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# Integrating social media marketing with esg-oriented brand strategies: Insights from retail engagement with gen z and millennials

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The use of social media has seen a significant increase worldwide, particularly in Indonesia. Social media has become a bridge for users to carry out various activities in the digital world, with companies, governments, and other organizations utilizing it to market their businesses. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of Social Media Marketing Activities influencing Brand Equity. Many companies, especially retail businesses in Indonesia, use Social Media Marketing to target Generation Z and Millennials. The aim of this study is to analyze the effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Equity, mediated by Brand Love, among retail companies in Indonesia targeting Generation Z and Millennials. **Methods:** This research utilized a sample of 300 respondents who follow one of the retail companies on social media in Indonesia. Data collection was done through surveys, and the data were analyzed using statistical methods. **Findings:** The results show that Social Media Marketing Activities did not have a significant positive effect on Brand Equity. These findings suggest that certain aspects of Social Media Marketing need to be optimized for better effectiveness in reaching Generation Z and Millennials. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that understanding how to effectively leverage Social Media Marketing is crucial for retail companies targeting Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This article offers new insights into the impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Equity in the retail sector, with a focus on the Generation Z and Millennial demographics in Indonesia.

**KEYWORDS:** brand love; brand equity; social media marketing activities;

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## 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, as a developing country, the use of social media has experienced significant growth. According to data from 2022, social media users in Indonesia reached 191.4 million out of a total population of 277.7 million, marking an increase from 170 million users in 2021 (Kemp, 2021). This growth of 26.6% indicates the increasing role of social media in facilitating the exchange of information, communication, and relationship-building among users. Such data suggest that the majority of people in Indonesia actively utilize social media for various activities.

Social media in Indonesia is not only used for communication but also serves as a platform for marketing, promotions, and the dissemination of the latest information. These activities create a substantial opportunity for businesses, particularly in implementing Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA). SMMA is a strategic tool that enables companies

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to promote their products through various social media platforms. Businesses engage interactively in marketing activities to attract consumer attention and enhance customer satisfaction (Nawi et al., 2020). Increasingly, companies are leveraging social media platforms and investing in SMMA to strengthen brand awareness among consumers (Kim et al., 2016). Through SMMA, businesses provide engaging, interactive, and entertaining content designed to attract and retain consumers (Park & Kim, 2014).

One of the primary motivations for companies to utilize social media marketing is to establish strong Brand Equity, which contributes to increased sales and profitability. The differential value created by Brand Equity simplifies the consumer purchasing process and strengthens brand attachment. Social Media Marketing Activities effectively generate consumer desire and affection for a brand, reinforcing brand loyalty. On social media platforms, customers have various ways to express their affinity for a brand, such as "likes" or "heart" reactions, which provide companies with clear insights into consumer preferences. Many retail businesses in Indonesia have intensified their reliance on social media advertising, with digital marketing accounting for approximately 70-80% of their advertising strategies.

The retail sector in Indonesia is becoming increasingly competitive, with companies facing challenges from both domestic and international players. Consequently, businesses must foster emotional and trust-based brand relationships through effective social media marketing strategies (Ebrahim, 2020; Wallace et al., 2017). Leading Indonesian retail companies, such as PT. I.P. Tbk, PT. M.D.S. Tbk, PT. M.P.P. Tbk, PT. S.A.T. Tbk, PT. M.A. Tbk, PT. M.U.I. Tbk, PT. E.S. Tbk, PT. H.S. Tbk, PT. A.H.I. Tbk, and PT. S.B.L. Tbk, have increasingly embraced digital advertising to support their business expansion.

Previous studies have largely examined the relationship between social media and brand engagement, focusing on aspects such as customer satisfaction, brand awareness, brand loyalty, purchase intent, and organizational performance (Hossain & Sakib, 2016; Uzir et al., 2021; Salam & Hoque, 2019; Uzir et al., 2021). However, limited research has explored the impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity while considering the mediating role of Brand Love (Godey et al., 2016). This study aims to fill this gap by empirically investigating the influence of SMMA on Brand Equity, mediated by Brand Love.

Previous research has indicated that Social Media Marketing has a significant positive effect on Brand Equity (Azim et al., 2022). An increase in Brand Equity is crucial for businesses as it reflects brand value and influences consumer perception (Setiawan & Murtiningsih, 2017). Moreover, investing in social media marketing contributes to higher returns on marketing expenditures (As'ad & Alhadid, 2014). Several studies have confirmed a positive and significant relationship between Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity (Nobar et al., 2020). However, contrary findings have also emerged Kusuma & Putri (2019) concluded that Social Media Marketing does not significantly impact Brand Equity. Additionally, negative consumer-generated content on social media can adversely affect Brand Equity.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity in Indonesian retail companies, particularly among Generation Z and Millennials. Specifically, this research seeks to examine the influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity, assess the effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Love, analyze the impact of Brand Love on Brand Equity, and investigate the mediating role of Brand Love in the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Equity.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Research model

This study adopts the research model proposed by Hafez (2021), the research model in this study tests seven hypotheses, including the significant positive influence of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) on Brand Equity (H1), the effect of SMMA on Brand

Love (H2), the significant positive impact of Brand Love on Brand Equity (H3), and the mediating role of Brand Love in the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Equity (H4).

Social Media Marketing Activities are classified as an independent or exogenous latent construct, while Brand Equity serves as the dependent or endogenous latent variable. Additionally, Brand Love is positioned as a mediating variable. This study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the maximum likelihood estimation method, as it effectively represents latent variables through multiple measurable indicators and evaluates numerous direct and mediated relationships among constructs simultaneously.

## 2.2 Hypothesis development

Koay et al. (2020) argue that Social Media Marketing Activities have a significant impact on Brand Equity across different customer segments. Ibrahim et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analytic examination of how SMMA can enhance consumer attitudes toward a brand. Their findings emphasize that social media marketing plays a crucial role in strengthening Brand Equity. Similarly, Lim et al. (2020) assert that Brand Equity is extensively influenced by Social Media Marketing Activities. Furthermore, Godey et al. (2016) highlight a significant correlation between social media marketing efforts and Brand Equity. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed; H1, Social Media Marketing Activities significantly and positively influence Brand Equity.

In the process of building a strong brand presence in the market, Brand Love has been recognized as a key construct (Albert et al., 2013; Yasin & Shamim, 2013). It reflects the emotional engagement that enhances customer satisfaction with a brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Brand Love is considered a desire-driven attitude, reinforced by a deep emotional connection with a favored brand (Kwon & Mattila, 2015). The consumers who develop strong affection for a brand exhibit high levels of passion and engagement. Unlike mere consumer preference, Brand Love represents a long-term relationship (Reimann et al., 2012). Karjaluoto et al. (2016) also describe Brand Love as a symbol of a dependable and strong customer-brand relationship, surpassing mere satisfaction. In this context, Brand Love is based on the triangular theory of love, which consists of passion, intimacy, and commitment (Sternberg, 1986). This conceptualization aligns with Fournier (1998), who asserts that Brand Love encompasses obsession, passion, dependency, and deep emotional attachment to a brand.

Social media serves as a powerful bridge in fostering relationships between consumers and brands, making it an essential marketing tool (Fournier & Lee, 2009). The interactive communication and search-related advantages of social media enhance consumer engagement (Evans, 2012; Laroche et al., 2013; Merisavo & Raulas, 2004). These benefits lead to higher customer satisfaction and increased positive word-of-mouth (WOM), ultimately strengthening Brand Love through SMMA efforts (Salem et al., 2019). However, the relationship between SMMA and Brand Love remains underexplored in existing literature. For instance, Okazaki et al. (2017) suggest that brand marketing should involve consumer engagement via social media. Wallace et al. (2014, 2017) further emphasize the association between social media, customer engagement, self-expressive branding, and Brand Love. Given the limited exploration of this relationship, the following hypothesis is proposed; H2, Social Media Marketing Activities significantly and positively influence Brand Love.

Brand Love determines how consumers think, feel, and behave toward a specific brand. It fosters positive emotions that lead to long-term relationships with brands (Reimann et al., 2012; Albert et al., 2008). Strong Brand Love often results in desirable marketing outcomes (Nikhashemi et al., 2019; Rambocas et al., 2018). According to Cho & Hwang (2020) and Zhang & Du (2020), Brand Love contributes to the long-term enhancement of both tangible and intangible brand assets, including Brand Equity. Several studies indicate that Brand Love is a fundamental element of Brand Equity (Machado et al., 2019). Verma (2021) also highlights the overall impact of Brand Love on Brand Equity.

Meirani & Abror (2019) found that Brand Love is a significant predictor of consumer-based Brand Equity. Similarly, Otero & Wilson (2018) observed a positive correlation between Brand Love and Brand Equity. The Brand Equity benefits from customer satisfaction driven by Brand Love. Furthermore, Algharabat (2017) suggests that SMMA indirectly affects Brand Love through self-expressive branding (both social and intrinsic). However, Brand Love, as a relational construct, is rarely tested as a mediator between SMMA and Brand Equity. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed; H3, Brand Love significantly and positively influences Brand Equity. H4, Brand Love mediates the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Equity.

### 2.3 Research design

The research design is a crucial aspect of this study, as it outlines the methodological framework for the investigation. Research design provides a structured plan for conducting marketing research projects (Yu & Cooper, 1983). It assists in defining key research problems, determining what, how, and where to measure, and establishing systematic approaches to address research inquiries. Additionally, research design specifies the procedural details necessary to obtain relevant information for answering the formulated research questions.

This study employs a conclusive research design, which aims to measure well-defined phenomena by testing specific hypotheses and examining correlations among variables (Kahle & Malhotra, 1994). The research follows a descriptive design, which is primarily intended to depict and analyze specific research constructs. Descriptive research is characterized by detailed analytical frameworks and hypothesis-driven investigation (Kahle & Malhotra, 1994). The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Equity, and the mediating role of Brand Love within the Indonesian retail sector, particularly among Generation Z and Millennials.

A single cross-sectional approach is applied in this study, meaning data is collected from a sample population at a single point in time (Kahle & Malhotra, 1994). Data collection is conducted through an online questionnaire distributed to respondents who follow the social media accounts of the top 10 retail companies in Indonesia. Once the minimum target sample size is met, the collected data is analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The study follows three key phases: the wording test, which ensures that survey items are clearly understood by respondents; the pre-test, which evaluates the validity and reliability of the questionnaire using SPSS software; and the main test, where final data analysis is conducted using AMOS version 23. The findings of this study are expected to serve as valuable insights and references for managerial decision-making and strategic planning in the Indonesian retail industry.

### 2.4 Operationalization of variables

This study examines four key variables, which have been adapted from previous research by Hafez (2021). These variables include Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Love (BL), and Brand Equity (BE). The measurement indicators for each variable are adjusted to fit the research context. All variables in this study are measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6.

Table 1. Research model variable

Variabel	Definition	Dimension	Item	Source	
Social Media Marketing Activities	According to Yadav & Rahman (2017), the presence of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA)	SMMA1	E1	The social media platforms of this retail company are enjoyable to	Kim and Ko (2012)

provides an opportunity for marketers to reduce biases and misconceptions about brands while enhancing brand value through the exchange of information and ideas.	SMMA2 (Interaction)	E2	use.
		IN1	The content shared by this retail company is entertaining. Sharing information is highly feasible on this retail company's social media platforms.
		IN2	Discussions and exchanges of opinions can easily take place on this retail company's social media.
		IN3	Expressing opinions is effortless on this retail company's social media platforms.
	SMMA3 (Trendiness)	TI1	I frequently share trendy content from this retail company through social media.
		TI2	The content shared by Erajaya Swasembada retail company on social media provides the latest information.
	SMMA4 (Customization)	C1	The information I need is easily accessible on this retail company's social media.
		C2	The social media platforms of

				<p>this retail company provide the necessary information I seek.</p> <p>W1 I am willing to share brand-related information about products or services from this retail company's social media with my friends.</p> <p>W2 I am eager to repost content from this retail company's social media to my personal social media accounts.</p>	
Brand love	<p>Brand Love is conceptualized as a relationship that results from a long-term emotional connection with a focal brand, which does not necessarily require explicit expectations (Carroll &amp; Ahuvia, 2006; Rauschnabel &amp; Ahuvia, 2014). According to Batra et al. (2012), Brand Love emerges from a multi-episodic relationship consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements.</p>	SMMA5 (Word-of-Mouth)	BL1	<p>The brand of this retail company that I like makes me feel good.</p> <p>BL2 I am highly attracted to the brand of this retail company that I favor.</p> <p>BL3 I feel emotionally attached to the brand of this retail company that I admire.</p>	Wallace et al. (2014)
Brand equity	<p>Brand Equity is projected as a significant asset in determining the nature of customer relationships with a brand (Ayesh et al., 2021).</p>		BE1	<p>I am always aware of the brand of this retail company.</p> <p>BE2 Even if other products have the same features as those from the Erajaya Swasembada</p>	Yoo and Donthu (2001)

- retail  
company, I  
would still  
prefer to  
purchase from  
Erajaya  
Swasembada.
- BE3 If another  
retail  
company is as  
good as my  
preferred  
retail  
company, I  
would still  
choose to  
purchase from  
my preferred  
retail  
company.
- BE4 If other brands  
are not  
significantly  
different from  
my preferred  
retail  
company's  
brand, the  
smarter choice  
is to continue  
purchasing  
from my  
preferred  
retail  
company.

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### 2.5 Questionnaire Design and systematics

A questionnaire is a list of questions in a study that respondents or informants need to fill out (Walgito, 1987). The researcher will distribute the questionnaire to gather information related to Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Love, and Brand Equity. The questionnaire will be distributed online to all potential respondents via Google Form in the form of a closed questionnaire. Before delving into the core of the questionnaire, the researcher will provide a brief introduction about their identity and the purpose of the research. Additionally, the researcher will reconfirm the respondent's willingness to allocate time to complete the questionnaire. The next section contains screening questions, where the researcher will ask several questions to ensure that the respondents meet the criteria for the study. This step is crucial to ensure that the research findings accurately represent the subject being investigated. The screening questions include whether the respondent is aged 18-35 years and whether they follow any social media account of an Indonesian Retail Company. In this study, the target respondents are individuals aged 18-34 years (Generation Z and Millennials), residing in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek), and following at least one social media account of an Indonesian Retail Company. If a respondent does not meet the criteria based on the screening questions, they will be informed not to proceed with the survey.

The core questions of the questionnaire are closely aligned with the research variables, such as Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Equity, Brand Trust, and Brand Love. To measure these variables, the research team opted for a Likert scale with the following

options: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree. Lastly, the respondent profile section gathers demographic data from those who agree to participate in the survey. This includes questions about the respondent's gender, age, occupation, monthly income, residence, the average time spent on social media, the types of social media platforms they frequently use, the social media accounts of Indonesian Retail Companies they follow, and their mobile phone number.

## 2.6 Data collection methods

According to Malhotra et al. (2012), Primary Data is data collected directly by the researcher to address the research problem. In this study, the researcher will collect quantitative data using a self-administered questionnaire, where respondents fill out the provided questionnaire themselves. The questionnaire will be distributed to respondents online via Google Forms, which will be shared through platforms such as Line, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The target sample size for this study is at least 115 respondents. The data will be quantitative, using a Likert scale of 1-6.

## 2.7 Sampling

The population for this study consists of Generation Z and Millennials, aged 18 to 34 years. Based on We Are Social and Hootsuite (2022), the highest number of social media users is in the 18-24 age group (Generation Z) and 25-34 age group (Millennials). The respondents are expected to live in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek) and follow at least one social media account of an Indonesian Retail Company. The minimum number of respondents expected in this study is 110. This study is limited to Indonesia, specifically the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek), which includes Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The sampling method used in this study is judgment sampling, in which data is collected based on the researcher's judgment. The purpose of judgment sampling is to intentionally choose the most appropriate units (individuals, events, or objects) to answer the research questions (Frey, 2018). Therefore, the researcher plays a key role in selecting the respondents, who are not chosen randomly. The minimum sample size is based on Hair et al. (2014), which suggests multiplying the number of items in the questionnaire by ten. With 22 items in the questionnaire, the minimum sample size is 220 respondents.

## 2.8 Data analysis methods

Before distributing the questionnaire to respondents, the researcher will conduct a wording test. This test will be given to 5-6 respondents to ensure that the questions are clear and understandable. The purpose of this test is to make sure the questionnaire can be easily understood by the respondents. Before validity and reliability tests, the researcher will conduct a pre-test and adjust the wording if needed. The pre-test is essential to ensure that the questionnaire is well-structured and suitable for distribution to respondents, as well as aligned with their understanding. A pre-test will be conducted with 30 respondents, which is the minimum number for data processing using SPSS software (Hogg & Tanis, 2005). After the pre-test, the researcher will perform validity and reliability testing. Validity testing checks how well the test measures what it is intended to measure (Cooper et al., 2013). The researcher will use SPSS software to check KMO, Bartlett Test, and factor loadings. Reliability testing will use Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS as an indicator of reliability (Malhotra, 2012).

The data collected from the pre-test will be grouped into predefined categories. Frequency distribution is the arrangement of data in specific intervals or categories (Hasan, 2001 and Sugiyono, 2013). This analysis provides an overview of the research variables and indicators, as well as a demographic description of the respondents. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a technique for estimating dependencies between constructs represented by multiple indicators and integrated into a model (Malhotra, 2012). In SEM

analysis, there are two types of variables: latent and observed. Latent variables are not directly observed, but they can be represented by observed variables (Hair et al., 2019). SPSS software will be used for SEM analysis in this study. Hair et al. (2019) explain that SEM analysis includes six stages: defining individual constructs, specifying the measurement model, designing the study, evaluating the validity of the measurements, specifying the structural model, and assessing the validity of the structural model.

The measurement model is used to validate the observed variables for each latent variable and assess the validity of each construct. In Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the research team will begin by conducting a validity test by checking the standardized loading factor (SLF) for each indicator. An indicator is considered valid if its t-value is  $\geq 1.96$  and the SLF is  $> 0.5$  (Wijanto & Halim, 2015). Following this, the reliability of the constructs will be assessed using Composite Reliability (CR), as suggested by Wijanto (2015). Constructs are deemed reliable if the CR value is  $\geq 0.70$  and the Variance Extracted (VE) is  $\geq 0.50$ . Lastly, the overall measurement model fit will be tested using the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) index, which measures how well the model fits the data and how accurately the theoretical model represents the real-world data (Hair et al., 2019).

The Structural Model illustrates the relationships between latent variables or constructs, as noted by Malhotra (2012). This analysis is conducted after validating the measurement model and ensuring the model fit is satisfactory. The first aspect of this analysis is the Structural Model Fit Test, where the fit of the model will be assessed using Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) measures. The results from these measures will determine if the structural model meets the necessary fit criteria. The second aspect is Causal Relationship Analysis, or hypothesis testing, where the researcher will evaluate the t-value and coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). A relationship between latent variables is considered valid if the t-value is  $\geq 1.645$  or  $\leq -1.645$ , depending on whether the hypothesis is one-tailed.  $R^2$  indicates the extent to which the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables (Wijanto & Halim, 2015). Additionally, mediation effects will be tested using Bootstrapping, which involves 2000 subsamples at a 95% confidence interval.

### 2.9 Pre-test

A pre-test is a measurement instrument conducted before the research subjects or respondents receive any intervention. The purpose of the pre-test is to determine whether the research instruments used are valid and reliable enough to be applied in the subsequent field study. In conducting a pre-test using SPSS software, the minimum number of respondents required is 30 individuals. If the results of the pre-test yield low validity and reliability values, changes need to be made to the indicators before proceeding further.

### 2.10 Main test

The main test is conducted once the pre-test results show validity and reliability, allowing the research process to continue. The main test serves as the final measurement instrument, following the successful completion of the pre-test, where the research subjects finally receive the intervention. The main test is designed to provide answers to the hypotheses set by the researcher. Data testing in the main test is carried out once the questionnaire has been distributed and the target respondent count has been met. For this study, the main test will be conducted using Amos version 23 software. The choice of using AMOS software is due to the fact that this research falls under CB-SEM (Covariance Based Structural Equation Modeling), which aims to test causal relationships between constructs or latent variables and assess the model's fit.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Research implementation

The research implementation involved three stages: the wording test, pre-test, and main-test. The first stage, the wording test, involved distributing the questionnaire to 10 respondents who met the criteria set by the researcher. The aim of the wording test was to ensure that the questionnaire's wording, language, and clarity were appropriate, making it easier for the respondents to understand and minimizing ambiguity in the questions. This stage was essential to ensure the quality of the responses from the participants.

The second stage was the pre-test, which aimed to validate the indicators and variables used in the study to ensure their reliability and validity. The pre-test was conducted by distributing the questionnaire via online platforms such as Line, WhatsApp, and Instagram, resulting in responses from 31 eligible respondents. The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS version 25 to evaluate the validity and reliability of the indicators and variables. If the results from the pre-test showed that all indicators met the required validity and reliability standards, the next step, the main-test, could be carried out.

The third stage was the main-test, which was carried out in the same manner as the pre-test but with a larger distribution to ensure the sample size target was met. The main-test aimed to gather data and test the hypotheses of the study. The main-test was conducted from May 8 to May 22, 2023, yielding responses from 302 participants. After excluding two invalid responses, the remaining 300 responses were processed further, as they met the criteria and passed the screening questions. The data from these 300 respondents were analyzed using SPSS version 25 and Amos software.

#### 3.2 Wording test

The wording test was conducted before the questionnaire was distributed to the target respondents to minimize ambiguity in the research. It was distributed online to 10 respondents who met the established criteria via Line and WhatsApp. The feedback gathered from the wording test provided suggestions for improving word selection, sentence structure, sentence effectiveness, and the clarity and interpretation of the questions. These suggestions were used to revise and refine the questionnaire to ensure it was clearer and easier for the respondents to understand.

#### 3.3 Validity and reliability testing of the pre-test

The validity and reliability of the pre-test were tested using SPSS version 25, based on data from 31 respondents who met the required criteria. If any indicators were found to be invalid or unreliable, they were either removed or revised until all indicators were valid and reliable. Below is the table showing the results of the validity and reliability tests carried out using SPSS version 25.

##### 3.3.1 Pre-test validity testing

The validity test for the pre-test was conducted using data from 31 respondents who passed the screening questions, which ensured they met the criteria for participation. To assess the validity of each indicator, the researcher used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and factor loadings on the component matrix. According to Kaiser, the KMO value should be greater than 0.5 to be considered acceptable. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should have a significance value of  $\leq 0.05$ , and factor loadings on the component matrix should be  $\geq 0.5$ . The following table presents the results of the pre-test validity test processed using SPSS version 25.

Based on the results of the tests conducted using spss version 25 software, it was found that all the variables in this study, namely social media marketing activities, brand love,

brand equity, and brand trust, can be considered valid. This is because the values obtained meet the validity test criteria, with  $kmo \geq 0.5$ , Bartlett's test of sphericity  $\leq 0.05$ , and each variable's indicators meeting the component matrix requirement of  $\geq 0.5$ . Thus, with the valid results for all variables, the indicators can be retained without the need for changes or elimination, allowing the research to proceed to the next stage, the main test, which involves a larger sample of respondents.

Table 2. Pre-test validity test result

Variable	Indicator	KMO	Bartlett's Test	Component Matrix	Conclusion
Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA)	SMMA1	0.727	0.000	0.708	Valid
				0.768	Valid
	SMMA2			0.740	Valid
				0.825	Valid
				0.741	Valid
	SMMA3			0.635	Valid
				0.800	Valid
				0.568	Valid
				0.517	Valid
	SMMA4			0.869	Valid
0.722		Valid			
SMMA5		0.711	Valid		
		0.705	Valid		
		0.753	Valid		
Brand Love	BL1	0.722	0.000	0.711	Valid
	BL2			0.705	Valid
	BL3			0.753	Valid
Brand Equity	BE1	0.784	0.000	0.835	Valid
	BE2			0.779	Valid
	BE3			0.744	Valid
	BE4			0.798	Valid

### 3.3.2 Reliability test for pre-test

The reliability test in the pre-test is measured using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. If the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variable is greater than 0.6, the variable can be considered reliable for the study (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The closer the Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability of the variable. Below are the results of the reliability test for the pre-test, processed using SPSS version 25.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha Pre-Test test result

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion			
Social Media Marketing Activities	SMMA1	E1	0.000	Reliabel			
		SMMA2			E2		
					IN1		
	IN2						
	SMMA3	IN3					
		T1					
	SMMA4	T2					
		C1					
	SMMA5	C2					
		W1					
		W2					
		W3					
	Brand Love				BL1	0.812	Reliabel
					BL2		
					BL3		
Brand Equity		BE1	0.832	Reliabel			
		BE2					
		BE3					
		BE4					

The table above shows the results of data processing using SPSS version 25 to assess the reliability of the pre-test data. Based on the results for the SMMA, BL, BE, and BT variables, it can be concluded that these variables are reliable since they meet the measurement criteria, indicating that the study is ready to proceed to the main test phase.

### 3.4 Respondent profile

The research questionnaire, which was distributed online via social media platforms such as Line, WhatsApp, and Instagram, received responses from 114 individuals who successfully passed the screening questions and met the criteria set for the target respondents in this study. These criteria included being between the ages of 18-34 years and following at least one Indonesian Retail Company on social media. Based on the data obtained from respondents who met the necessary criteria, the researcher analyzed the respondent profile as part of the research information.

Table 4. Respondent frequency distribution

Category	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	99	33%
	Female	201	67%
Age	18 - 21 years	67	22%
	22 - 25 years	175	58%
	26 - 29 years	42	14%
	30 - 34 years	16	5%
Residence	Bekasi	20	7%
	Bogor	30	10%
	Depok	61	20%
	Jakarta	164	55%
	Tangerang	25	8%
Occupation	Housewife	3	1%
	Employee	73	24%
	University student	200	67%
	Student	13	4%
	Entrepreneur	11	4%
Monthly income per person	Below 2,000,000 IDR	91	30%
	2,000,000 – 3,000,000 IDR	74	25%
	3,000,000 – 4,000,000 IDR	53	18%
	4,000,000 – 5,000,000 IDR	20	7%
	Above 5,000,000 IDR	62	21%
Social media frequently used	Instagram	219	73%
	Line	2	1%
	Linkedin	5	2%
	Tiktok	52	17%
	Twitter	22	7%
The frequency of social media usage	2 - 5 hours per day	198	66%
	Less than 2 hours per day	38	13%
	5 or more hours per day	64	21%
Indonesian retail companies followed	A.H.I., Tbk.	72	21%
	E.S., Tbk.	36	10%
	H.S., Tbk.	3	1%
	H.S., Tbk.	13	4%
	I.P. PT	27	8%
	M.D.S., Tbk.	42	12%
	M.P.P., Tbk.	10	3%
	M.U.I., Tbk.	13	4%
	M.A., Tbk.	100	29%
	S.A.T., Tbk.	23	7%
S.B.L., Tbk.	9	3%	

The table above presents the data obtained through the distribution of the questionnaire using Google Forms, which covers the respondents' profiles based on gender, age, occupation, place of residence, monthly income, frequently used social media platforms, daily social media usage intensity, and Indonesian retail companies followed.

Regarding the gender classification of the respondents, it is shown that the majority, 67%, are female, while 33% are male. In terms of age, it can be observed that the largest group of respondents, accounting for 58%, are aged 22-25 years, which indicates that the largest proportion of respondents belong to Generation Z. In terms of residence, the majority of respondents are from Jakarta, making up 55% of the respondents, as the target area for this study was the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek). Regarding occupation, the largest group of respondents, 67%, are students. In terms of monthly income classification, the largest percentage, 30%, earn below IDR 2,000,000 per month. Additionally, the most followed Indonesian retail company among the respondents is Mitra Adiperkasa, Tbk., with 29% of the respondents following it. Regarding social media platforms, Instagram is the most frequently used, with 73% of respondents indicating they use it the most. Lastly, in terms of social media usage intensity per day, the majority of respondents, 66%, spend 2 to 5 hours per day on social media.

### 3.5 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis refers to a description of the data obtained from the research respondents' questionnaires. In this study, the data was collected from 114 respondents who met the established criteria. Several key aspects are considered in the descriptive analysis, including the number of respondents (sample size), minimum value, maximum value, mean value, standard deviation, and total mean score. The researcher used a 1-6 Likert scale, interpreted as follows:

Table 5. interpretation of score range

Score range	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.75	Strongly disagree
1.756 - 2.5	Disagree
2.56 - 3.25	Agree
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly agree

#### 3.5.1 Descriptive analysis of social media marketing activities

The descriptive analysis of the Social Media Marketing Activities variable consists of 11 indicator questions, with a total mean value of 4.93. This value indicates that, on average, respondents strongly agree that the Indonesian retail companies they follow effectively utilize social media for marketing their products.

Table 6. Descriptive analysis of social media marketing activities

Indicator	Sample Size	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Standard Deviation	Mean	Total Mean Value
SMMA 1	300	2	6	0.94	5.03	4.93
SMMA 2	300	2	6	0.92	5.07	
SMMA 3	300	2	6	0.98	5.00	
SMMA 4	300	2	6	1.05	4.82	
SMMA 5	300	2	6	1.06	4.76	

The lowest average value among the indicators is SMMA5, with a mean of 4.76, indicating that respondents strongly agree with sharing information about the company's products or services on social media and reposting the company's content on their own social media.

Meanwhile, the highest mean value is SMMA2, at 5.07, showing that respondents strongly agree that sharing information, discussions, and exchanging opinions are easy to do through the social media platforms of the retail companies they follow.

### 3.5.2 Descriptive analysis of brand love

The descriptive analysis of the Brand Love variable consists of three indicators, with a total mean value of 4.75. This indicates that, on average, respondents have a strong emotional connection with the brands of their preferred retail companies. The lowest mean value is for indicator BL3, at 4.21. Despite being the lowest, this still suggests that respondents strongly agree that they are emotionally involved with their preferred retail brands. Meanwhile, the highest mean value is for indicator BL2, at 4.78, meaning that respondents are highly interested in their favorite retail brands.

Table 7. Descriptive analysis of brand love

Indicator	Sample Size	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Standard Deviation	Mean	Total Mean Value
BL1	300	1	6	0.92	4.69	4.75
BL2	300	2	6	0.89	4.89	
BL3	300	1	6	1.05	4.67	

### 3.5.3 Descriptive analysis of brand equity

The descriptive analysis of the Brand Equity variable consists of four indicators, with a total mean value of 4.82. This suggests that respondents have a strong attachment to the brand equity of their preferred retail companies. Indicators BE1 and BE2 have the highest mean value of 4.87, signifying that respondents strongly believe it makes sense to purchase products from their preferred retail companies rather than from competitors, even if the features are similar. Meanwhile, the lowest mean value is for indicator BE3, at 4.73, indicating that respondents strongly agree that even if a better retail company exists, they would still choose to purchase from their preferred retail brand.

Table 8. Descriptive analysis of brand equity

Indicator	Sample Size	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Standard Deviation	Mean	Total Mean Value
BE1	300	2	6	0.94	4.87	4.82
BE2	300	2	6	0.94	4.87	
BE3	300	2	6	0.89	4.82	
BE4	300	12	6	0.91	4.73	

### 3.6 Model measurement test

In conducting the model measurement test, the researcher identifies two groups: Absolute Fit Measures and Incremental Fit Measures. However, before performing the goodness-of-fit test, the researcher first identifies the obtained data. After normalizing the data, it was found that the dataset does not meet the multivariate normality test, as shown in Table 9.

A normality test is considered valid when the Critical Ratio (CR) of skewness and kurtosis falls within the range of -2.58 to 2.58, and the P-Value for Skewness and Kurtosis is less than 0.05. If these conditions are met, the data can be concluded to be normally distributed both univariately and multivariately. The table below presents the assessment of normality.

Table 9. Assessment of normality

Variable	Min	Max	Skew	C.R.	Kurtosis	C.R.
BT4	2	6	-0.567	-4.007	-0.05	-0.177
BE4	2	6	-0.612	-4.328	0.422	1.494
BE3	2	6	-0.670	-4.737	0.426	1.506
BE2	2	6	-0.649	-4.591	0.056	0.199
BE1	2	6	-0.806	-5.699	0.659	2.331
BL3	1	6	-0.762	-5.390	0.506	1.790
BL2	2	6	-0.676	-4.777	0.255	0.901
BL1	1	6	-0.902	-6.378	1.103	3.898
SMMA5	2	6	-0.640	-4.525	0.094	0.334
SMMA4	2	6	-0.719	-5.086	0.274	0.968
SMMA3	2	6	-0.551	-3.896	-0.431	-1.524
SMMA2	2	6	-0.778	-5.503	0.360	1.274
SMMA1	2	6	-0.882	-6.239	0.696	2.462
Multivariate				35.546		12.827

The results from Table 9 indicate that the Critical Ratio (CR) values do not meet the standard requirements, as the CR values for univariate data fall outside the range of -2.58 to 2.58, with a multivariate value of 12.827. Additionally, the P-Value for Skewness and Kurtosis exceeds 0.05.

According to Hair et al. (1998), model estimation using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method is highly sensitive to data that does not meet normality. However, Ghozali & Fuad (2008) state that measurement models using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method, as in this study, can still be tested by adjusting the goodness-of-fit indices in the model. The results of the goodness-of-fit test are presented below.

Table 10. Model fit test

Goodness of Fit Measure	Value	Description
Absolute Fit Measures		
Chi-Square/df	3.352	Marginal Fit
GFI	0.87	Marginal Fit
SRMR	0.05	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.089	Poor Fit
ECVI	1.375	Good Fit
ECVI for Saturated Model	0.910	Good Fit
ECVI for Independence Model	8.755	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Measures		
NNFI (TLI)	0.886	Marginal Fit
NFI	0.872	Marginal Fit
RFI	0.844	Marginal Fit
IFI	0.906	Good Fit
CFI	0.906	Good Fit

The data processing results for this model fall into three categories: Poor Fit, Marginal Fit, and Good Fit. The model fit test criteria, several measures determine the classification of model fit. In the Absolute Fit Measures category, a Chi-Square/df value between 2 and 5 is classified as Good Fit. The GFI value is considered Marginal Fit if it falls between 0.80 and 0.90, while a value above 0.90 is categorized as Good Fit (Wijanto & Halim, 2008). Additionally, the SRMR value is classified as Good Fit if it is less than 0.10 (Hu & Bentler, 1995), and the RMSEA value must be below 0.08 to achieve a Good Fit classification (Wijanto, 2008). The ECVI value (1.375) is closer to the ECVI saturated model value (0.910) than to the ECVI independence model value (8.755), indicating a Good Fit (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Muller, 2003). In terms of Incremental Fit Measures, indices such as NNFI (TLI), NFI, RFI, IFI, and CFI are classified as Good Fit if their values are  $\geq 0.90$ , while values between 0.80 and 0.90 are categorized as Marginal Fit (Wijanto, 2008).

Based on these results, SRMR, ECVI, and CFI fall into the Good Fit category. Chi-Square/df, GFI, NNFI (TLI), and NFI are classified as Marginal Fit, while RMSEA is categorized as Poor Fit. This result is less satisfactory because RMSEA is considered the most informative criterion in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Byrne, 1989). Therefore, the researcher decided to modify the model to improve the goodness-of-fit results.

### 3.6.2 Modification of model fit test

The modification of the model fit test was conducted to improve the overall model fit. Modification indices should be adjusted one by one by correlating the highest M.I. values within the same latent variable (Hox & Bechger, 2007; Wijanto, 2008; Adam, 2008).

The researcher performed seven modification steps by connecting error pairs within the same latent variable:  $e1 \leftrightarrow e2$ ,  $e2 \leftrightarrow e3$ ,  $e3 \leftrightarrow e4$ ,  $e4 \leftrightarrow e5$ ,  $e6 \leftrightarrow e8$ ,  $e9 \leftrightarrow e10$ , and  $e10 \leftrightarrow e11$ . These modifications were applied to a single construct, ensuring that the modified indicators were reflective.

After the modifications, the RMSEA value improved significantly and was categorized as Good Fit at  $0.056 < 0.08$ , as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Results of model measurement modification testing

Goodness of Fit Measure	Value	Description
Absolute Fit Measures		
Chi-Square/df	1.950	Marginal Fit
GFI	0.928	Good Fit
SRMR	0.034	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.056	Good Fit
ECVI	0.895	Good Fit
ECVI for Saturated Model	0.910	Good Fit
ECVI for Independence Model	8.755	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Measures		
NNFI (TLI)	0.954	Good Fit
NFI	0.931	Good Fit
RFI	0.910	Good Fit
IFI	0.965	Good Fit
CFI	0.965	Good Fit

The results indicate that the Chi-Square/df value has improved but remains categorized as a Marginal Fit. Additionally, SRMR, ECVI, IFI, and CFI values have increased while maintaining their classification. Notably, GFI, NNFI (TLI), NFI, and RFI values have improved, shifting from Marginal Fit to Good Fit. In summary, the model modification test results indicate one Marginal Fit and eleven Good Fit indices, suggesting that the study can proceed to the next stage.

The table presents the measurement test results derived from data processing using AMOS 23 software. The validity assessment follows the standard threshold of factor loadings  $> 0.50$ . The findings confirm that all included measurement indicators meet this criterion, establishing their validity. For reliability, indicators are considered reliable if their variance extracted (VE) is  $\geq 0.50$  and composite reliability (CR) is  $\geq 0.70$ . Based on these parameters, all measurement indicators and variables in the validity and reliability testing, as analyzed using AMOS 23, demonstrate strong validity and reliability.

Table 12. Validity and reliability testing of the main test

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	Conclusion
SMMA	SMMA1	0.65	0.97	Valid and Reliable
	SMMA2	0.58		
	SMMA3	0.66		
	SMMA4	0.66		

Brand Love	SMMA5	0.65	0.97	Valid and Reliable
	BL1	0.77		
	BL2	0.79		
Brand Equity	BL3	0.76	0.98	Valid and Reliable
	BE1	0.75		
	BE2	0.74		
	BE3	0.75		
	BE4	0.71		

### 3.7 Structural model analysis

#### 3.7.1 Structural model fit testing

Table 13. Model fit testing result

Goodness of Fit Measure	Value	Description
Absolute Fit Measures		
Chi-Square/df	1.950	Marginal Fit
GFI	0.928	Good Fit
SRMR	0.034	Good Fit
RMSEA	0.056	Good Fit
ECVI	0.895	Good Fit
ECVI for Saturated Model	0.910	Good Fit
ECVI for Independence Model	8.755	Good Fit
Incremental Fit Measures		
NNFI (TLI)	0.954	Good Fit
NFI	0.931	Good Fit
RFI	0.910	Good Fit
IFI	0.965	Good Fit
CFI	0.965	Good Fit

This table presents the results of the structural model fit test, assessing the model's goodness of fit. The findings indicate that the fit indices for the structural model align closely with those of the measurement model. The closer the fit indices of the structural model are to those of the measurement model, the better the overall model fit. This study reports one Marginal Fit and eleven Good Fit indices, confirming that the structural model is acceptable and ready for further analysis.

#### 3.7.2 Causal relationship analysis

Causal relationship analysis examines the relationships among constructs by analyzing the significance of T-Values and P-Values in the structural model, as obtained through AMOS 23. Additionally, this analysis presents the determination coefficient (R-Square) to assess the explanatory power of independent variables on dependent variables.

Both direct and indirect effects were analyzed. Direct effects include paths such as SMMA → BL, SMMA → BE. Mediation effects were tested using Bootstrapping with 2000 subsamples at a 95% confidence level, evaluating paths like SMMA → BL → BE.

Table 14. Causal relationship analysis result

Path	Standardized Regression Weights	S.E	T-Value	P-Value	Conclusion
Direct Effects					
SMMA → BL	0.98	0.10	10.06	0.00	Positive and Significant
SMMA → BE	-0.16	0.50	-0.32	0.75	Not Significant
Indirect Effects					
SMMA → BL → BE	-	-	1.08	0.03	Positive and Significant

Two effects are found to be non-significant, as their T-Values fall outside the acceptable range ( $\leq -1.645$  or  $\geq 1.645$ ), and their P-Values exceed 0.05 at a 95% confidence level. These include the effect of BL on BT (T-Value = 1.11, P-Value = 0.27) and the effect of SMMA on BE (T-Value = -0.32, P-Value = 0.75). In contrast, five effects meet the significance criteria, indicating meaningful relationships in the research model.

### 3.8 Hypothesis analysis

Table 15. Hypothesis analysis

Hypothesis	Research Question	T-Value	P-Value	Research Findings	Findings from Reference Journal
H1	Social Media Marketing Activities positively influence Brand Equity.	-0.32	0.075	Not Supported	Not Supported
H2	Social Media Marketing Activities positively influence Brand Love.	10.07	0.000	Supported	Supported
H3	Brand Love positively influences Brand Equity.	1.11	0.27	Not Supported	Supported

#### 3.8.1 H1: Social media marketing activities positively influence brand equity

Based on the research findings, H1 has a t-value of -0.32, which falls outside the critical ratio range of  $\geq -1.645$  to  $\geq 1.645$ . This result is further supported by a P-Value of 0.75, which does not meet the significance criterion of  $< 0.05$ . Consequently, this hypothesis is rejected, indicating that increasing Social Media Marketing Activities in Indonesian retail companies does not significantly enhance their Brand Equity.

These findings align with prior research conducted by Hafez (202a), which also demonstrated that Social Media Marketing Activities alone are insufficient to create Brand Equity. Emotional engagement and consumer confidence in making purchasing decisions are necessary components for building Brand Equity. However, these results contradict previous studies (Azim et al., 2022; Nobar et al., 2020), which found that aggressive and extensive Social Media Marketing Activities in Indonesian retail companies positively influence Brand Equity. In the present study, most respondents disagreed that Social Media Marketing Activities of Indonesian retail companies positively impact their Brand Equity.

#### 3.8.2 H2: Social media marketing activities positively influence brand love

The research findings indicate that H2 has a t-value of 11.679, which falls within the acceptable critical ratio range of  $\geq -1.645$  to  $\geq 1.645$ . This result is further supported by a P-Value of 0.000, meeting the significance criterion of  $< 0.05$ . These findings confirm that Social Media Marketing Activities have a significant positive impact on Brand Love.

This conclusion is consistent with previous studies (Hafez, 2021; Sikandar & Ahmed, 2019), which found that Social Media Marketing Activities conducted by Indonesian retail companies, particularly through the creation and development of digital content, effectively enhance customers' emotional attachment to the brand. This emotional bond facilitates the establishment of long-term relationships between the brand and its consumers.

#### 3.8.3 H3: Brand love positively influences brand equity

The research findings indicate that H3 has a t-value of 1.11, which falls outside the acceptable critical ratio range of  $\geq -1.645$  to  $\geq 1.645$ . Additionally, the P-Value is 0.27, exceeding the significance threshold of  $< 0.05$ . These results suggest that Brand Love does not significantly influence Brand Equity.

These findings contradict previous studies (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016), which suggest that Brand Love alone is not sufficient to create Brand Equity. Instead, brand loyalty serves as an intermediary between Brand Love and Brand Equity. A strong emotional attachment to a brand can foster Brand Love, which, in turn, strengthens brand loyalty (Beckman et al., 2013). Consequently, loyal customers engage in repeated purchases, sustaining long-term relationships and ultimately enhancing Brand Equity.

#### *3.8.4 H4: Brand love mediates the positive influence of social media marketing activities on brand equity*

The research findings indicate that H4 has a t-value of 2.108, which falls within the acceptable critical ratio range of  $\geq -1.645$  to  $\geq 1.645$ . This result is further supported by a P-Value of 0.035, meeting the significance criterion of  $< 0.05$ . These findings confirm that Brand Love significantly mediates the positive influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity.

These results align with prior research by Hafez (202a), which suggests that when Social Media Marketing Activities are effectively and aggressively utilized by Indonesian retail companies, they enhance customer emotional engagement with the brand. This emotional connection contributes to increased Brand Equity in the long run.

## **4. Conclusions**

This study is based on the model proposed by Md. Hafiz and examines the influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity. The objective of this research is to gain insight into how social media marketing activities impact brand equity in Indonesian retail companies from the perspective of Generation Z and Millennials. After distributing questionnaires, collecting responses, and processing data from a total of 300 respondents, the findings of this study can be summarized as follows.

First, Social Media Marketing Activities do not have a significant positive impact on Brand Equity. This result indicates that Hypothesis 1 is not supported, meaning that a higher level of social media marketing activities conducted by Indonesian retail companies does not significantly contribute to the creation or enhancement of Brand Equity among Generation Z and Millennials.

Second, Social Media Marketing Activities have a significant positive effect on Brand Love. This finding supports Hypothesis 2, suggesting that social media marketing efforts by Indonesian retail companies, particularly through the creation and development of digital content, foster emotional attachment among Generation Z and Millennials, thereby enabling long-term relationships with the brand.

Third, Brand Love does not have a significant positive impact on Brand Equity. This result indicates that Hypothesis 3 is not supported, meaning that simply cultivating Brand Love among Generation Z and Millennials is not sufficient to establish strong Brand Equity for Indonesian retail companies.

Lastly, Brand Love mediates the positive influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Trust. This finding supports Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that a more aggressive and well-utilized social media marketing strategy by Indonesian retail companies enhances emotional attachment among Generation Z and Millennials, ultimately strengthening the brand's value in the future.

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### Author Contribution

All authors contributed substantially to this research. Contributions included study conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The drafting and revision of the manuscript were conducted collaboratively, with all authors reviewing and approving the final version for submission.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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