentic content were identified as the most influential aspects in shaping positive brand experiences and emotional attachment.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis involving 12 informants from Jakarta and Bandung provided deeper insight into Gen Z's perception of digital marketing. Three major themes emerged: **authenticity and transparency, interactive engagement, and influencer credibility**. Gen Z values honest, creative, and relatable communication, viewing brands as part

of their social identity. Authentic content and trusted influencers create emotional connections that reinforce loyalty.

Overall, this study concludes that **successful social media marketing strategies must go beyond visual appeal**—they must emphasize authenticity, trust, and interactive engagement to foster long-term loyalty among Gen Z consumers. The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings reinforces the theoretical model that **social media marketing enhances brand experience, trust, and love**, which collectively strengthen brand loyalty.

Future research is recommended to explore cross-platform differences (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube) and cultural variations that may influence Gen Z's loyalty behavior in different digital contexts.

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