

## The Influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Loyalty Through Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Brand Trust, and Brand Equity

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### ABSTRACT (10pt)

This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing (SMM) consisting of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on brand loyalty for GT Man underwear products. Additionally, it explores the mediating roles of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, brand trust, and brand equity in enhancing the relationship between SMM and brand loyalty. A quantitative approach was employed using structural equation modeling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS) through SmartPLS 4.0. Data were collected from 400 social media users familiar with GT Man to test both direct and indirect effects among the proposed constructs. The findings indicate that all dimensions of SMM significantly affect the mediating variables and brand loyalty. The strongest direct effect is found between SMM and brand trust, suggesting that consistent, authentic, and responsive social media communication builds greater trust in GT Man. In terms of mediation, cognitive engagement and brand trust serve as the most influential mediators in the formation of brand loyalty. While emotional engagement and brand equity have relatively weaker indirect effects, they still play a significant role in strengthening the impact of SMM. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of how psychological engagement and brand perceptions shape loyalty in a digital environment. Practically, it suggests that GT Man should develop more educational, emotionally resonant, and interactive social media content to reinforce trust, perceived value, and long-term customer loyalty.

**Keywords:** social media marketing; brand loyalty; customer engagement; brand trust; brand equity

### INTRODUCTION

The global digital landscape has experienced unprecedented transformation in recent decades, fundamentally reshaping marketing paradigms across industries (Quinn et al., 2016; Rajendran, 2024). Digital marketing spending worldwide reached \$602.25 billion in 2023, with social media marketing accounting for a significant portion of this investment, demonstrating the critical importance of digital channels in modern business strategies (Statista, 2024). Social media platforms have evolved from simple communication tools to sophisticated marketing ecosystems that enable brands to engage with consumers in real-time, create personalized experiences, and build lasting relationships that transcend traditional marketing boundaries.

The proliferation of social media marketing activities (SMMA) has created new opportunities for brands to connect with consumers through entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Kim & Ko, 2010). These dimensions have become essential components of effective digital marketing strategies, enabling brands to create meaningful engagement that drives consumer behavior and loyalty (Gavilanes et al., 2018; Rowi et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2024). Globally, companies are increasingly recognizing that social media marketing is not merely about promotional activities

but encompasses a comprehensive approach to building cognitive and emotional connections with consumers (Godey et al., 2016).

Research demonstrates that effective social media marketing activities significantly influence consumer perceptions and behaviors, particularly in building brand trust and equity, which are fundamental drivers of long-term customer loyalty (Laroche et al., 2013). The global shift toward digital-first consumer behavior has made social media marketing an indispensable tool for brands seeking to maintain competitive advantage and sustainable growth in increasingly crowded marketplaces.

Indonesia presents a unique and dynamic digital marketing landscape that reflects both global trends and local market characteristics. The rapid development of information technology in Indonesia is reflected in internet penetration rates reaching 79.5% in 2024 (APJII, 2024), with social media usage being the primary reason for internet access, scoring 3.31 out of 4 on importance scale. This digital adoption has fundamentally altered consumer behavior patterns, with projections indicating that social media users in Indonesia will continue to increase, reaching 268.48 million by 2028, representing a 12.52% increase from 2024 (Statista, 2024).

The Indonesian textile and garment industry, particularly in the men's underwear segment, faces significant challenges amid this digital transformation. Statistical data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics reveals that apparel sector growth stagnated at 1.7% in Q4 2024, with only the food and beverage sector showing growth in offline retail while the apparel sector declined, especially in the middle-to-upper segment in shopping malls (CNBC Indonesia, 2025). This stagnation is influenced by changing consumer behavior that increasingly favors online shopping channels or more convenient and practical shopping locations (Tempo, 2019), aligning with Populix survey findings that 46% of fashion and beauty products are purchased online (Populix, 2023).

PT Ricky Putra Globalindo, Tbk (*RICY*), with its flagship brand GT Man, exemplifies these industry challenges despite its established market position. Although GT Man has long been recognized as a pioneer in Indonesia's textile and garment industry and has achieved prestigious awards such as the *Indonesia Best Brand Award (IBBA)*, maintaining its position as the number one men's underwear brand in Indonesia since 2008, the company faces significant financial pressure. *RICY*'s financial reports from Q3 2023 to Q3 2024 demonstrate a drastic performance decline where revenue growth did not align with cost growth, resulting in losses of up to 37 billion rupiah in Q3 2024.

The urgency of this research stems from the critical gap between digital marketing potential and actual performance outcomes in the Indonesian market context. Despite GT Man's active utilization of various social media platforms, including Instagram (@gtman\_official) with 47.9 thousand followers, TikTok with 4.6 thousand followers, Facebook with 3.7 thousand, and YouTube with 80 subscribers, the social media marketing activities have not been able to significantly increase sales and strengthen consumer loyalty. Analysis reveals that GT Man's social media engagement rates remain relatively low, with interaction posts generating only 200-300 comments per upload, representing merely 0.7% of total followers, which is considered suboptimal for effective audience engagement.

Comparative analysis with competitors reveals significant performance gaps. While GT Man maintains brand index leadership over competitors like Rider, minimal social media

activity appears to impact consumer loyalty and sales negatively. Sales data from Shopee marketplace shows GT Man's five best-selling products generating only 200-277 units per article per month, significantly lagging behind Rider's 500-1,000+ units. This performance disparity, despite GT Man's superior brand recognition, highlights the critical need for enhanced digital marketing strategies.

The research urgency is further emphasized by the rapid evolution of consumer preferences toward digital channels and the increasing importance of social media marketing in driving brand loyalty. Companies that fail to effectively leverage social media marketing activities risk losing market share to more digitally savvy competitors, regardless of their traditional brand strength or market position.

Extensive research has established the significant relationship between social media marketing activities and brand loyalty through various mediating mechanisms. Aljuhmani et al. (2023) demonstrated that social media marketing efforts significantly influence customer brand engagement, which subsequently drives brand loyalty, emphasizing the critical role of engagement as a mediating factor. Their study revealed that entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and *eWOM* dimensions of social media marketing create meaningful connections with consumers that translate into loyalty behaviors.

Ebrahim (2019) provided crucial insights into the role of trust in understanding social media marketing's impact on brand equity and brand loyalty, establishing that trust serves as a fundamental mediator in the relationship between digital marketing activities and consumer loyalty. This research highlighted the importance of consistent, authentic, and reliable social media communications in building consumer confidence and long-term commitment to brands.

Ali et al. (2024) explored the interrelationships between social media marketing and brand loyalty through both symmetrical and asymmetrical modeling approaches, revealing complex pathways through which digital marketing activities influence consumer behavior. Their findings emphasized the multifaceted nature of social media marketing impact, involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of consumer engagement.

Godey et al. (2016) examined social media marketing efforts of luxury brands and their influence on brand equity and consumer behavior, providing insights into how different social media marketing dimensions contribute to brand value creation. Their research demonstrated that effective social media marketing activities enhance perceived brand quality, brand awareness, and brand associations, which collectively strengthen brand equity and consumer loyalty.

Additional research by Laroche et al. (2013), Ma et al. (2022), and Le et al. (2024) has consistently shown that social media marketing activities create multiple pathways to brand loyalty through cognitive engagement (attention, understanding, processing), emotional engagement (affective responses, feelings), brand trust (reliability, credibility), and brand equity (perceived value, uniqueness). These studies collectively establish a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the complex mechanisms through which social media marketing influences consumer loyalty.

This research contributes several novel elements to the existing body of knowledge in digital marketing and brand management. First, it provides the first comprehensive empirical examination of social media marketing activities' impact on brand loyalty specifically within the Indonesian men's underwear market context, addressing a significant gap in industry-

specific research. While previous studies have examined these relationships in various contexts, none have specifically focused on the unique characteristics and challenges of the Indonesian textile industry.

Second, the research employs an integrative model that simultaneously examines multiple mediating pathways (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, brand trust, and brand equity) through which social media marketing activities influence brand loyalty. This comprehensive approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the complex mechanisms underlying digital marketing effectiveness compared to studies that examine individual mediating variables in isolation.

Third, the study contributes methodological innovation by applying Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (*SEM-PLS*) to test both direct and indirect effects, including serial mediation pathways, providing robust empirical evidence for theoretical relationships. This methodological approach enables more sophisticated analysis of the interrelationships among variables and provides practical insights for marketing strategy development.

Fourth, the research addresses the practical challenge of declining traditional retail performance in emerging markets by examining how digital marketing strategies can compensate for offline market challenges. This focus on digital transformation in traditional industries provides valuable insights for companies navigating similar market transitions.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the influence of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty through the mediating roles of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, brand trust, and brand equity, specifically in the context of GT Man underwear products. This overarching objective encompasses several specific aims: examining the direct effects of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and *eWOM* dimensions on brand loyalty; investigating the mediating effects of cognitive and emotional engagement; analyzing the role of brand trust and brand equity as mediators; and testing serial mediation pathways through multiple mediating variables.

The research benefits extend across multiple dimensions. Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of social media marketing theory by providing empirical evidence for the complex relationships between digital marketing activities and consumer loyalty in an emerging market context. It enriches the understanding of how different dimensions of social media marketing create cognitive and emotional connections with consumers, leading to trust, perceived value, and loyalty.

Practically, the research provides actionable insights for GT Man and similar companies seeking to enhance their digital marketing effectiveness. The findings offer specific guidance on which social media marketing activities are most effective in building consumer engagement, trust, and loyalty, enabling more targeted and efficient marketing resource allocation. The research also provides valuable benchmarking information for companies operating in similar market conditions or facing comparable digital transformation challenges.

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of GT Man to encompass broader industry and academic significance. For the Indonesian textile and garment industry, this research provides evidence-based guidance for digital marketing strategy development, particularly relevant given the industry's ongoing challenges with declining offline sales and increasing digital competition. The findings will inform industry best practices

for social media marketing implementation and provide a framework for measuring digital marketing effectiveness.

The expected impact includes enhanced understanding of digital marketing effectiveness, improved strategic decision-making for companies investing in social media marketing, and contribution to the development of more sophisticated and effective digital marketing practices in emerging markets. This research ultimately aims to bridge the gap between digital marketing potential and actual performance outcomes, providing practical solutions for companies seeking to leverage social media platforms for sustainable competitive advantage and long-term customer relationship building.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (*SEM-PLS*) through SmartPLS 4.0 software. The research design was cross-sectional, causal, and deductive in nature.

### **Population and Sample**

The target population consisted of social media users who follow GT Man's official social media accounts and have purchased GT Man products. Due to the inability to determine the exact population size, the Lemeshow formula was used for unknown populations with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum sample size of 385 respondents. Using a purposive sampling technique, 400 valid respondents were obtained who met the following criteria: (1) followers of GT Man's official social media accounts; (2) have purchased GT Man products through social media platforms; (3) have intention to repurchase GT Man products; and (4) have intention to recommend GT Man products.

### **Variables and Measurement**

The study examined six main constructs: Social Media Marketing (*SMM*) as the independent variable consisting of five dimensions (entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and *eWOM*), Brand Loyalty as the dependent variable, and four mediating variables (Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Brand Trust, and Brand Equity). All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments by Aljuhmani et al. (2023) and Ebrahim (2019).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using *SEM-PLS* with SmartPLS 4.0, involving a two-stage evaluation: outer model evaluation (validity and reliability testing) and inner model evaluation (hypothesis testing). Validity was assessed through convergent validity (outer loadings  $\geq 0.70$  and AVE  $\geq 0.50$ ) and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings). Reliability was evaluated using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha (both  $\geq 0.70$ ).

### **Sample Demographics and Screening Analysis**

The research successfully collected data from 454 respondents, with 400 meeting the stringent screening criteria for inclusion in the final analysis. The screening process utilized four critical questions to ensure respondent suitability: (1) following GT Man's official social media accounts, (2) having purchased GT Man products through social media platforms, (3) possessing intention for repeat purchases, and (4) willingness to recommend GT Man products.

This methodical approach resulted in 54 respondents being excluded for not meeting all criteria, ensuring data quality and relevance.

**Table 1. Respondent Demographics**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	227	56.8%
	Female	173	43.3%
Age Range	17-24 years	90	22.5%
	25-34 years	114	28.5%
	35-44 years	79	19.8%
	45-54 years	59	14.8%
	>55 years	58	14.5%

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

The demographic analysis reveals male dominance (56.8%), aligning with GT Man's positioning as Indonesia's number one men's underwear brand. The age distribution centers on the 25–34 years segment (28.5%), representing the economically active demographic most engaged with digital platforms, consistent with *Digital Natives* theory (Prensky, 2001), which suggests individuals in this age range demonstrate a higher propensity for social media engagement and digital consumption behaviors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

The descriptive analysis employed a 5-point Likert scale evaluation across all constructs, with interpretation categories ranging from very low (20%-36%) to very high (85%-100%). All variables demonstrated strong positive perceptions, falling within the "high" category (69%-84%).

**Table 2. Social Media Marketing Activities Assessment**

Dimension	Indicator	Score	Percentage	Category
Entertainment	Content is fun (ENT1)	1,526	76.3%	High
	Content is interesting (ENT2)	1,522	76.1%	High
Interaction	Information sharing (INT3)	1,527	76.4%	High
	Opinion exchange (INT4)	1,513	75.7%	High
	Reply to comments (INT5)	1,504	75.2%	High
	Answer questions (INT6)	1,527	76.4%	High
	Easy to provide opinion (INT7)	1,512	75.6%	High
Trendiness	Newest information (TRE8)	1,531	76.6%	High
	Very trendy (TRE9)	1,513	75.7%	High
Customization	Customized search (CUS10)	1,539	77.0%	High
	Customized content (CUS11)	1,538	76.9%	High
	Customized service (CUS12)	1,532	76.6%	High
eWOM	Share information (eWOM13)	1,509	75.5%	High
	Upload content (eWOM14)	1,532	76.6%	High
<b>Overall SMMA Average</b>		<b>1,523</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

The SMMA analysis reveals customization as the strongest dimension (77.0%), particularly the "customized search" feature (CUS10), indicating GT Man's success in providing personalized information access. Conversely, interaction shows the weakest

performance (75.2%), specifically in responding to follower comments (INT5), suggesting opportunities for enhanced two-way communication strategies.

### Consumer Engagement Analysis

**Table 3. Cognitive and Emotional Engagement Assessment**

Engagement Type	Indicator	Score	Percentage	Category
Cognitive	Gets me thinking (COG1)	1,549	77.5%	High
	Think a lot about brand (COG2)	1,636	81.8%	High
	Stimulates learning interest (COG3)	1,432	71.6%	High
Emotional	Feel positive (EMO1)	1,441	72.1%	High
	Makes me happy (EMO2)	1,684	84.2%	High
	Feel good (EMO3)	1,598	79.9%	High
	Feel proud (EMO4)	1,517	75.9%	High
<b>Overall Engagement Average</b>		<b>1,551</b>	<b>77.6%</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

Cognitive engagement demonstrates strong performance, with "thinking about GT Man during social media visits" achieving the highest score (81.8%), indicating successful mental association building. Emotional engagement peaks with happiness generation (84.2%), reflecting GT Man's capacity for positive emotional connection. However, the lower score for learning interest stimulation (71.6%) suggests potential for enhanced educational content strategies.

### Brand Trust and Brand Equity Evaluation

**Table 4. Brand Trust Assessment**

Indicator	Score	Percentage	Category
Brand is honest (BTO1)	1,544	77.2%	High
Works for happiness (BTO2)	1,659	83.0%	High
Works to satisfy (BTO3)	1,603	80.2%	High
Fulfill satisfaction (BTO4)	1,454	72.7%	High
Promises are real (BTO5)	1,364	68.2%	High
<b>Brand Trust Average</b>	<b>1,525</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

**Table 5. Brand Equity and Brand Loyalty Assessment**

Variable	Indicator	Score	Percentage	Category
Brand Equity	Prefer this brand (BEO1)	1,543	77.2%	High
	Choose this brand (BEO2)	1,442	72.1%	High
	Smarter choice (BEO3)	1,694	84.7%	High
	<b>Brand Equity Average</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>78.0%</b>	<b>High</b>
Brand Loyalty	Say positive things (BL1)	1,622	81.1%	High
	Recommend to others (BL2)	1,448	72.4%	High
	Encourage relatives (BL3)	1,533	76.7%	High
	Continue using (BL4)	1,718	85.9%	Very High
	<b>Brand Loyalty Average</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>79.0%</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

Brand trust analysis reveals "works for happiness" as the strongest indicator (83.0%), while "promises are real" shows the lowest score (68.2%), indicating potential trust

vulnerabilities. Brand equity demonstrates strong positioning with "smarter choice" achieving 84.7%, reflecting GT Man's competitive advantage perception. Brand loyalty exhibits robust performance, with continuation intention reaching very high category (85.9%), demonstrating strong customer retention potential.

**Measurement Model Evaluation**

The outer model assessment employed two critical validity measures: convergent validity and discriminant validity, alongside reliability testing using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients.

**Convergent Validity Analysis**

The convergent validity evaluation utilized two primary criteria: outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The formula for AVE calculation follows:

$$AVE = \Sigma(\lambda_i^2) / n$$

Where  $\lambda_i$  represents the standardized outer loading of indicator  $i$ , and  $n$  represents the number of indicators per construct.

**Table 6. Convergent Validity Results**

Construct	Outer Loadings Range	AVE	Validity Status
Social Media Marketing	0.912 - 0.959	0.633	Valid
Cognitive Engagement	0.875 - 0.900	0.788	Valid
Emotional Engagement	0.821 - 0.855	0.702	Valid
Brand Trust	0.825 - 0.881	0.725	Valid
Brand Equity	0.861 - 0.872	0.750	Valid
Brand Loyalty	0.834 - 0.863	0.724	Valid

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

All constructs exceeded the minimum thresholds (outer loadings  $\geq 0.70$ , AVE  $\geq 0.50$ ), confirming convergent validity. The Social Media Marketing construct, despite its multidimensional nature, achieved satisfactory convergent validity (AVE = 0.633), indicating adequate internal consistency among its five dimensions.

**Discriminant Validity Assessment**

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of each construct's AVE must exceed its correlations with other constructs.

**Table 7. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Matrix**

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SMM	0.796					
2. Cognitive Engagement	0.714	0.888				
3. Emotional Engagement	0.728	0.703	0.838			
4. Brand Trust	0.729	0.682	0.721	0.851		
5. Brand Equity	0.681	0.629	0.656	0.694	0.866	
6. Brand Loyalty	0.704	0.693	0.701	0.697	0.688	0.851

Note: Diagonal values represent  $\sqrt{AVE}$ ; off-diagonal values represent inter-construct correlations.

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

The analysis confirms discriminant validity as all diagonal values ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) exceed the corresponding row and column correlations, indicating that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with other constructs.

**Reliability Analysis**

Reliability was assessed using both Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA), with the acceptance threshold set at 0.70.

**Table 8. Reliability Assessment**

Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Status
Social Media Marketing	0.931	0.923	Excellent
Cognitive Engagement	0.917	0.864	Excellent
Emotional Engagement	0.904	0.860	Excellent
Brand Trust	0.928	0.904	Excellent
Brand Equity	0.900	0.834	Excellent
Brand Loyalty	0.912	0.879	Excellent

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

All constructs demonstrate excellent reliability, substantially exceeding minimum thresholds, confirming internal consistency and measurement stability.

**Structural Model Assessment**

The inner model evaluation examined predictive capabilities through R-square analysis and path significance testing via bootstrapping procedures.

**Table 9. R-Square Analysis**

Endogenous Variable	R-Square	Predictive Capability
Cognitive Engagement	0.510	Moderate
Emotional Engagement	0.530	Moderate
Brand Trust	0.531	Moderate
Brand Equity	0.522	Moderate
Brand Loyalty	0.683	Strong

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

The model demonstrates strong predictive capability for Brand Loyalty ( $R^2 = 0.683$ ), indicating that 68.3% of loyalty variance is explained by the proposed model. Mediating variables show moderate predictive capabilities ( $R^2 > 0.50$ ), confirming adequate explanatory power for the theoretical framework.

**Hypothesis Testing and Path Analysis**

The bootstrapping procedure (5,000 samples) was employed to assess path significance and test the proposed hypotheses.

**Table 10. Direct Effects Analysis**

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-Value	Decision
H1	SMM → Cognitive Engagement	0.714	20.991	0.000	Supported
H2	SMM → Emotional Engagement	0.728	20.414	0.000	Supported
H3	SMM → Brand Trust	0.729	17.519	0.000	Supported
H4	SMM → Brand Equity	0.498	8.913	0.000	Supported
H5	SMM → Brand Loyalty	0.244	4.670	0.000	Supported

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Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-Value	Decision
H6	Brand Trust → Brand Equity	0.274	5.075	0.000	Supported
H7	Cognitive Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.222	7.438	0.000	Supported
H8	Emotional Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.163	3.628	0.000	Supported
H9	Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.191	4.945	0.000	Supported
H10	Brand Equity → Brand Loyalty	0.164	4.180	0.000	Supported

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

**Table 11. Indirect Effects Analysis**

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	p-Value	Decision
H11	SMM → Cognitive Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.158	7.201	0.000	Supported
H12	SMM → Emotional Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.119	3.574	0.000	Supported
H13	SMM → Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.139	4.847	0.002	Supported
H14	SMM → Brand Equity → Brand Loyalty	0.081	4.062	0.000	Supported
H15	SMM → Brand Trust → Brand Equity → Brand Loyalty	0.033	3.095	0.002	Supported

Source: Data processed by the author, 2025

All fifteen hypotheses receive empirical support ( $p < 0.05$ ), confirming the comprehensive theoretical model. The strongest direct effect occurs between SMM and Brand Trust ( $\beta = 0.729$ ), while the strongest mediation pathway operates through Cognitive Engagement ( $\beta = 0.158$ ).

**Social Media Marketing Activities Impact**

The empirical findings reveal that Social Media Marketing Activities exert significant influence across all examined constructs, with Brand Trust emerging as the primary beneficiary ( $\beta = 0.729$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This substantial effect aligns with Ebrahim's (2019) assertion that authentic, consistent social media communication builds consumer confidence. GT Man's achievement as a Superbrand Indonesia 2023 recipient reinforces this trust-building capacity, demonstrating how sustained quality communication translates into consumer confidence.

The strong influence on Emotional Engagement ( $\beta = 0.728$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) reflects GT Man's success in creating positive emotional connections through entertainment content, particularly evident in collaborations with comedian Uya Kuya, which generated 25,200 viewers—the highest engagement on GT Man's Instagram. This finding supports Kim and Ko's (2010) framework emphasizing entertainment's role in emotional brand connection.

Cognitive Engagement also demonstrates strong susceptibility to SMM influence ( $\beta = 0.714$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating GT Man's educational content effectiveness. The brand's informative posts about fabric quality, comfort features, and product benefits successfully stimulate consumer thinking and learning interest, supporting Ma et al.'s (2022) cognitive engagement theory.

### **Mediating Mechanisms Analysis**

The mediation analysis reveals Cognitive Engagement as the most influential pathway ( $\beta = 0.158$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting GT Man consumers prioritize rational decision-making processes over emotional responses. This finding challenges conventional wisdom favoring emotional appeals in consumer goods marketing, indicating that Indonesian consumers in this category value informational content that enhances product understanding and purchase confidence.

Brand Trust mediation ( $\beta = 0.139$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) confirms Laroche et al.'s (2013) findings regarding trust's pivotal role in social media marketing effectiveness. GT Man's consistent message delivery across platforms and authentic customer testimonials contribute to this trust-building process, creating a reliable pathway to loyalty formation.

Emotional Engagement mediation ( $\beta = 0.119$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while significant, demonstrates weaker influence compared to cognitive pathways. This suggests that while GT Man succeeds in generating positive emotions, these feelings translate less effectively into loyalty compared to cognitive processes. The brand may benefit from strengthening emotional content strategies to enhance this pathway's effectiveness.

Brand Equity mediation shows the weakest effect ( $\beta = 0.081$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating potential for improvement in communicating unique value propositions. Despite GT Man's market leadership position, consumers may not fully perceive distinctive advantages over competitors, suggesting opportunities for enhanced differentiation messaging.

### **Serial Mediation Insights**

The serial mediation pathway through Brand Trust and Brand Equity ( $\beta = 0.033$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) reveals a sequential process where social media marketing first builds trust, which subsequently enhances perceived brand value, ultimately contributing to loyalty. While this effect appears modest, it represents a sophisticated consumer evaluation process where trust establishment precedes value recognition, supporting the hierarchical model of consumer brand relationship development.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

These findings extend consumer engagement theory by demonstrating the dominance of cognitive over emotional pathways in emerging market contexts. The results suggest that educational, informative social media content may be more effective than purely entertaining material in building sustainable customer relationships in the Indonesian market.

For GT Man specifically, the research indicates that while current social media strategies show effectiveness, strategic rebalancing toward enhanced two-way interaction and strengthened brand equity communication could optimize results. The brand's strength in trust-building provides a solid foundation for loyalty development, but opportunities exist for leveraging this trust to enhance perceived brand uniqueness and emotional connections.

The research also contributes to social media marketing theory by providing empirical evidence for the complex, multifaceted relationship between digital marketing activities and consumer loyalty, particularly in contexts where traditional retail channels face disruption from digital transformation pressures.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Social Media Marketing Activities significantly influence Brand Loyalty both directly and indirectly through Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Brand Trust, and Brand Equity. The strongest pathway is through Brand Trust, highlighting the importance of building credibility and reliability through social media communications. Cognitive Engagement serves as a more influential mediator than Emotional Engagement, suggesting that GT Man's audience values informative and educational content over purely entertainment-focused material. While all hypotheses were supported, the relatively weaker effects of some mediating variables indicate opportunities for strategic improvement. GT Man should focus on strengthening two-way interactions, developing more educational content, and emphasizing unique brand values to enhance both trust and perceived brand equity, ultimately driving stronger customer loyalty in the digital marketplace.

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