

Research Article

The Power of Social Media for Marketing Activities to Boost Brand Love of Local Products

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ORCIDTatik Suryani: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7472-9617>**Abstract.**

It has become increasingly difficult for local brands to compete with global brands, as most foreign brands are perceived as better than local brands. As such, local companies were highly suggested to change their public perception through appropriate marketing communications. Social media for business purposes can be optimized through social media marketing activities (SMMA) to shape positive customer attitudes and behaviors. This study aimed to examine the influence of SMMA on customer love for local brands and the effect of SMMA on increasing brand awareness and image as two essential antecedents for creating brand love. This research design used a survey and involved 200 customers and social media visitors of local brands. Data was analyzed using the WarpPLS software. The findings showed that SMMA could increase customer love for local brands through brand awareness and brand image. Research also found that SMMA can directly influence brand love. The influence of SMMA on brand awareness was more powerful than brand image. From a customer perception perspective, brand awareness and brand image were important conditions for strengthening brand love. The implication of this research is that local product companies should design and manage their marketing activities in social media based on the important criteria from the customer's perspective.

Keywords: social media marketing activities, brand awareness, brand image, brand love, local product

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1. Introduction

To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of companies marketing activities, more companies are strategically using social media as a means of marketing communication and, at the same time, efforts to maintain customers. Bang Digital [1] reported that 97% of companies use social media to communicate with their intended markets. Hence, social media has been viewed as an innovative way to improve business performance significantly. Although social media can increase favorable company-customer interaction and engineers customer attitudes and behavior [2], ensuring the

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appropriate social media marketing activities (SMMA) need to be a thoughtful concern for companies.

SMMA is a type of marketing communication carried out on a digital platform. In SMMA, five critical dimensions must be considered: entertainment, the interaction between companies and customers, trendiness or always up to date, self-personalization according to customer desires, and word of mouth (WoM) [3]. Another study showed four critical elements in the SMMA development strategy, namely interactivity, informativeness, trendiness, and personalization [4], and there are additions from other studies, namely entertainment and advertising [5]. Regardless of those dimensions, developing the right marketing content can improve customer relationships [6].

The development of appropriate content and strategies in SMMA is expected to increase the formation of consumer attitudes and behaviors, especially brand love. During the increasingly fierce competition between brands, customer love for local brands must be increased since customers who love brands will be highly loyal [7]. If customers are loyal to the local brands, they will not easily switch to foreign brands or choose foreign brands as their primary preference. Such conditions are essential for local brands in Indonesia, for the brands to become the preferred brand in the country.

Brand love can be formed due to consumer knowledge and perception of a brand. Considering that SMMA, as a means of marketing communication, has been previously proven to be able to increase brand awareness [8, 9], brand image [5, 9], and brand loyalty [10-12], we assume that SMMA can also increase brand love, brand awareness, and image among consumers for local brands. Accordingly, we aim to investigate those nexuses and can contribute to a better understanding of how and why SMMA can enhance love, awareness, and image among consumers of local Indonesian brands through the effective use of social media platforms.

1.1. Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA)

The use of social media in business is increasing along with the trend of buyers using social media and the evidence that shows its benefits in marketing communications. One of the use cases of using social media as a marketing tool is also known as social media marketing activities. SMMA is seen as a promotional and relational communication tool that supports the application of marketing strategies by increasing interactions between companies and customers [12]. Creating content, interactions, and connections with customers and between customers is a significant benefit of the company [6].

Optimizing SMMA development by the business can be implemented by considering the dimensions of SMMA. Studies conducted on different product brands and industries show different results. Studies conducted on luxury brands show that the dimensions of SMMA that are considered necessary are the interaction between companies and customers and between customers and customers, entertainment that customers can feel by visiting social media, trendiness, personalization, and word of mouth [13, 14]. In another study, there are four dimensions of SMMA, namely: interactivity, SMMA provides opportunities for customers to share, improve the content and interact not only with companies but also with other customers; second is the informativeness, meaning that the completeness, accuracy, and usefulness of the information in SMMA are essential to customers. The third dimension is personalization, which demonstrates the ability of the company to customize its offering according to the customer needs and expectations, and the last dimension is trendiness [4]. Another study added the entertainment aspect as one of the dimensions of SMMA is entertainment, namely the ability of SMMA to provide comfort, pleasure, relaxation, and pleasant experience [5, 12].

Generally, studies show that the quality of social media contributes to increasing brand awareness and brand image [9]. Other studies that focus on SMMA show that SMMA can increase brand equity and purchase intention [4], and improve the quality of relationships with customers, thus having an impact on increasing purchase intention, loyalty intention, and participation intention [6]. Referring to these studies, SMMA can affect attitudes and behaviors; as mentioned, brand love as part of consumer attitudes can likely be formed through SMMA.

1.2. Brand Awareness

Consumer brand awareness is the consumer's ability to remember a brand spontaneously. Consumers who have brand awareness will be able to recognize brands, remember to recognize products and their differences from other products and compare with other brands [15]. For companies, brand awareness is fundamental because brand awareness will shape brand perspectives [16]. The formation of brand awareness is partly due to marketing communication. Marketing communications influence consumers' cognitive, affective, and conation aspects. Social media provides an effective way to broadcast various information about brands to form brand awareness [17]. The existence of interactions, connections, and sharing information provides knowledge about brands that can increase brand awareness—the better social media quality in marketing activities, the higher consumer brand awareness [9].

1.3. Brand Image

Brand image is generally defined as everything related to a brand's attributes in consumers' minds [18]. Brand image can be formed due to: Benefits perceived by customers, product quality, and product experience [19]. A local brand has a positive image in the minds of customers when customers feel the benefits, product quality, and pleasant experiences about the brand. This image can be influenced by marketing communications carried out by the company. SMMA, as a means of marketing communication through the platform, is designed to form brand awareness in consumers and brand image. This brand image plays an essential role in consumer behavior in influencing decisions and other purchasing behavior [20].

1.4. Brand Love

Brand love is an expression of consumer affection. Deep feelings and intense relationships characterize BL. Brand love is formed from three subdimensions of brand uniqueness: functional, sensory, and communicative [21]. Brand uniqueness that distinguishes a brand from other brands causes customers to love the brand. Brand uniqueness is critical to brand success and supports brand equity [22]. A brand that demonstrates superior performance and benefits is essential to customers.

Brand love is formed due to the long-term relationship between consumers and brands. Brand love is positive valence and involves higher emotions that lead consumers to a brand and other consumer attitudes, namely brand loyalty and brand attachment [23]. Brand love has a positive impact on consumer behavior [7]. Consumers who love the brand will commit to the brand, tell the goodness of the brand through WoM and be loyal to the brand. The primary constructs of brand love are affections and separation distress.

2. Research Method

The population of this research was consumers who frequently viewed social media platforms from local brands. The sampling technique chosen was purposive sampling with the criteria that respondents are consumers who frequently visit local brand social media platforms and buy local brands made in Indonesia located in Jakarta and Surabaya. The selection of consumers in these two cities was essential to represent major cities in Indonesia. In determining the acceptable minimum sample for robust statistical results,

we used an a-priori sample size calculator for structural equation models (SEM) [24-28], resulting in a recommendation to collect a minimum of 173 samples to detect an effect size of 0.3 with a significance level of 0.05 and a statistical power of 90%.

To ensure content and construct validity, all measurement items in this study have been adapted from previously established studies. We measured social media marketing activities (SMMA) with four items adapted from Koay et al. [4], Bilgin [5], and Fetais et al. [11]; brand awareness with five items adapted from Poulis et al. [26] and Suryani et al. [27]; brand image with five items adapted from Barreda et al. [19] and Martínez et al. [28]; and brand love with four items adapted from Le [7]. Subsequently, we evaluated all measurement items using the 5-point Likert scale, starting from 'strongly disagree' represented by (1) to 'strongly agree' represented by (5).

Technically, we collected data using a questionnaire survey method and supplemented it with interviews when respondents did not understand the questions. During the data collection process in July 2022, we finally involved 230 respondents, but we only retained 200 data for the final analysis. We deleted 30 data concerning data incompleteness during the survey. The 200 retained data was still appropriate for further analysis because it met the required minimum samples, as previously explained. Table 1 exhibits the detail of the respondent profile involved in this study.

We estimated the model using the PLS-SEM-based approach using WarpPLS software [29] for several considerations, including PLS-SEM provides excellent statistical results for exploratory and confirmatory research [30], works effectively with a small sample size [31], and results in better composite reliability and convergent validity compared to CB-SEM [32].

TABLE 1: Responden profile.

Respondent Characteristics	Data	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	82	41
Female	118	59
Frequency of Visits to Social Media		
Every month or less	21	10.5
2 – 4 weeks	83	41.5
Every week	96	48
Familiarity with the brand		
≤ 1 year	23	11.5
> 1 - ≤ 2 years	80	40
> 2 - ≤ 3 years	32	16
> 3 years	65	32.5

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

This section evaluated the research model's reliability and validity, as indicated in Table 2 and Table 3. The values of both indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability (composite reliability and Cronbach alpha) were above the minimum threshold of 0.70 [33]. Meanwhile, the values of average variance extracted (AVE), as standard for evaluating convergent validity, showed satisfying results which exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50 [33]. Thus, the reliability and validity of the current research model were well-established.

TABLE 2: Reliability test

Latent Variable	Indicator	Indicator Reliability	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
SMMA	SMMA1	0.718	0.863	0.771
	SMMA2	0.834		
	SMMA3	0.764		
	SMMA4	0.759		
Brand Image	BI1	0.787	0.907	0.879
	BI2	0.824		
	BI3	0.730		
	BI4	0.854		
	BI5	0.854		
Brand Awareness	BA1	0.761	0.905	0.878
	BA2	0.825		
	BA3	0.849		
	BA4	0.820		
	BA5	0.782		
Brand Love	BL1	0.956	0.965	0.951
	BL2	0.925		
	BL3	0.926		
	BL4	0.925		

TABLE 3: Convergent validity test.

Latent Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Status
SMMA	0.6003	Valid
Brand Image	0.659	Valid
Brand Awareness	0.663	Valid
Brand Love	0.872	Valid

3.2. Structural Model Evaluation

This section principally evaluated the significant value level of path coefficient among construct relationships under this study. As presented in Fig. 1 and Table 4, all direct relationships among constructs under this study were entirely accepted, except the relationship between social media marketing activities (SMMA) and brand love (BL). Referring to the mediation analysis approach suggested by Hair et al. [34], on the other hand, the insignificant result of the relationship offered implicit mediation effects of brand awareness (BA) and brand image (BI).

In detail, the total effect on the relationship of SMMA to BL through BA was higher with the value of $(0.00 + 0.69) \times 0.25 = 0.17$ than the direct relationship of SMMA to BL, which was not significant, implying the full mediation effect of brand awareness (BA) was statistically supported. Similarly, the total effect on the relationship of SMMA to BL through BI was also higher with the value of $(0.00 + 0.29) \times 0.53 = 0.15$ than the direct effect between SMMA and BL, which was not significant, indicating that the full mediation effect of brand image (BI) was statistically acceptable as well.

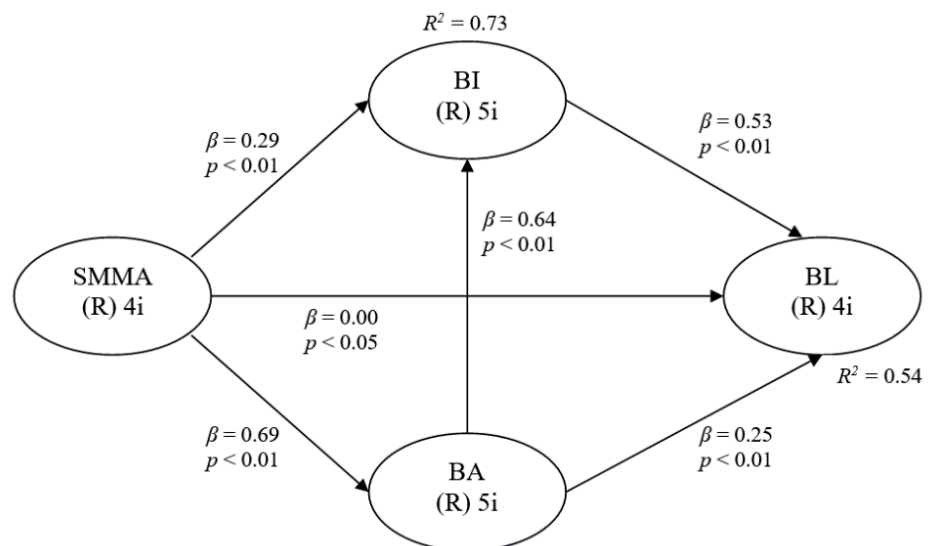


Figure 1: The structural model evaluation output.

Additionally, according to the R2 value, we can find that there was a decisive role of SMMA and brand awareness in shaping brand image, indicated by the R2 value of 0.73 (73%) and the influence of SMMA on BL through BA and BI with the R2 value of 0.54 (54%). In the marketing research domain, the R2 values of this current study were considered moderate to substantial [35]. Regarding the R2 value predicate, we can also infer that the suitability of the current research framework was relatively excellent.

TABLE 4: Path coefficient and p-value.

Construct Relationship	B	P-value	Decision
SMMA→BI	0.29	<0.01	Accepted
SMMA→BA	0.69	<0.01	Accepted
SMMA→BL	0.00	0.50	Rejected
BA→BI	0.64	<0.01	Accepted
BI→BL	0.53	<0.01	Accepted
BA→BL	0.24	<0.01	Accepted

More specifically, this study confirmed that the influence of SMMA on brand awareness is stronger than the influence of SMMA on brand image. This finding is relevant to the previous study [9], which showed that the quality of social media contributes to increasing brand awareness. A more specific study on SMMA shows that SMMA positively affects brand awareness in Turkey [5]. SMMA, as a form of marketing communication, is designed to shape positive attitudes and behavior of consumers, and brand awareness is one of the expected outcomes of SMMA [36]. One of the marketing communication purposes is to provide information to consumers so that consumers know and recognize the product. Given that brand awareness is formed when consumers know and recognize a product, the message conveyed in SMMA is complete, current, and continuously updated, and a sense of pleasure facilitates more accessible learning for consumers and gives an impression on the consumer mindset. SMMA's dimensions emphasizing interactivity, entertainment, and informativeness [4, 12] can form consumer awareness about the brand and its attributes.

Brand image is part of brand equity, essential in determining buying behavior. This study validated that SMMA had a positive effect on brand image. The image of a product is formed because of information, experiences, and observations made by consumers. Consumers who frequently visit and interact with social media will have product experiences and impressions of a brand. The interaction creates value in communication and influences consumer perceptions. A Meta-analytic study showed that SMMA affects consumer brand perception [3]. These results also support another study in the airline industry which found that SMMA contributed positively to shaping brand awareness and image [37]. Another study, although it is not specifically on SMMA but focuses on the quality of social media, showed a positive effect on the brand image [9]. The higher the quality of social media, the stronger the brand image will be. In the context of this research, the higher the SMMA, the stronger the brand image among consumers.

Brand awareness and image, as fundamental components of brand equity, are closely interrelated to the communication process. This study showed that brand awareness had a positive effect on brand image. Suryani [18] stated that brand image is a consumer's perception of a brand with its various attributes. Consumers who are extensively exposed to SMMA will experience a continuous learning process that eventually forms brand awareness. The impression of a brand formed continuously through consumer interaction with SMMA allows consumers to connect various attributes to form brand awareness, strengthening the brand image. In the communication stage, brand awareness is the initial step that occurs to consumers who will form a brand image. This study's results support a previous study in Turkey on well-known brands in the country that brand awareness affects brand image [5].

This study also confirmed that SMMA has no significant direct effect on brand love, but it must be mediated by brand awareness and brand image. In other words, the findings indicate a vital role of brand awareness and image in shaping brand love and are essential to complementing previous research results. Consequently, in establishing brand love, SMMA must initially be able to form brand awareness and image. The dimensions of SMMA include interactivity, informativeness, personalization, trendiness, and entertainment [4, 5, 12] need to be well-designed in terms of convenience and attractiveness to customers to interact and feel entertained and interested in the brand so that customers have knowledge and image about the brand. Another important aspect is that the company should actively listen to and respond to customer expectations to customize customer needs through its social media platforms.

4. Conclusion

This study's results show that SMMA on a powerful social media platform contributes to the formation of brand love. Although the effect of SMMA on brand love is indirect, it could still strongly influence brand awareness and brand image, two fundamental constructs for companies to design effective SMMA.

Furthermore, this study also contributes to developing a model of SMMA on consumer attitudes, precisely brand awareness, brand image, and brand love. The resulting model clarifies the relationship of the three attitude elements that are a consequence of communication through digital platforms through the SMMA of a brand. The results of this study also strengthen the theory regarding the communication process to the formation of consumer behavior, that brand awareness is a condition that is formed first before brand image.

Lastly, an essential implication of this research is that using social media platforms through SMMA will be effective and powerful in creating brand love if the company develops the right strategy in creating and managing the dimensions of SMMA. Companies must implement innovative strategies to maintain the quality of interactivity, informativeness, personalization, and trendiness and create fun and engaging content that is interesting and entertaining for visitors to their social media platforms.

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