

Social media marketing dynamics and brand loyalty: A sequential mediation model in the Indonesian packaged drinking water industry

Andika¹, Yusrita², Joko Purwanto Nugroho³, Della Nanda Luthfiana⁴, Rizki Zaenul Hak⁵

^{1,4,5}Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Janabadra, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

³Accounting Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Janabadra, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Correspondents e-mail: andika@janabadra.ac.id

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Author's email:

yusrita@fe.uisu.ac.id

jokopenug@janabadra.ac.id

della@janabadra.ac.id

rizkizh.id@gmail.com

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Abstract

Purpose – This study uses the stimulus organism response (SOR) as the theory framework to analyze the sequential mediating roles of brand experience (BE), brand trust (BT), and brand love (BLV) to show the connection between Social Media Marketing (SMM) activities and brand loyalty (BL).

Design/methodology/approach – The study approach was empirically evaluated using 310 SM users as data who follow bottled water brands on any platform and have made a purchase. Furthermore, a sequential multiple mediation model was tested using PLS-SEM.

Findings – The results indicate that SMM significantly affects BE, and BE significantly affects BT and BLV. Subsequently, this influence of BT and BLV contributes to an increase in BL. Additionally, it was revealed that BE, BT, and BLV sequentially and significantly mediate the relationship between SMM and BL.

Research limitations/implications – Its cross-sectional design, sample bias towards younger, educated respondents, a narrow focus on BL from SMM activities, and a lack of consideration for sustainability and broader product types suggest a need for more diverse and longitudinal future research.

Practical implications – The result emphasizes the need for brands to leverage SM as a critical channel for consumer engagement, suggesting the adoption of personalized, entertaining, and interactive digital campaigns to increase through memorable BE.

Originality/value – This study pioneers using SOR theory to explore the SMM impact on BL within the bottled water industry, providing novel insights through empirically confirming a model that links SMM activities with loyalty via BE, BT, and BLV

Keywords: brand experience, brand loyalty, brand love, brand trust, social media marketing, stimulus organism response theory.

Introduction

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has emerged as a crucial component of digital marketing, introducing new dimensions to modern marketing strategies (Jamil et al., 2022). Many utilize social media (SM) platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to advertise their products and

services (Appel et al., 2020). SMM plays a significant role in shaping customers' perceptions of brands (Wei et al., 2023). In 2023, global statistics showed that 4.95 billion people were actively engaged in SM networks, marking an increase to 6 billion by 2027 (Dixon, 2023c; Petrosyan, 2024). The worldwide penetration rate of SM is approximately 75.3% (Dixon, 2023b), with users spending an average of 151 minutes daily on these platforms (Dixon, 2023a). Indonesia has experienced a significant surge in SM usage, with 167 million active users, representing 60.4% of its total population (Kemp, 2023a). This exponential growth has opened new avenues for marketers to utilize SM to build strong brand-customer relationships, especially in the bottled mineral water industry.

The rise of SM platforms has fundamentally altered marketing strategies. Instead of serving purely as channels for disseminating information, businesses now utilize these platforms to engage with customers actively and maintain their interest (Harrigan et al., 2020; Pascucci et al., 2023). This strategic application of SM strengthens customer loyalty and promotes continuous engagement with products and services (Al-Dmour et al., 2023). Moreover, marketing through SM allows companies to reach audiences far beyond traditional limits, thus gaining new customers and enhancing brand recognition, reputation, and value (Ebrahim, 2020; Koay et al., 2023). SM's widespread adoption as the primary avenue for communication (Hatamleh et al., 2023) plays a pivotal role in the consumer's decision-making journey, serving as a critical source of information (Mason et al., 2021). Given its significant influence on consumer perceptions, SMM has emerged as a crucial field of study.

To further explore the impact of SMM, it is essential to examine its influence on critical factors such as BL, BT, BE, and BLV. Recent studies confirm that customers engaged with a brand on social media are three times more likely to remain loyal to it (So et al., 2021), highlighting the significant impact of SMM on fostering BL. SMM also significantly influences BE, BT, and BLV, which drive BL. SMM shapes BE by influencing consumer perceptions and emotional responses, which is crucial for loyalty intentions (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). Additionally, SMM enhances BT by fostering consistent and transparent interactions, reducing perceived risks, and ensuring long-term security (Handayani et al., 2021). Personalized content in SMM also strengthens BLV by creating emotional attachment and encouraging loyalty (Junaid et al., 2019). The strategic management of BE, BT, and BLV collectively sustains BL by driving initial attraction through positive brand experiences, ensuring long-term security via trusted interactions, and transforming customer satisfaction into brand advocacy through emotional connections (Hafez, 2021; Hanaysha, 2022; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). Therefore, understanding the interplay between SMM and these factors is essential for developing robust marketing tactics that not only drive immediate engagement but also cultivate long-term loyalty and brand advocacy. This comprehensive approach enriches the discourse on SMM and provides actionable insights for businesses to enhance consumer engagement and achieve sustained competitive advantage.

The bottled water industry in Indonesia, under supervision by the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), has experienced significant expansion over time. Currently, 7,780 brands of bottled drinking water are registered with BPOM and produced by 1,032 local and international producers throughout Indonesia (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan Indonesia, 2020). Based on data from the Central Statistical Agency (BPS), 40.64% of households in Indonesia consume bottled drinking water (Direktorat Statistik Kesejahteraan Rakyat Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023), which indicates broad market penetration. The industry is entering an increasingly complex and dynamic competition phase amid a growing population and increased health awareness. Dominance by key players such as Aqua, Le Minerale, and Nestle Pure Life Angelia (2022) does not preclude the emergence of new brands that offer differentiation through quality, packaging innovation, and adaptive marketing strategies. The increasing digital penetration and use of SM in Indonesia have also opened up new and effective marketing channels, expanded market reach, and increased competition intensity. In this environment, a company's ability to quickly adjust to consumer preferences and market trends becomes the key to success (Appel et al., 2020). Therefore, bottled water marketers must build strong and emotional brand relationships and mutual trust, primarily through effective SM marketing strategies (Al-Dmour et al., 2023). Timely

and focused research is needed to understand how SMM activities can effectively establish and sustain BL in Indonesia's highly competitive bottled water market.

SMM has emerged as a pivotal strategy for businesses to promote their offerings, yet the determination of its actual effectiveness remains an ongoing inquiry (Koay et al., 2023). It is projected that by 2024, the expenditure on SMM will substantially increase, reaching a market valuation of approximately \$219.8 billion, signaling its growing importance in the digital marketing landscape (Statista et al., 2024). Notably, advertising via SM platforms has overtaken traditional paid search advertising in popularity, reflecting a shift in marketing strategies (Kemp, 2023b). Despite this surge, many companies need help fully leveraging SM advantages, often attributed to the diverse usage patterns across generations. Platforms like Instagram, which features feeds, Stories, and Reels, are notably favored by millennials and Generation Z. In contrast, Facebook, known for its broad feature set from text statuses to videos, resonates more with an older demographic (Pusparisa, 2021). TikTok, distinguished by its engaging short videos, captivates Generation Z with its unique effects and filters, highlighting the platform's innovative appeal (Hajiyeva, 2023). The primary obstacle for businesses in crafting distinctive SMM campaigns is a need for a comprehensive understanding of target audiences' preferences, behaviors, and needs, leading to misalignments between the content produced and the audience's expectations. Moreover, the success of SMM efforts largely hinges on the ability of a business to effectively and strategically navigate the diverse landscape of SM platforms, each catering to specific demographics and user interaction patterns. A generalized approach to SMM can lead to adequate engagement levels and improve the overall efficacy of marketing initiatives. Consequently, achieving prominence in the crowded SMM field requires businesses to deepen the comprehension of their target audience's characteristics and to adeptly leverage each platform's distinct features and user base cohesively and strategically (Koay et al., 2023). Grasping these nuances is crucial for ensuring that investments in SMM boost visibility and foster sustained customer engagement and loyalty.

Several studies have shown the significant SMM impact activities on consumer response to brands (Althuwaini, 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Haudi et al., 2022; Panigyrakis et al., 2020; Perera et al., 2022; Ye et al., 2022). However, the core connection between SMM activities and BL formation remains unexplored. Research by Aljuhmani et al. (2023) found a direct positive correlation between the perception of SMM and BL, but, as explained by Koay et al. (2023), this relationship is more complex. Hafez (2021) added that a positive SMM increases BLV and BT, contributing to BL. Althuwaini (2022) supports this, suggesting that BT mediates SMM and BL perceptions. Research by Bui et al. (2023) highlights that customer engagement with digital content often affects BL indirectly, with the evaluation of consumer experience as a critical mediator. M.-W. Li et al. (2020) show that SM user context and interaction influence BL and trust more, directly affecting the brand level. It was revealed that there is a more significant connection between consumer engagement, brand attachment, and BL than the connection between engagement, trust, and BL. Although there have been attempts to explore the connections between SMM and BL activities, understanding how SMM affects BL comprehensively is still widespread and needs to be integrated into the current references.

This study utilizes the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory to investigate the complex relationship between SMM and BL in the bottled water industry in Indonesia. The SOR framework explains how external stimuli, such as SMM, influence cognitive and emotional states, shaping consumer behavior (Zhang et al., 2021). Unlike previous research, this study distinguishes between the stimulus, organism, and response by examining how SMM (stimulus) affects BL (response) through the mediating roles of BE, BT, and BLV (organism). By introducing a sequential mediation model, this study aims to uncover the unique contributions of BE, BT, and BLV within the context of SMM and explore the indirect impact of SMM on BL through the mediating effects of BE, BT, and BLV. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: How does SMM indirectly affect BL in the Indonesian bottled water market? What roles do BE, BT and BLV play in mediating the relationship between SMM and BL? How can businesses strategically utilize SMM to enhance BL through these mediators? By answering these questions, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of how SMM influences BL, offering actionable insights to improve

consumer engagement and loyalty strategies. The findings are expected to significantly contribute to the marketing literature and provide practical guidance for businesses aiming to build stronger brand-consumer relationships.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Stimuli-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory

Mehrabian & Russell (1974) developed the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory in the context of environmental psychology, which presents a framework for understanding how the external environment (Stimulus) affects the inner state of the individual (Organism), which further determines the behavioral response (Response). According to Mehrabian & Russell (1974), individuals perceive and process environmental stimuli, producing emotional and cognitive responses that influence behavior. Loureiro et al. (2020) show that environmental stimuli get consciousness and trigger the person's emotional reactions, including feelings, affects, and perceptions, which directly affect the individual's behavior. In this context, Islam & Rahman (2017) elaborate that "organisms" reflect internal processes rooted in individual perception and evaluation, transforming external environmental inputs into behavioral responses.

SOR theory has found its wide application in various studies, especially in SM marketing. For example, Aljuhmani et al. (2023) used the SOR theory to uncover how SMM in the aviation industry can affect BL through consumer cognitive and emotional engagement. Hafez (2021) uses the SOR theory by focusing on the impact of SMM on equity-related operations in the banking industry, highlighting the trust and love role of brands as mediators. Meanwhile, Koay et al. (2023) use SOR theory to investigate how SMM can influence consumer purchase intent, emphasizing a gradual process involving trust, experience, and love for the brand. Hanaysha (2022) also uses SOR theory to analyze SMM activities influencing consumer decision-making in the fast food industry, focusing on trust as a mediating factor. These studies confirm the relevance of SOR theory in today's digital context, suggesting that stimuli from SM can trigger complex internal processes, ultimately influencing consumer behavioral responses. This research adopts the framework Koay et al. (Koay et al., 2023) developed, focusing on how SMM activity stimuli affect consumers' inner state sequentially, culminating in behavior. The relationship between marketing stimulus, internal processing by consumers (organisms), and consumer behavioral responses (response) becomes significant in this study, which seeks to understand the consumer response and the perceived value of SMM activities.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) Activities on Brand Experience (BE)

SMM Activities are a set of activities business organizations conduct on social media platforms for marketing and customer interaction (Hanafizadeh et al., 2021). These activities include content creation, distribution, and management on SM platforms using sharing features. This sharing process involves receiving, disseminating, and exchanging content in various forms (Li et al., 2021). Content on SM, which can be user-generated or marketing-generated, is crucial in this process (Meire et al., 2019). Brand pages on SM, which serve as interactive platforms for communication between customers and brands, allow for unlimited follower count participation and brand-related message exchange (Fetais et al., 2023; Jamil et al., 2022). Brand content companies facilitate deeper SM connections among brands and customers (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021).

BE refers to the customer's overall perception of their interaction with the brand, which includes emotional, sensory, and social aspects (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). A positive and prosperous BE can be achieved through the presentation of a comprehensive experience by brand pages on social media, which can fulfil the hedonic needs of customers and generate a favorable response from them (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

This research builds on the understanding that the distribution of shared content plays a pivotal role in fostering a positive and enriching consumer experience. In this case, consumers are usually driven by hedonic motivations, which include the desire for emotional, sensory, and social stimuli (Kimiagari & Asadi Malafe, 2021). Previous studies have shown that content characteristics in brand posts, such as interactivity, clarity, and message conveyed, play an essential role in driving

engagement (Chae, 2021; Lim & Rasul, 2022). This consumer engagement is vital because it reflects behaviors and actions that can benefit brands (Eslami et al., 2021). Research Beig & Khan (2018) Explicitly found that business marketing activities that involve sharing content on SM significantly affect the consumer BE. Drawing from these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: SMM activities have a significant effect on consumer BE.

The Influence of Brand Experience (BE) on Brand Trust (BT)

Confidence indicates the dedication of a brand to prioritizing the needs of customers. Trust mitigates any uncertainty or apprehension consumers might experience when not well-acquainted with the product (Hassan et al., 2016). To maintain customer lifetime value in the long run, companies must establish brand credibility in the eyes of their customers (Gam et al., 2023). Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) explain that BT is the standard by which customers are prepared to choose the brand's capacity to fulfil their obligations. Chauhan & Fauzy (2020) show that developing BT is based on past BE and earlier connections. BE is defined by Brakus et al. (2009) as a behavior reaction that brings the stimuli related to the brand and the aspects such as packaging, communication, environment, and the brand design as the identity, as well as the internal subjective reaction such as sensation, perspective, and cognition. The experience encompasses four distinct aspects: sensory perception, emotional response, intellectual engagement, and behavioral interaction.

Experiences with brands can occur in various settings, including direct interactions during shopping or through indirect engagement via SM platforms (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). These interactions enable consumers to shape their perception of a BE, which can happen even without prior purchase of its products (Koay et al., 2023). According to Shahid et al. (2022), certain sensations linked to memorable BE can foster specific perceptions in consumers' minds, thereby enhancing trust in the brand (Haudi et al., 2022). The genuineness perceived in a brand's SMM activities is essential in fostering trust among consumers, especially when they believe the brand earnestly strives to offer top-notch products and services to cater to their needs (Koay et al., 2023). Consequently, the research infers that positive impressions derived from consistent and authentic experiences on SM are vital for cultivating consumer BT. BT emerges as a secondary response stemming from the BE. Accordingly, this study introduces the following hypothesis:

H₂: BE in SM has a significant influence on BT.

The Influence of Brand Experience (BE) on Brand Love (BLV)

Researchers have found that the BE has a vital emotional component, where the customer's feelings and thoughts towards the brand are significant (Brakus et al., 2009). This approach combines emotion and compassion to understand the brand more deeply (Singh et al., 2021). The relationship between the customer and the brand involves more than just internal feelings; it also creates a sense of ownership and attachment to the brand (Schmitt, 2012). Positive experiences with brands encourage consumers to develop positive emotions and love for the brand, resulting from their internal processes (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). Huber et al. (2015) further elaborate that customers who develop a fondness for a brand tend to exhibit passionate engagement with it. Brand Love (BLV) is an intense and enduring emotional attachment to a brand. It represents a more robust and reliable relationship than customer satisfaction (Watanuki, 2022). Fournier (1998) states that BLV includes aspects such as obsession, passion, dependence, and feelings for the brand. Meanwhile, Albert et al. (2009) propose the concept of BLV with two key factors: affection and passion. We articulate BLV as a high-level construct involving two key aspects: intimacy and love, in line with the view of (Bae & Kim, 2023; Sarkar et al., 2013), where intimacy reflects the consumer's emotional bond with the brand and passion indicates deep interest (Batra et al., 2012).

Previous studies have shown that BE significantly affects BLV formation (Huang, 2017; Na et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2021), providing insight into the role of BLV resulting from BE in the mobile context. This relationship was also found in online shopping (Mustafa et al., 2022) and hypermarket (Singh et al., 2021). Thus, consumers' engagement and interaction with the brand through various mediums and experiences, from physical products to digital services, play an

essential role in shaping and strengthening love for the brand. Other research from Hepola et al. (2017) also points out that online streaming services often aim to meet consumers' emotional needs, contributing to BLV formation. Next, Madeline & Sihombing (2019) found that memorable experiences gained from SM marketing activities significantly affect BLV. Based on this review of the literature and findings, we put forward the following hypotheses:

H₃: BE in SM has a significant influence on BLV.

The Influence of Brand Trust (BT) on Brand Loyalty (BL)

Consumer trust in brands can be thought of as a consequence of engagement, stemming from the experiences consumers have when interacting with the products or brands they use (Chauhan & Fauzy, 2020). Based on various studies that have been conducted, it is found that BT creates the basis for a strong relationship between brands and consumers (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022; Na et al., 2023). This trust is related to customers' favorable view of the product, service, and brand (Park & Kim, 2016). Specifically, BT indicates the extent to which customers are willing to trust the brand and its engagement, significantly influencing BL and better customer retention (Dandis et al., 2022; Mutum et al., 2014). BL is defined as a customer's willingness to repeatedly purchase a brand, demonstrating a preference for it over other alternatives (Zhou et al., 2022).

The research conducted by Atulkar (2020) asserts that trust in the brand not only affects customer loyalty but also serves as an incentive for customers to channel their trust in the brand, forming a lasting relationship (Lin et al., 2017). Therefore, brands that gain trust tend to get more purchases because they are perceived to have lower risk than other alternatives (Cardoso et al., 2022). Remember that customers with similar levels of BT do not necessarily exhibit similar levels of BL (Li et al., 2012). However, customers always look for brands that can deliver on their promises and meet their expectations, strengthening their trust in the brand (Atulkar, 2020). Therefore, BT is positively associated with perceptions of quality, value, satisfaction, and uniqueness (Althuwaini, 2022; Atulkar, 2020; Ebrahim, 2020), which ultimately contributes to the development of customer loyalty. Based on this description, this research proposes the following hypotheses:

H₄: BT has a significant influence on BL.

The Influence of Brand Love (BLV) on Brand Loyalty (BL)

BLV encapsulates consumers' emotional connection and positive sentiments towards a specific brand, a notion distinct from mere satisfaction rooted in cognitive assessment (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). Unlike satisfaction, which is a rational evaluation, this emotional bond encourages consumers to consistently prefer a brand, driven by the emotional fulfillment it provides (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). Consequently, due to their strong emotional ties, consumers must be more relaxed by competitive promotions or adverse information regarding their preferred brand (Merlo et al., 2023). This loyalty stems from their deep emotional engagement with the brand, suggesting that brand loyalty is significantly shaped by the depth of the consumer's emotional investment (Bagozzi et al., 2017; Park et al., 2010).

Recent research has consistently demonstrated a significant relationship between BLV and consumer loyalty across diverse markets and product categories. For instance, a study by Kazmi & Khalique (2019) on the cosmetics industry in Pakistan showcased a notable positive link between these variables. This observation was further echoed in a study by Zhang et al. (2020) focusing on the Tablet PC market. Furthermore, an investigation into the influence of BLV on BL within Indonesia's coffee shop sector by Maduretno & Junaedi (2022) provided additional support to these findings. Building on this trend, a recent analysis conducted by Bae & Kim (2023) on the BL of Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy consumers in Korea further affirmed the substantial impact of BLV. Drawing upon these theoretical and empirical insights, the present study posits that a similar relationship between BLV and BL is anticipated within Indonesia's bottled water market, leading to the following hypothesis:

H₅: BLV has a significant influence on BL.

The Mediating Role of Brand Experience (BE), Brand Trust (BT), and Brand Love (BLV)

The SOR theory states that BE, BT, and BLV mediate between perceiver SMM activities and BL. In this framework, perceived SMM activities are the 'stimulus,' while BE, BT, and BL constitute the 'organism,' leading to the 'response'—BL. In the current literature, the underlying mechanism of how perceived SMM activities lead to BL remains unclear, with mixed findings. For example, Hafez (2021) research revealed that positive SMM activities increase BLV and trust, contributing positively to BL. Research results in Althuwaini (2022) also support these findings, stating the association between perceived SMM and BL mediated by BT. In digital content marketing, research by Bui et al. (2023) highlights that there is not always a direct connection between BL and digital content marketing. BL affected the perceived quality of digital content marketing instead of the influence mediated by customer evaluation experience.

Based on the SOR framework and existing studies, we suggest an in-depth dual sequential mediation model to understand the influence of perceived SMM activities on fostering BL. We first hypothesize that when SMM activities are implemented well, their positive impact is evident in creating an engaging BE. This engaging and consistent BE can build a strong foundation of BT and BLV among consumers. These elements are pivotal drivers, motivating consumers to sustain their allegiance to the brand. On this basis, we advance the following hypotheses:

H₆: The connection between SMM activities and BL is influenced sequentially and with significance through BE and BT.

H₇: The connection between SMM activities and BL is influenced sequentially and with significance through BE and BLV.

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework that we have developed:

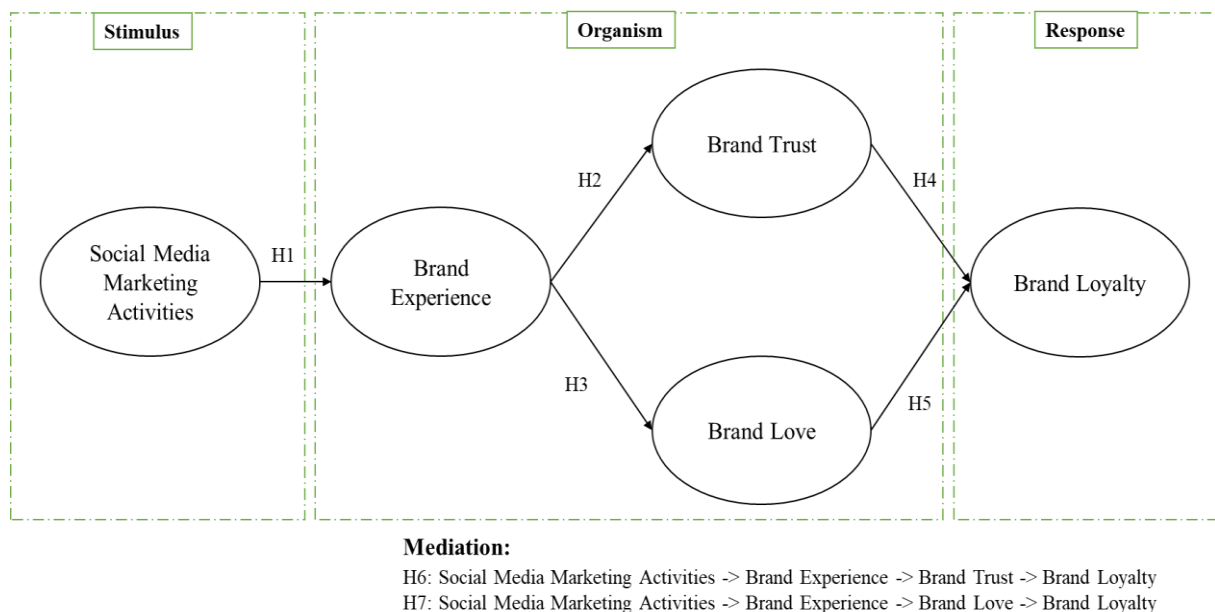


Figure 1. Research Framework

Research Methods

This research evaluates the impact of SMM strategies on consumer loyalty towards bottled water brands. To achieve this goal, the study employed purposive sampling to select participants who possess specific characteristics: 1) active social media users, 2) followers of a bottled water brand on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram, and 3) purchasers of the products of the brands they follow. The selection of respondents spanned across Indonesia's major islands such as Java, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Papua, Maluku, Sulawesi, and Bangka Belitung to ensure a sample representative of the broader population. Given the absence of comprehensive data on the number of bottled water consumers in Indonesia, the study determined its minimum sample size using a methodology proposed by Chin (1998) that focuses

on statistical power analysis. The application G*Power Chin (1998) focuses on statistical power analysis. The application G*Power Faul et al. (2007) facilitated this analysis, indicating a requirement for at least 258 respondents to achieve a statistical power exceeding 0.90. Data collection commenced with a pilot test of the survey tool on 35 participants, followed by broader distribution via Google Forms after confirming the absence of significant issues. The survey was active from December 28, 2023, to February 6, 2024, and disseminated to chosen participants through the investigator's Instagram and WhatsApp networks, ultimately garnering 310 valid responses for analysis. Data evaluation was conducted using a Partial Least Squares (PLS) method within a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework, adhering to the analytical procedures outlined by Hair et al. (Hair et al., 2016), including assessments of both the inner and outer model and the inspection of path coefficients, to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Measurement

This research is based on earlier theoretical studies on SMM activities, BE, BT, BLV, and BL. The instruments used to measure each variable in this study are outlined in Appendix 1, and these were adapted and modified from various studies (Althuwaini, 2022; Batra et al., 2012; Brakus et al., 2009; Chieng et al., 2022; Ebrahim, 2020; Koay et al., 2020, 2023; Lin et al., 2017; Sarkar et al., 2012). To ensure the content validity of each question in the assessment, we collected responses from participants using a 5-point Likert scale, with five indicating 'strongly agree' and one indicating "strongly disagree".

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	%	Cumulative percent
Gender	Female	166	54	54
	Male	144	46	100
Age	17-26	206	66	66
	27-42	92	30	96
	43-58	11	3	99
	>58	1	1	100
Education Level	≤ High School	90	29	29
	Diploma I-IV	34	11	40
	Bachelor's Degree	158	51	91
Income Level	Master's/Doctoral Degree	28	9	100
	IDR <1.500.000	151	49	49
	IDR 1.500.000-2.500.000	34	11	60
	IDR 2.500.000-3.500.000	44	14	74
Commonly consumed bottled water brands.	IDR >3.500.000	81	26	100
	Le Minerale	117	38	38
	Aqua	108	35	73
	Vit	24	8	81
	Nestlé Pure Life	19	6	87
Bottle size	other brands	42	13	100
	1500 ml	31	10	10
	240 ml	25	8	18
	330 ml	22	7	25
	600 ml	123	40	65
	Gallon	109	35	100
Regularly used social media platforms.	Instagram	186	60	60
	Facebook	21	7	67
	TikTok	15	5	72
	Twitter/X	64	21	93
	Others	24	7	100

The characteristics of the respondents provide an overview of demographic situations, education levels, income, preferences for bottled drinking water, and social media usage, as detailed in Table 1. Based on the 310 respondents involved, it can be concluded that the survey included a relatively balanced gender distribution, with females being slightly more dominant than males, at 54% and 46%, respectively. The respondents tended to be young, with the majority (66%) falling within the age range of 17-26 years. The education level of respondents showed that more than half (51%) held a bachelor's degree, indicating that the survey involved respondents with relatively high educational attainment. In terms of income levels, the survey revealed that nearly half of the respondents (49%) had a monthly income below IDR 1,500,000. When asked about the brand of bottled drinking water they usually consumed, respondents showed diverse preferences. Le Minerale was the most popular, with 38% of respondents choosing it, followed by Aqua (35%), and other brands like Vit and Nestlé Pure Life with smaller percentages. Meanwhile, the most frequently chosen bottle size was 600 ml, selected by 40% of respondents. Last, social media also played a significant role in the respondents' lives, with Instagram being the most frequently used platform (60%), far ahead of Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter/X. This indicates that Instagram significantly influences the respondents' social media habits, while other platforms are used less frequently.

Testing the Measurement Model

Table 2. Indicator test results

Variables	Items	Loading	CR	AVE
Social media marketing (SMM) activities	IN1	0.795	0.973	0.676
	IN2	0.846		
	IN3	0.871		
	INF1	0.811		
	INF2	0.838		
	INF3	0.826		
	PER1	0.861		
	PER2	0.837		
	PER3	0.842		
	PR1	0.757		
	PR2	0.8		
	PR3	0.797		
	PR4	0.785		
	TRE1	0.831		
TRE2	0.797			
WOM1	0.842			
WOM2	0.832			
Brand Experience (BE)	BE1	0.895	0.963	0.763
	BE2	0.887		
	CE1	0.878		
	CE2	0.853		
	EE1	0.895		
	EE2	0.853		
	SE1	0.84		
	SE2	0.883		
Brand Trust (BT)	TR1	0.89	0.919	0.79
	TR2	0.897		
	TR3	0.88		
Brand Love (BLV)	INT1	0.842	0.937	0.712
	INT2	0.864		
	INT3	0.817		
	PASS1	0.836		
	PASS2	0.879		
	PASS3	0.824		
Brand Loyalty (BL)	BL1	0.849	0.89	0.73
	BL2	0.855		
	BL3	0.858		

Hair et al. (2016) suggest the measurement model's validity and reliability evaluation criteria. The criteria include convergent validity, assessed based on outer loading values; discriminant validity, determined by Average Variance Extracted (AVE); and composite reliability, measured. The results obtained from the outer loading values range between 0.757 and 0.897 in Table 2, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.6, which confirms convergent validity. In addition, AVE values ranging from 0.676 to 0.79, exceeding the value limit of 0.50, indicate sufficient discriminant validity. Finally, composite reliability for all constructs is above 0.70, signifying satisfactory consistency and stability. Therefore, the instruments used in this study can be considered efficient and reliable for measuring the variables involved by ensuring the validity of those that have been thoroughly verified.

Evaluation of Structural Model

Structural model evaluation in PLS-SEM aims to check the validity of conceptual models by emphasizing their predictive capacity. In this evaluation, we utilize various evaluative metrics such as R square, Q square, SRMR, and PLS Predict, according to the recommendations of Hair et al. (Hair et al., 2019). The R Square analysis showed significant influence from variables such as BE, BT, and BLV, with R Square values of 0.85 for BE, 0.76 for BT, and 0.803 for BLV, respectively. Meanwhile, BL showed moderate influence with an R Square of 0.705 (Hair et al., 2011). Furthermore, the Q square value indicates high predictivity for all variables, with scores of 0.643 for BE, 0.596 for BT, 0.573 for BLV, and 0.504 for BL (Hair et al., 2019). SRMR, as a crucial metric for assessing model suitability in PLS-SEM, recorded a value of 0.04 in this study, indicating suitable suitability because the value is below 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2016). Finally, a comparison between the predictive capabilities of PLS and linear regression (LM) models shows that PLS has lower RMSE and MAE values in most of its components than LM, indicating that PLS has moderate predictive potential (Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis Testing

This study used the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples to test the proposed hypotheses to determine the standard error and t-value. More information about this structural model can be seen in Table 3. The analysis found that SMM activities ($\beta = 0.922, p < 0.001$) significantly affect BE, which supports hypothesis H1. Furthermore, it was identified that BE has a significant impact on BT ($\beta = 0.871, p < 0.001$) and BLV ($\beta = 0.902, p < 0.001$), which strengthens hypotheses H2 and H3. The study also found evidence supporting the significant positive influence of BT ($\beta = 0.211, p < 0.05$) and BLV ($\beta = 0.653, p < 0.001$) in increasing BL, following hypotheses H4 and H5. In addition, two indirect effects were analyzed through three coefficients (SMM -> BE -> BT -> BL and SMM -> BE -> BLV -> BL). The analysis results show support for H6, with the indirect effect confidence interval (LB: 0.414; UB: 0.676) not having a zero value, and the same applies to H7, with the indirect effect confidence interval (LB: 0.035; UB: 0.302) also not having a zero value. In conclusion, these findings indicate a sequential and significant relationship between SMM and BL activity mediated by BE, BT, and BE and BLV.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results

Effect	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Std Error	T Values	P Values	5%	95%
Direct							
H1	SMM → BE	0.922	0.014	64.686	0.000	0.897	0.943
H2	BE → BT	0.871	0.021	41.192	0.00	0.834	0.903
H3	BE → BLV	0.902	0.016	57.993	0.00	0.875	0.926
H4	BT → BL	0.211	0.099	2.137	0.033	0.043	0.367
H5	BLV → BL	0.653	0.093	6.98	0.000	0.499	0.809
Indirect							
H6	SMM → BE → BT → BL	0.17	0.082	2.083	0.037	0.035	0.302
H7	SMM → BE → BLV → BL	0.543	0.08	6.815	0.000	0.414	0.676

Discussion

This study made a significant contribution in confirming and expanding previous research findings related to SMM activities and their effects on BE, BT, BLV, and BL. Our findings point to some of the critical points outlined below:

First, this study confirms that SMM activities are essential in shaping BE. These findings are consistent with studies by (Beig & Khan, 2018; Zollo et al., 2020), which explicitly show that business marketing activities involving sharing content on social media significantly affect the consumer brand experience. SMM activities increase consumer interactivity and engagement with brands, allowing for personalizing relevant content and increasing brand awareness and understanding through compelling stories and information. Additionally, the visual and emotional elements of SMM content can trigger deep emotional responses, creating memorable memories and strengthening consumers' attachment to the brand. Therefore, an effective and well-planned SMM strategy is critical to building a solid and immersive brand experience for consumers.

Second, the study found that BE significantly affects the formation of BT and BLV on brands. These findings are consistent with research by (Hepola et al., 2017; Koay et al., 2023; Madeline & Sihombing, 2019; Shahid et al., 2022), which shows that consistent and memorable BE encourages consumers to develop trust and a close emotional connection with the brand. Critically, BE plays a central role in creating consumer perceptions of brand credibility and reliability, a key component of BT. A positive and consistent experience increases consumer confidence in the brand's goodwill and integrity, strengthening BT. Further, an alluring and satisfying BE generates a deep emotional attachment, articulated as BLV, where consumers not only trust the brand but also have a strong affection for it. This emotional connection is a critical catalyst in shaping sustainable brand loyalty, as consumers who love the brand are more likely to remain loyal and recommend it to others. Thus, this study confirms the importance of BEs in building BT and BLV, which drive solid and sustainable brand loyalty.

Third, this study confirms that BT and BLV are the main determining factors of BL, which shows that consumers are more likely to choose and remain loyal to products or services from brands they trust and love. These findings are in line with earlier studies by (Althuwaini, 2022; Atulkar, 2020; Bae & Kim, 2023; Ebrahim, 2020), which highlight that trust and love for brands is strongly correlated with brand loyalty. Our study reinforces this relationship by showing that solid brand trust (BT) creates a sense of security and confidence in brand quality and integrity. In contrast, love for brands (BLV) builds a deep emotional bond between consumers and brands. These two elements work synergistically to strengthen consumer loyalty, with BT providing a rational foundation for loyalty and BLV adding an emotional dimension that strengthens long-term attachment. Thus, effective brand trust and love management are crucial to maintaining and increasing brand loyalty in a competitive market.

Fourth, our findings show a positive and sequential relationship between SMM and BL activities, which BE, BT, and BLV mediate. Practical SMM activities trigger memorable BEs in consumers, forming positive BT and BLV and increasing the likelihood of consumers becoming loyal. Previous research by Koay et al. (2023) indicates that consistent and memorable interactions through SMM can strengthen consumer loyalty to the brand through BT and BLV. However, our research expands on these findings by showing that directed and consistent SMM activities not only build BT and BLV but also BE, all of which synergistically contribute to increased brand loyalty. Thus, this study underscores the importance of a holistic approach in SMM management, which includes the formation of a positive brand experience, trust, and love for the brand to drive consumer loyalty on an ongoing basis.

Finally, this study provides unique theoretical insights by proposing and validating a research model that outlines how consumers respond to stimuli from SMM activities, leading to internal conditions such as BE, BT, and BLV. These internal conditions positively and sequentially affect BL. This study also confirms the use of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory as a theoretical basis to explain the mechanism behind the influence of SMM activity on BL. By integrating BE, BT, and BLV in one comprehensive model, this study is the first to propose a sequential theory about the contribution of SMM activities to BL in the bottled water industry,

enriching and expanding the existing research framework. For example, these findings are in line with earlier research (Aljuhmani et al., 2023; Althuwaini, 2022; Bui et al., 2023; Hafez, 2021; Koay et al., 2023; Li et al., 2020) however, it made an additional contribution by showing that SMM activity not only affected BE but also BT and BLV respectively, which ultimately increased BL. These findings provide a more robust and practical theoretical foundation for marketers to manage SMM activities to achieve higher brand loyalty.

Theoretical Implication and Managerial Implication

This research significantly enriches the academic discourse by advancing the application of the SOR theory in SMM and BL, particularly within the bottled water sector. Through the empirical validation of a comprehensive model, this study elucidates the sequential influence of SMM in BL, mediated by BE, BT, and BLV. This not only reaffirms the critical role of these constructs but also highlights the novelty of applying the SOR theory to uncover the mechanisms at play. The paper's distinctive contribution emerges from its innovative use of the SOR framework in a unique industry context, offering profound insights into the strategic employment of SMM to cultivate consumer loyalty. By seamlessly integrating theoretical framework with practical implications, this research not only enriches existing studies but also lays a robust foundation for subsequent explorations into the dynamics of digital-age consumer-brand relationships.

Building on these theoretical insights, the managerial implications underscore the imperative for brands to harness SM's potential as a pivotal consumer engagement channel, comparable in impact to traditional channels like TV and print media (Fraccastoro et al., 2021). Marketers are advised to prioritize inventive digital campaigns, acknowledging that SM's influence extends beyond brand awareness to significantly affect BL by crafting memorable and consistent BEs (Na et al., 2023). Drawing from the research findings, several strategic recommendations are proposed, emphasizing personalization, entertainment, interaction, and timely content. Brands are encouraged to differentiate through personalized offerings and services, such as demographic-specific promotional content (Dwivedi et al., 2021) and sophisticated predictive recommendation systems on social platforms (Bleier et al., 2018), to enhance BL. The importance of captivating consumer attention in an information-saturated environment is highlighted, with a call for engaging visual content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram that prioritize images and stories. Additionally, the study underscores the necessity of responsiveness in SM interactions—prompt complaint resolution and active engagement with comments are crucial for fostering consumer engagement (Istanbulluoglu, 2017). Effective SMM strategies are instrumental in developing a wealthy BE and solidifying trust and love for the brand to propel BL. This seamless integration of theoretical insights and practical strategies offers a comprehensive roadmap for leveraging SMM to fortify the consumer-brand bond, aligning theoretical implications with actionable managerial recommendations.

Conclusion and Future Direction

This research substantiates the effectiveness of the SOR theory in clarifying the role of SMM in enhancing BL. It demonstrates that SMM activities significantly boost BE, positively affecting BL through BT and BLV. Additionally, our analysis uncovers notable indirect routes through which SMM activities contribute to BT and BLV, culminating in increased BL. These findings corroborate our initial hypotheses and underline the vital importance of SMM in promoting BL via BE, BT, and BLV.

Although this study has important implications, some limitations should be recognized for future research suggestions. *First*, using a cross-sectional research method, characterized by simultaneous and uniform data collection, restricts the ability to establish causal relationships definitively. Adopting a longitudinal data collection approach is recommended to enhance the robustness of future research outcomes. *Second*, employing a simple purposive sampling technique has led to a sample bias, predominantly comprising respondents aged 17-26 with undergraduate education levels. This highlights the necessity for future research to encompass a more diverse

representation of the general population. *Third*, the current investigation concentrates on the effects of Brand Social Media Marketing (SMM) activities on brand loyalty (BL). Subsequent studies underscore the importance of exploring their impact on other aspects, such as impulse buying behavior. *Fourth*, although this research focuses on bottled water brands, it has yet to consider sustainability aspects like environmental awareness. Future studies should include these sustainability factors in analyzing SMM activities' influence on bottled water brand loyalty. Last, considering the research's exclusive focus on bottled water brands, future studies must extend their scope to other products. This expansion will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the prevailing market dynamics.

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APPENDIX 1. Research Instrument

Table. Research Instrument

Variable	Code	Items	Source		
Social Media Marketing Activities	SMM	Promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I follow the promotional activities of the mineral water brand I like on social media platforms. 2. I was interested in the promotions held by the mineral water brand, which I liked on social media. 3. I benefit from the promotional information my favorite mineral water brand shared on social media. 4. My favorite mineral water brand is actively campaigning for environmental sustainability. 	(Althuwaini, 2022)	
		Interactive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can discuss and share opinions with others through the social media pages of bottled water products. 2. The social media pages of this bottled water product that I love often respond to and communicate with its users 3. I can easily share the latest information about bottled water products on its social media pages. 	(Koay et al., 2020, 2023)	
		Tren	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This bottled water brand often shares the latest information on its social media. 2. Many people like and follow the social media accounts of the bottled water brand I like 		
	SMM	Informative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The mineral water company's social media accounts provide accurate product information. 2. The information provided by the social media of this mineral water company was helpful to me. 3. The social media accounts of this bottled water brand that I love provide accurate and precise information about its products 	(Koay et al., 2020)	
		Personalized	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I benefited from the information posted on social media about this bottled water brand. 2. The brand's social media provides complete information and covers various things about its products. 3. Social media from bottled mineral water brands provide purchase recommendations that match what I need. 		
		WOM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I share information about bottled water brands, such as products or services, from the brand's social media accounts with my friends. 2. I am interested in sharing content from the mineral water brand's social media accounts on my personal Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or Twitter pages. 	(Koay et al., 2023)	
	Brand Trust	BT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am confident in the quality of the bottled water brand I use today 2. I believe that the bottled water brand I use today has the principle of honesty 3. I feel that the bottled water brand I use today supports environmental sustainability efforts 	(Althuwaini, 2022; Koay et al., 2023)	
	Brand Experience	BE	Sensory Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When interacting with bottled water brands on social media, I felt a positive visual and sensory experience. 2. The content shared by bottled mineral water brands on social media is so exciting and positive for my senses. 	(Brakus et al., 2009; Chieng et al., 2022)
			Emotional Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I feel positive about this bottled mineral water brand when interacting on social media. 2. The use of products from this brand of bottled mineral water provokes positive emotions. 	

Variable	Code	Items	Source	
Brand Love	BLV	Cognitive Experience	(Batra et al., 2012; Sarkar et al., 2012)	
		Behavioral Experience		1. This bottled mineral water brand encourages me to have positive thoughts when I see its content on social media.
				2. The content that the bottled mineral water brand shared on social media stimulated my curiosity and positive thinking
		Intimacy		1. Using products from bottled mineral water brands has provided a positive physical experience for me.
				2. Using products from bottled mineral water brands has provided a positive physical experience for me.
		Passion		1. I feel positive about this brand of bottled mineral water
2. I feel exceptionally connected to this brand of bottled mineral water				
3. This brand of bottled mineral water feels familiar to me				
Brand Loyalty	BL	1. I like this brand of bottled mineral water	(Ebrahim, 2020; Lin et al., 2017)	
		2. This brand of bottled mineral water brings happiness to my experience		
		3. This brand of bottled mineral water suits my preferences		
Brand Loyalty	BL	1. I prefer to buy the bottled mineral water I use than other mineral water brands.	(Ebrahim, 2020; Lin et al., 2017)	
		2. The brand of mineral water I use now will be my top choice when buying mineral water.		
		3. I would recommend the mineral water brand I regularly use to others.		