



Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty, The Mediating Role of Brand Trust: a Partial Least Square Algorithm (PLS) Approach

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Abstract.

Purpose: Brand loyalty is a very important aspect along with technological growth, market saturation, globalization, and intense competition. This research seeks to analyze how social media marketing and brand experience impact brand loyalty among students who use XL in Semarang City, with brand trust serving as an intermediary factor.

Methods: The research approach is quantitative, with sampling using a purposive sampling technique and the research sample is 133 university students in Semarang. This research establishes a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis with Smart PLS.

Result: The results of this research indicate that both social media marketing and brand experience factors exhibit a favorable and substantial impact on brand loyalty. Moreover, brand trust displays a positive and notable effect on brand loyalty while also acting as a mediator for the positive influence that social media marketing and brand experience have on brand loyalty.

Novelty: Analysis and testing of variables that influence user brand loyalty of XL using the Partial Least Square (PLS) algorithm and the Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) approach. This study examines the telecommunications sector on the advice of previous studies.

Keywords: Brand loyalty, Brand trust, Social media marketing, Brand trust, Cellular operators.

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INTRODUCTION

Telecommunications has developed into one of the basic needs of Indonesian citizens today [1]. Indonesia has 170.4 million smartphone users in 2020 and is in fourth position after China, India, and America [2]. The use of the internet has been increasing over the last five years along with the increasing need for telecommunication. Currently, there are 54.25% more national internet users than in 2018 [3]. During the Covid-19 pandemic, working from home (WFH) was one of the reasons for the increase in internet users [4].

Cellular operators around the world, including Indonesia are trying to improve their quality to gain customer loyalty. Brand Loyalty is an important marketing strategy concept. Companies are required to be able to improve their customer loyalty to increase profitability, as it operates in a very competitive environment [5]. Loyalty becomes very important in conditions of intense competition because it can create increased profits through increased revenue, reduced costs to acquire customers, lower customer price sensitivity, and reduced costs [6].

New marketing trends and models emerge as a result of current phenomena, such as the massive use of the internet, social media, and the digital environment, which leads companies to intense competition. Leveraging social media marketing presents a chance for companies to craft online marketing strategies, capitalizing on the fact that consumers now access substantial information through social media platforms [7]. The rise of businesses adopting social media has transformed the manner in which individuals engage in purchasing and vending products, seek out information about products and services, and engage with

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both other companies and customers [8]. This new phenomenon is one of the highlights of this research, where not too many studies have investigated the same thing.

Brand experience is a variable that cannot be separated and needs to be discussed in knowing the construct of loyalty. Brand experience materializes as a result of stimuli that ignite customers' enthusiasm and pleasure, consequently motivating them to recurrently seek out and relive these experiences over an extended period [9]. Brand experience plays a crucial role in foreseeing consumer behavior consequences, including outcomes like customer contentment, loyalty, or the intention to make a purchase [10]. However, based on previous research, it still raises several questions where there are gaps from previous researchers who stated different results (research gap) where it is necessary to do a re-examination to strengthen the results of previous studies.

Brand trust is the next crucial factor that consumers consider in choosing the services they will use. Samarah et al. state that the tendency of customers to rely on the capacity of the brand to carry out the promised function is known as brand trust [11]. Brand trust has been demonstrated to wield a significant influence on fostering brand commitment or an individual's inclination to uphold a brand connection. This suggests a person's readiness to invest efforts in nurturing an ongoing relationship with a brand [12]. Consumers who have a sense of trust are willing to remain loyal to the brand, are willing to pay a premium price and share information about the product [13].

In this study, it was found that there were differences in research results (research gaps) from several previous studies that studied similar variable constructs. Some of them are Li et al. in their research stating that the role of brand attachment and consumer trust cannot be ignored when increasing loyalty [14]. Furthermore, Samarah et al. argued that brand trust has a positive influence on loyalty [11]. However, Harun et al. put forward the opposite where trust in a brand does not affect loyalty [15].

Garanti & Kissi found that social media marketing affects consumer loyalty to brands [8], Algharabat in his research also found something similar [16]. However, it is different from Zhang & Li who found that not all factors from social media can increase loyalty [17]. Fernandes & Inverneiro in their research also states that social media does not affect brand loyalty [18].

Akoglu & Özbek in their research stated that brand experience can affect perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty [13]. Mostafa & Kasamani also stated the same thing where in their research it was revealed that brand experience increases long-lasting brand loyalty through building brand passion [19]. However, Chung & Welty Peachey stated that simply having a good experience with a brand does not directly increase brand loyalty [20].

Variables such as social media marketing, brand experience, and brand trust are frequently employed to investigate consumer loyalty. For instance, Samarah et al. conducted a study involving 353 followers of Royal Jordanian Airlines on Facebook, wherein they examined the interplay among social media, brand trust, and behavioral brand loyalty [11]. Samarah et al. suggest further research on different sectors such as hotels or cellular operators [11]. This research has several attractions, the variables taken in this study are interesting enough to be able to provide input for companies, especially cellular operator companies that require high loyalty, which this research can serve as a reference for companies to formulate strategies according to consumer preferences and expectations. to increase consumer loyalty. Another interesting thing is that researchers also found differences in research results from previous researchers regarding the relationship between the variables studied. The gap findings in previous research led this study to re-examine the relationship between these variables.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

Customer Relationship Marketing

Customer relationship marketing entails a comprehensive strategy and systematic approach to acquiring, retaining, and collaborating with specific customers, all aimed at delivering exceptional value to them [21]. CRM is a corporate strategy that builds and manages relationships with customers through understanding, anticipating, and managing customer needs [22]. A CRM strategy can assist businesses in optimizing the value derived from their customers' transactions throughout the entire time of the relationship [23].

Technologies enable efficient market intelligence collection, analysis [24], and personalized customer interactions [23].

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a key strategy for securing a lasting competitive edge, as loyal customers are cost-effective and less likely to extensively research alternative options [20]. Mostafa & Kasamani explains brand loyalty is a dedication to continuing to subscribe to a preferred item or service in the future [19]. As a result, customers continue to buy the same brand despite external pressures and stimuli that can encourage brand-switching behavior. Brand loyalty is considered a crucial factor in the effectiveness of a company's marketing plan because loyal customers are critical to a company's ability to achieve a significant market share [19].

Social Media Marketing

Timoshenko & Hauser states that brand loyalty can be stimulated by the unique involvement of consumers in social media marketing [25]. Social media marketing benefits advertisers as consumers tend to select comparable lifestyle groups on these platforms [7]. Social media provides consumers with the facility to dynamically assess brand trust by observing their behavior while interacting with them [17].

Social media marketing tends to the use of social media in conjunction with other communication channels to advance organizational goals that benefit internal and external stakeholders, including clients, employees, suppliers, and government agencies [26]. Several previous studies found that social media marketing affects consumer loyalty to a brand. Research conducted by Garanti & Kissi shows that social media marketing positively affects customer loyalty [8]. Other previous studies also stated the same thing [11], [16], [17], [27]. Based on the previous literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Social media marketing has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Brand Experience

Brand experience is the response that customers give about their interactions with the brand, where they have a consistent experience across all brand channels [19]. To persuade people to continue buying and sticking with the brand's products, companies must work to provide an engaging brand experience. Consumers connect with brand personalities and form strong bonds through these brand experiences [13]. Brands offering a unique brand experience stand out from the competition, becoming preferred choices that foster brand loyalty and wider brand recognition [13]. According to Kim & Chao, brand experience plays a significant role in anticipating consumer behavior outcomes like customer satisfaction and loyalty [10].

Several studies find that consumer loyalty to a brand is linked to the brand experience. The research conducted by Akoglu & Özbek shows that positive brand experiences foster customer loyalty to a brand [13]. Mostafa & Kasamani found something similar, namely brand experience has a positive effect on customer loyalty to a brand [19]. Other previous research has also found similar things where brand experience affects brand loyalty [28]–[30]. Drawing from prior research, we present the subsequent hypothesis:

H2. Brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Brand Trust

Trust is identified as a fundamental component in studies of consumer-brand relationships by M. Zhang et al [31]. Brand trust holds significance as it directly impacts user decisions to engage with brand websites, share information, provide user data, make purchases, participate in site activities, and cultivate brand loyalty [31]. Consumers who have a sense of trust are willing to remain loyal to the brand, are willing to pay a premium price, and share information about the product with the environment [13].

Several studies find that brand trust can influence brand loyalty. Li et al show that brand trust affects brand loyalty [14], and Samarah et al also found the same thing [9]. Several previous studies also stated the same thing [13], [30], [32], [33]. Drawing from prior research, we present the subsequent hypothesis. Drawing from prior research, we present the subsequent hypothesis:

H3. Brand trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Customers trust social media more than other, more conventional components of the promotional mix. This is because of the direct communication, quick responses, and more objective user-generated content offered by social media. In this condition, one of the key factors influencing the development of loyalty is trust. Several studies are showing the mediating role of brand trust in the influence of social media marketing on brand loyalty. Samarah et al. show that brand trust is a mediating factor in the influence of social media marketing on brand loyalty [11]. Several other previous studies also stated the same thing [32], [34]. Based on the previous literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4. Social media marketing has a positive effect on brand loyalty through brand trust.

The pleasurable experience for consumers with a brand is what will ultimately create an emotional impact and satisfaction in their minds. These results will ultimately contribute to the formation of trust in a brand, which can increase consumer loyalty to a brand. Several studies are showing that brand trust mediates the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty. The research conducted Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka shows that brand trust is a mediating factor in the influence of brand experiences on brand loyalty [35]. Several other previous studies have also stated the same thing and brand trust is a mediating factor in the influence of brand experience on consumers' brand loyalty [13], [30]. Drawing from prior research, we present the subsequent hypothesis:

H5. Brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty through brand trust.

METHODS

To test the hypothesis, the designed questionnaire contains several items that have along with the researcher's input, have been considered. The measurement items for the factors within in the causal model have been adjusted based on earlier research; this applies to the concept of brand loyalty [19], social media marketing [36], brand experience [10], and brand trust [37]. For item measurement, a five-point Likert scale was employed. The survey includes queries concerning demographic factors (e.g., gender, age). The study's target population consisted of university students who utilized the XL operator; however, the precise population size remains unknown. When dealing with an uncertain sample size, determining the required number of samples can be achieved using the formula proposed by Ferdinand [38] the number of items x 5, In this study, the number of items is 26 so the minimum number of samples that must be met is $26 \times 5 = 130$ sample.

Following these calculations, the study utilized a sample size of at least 130 respondents. The sampling method employed was non-probability sampling, specifically utilizing the purposive sampling technique. The sample criteria encompassed university students located in the city of Semarang, who have been subscribers of XL internet services for the preceding two years [39], Excluding the use of alternative operators over the past two years, meeting a minimum age requirement of 18 years for psychological maturity ensuring representative responses, actively following XL's social media accounts on Instagram, having engaged in online classes using XL operator services.

Semarang was selected as the research site due to its status as a major city in Indonesia. The city of Semarang also has several large campuses that better describe the object of research. The research was conducted from June to July 2023. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is used as a data analysis method in this study. Partial Least Square (PLS) is used as a tool to analyze research data.

Partial least square Algorithm with Smart PLS 3.0 software. As for the order in use:

1. Questionnaire data is converted to Note or CSV form
2. New Project in Smart PLS 3.0
3. Input CSV data into Smart PLS 3.0
4. Draw the model structure from the desired latent variables
5. Test the Quality of the measurement model (PLS Algorithm)
6. Hypothesis Testing (Resampling Bootstrapping)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of 142 online questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms. From the collected data, 133 respondents (93.6% of the total) met the criteria. The study focused on three respondent attributes: gender age, and subscription duration (years). Table 1 provides an overview of how respondents' characteristics were grouped.

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics

Gender	frequency	percentage
Men	66	49,6 %
Women	67	50,4 %
	133	
Age		
20	1	0,8 %
21	15	11,3 %
22	46	34,6 %
23	56	42,1 %
24	14	10,5 %
25	1	0,8 %
Subscription		
2 years	20	15,0 %
3 years	58	43,6 %
4 years	46	34,6 %
5 years	8	6,0 %
> 5 years	1	0,8 %

Source: Primary data (2023)

Outer Model Analysis

An outer model assesses the connection between indicators and latent variables, focusing on validity and reliability in the research model.

Convergent Validity

According to Hair et al., convergent validity is a comprehensive measure within a reflective measurement model that gauges the degree to which construct indicators converge, thus elucidating the variance of the items [40]. Convergent validity can also be measured through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which is said to be valid if $AVE > 0.7$. Table 2 demonstrates that all statement items have achieved outer loading values > 0.7 , confirming their validity.

Table 2. Outer loading test results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading(>0,7)
Social Media Marketing	SMM 1	0,759
	SMM 2	0,773
	SMM 3	0,817
	SMM 4	0,767
	SMM 6	0,763
Brand Experience	BE 1	0,771
	BE 2	0,785
	BE 3	0,746
	BE 4	0,803
	BE 5	0,790
	BE 6	0,738
BT 2Brand Trust	BT 1	0,784
	BT 2	0,834
	BT 3	0,835
	BT 4	0,763
	BT 5	0,779
	BT 6	0,737
Brand Loyalty	BL 1	0,741
	BL 2	0,722
	BL 3	0,818
	BL 4	0,812
	BL 5	0,802
	BL 6	0,709
	BL 7	0,720
	BL 8	0,772

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

However, it's noteworthy that one statement, SMM5, related to social media marketing is missing from the table. This statement indicator was excluded from the data processing due to its invalidity, with an outer loading value of <0.7 and repeated testing is carried out.

Table 3. AVE value

Variable	AVE
Social media marketing	0,602
Brand experience	0,597
Brand trust	0,623
Brand loyalty	0,582

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

Furthermore, data is considered valid if it fulfills the AVE criterion, which should be ≥ 0.5 [40]. Table 3 confirms that each variable's AVE value satisfies this guideline by being > 0.5 . Based on the outer loading value and AVE, the indicators in this study are considered valid and demonstrate convergent validity. Figure 2 will display a valid model with correlations that meet the criteria, where each variable's outer loading value is > 0.7 .

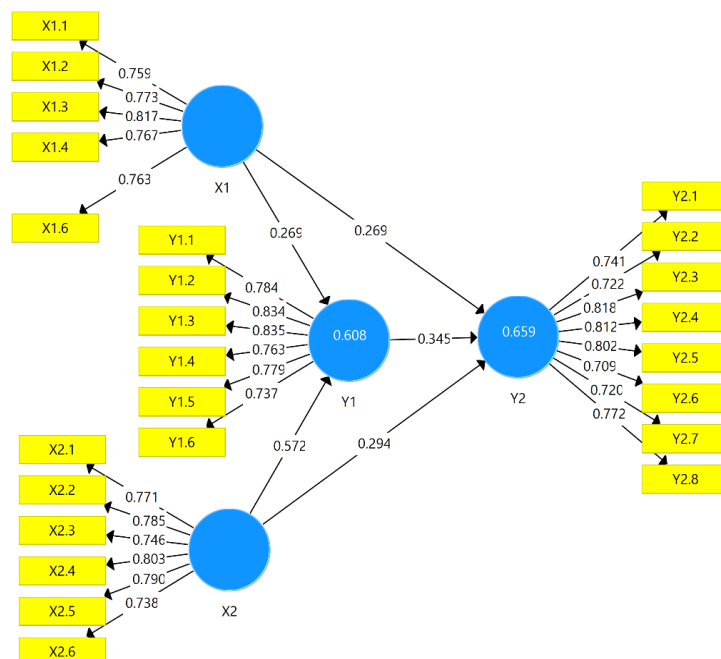


Figure 1. Structure model

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity ensures a construct's distinctiveness from others, highlighting its unique representation of unexplored phenomena within the model [41]. Precisely, an indicator should exhibit a higher loading on its corresponding construct compared to any cross-loadings it has on other constructs.

Table 4. Cross loading's

	SMM	BE	BT	BL
SMM 1	0,759	0,514	0,484	0,465
SMM 2	0,773	0,542	0,580	0,537
SMM 3	0,817	0,564	0,519	0,576
SMM 4	0,767	0,528	0,488	0,594
SMM 6	0,763	0,470	0,467	0,511
BE 1	0,514	0,771	0,547	0,643
BE 2	0,530	0,785	0,543	0,562
BE 3	0,492	0,746	0,609	0,531
BE 4	0,518	0,803	0,570	0,590

	SMM	BE	BT	BL
BE 5	0,567	0,790	0,641	0,581
BE 6	0,513	0,738	0,583	0,496
BT 1	0,578	0,595	0,784	0,570
BT 2	0,534	0,630	0,834	0,596
BT 3	0,604	0,626	0,835	0,596
BT 4	0,511	0,503	0,763	0,550
BT 5	0,452	0,622	0,779	0,596
BT 6	0,424	0,588	0,737	0,609
BL 1	0,474	0,470	0,451	0,741
BL 2	0,386	0,441	0,464	0,722
BL 3	0,654	0,635	0,602	0,818
BL 4	0,582	0,566	0,638	0,812
BL 5	0,549	0,620	0,643	0,802
BL 6	0,510	0,646	0,561	0,709
BL 7	0,479	0,507	0,558	0,720
BL 8	0,552	0,558	0,574	0,772

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

Table 4 demonstrates that the correlation between constructs and their respective indicators surpasses the correlations with other constructs for each variable. Therefore, all indicators in this study were declared to have good discriminant validity.

Reliability Test

In PLS, the reliability assessment employs two techniques: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The questionnaire is deemed reliable if its internal consistency value falls within the range of 0.6 to 0.7 [40]. Table 5 illustrates that both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability surpass the 0.6 thresholds, affirming the reliability and validity of this research instrument.

Table 5. Reliability test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
BE	0,865	0,866	0,899
BL	0,897	0,902	0,918
BT	0,879	0,880	0,908
SMM	0,835	0,837	0,883

Source: Data processed through Smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

Inner Model Analysis

The inner model test assesses data structure, relying on reliable and valid statements. Improved model accuracy, measured by R-Square, is crucial. This test aims to understand how changes in exogenous variables impact endogenous variables [40]. The higher percentage indicates greater data test precision.

Table 6. Analysis of R square test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
BL	0,659	0,651
BT	0,608	0,602

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

According to table 6, the brand loyalty variable has an R-Square value of (0.659), implying that it receives a 65.9% contribution from social media marketing and brand experience, with the remainder influenced by other factors. Furthermore, the brand trust variable has an R-Square value of (0.608), implying that social media marketing and brand experience contribute up to 60.8% of the total, with the remainder influenced by other factors.

Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis test uses the bootstrapping method, indicated by a significance test > 0.05 and a t-statistic value > 1.656 for the one-tailed hypothesis. It involves two tests: direct and indirect effects.

Direct Effect Hypothesis

The bootstrapping method was employed for hypothesis testing, revealing path analysis or coefficients with direct effects.

Table 7. Direct effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
BE -> BL	0,294	0,298	0,105	2,811	0,005
BE -> BT	0,572	0,571	0,080	7,122	0,000
BT -> BL	0,345	0,339	0,107	3,220	0,001
SMM -> BL	0,269	0,273	0,088	3,062	0,002
SMM -> BT	0,269	0,273	0,084	3,217	0,001

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

Based on the direct effect hypothesis test outcomes, the correlation between social media marketing and brand experience among XL consumers shows a positive connection with both brand trust and brand loyalty (refer to table 7). These findings support H1, H2, and H3, with t-statistic values exceeding the critical t-table value (1.65) and p-values below 0.05.

Social media marketing can positively increase brand loyalty, with an original sample value of 0.269 and a T-Statistic of 3.062 > 1.656, and a P-Value of 0.002 < 0.050. These findings indicate that enhanced social media marketing efforts by XL result in increased consumer loyalty. Consequently, it can be inferred that social media marketing significantly and positively influences brand loyalty. These results validate the concept of CRM, a strategy that involves acquiring, retaining, and enhancing consumer relationships to foster loyalty. CRM, a communication approach, particularly with consumers, centers on attracting new prospects and enhancing existing customer relationships. Social media brings companies to get information about what consumers need and complain about to be identified to keep consumers loyal. This condition confirms that social media marketing plays a role as a factor in influencing consumer loyalty.

This study found that social media managed by XL can collect information about consumer needs in addition to its main role as a marketing tool. Social media managed by XL seeks to provide entertaining information to its consumers by providing collaborative content with several well-known celebrities while still providing marketing messages in it. XL also seeks to build interaction with consumers, both through the comment column and in the form of challenges and giveaways that consumers can participate in. XL also strives to provide trending content to keep consumers informed through their social media.

These findings validate the initial hypothesis, which posits that social media marketing exerts a favorable influence on brand loyalty. This outcome is further substantiated by the earlier study conducted by Garanti & Kissi, where they discovered a constructive impact of social media marketing on customer loyalty [8], other previous research also stated the same thing [11], [16], [17], [27]. XL has formed their social media well, the social media that was formed was not only aimed at carrying marketing messages but also trying to get information about consumers.

Brand experience can positively increase brand loyalty, with an original sample value of 0.294 and a T-Statistic of 2.811 > 1.656, and a P-Value of 0.005 < 0.050. These outcomes imply that an improved brand experience perceived by consumers leads to heightened consumer loyalty. Based on these findings, it can be deduced that brand experience significantly and positively impacts brand loyalty. These results validate the purpose of CRM. Companies basically state that they have a mindset that focuses on increasing customer happiness, is customer oriented, and reacts to consumer needs by responding to their experiences. CRM has a goal so that companies can manage consumers to be able to identify, satisfy and retain customers so that they become loyal to the product. Consumer experience is the main thing that determines whether consumers are satisfied or not. Satisfied consumers will bring loyal behavior to the brand.

This study found that the brand experience formed by XL touched the sensory, affective, and feeling of consumers. The experience formed by XL seeks to provide memorable things for consumers, what XL focuses on in this case is to provide a fast and wide network so that consumers feel satisfied and have minimal problems while using XL so that it will keep consumers from switching to competitors.

These results confirm the second hypothesis, asserting that brand experience positively influences brand loyalty, which aligns with earlier research by Akoglu & Özbek, who identified a similar connection between brand experience and customer loyalty to a brand [13], These results confirm the second hypothesis, asserting that brand experience positively influences brand loyalty, which aligns with earlier research by Akoglu & Özbek, who identified a similar connection between brand experience and customer loyalty to a

brand [13], Other previous research has also found similar things where brand experience affects brand loyalty [28]–[30]. XL strives to provide the best experience for consumers, this memorable experience will bring consumers to remain loyal to XL.

Brand trust can positively increase brand loyalty, with an original sample value of 0.345 and a T-Statistic of $3.220 > 1.656$, and a P-Value of $0.001 < 0.050$. These findings suggest that stronger brand trust among consumers leads to increased consumer loyalty. Based on these results, it can be inferred that brand trust significantly and positively impacts brand loyalty. These results validate the purpose of CRM, namely by using CRM, companies basically state that they have a mindset that focuses on increasing customer happiness, is customer oriented, and reacts to the need for consumer safety.

Communication is a form of CRM implementation within the company to gain consumer trust to gain consumer loyalty. Consumers who have trust in a brand tend to have a sense of loyalty to that brand and do not switch to other brands. Establishing consumer trust is the primary factor to prioritize when cultivating loyalty.

This research found that the brand trust formed by XL is in the form of providing consumers with a sense of security, being honest with consumers, and having a trustworthy reputation, trust in the brand makes customers pay less attention to competing brands, and this will make consumers more resistant to the temptation of other similar products. Customers will also speak well of the company and its brand to others. This is what makes loyal customers.

These results confirm the third hypothesis which states that brand trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty. These results were also supported by Li et al who found that brand trust affects brand loyalty [14], Samarah et al. also found the same thing [9]. Several previous studies also stated the same thing [13], [30], [32], [33]. XL strives to gain consumer trust, with this feeling of trust it will bring consumers to remain loyal to XL.

Indirect Effect Hypothesis

The results of hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping method reveal path analysis and coefficients with an indirect effect. The findings of the indirect effect hypothesis test are depicted in Table 8, demonstrating that brand trust can mediate the impact of all independent variables on brand loyalty. These outcomes confirm H4 and H5, with t-statistic values exceeding the critical t-table value (1.65) and p-values below 0.05.

Table 8. Indirect effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
SMM -> BT -> BL	0,093	0,091	0,038	2,430	0,015
BE -> BT -> BL	0,197	0,195	0,073	2,703	0,007

Source: Data processed through smart PLS 3.0 (2023)

Social media marketing possesses the potential to enhance brand loyalty by fostering brand trust, as indicated by an initial sample value of 0.093, a T-Statistic surpassing 1.977 with a value of 2.430, and a P-Value of 0.015 which is less than 0.050. This signifies that when social media marketing is effectively executed and is accompanied by a strong sense of consumer trust, it leads to heightened consumer loyalty. In essence, brand trust operates as a mediator, influencing the connection between social media marketing and brand loyalty.

These outcomes validate the fourth hypothesis, which asserts that social media marketing indeed has a favorable impact on brand loyalty by way of brand trust. These findings align with prior research by Samarah et al., where they demonstrated that brand trust acts as a mediating element in the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty [11]. Several other previous studies also stated the same thing [32], [34]. XL aims to utilize social media marketing as a means to cultivate a sense of openness with consumers. By enhancing brand trust, this approach is expected to amplify the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty.

Brand experience can positively increase brand loyalty through brand trust with an original sample value of 0.197 and a T-Statistic of $2.703 > 1.977$ and a P-Value of $0.007 < 0.050$, it means that when the experience is good and strengthened by well-perceived consumer trust it will increase consumer loyalty. That is, brand trust can mediate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.

These results confirm the fourth hypothesis which states that brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty through brand trust. These results are supported by previous research conducted by Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka who found that brand trust is a mediating factor in the influence of brand experiences on brand loyalty [35]. Several other previous studies have also stated the same thing where brand trust is a mediating factor in the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty [13], [30]. XL seeks to create a memorable experience for its customers to create a sense of consumer trust in the brand, with increasing brand trust will increase the influence of brand experience on brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the data analysis revealed a noteworthy and positive connection among each of the variables specifically, social media marketing, brand experience, and brand trust with brand loyalty. However, it's worth highlighting that the influence of the social media marketing variable on brand loyalty appeared to be the least robust. This suggests that the brand loyalty impact of the social media marketing efforts undertaken by XL has been relatively modest. As a result, it is advisable for XL to dedicate increased attention to refining their execution of social media marketing in order to bolster brand loyalty. There are several strategies that could be employed to achieve this, including focusing on the inherent attributes of social media marketing, such as entertainment value, interactive experiences, and alignment with current trends. Implementing these strategies effectively has the potential to sway consumers towards developing a deeper sense of loyalty to the brand. This research has limitations based on the research that has been done. This limitation is that the object of the research is only focused on students in the city of Semarang. In addition, the sample used was only 133 respondents due to limited time and research staff. Subsequent studies are anticipated to encompass a broader scope beyond the student demographic. This research framework could also be expanded by incorporating additional variables that impact loyalty, including factors like age, education, or income, which can serve as control variables for more comprehensive insights.

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