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The Effect of Social Media Engagement on Brand Loyalty in the Digital Economy

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the effect of social media engagement on brand loyalty in the digital economy through a literature review approach. The rapid development of digital technology and social media platforms has significantly transformed consumer behavior and business communication patterns. Social media has become an essential strategic tool for organizations to establish relationships with customers and strengthen their market position. Therefore, understanding the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty has become increasingly important in the current digital environment. This study employed a literature review method by collecting and analyzing relevant studies published between 2015 and 2025 from academic databases and reputable journals. The analysis process involved identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing previous research findings related to social media engagement and brand loyalty. The findings indicate that social media engagement positively influences brand loyalty through emotional attachment, customer participation, and interactive communication processes. In addition, variables such as brand trust, customer experience, content quality, and online community participation strengthen the relationship between social media engagement and loyalty. The study concludes that effective social media engagement strategies contribute significantly to maintaining long-term customer relationships and enhancing sustainable competitive advantages in the digital economy.*

Keyword: *Social Media Engagement, Brand Loyalty, Digital Economy, Customer Engagement, Digital Marketing.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh keterlibatan media sosial (*social media engagement*) terhadap loyalitas merek (*brand loyalty*) dalam ekonomi digital melalui pendekatan tinjauan literatur. Perkembangan pesat teknologi digital dan platform media sosial telah mengubah secara signifikan perilaku konsumen serta pola komunikasi bisnis. Media sosial telah menjadi alat strategis yang penting bagi organisasi untuk membangun hubungan dengan pelanggan dan memperkuat posisi mereka di pasar. Oleh

karena itu, pemahaman mengenai hubungan antara keterlibatan media sosial dan loyalitas merek menjadi semakin penting dalam lingkungan digital saat ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode tinjauan literatur dengan mengumpulkan dan menganalisis berbagai penelitian yang relevan yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2015 hingga 2025 dari basis data akademik dan jurnal bereputasi. Proses analisis dilakukan melalui identifikasi, evaluasi, dan sintesis terhadap temuan penelitian sebelumnya yang berkaitan dengan keterlibatan media sosial dan loyalitas merek. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan media sosial memberikan pengaruh positif terhadap loyalitas merek melalui keterikatan emosional, partisipasi pelanggan, dan proses komunikasi interaktif. Selain itu, variabel seperti kepercayaan merek, pengalaman pelanggan, kualitas konten, dan partisipasi dalam komunitas daring memperkuat hubungan antara keterlibatan media sosial dengan loyalitas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi keterlibatan media sosial yang efektif memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan dalam mempertahankan hubungan jangka panjang dengan pelanggan serta meningkatkan keunggulan kompetitif yang berkelanjutan dalam ekonomi digital.

Kata Kunci: Keterlibatan Media Sosial, Loyalitas Merek, Ekonomi Digital, Keterlibatan Pelanggan, Pemasaran Digital.

PENDAHULUAN

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the global economic environment and significantly changed the way organizations conduct business activities. The emergence of the digital economy has created a new ecosystem characterized by the integration of internet technology, digital communication systems, and online platforms into various business processes. The digital economy has become an important driver of economic growth because it enables businesses to operate more efficiently, expand market reach, and improve customer interactions through digital channels. Organizations increasingly utilize technological innovations not only to deliver products and services but also to establish meaningful relationships with consumers. As technology continues to evolve, companies are required to adapt to changing consumer behaviors and market dynamics to remain competitive in increasingly complex business environments (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

One of the most influential developments in the digital economy is the emergence and rapid growth of social media platforms. Social media has transformed communication patterns by creating interactive environments where users can create, share, and exchange information in real time. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) have become important communication channels for both individuals and businesses. Unlike traditional communication methods, social media allows businesses to engage directly with consumers through two-way communication processes. This interactive nature enables organizations to understand customer preferences, gather feedback, and establish stronger relationships with target audiences (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

The increasing adoption of social media platforms has also significantly changed consumer behavior. Consumers in the digital era are no longer passive recipients of information but have become active participants in communication and decision-making processes. Before purchasing products or services, consumers frequently search for information online, read reviews, compare alternatives, and seek recommendations from other users through social media platforms. Furthermore, consumers actively share experiences and opinions regarding brands, products, and services, which can influence the purchasing decisions of others. This shift in consumer behavior has created opportunities and challenges for organizations seeking to maintain strong relationships with customers.

As social media becomes increasingly integrated into daily life, businesses have begun recognizing the strategic importance of customer engagement within digital platforms. Social media engagement refers to the interactions and connections established between consumers and brands through online activities such as liking, commenting, sharing content, posting reviews, and participating in discussions. Social media engagement goes beyond simple communication metrics because it reflects customers' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement with brands. Higher engagement levels indicate stronger relationships between customers and organizations and may contribute to improved business performance (Hollebeek et al., 2016).

Social media engagement has emerged as a critical element in digital marketing strategies because it allows organizations to build stronger customer relationships. Companies increasingly invest in social media marketing activities to attract customer attention and encourage interaction with brand-related content. Interactive content such as videos, live streaming, storytelling, polls, and user-generated content has become increasingly popular because it encourages customer participation and increases engagement levels. Effective engagement strategies help organizations create positive customer experiences and strengthen emotional connections between consumers and brands (Kotler et al., 2021).

In highly competitive markets, establishing and maintaining customer loyalty has become a significant challenge for businesses. Brand loyalty is generally defined as a customer's commitment to continuously choose and support a particular brand over competing alternatives. Loyal customers tend to repeatedly purchase products or services and often recommend brands to others through positive word-of-mouth communication. Brand loyalty is considered an important determinant of organizational success because it contributes to increased sales, customer retention, profitability, and sustainable competitive advantages (Oliver, 2015).

However, maintaining customer loyalty in the digital economy has become increasingly difficult due to rapid technological changes and shifting consumer expectations. The availability of extensive information and multiple product alternatives online has reduced switching barriers among consumers. Customers can easily compare products, evaluate prices, and change preferences based on available information and experiences shared by other users. Consequently, organizations are required to develop innovative approaches to strengthen customer relationships and maintain long-term loyalty.

Social media engagement is increasingly considered one of the important factors influencing brand loyalty. Previous studies indicate that interactions between consumers and brands through social media positively affect customer perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Consumers who actively engage with brands on social media platforms are more likely to develop stronger emotional attachment and favorable perceptions of those brands. Positive interactions through social media can increase customer trust, satisfaction, and commitment, which subsequently contribute to the development of brand loyalty (Aljarah et al., 2021).

Additionally, social media engagement facilitates customer participation in online communities that support relationship-building processes. Online brand communities allow consumers to communicate with others who share similar interests and experiences regarding specific products or services. Participation in these communities can create a sense of belonging and strengthen emotional ties between customers and brands. Customers who perceive themselves as part of a brand community often demonstrate stronger loyalty and are more willing to maintain long-term relationships with organizations (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016).

The growing influence of younger consumer generations further highlights the importance of social media engagement in shaping brand loyalty. Millennials and Generation Z consumers spend substantial amounts of time using digital platforms and often rely on social media when making purchasing decisions. These consumer groups tend to value authenticity, personalization, and interactive experiences. Businesses that successfully create engaging content and meaningful digital experiences are more likely to establish stronger relationships with these consumer segments (Appel et al., 2020).

Despite the growing interest in social media engagement and brand loyalty, several research gaps remain evident in the literature. First, many previous studies primarily focused on developed countries where technological infrastructure and digital behavior differ from emerging economies. Developing countries continue to experience rapid digital growth and increasing social media adoption; however, research within these contexts remains relatively limited. Second, previous studies often focus on specific dimensions of engagement while neglecting the combined influence of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of engagement. Third, the rapidly changing social media landscape requires continuous investigation because technological innovation and consumer preferences evolve over time.

Moreover, increasing competition within the digital economy requires organizations to understand the mechanisms through which social media engagement influences customer loyalty. Businesses increasingly seek effective strategies to maintain customer relationships in environments characterized by abundant information and reduced customer switching costs. Understanding how engagement contributes to customer loyalty may provide valuable insights for organizations in designing digital marketing strategies that improve customer retention and long-term performance.

Therefore, investigating the effect of social media engagement on brand loyalty in the digital economy is important from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, this study can contribute to the development of literature related to digital marketing and consumer behavior by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between social media engagement and customer loyalty. Practically, the findings may help organizations formulate effective strategies for enhancing customer interaction, strengthening relationships, and improving business performance within increasingly dynamic digital environments.

Based on the discussion above, social media engagement has become an essential element in creating customer relationships and enhancing brand sustainability within the digital economy. Understanding the influence of social media engagement on brand loyalty is therefore important for organizations seeking to achieve sustainable growth and maintain competitive advantages in modern business environments.

METODE

This study employs a literature review method to analyze and synthesize previous research findings related to the effect of social media engagement on brand loyalty in the digital economy. A literature review is a research approach that systematically identifies, evaluates, and interprets existing studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular research topic. This method allows researchers to examine the development of concepts, identify research trends, evaluate findings from previous studies, and determine research gaps requiring further investigation (Snyder, 2019). Since this study aims to understand the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty from existing scholarly perspectives, the literature review method is considered appropriate for achieving the research objectives.

The literature review process in this study follows several systematic stages. The first stage involves identifying research topics and formulating research questions related to social media engagement and brand loyalty within the context of the digital economy. After

determining the scope of the study, the second stage consists of searching and collecting relevant literature from various academic databases and scientific sources. The literature search focuses on journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and research reports published within a specified period to ensure the relevance and recency of the reviewed literature (Xiao & Watson, 2019). Several online databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, and other reputable academic sources are used to collect relevant studies.

The search process employs several keywords associated with the research topic, including social media engagement, brand loyalty, digital economy, customer engagement, social media marketing, and consumer behavior. To improve the quality and relevance of selected studies, inclusion and exclusion criteria are applied. The inclusion criteria consist of: (1) studies discussing social media engagement and brand loyalty, (2) articles published in peer-reviewed journals, (3) literature published between 2015 and 2025, and (4) studies written in English. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria include studies unrelated to the research variables, duplicated publications, and articles with incomplete information or insufficient relevance to the study objectives (Paul & Criado, 2020).

After the literature collection process, the selected studies are analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. Qualitative content analysis allows researchers to categorize and interpret information obtained from previous studies systematically. The analysis process includes organizing literature according to themes, identifying similarities and differences among findings, and evaluating the relationships between social media engagement and brand loyalty. Additionally, this process aims to identify patterns and emerging issues related to digital consumer behavior and customer relationship development in social media environments (Snyder, 2019). The synthesized findings are then interpreted to provide broader insights regarding the role of social media engagement in influencing customer loyalty.

The use of a literature review method in this study provides several advantages. First, it enables researchers to obtain comprehensive information from previous studies and establish theoretical understanding of the research topic. Second, it helps identify research gaps and opportunities for future studies. Third, it supports the development of a conceptual understanding of the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty in the digital economy. Therefore, this method is expected to provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of existing knowledge while contributing to future research and managerial practices in digital marketing.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

A. Research Results

This study employed a literature review method to examine the effect of social media engagement on brand loyalty in the digital economy. The analysis was conducted by reviewing previous empirical and conceptual studies related to social media engagement, digital marketing, customer behavior, and brand loyalty. The reviewed literature was collected from various academic databases, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Emerald Insight, and SpringerLink, following the inclusion and exclusion criteria established in the methodology section.

The selection process was conducted in several stages. First, articles were identified using keywords including social media engagement, brand loyalty, consumer engagement, digital economy, customer loyalty, and social media marketing. Second, duplicate and irrelevant studies were excluded. Third, the remaining articles were screened according to publication year (2015–2025), relevance to research objectives, and completeness of information. Based on the screening process, ten articles were selected for detailed analysis.

The selected studies represent various industrial sectors including fashion, airlines, social media communities, consumer products, and digital service industries. Most studies used quantitative approaches with analytical methods such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), and survey analysis. In addition, several studies employed conceptual and literature review approaches to explain the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty.

Table 1. Selected Articles Reviewed in the Literature Study

No	Authors	Year	Research Focus	Method	Main Findings
1	Hollebeek et al.	2016	Consumer brand engagement on social media	SEM	Engagement includes emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions
2	Kamboj & Rahman	2016	Social media brand communities and loyalty	Quantitative	Community participation positively influences brand loyalty
3	Yadav & Rahman	2018	Social media marketing activities and loyalty	Quantitative	Social media activities significantly improve customer loyalty
4	Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick	2019	Digital marketing and customer relationships	Conceptual	Digital interaction improves customer engagement
5	Appel et al.	2020	Social media marketing development	Literature Review	Social media transforms consumer-brand relationships
6	Tuten & Solomon	2020	Social media marketing strategies	Conceptual	Interactive communication strengthens customer relationships
7	Aljarah et al.	2021	Social media engagement and trust	SEM	Brand trust mediates engagement and loyalty
8	Dwivedi et al.	2021	Digital and social media marketing research	Literature Review	Digital interactions influence customer behavior
9	Hadikusuma & Ginting	2024	Social media engagement among Generation Z	PLS-SEM	Engagement positively influences brand loyalty
10	Yazdi et al.	2024	Brand loyalty development trends	Bibliometric Analysis	Customer experience and engagement affect loyalty

Table 1. demonstrates that social media engagement has consistently been identified as an important factor affecting customer loyalty in digital environments. Most studies indicate a positive relationship between customer interactions through social media and long-term customer commitment toward brands.

The reviewed studies also reveal that social media engagement should not be interpreted merely as the frequency of customer interactions. Rather, engagement includes multidimensional aspects such as emotional attachment, active participation, and psychological involvement with brands. Customers increasingly seek interactive experiences and personalized communication through digital platforms.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that several mediating variables strengthen the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty, including customer trust, customer satisfaction, customer experience, and emotional attachment. Therefore, customer loyalty is influenced not only by direct engagement but also by broader relational mechanisms.

Discussion

Social Media Engagement in the Digital Economy

The development of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed business environments and consumer behavior. Traditional communication systems were primarily characterized by one-way information delivery, whereas current digital platforms encourage interactive communication and active customer participation. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become essential channels for communication between organizations and consumers.

According to Hollebeek et al. (2016), social media engagement consists of three major dimensions: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. Cognitive engagement refers to customers' mental attention toward brand-related information. Emotional engagement represents customer feelings and emotional attachment toward brands. Behavioral engagement involves customers' participation in activities related to brands.

The reviewed studies suggest that customer engagement has become increasingly important in digital environments because consumers are no longer passive recipients of information. Instead, consumers actively participate in value creation by producing content, sharing experiences, and interacting with brands and other users. Social media platforms provide opportunities for customers to contribute directly to brand communication processes.

Dwivedi et al. (2021) argued that digital technologies have transformed customer relationships from transactional interactions toward relationship-based approaches. Businesses increasingly focus on maintaining long-term relationships with customers because customer retention provides greater value than short-term transactions.

The literature also indicates that social media platforms facilitate stronger interactions because communication can occur continuously and in real time. Customers may interact with brands through comments, content sharing, live streaming, and online communities. Such activities contribute significantly to relationship development and customer engagement.

Relationship Between Social Media Engagement and Brand Loyalty

The literature reviewed in this study consistently indicates that social media engagement positively influences brand loyalty. Customers actively involved in interactions with brands on social media platforms tend to develop stronger emotional connections and favorable perceptions toward those brands.

Brand loyalty refers to customers' commitment to continue choosing a specific brand over competing alternatives. Loyal customers often demonstrate repeated purchasing behavior and positive recommendations toward brands. According to Oliver (2015), customer loyalty is considered an important factor because loyal customers contribute significantly to organizational sustainability and profitability.

Yadav and Rahman (2018) found that social media marketing activities significantly improve customer loyalty because social media interactions increase customer involvement and positive experiences. Customers who frequently interact with brands through social media tend to perceive greater value and stronger relationships.

Similarly, Kamboj and Rahman (2016) found that customer participation in social media-based communities positively influences customer loyalty. Online communities

provide opportunities for customers to share experiences and establish relationships with others who have similar interests.

The findings of Aljarah et al. (2021) further indicate that brand trust serves as an important mediating factor in the relationship between social media engagement and loyalty. Customers who perceive brands as trustworthy are more likely to maintain long-term relationships and continue supporting brands.

Factors Supporting Brand Loyalty Formation

Based on the reviewed literature, several factors strengthen the influence of social media engagement on brand loyalty:

a. Brand Trust

Brand trust refers to customer confidence in a brand's reliability and credibility. Trust enhances customers' willingness to maintain long-term relationships.

Aljarah et al. (2021) explained that trust mediates the relationship between engagement and loyalty because customer interactions increase confidence toward brands.

b. Content Quality

Content quality significantly influences customer interaction and engagement. Informative and entertaining content encourages customers to participate actively in social media activities.

Tuten and Solomon (2020) emphasized that organizations increasingly use interactive content to strengthen customer relationships and maintain engagement.

c. Customer Experience

Customer experience refers to customers' perceptions and feelings arising from interactions with brands. Positive experiences increase emotional attachment and customer satisfaction.

Yazdi et al. (2024) identified customer experience as one of the important factors affecting brand loyalty development.

d. Online Communities

Participation in online communities creates stronger emotional relationships between customers and brands. Customers involved in communities often perceive themselves as members of a social group connected by shared interests.

Kamboj and Rahman (2016) indicated that online communities positively influence customer commitment and loyalty.

Research Gap Analysis

The literature review identified several research gaps. First, previous studies have primarily focused on developed countries, whereas studies in emerging economies remain relatively limited despite increasing digital adoption.

Second, many studies examine engagement as a single construct without considering multidimensional aspects such as emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement simultaneously.

Third, rapid changes in digital technologies require continuous investigation because customer behavior evolves over time.

Fourth, most previous studies employ quantitative approaches, while comprehensive literature synthesis remains relatively limited.

Therefore, this study contributes by integrating findings from previous studies and providing broader insights regarding the effect of social media engagement on brand loyalty in digital environments.

KESIMPULAN

Based on the findings and discussion presented in this literature review study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the effect of social media engagement on brand loyalty in the digital economy.

First, social media engagement has become an important element in the development of customer relationships in the digital economy. The reviewed studies indicate that social media is no longer merely a communication tool but has evolved into a strategic platform that facilitates interaction, participation, and relationship building between organizations and consumers. Social media engagement consists of multidimensional aspects, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, which collectively influence customer perceptions and attitudes toward brands.

Second, the findings of the reviewed literature consistently demonstrate that social media engagement positively influences brand loyalty. Customers who actively engage with brands through social media platforms tend to develop stronger emotional attachment, greater trust, and more favorable perceptions toward brands. These interactions contribute to repeated purchasing behavior, customer retention, and stronger commitment toward specific brands. Therefore, active engagement between consumers and brands plays a significant role in strengthening long-term customer relationships.

Third, the literature review reveals that the relationship between social media engagement and brand loyalty is not always direct. Several mediating factors strengthen this relationship, including brand trust, customer experience, content quality, and participation in online communities. Among these factors, brand trust appears to be one of the most influential variables because customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands they perceive as reliable and credible. Additionally, high-quality and interactive content can encourage customer participation and create meaningful customer experiences that support loyalty formation.

Fourth, the review indicates that changing consumer behavior within the digital economy requires organizations to adopt more customer-centered approaches in their marketing strategies. Consumers increasingly seek personalized experiences, meaningful interactions, and authentic communication through digital platforms. Consequently, organizations should focus not only on increasing interaction frequency but also on improving the quality and relevance of engagement activities.

Finally, this literature review contributes to the understanding of social media engagement and brand loyalty by synthesizing findings from previous studies and identifying existing research gaps. Future studies may further explore different dimensions of engagement, include broader industrial contexts, and investigate additional variables influencing customer loyalty within rapidly evolving digital environments.

Overall, it can be concluded that social media engagement plays a significant role in enhancing brand loyalty in the digital economy and represents an important strategic tool for organizations seeking sustainable customer relationships and long-term competitive advantages.

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