

Optimizing Tiktok: The Role Of Social Media Marketing Activities In Enhancing Customer Engagement Mediated By Celebrity Endorsers And Brand Love

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) on Customer Engagement, with Celebrity Endorser and Brand Love serving as mediating variables within the transportation service industry. Social media marketing strategies foster emotional connections with consumers and enhance their engagement in the digital environment. A quantitative approach was employed using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method via SmartPLS 4. Data were collected through an online questionnaire (Google Forms) from 219 respondents who had viewed or followed TikTok content. The model was evaluated through validity and reliability tests, while the structural model was used to examine direct and indirect relationships between variables. The results indicate that SMMA has a significant positive effect on Brand Love, Celebrity Endorser, and Customer Engagement. Furthermore, Brand Love significantly influences Customer Engagement and mediates the relationship between SMMA and Customer Engagement. Conversely, Celebrity Endorser does not significantly influence Customer Engagement and does not mediate this relationship. These findings underscore the importance of emotional bonds in enhancing customer engagement through social media marketing strategies.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh Aktivitas Pemasaran Media Sosial (SMMA) terhadap Keterlibatan Pelanggan dengan *Celebrity Endorser* dan *Brand Love* sebagai variabel mediasi pada industri jasa transportasi. Strategi pemasaran media sosial membangun hubungan emosional dengan konsumen serta meningkatkan keterlibatan mereka di lingkungan digital. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode *Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares* (SEM-PLS) melalui SmartPLS 4. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring menggunakan Google Forms dari 219 responden yang pernah menonton atau mengikuti konten TikTok. Model dievaluasi melalui uji validitas dan reliabilitas, sedangkan model struktural digunakan untuk menguji hubungan langsung dan tidak langsung antarvariabel. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa SMMA berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap *Brand Love*, *Celebrity Endorser*, dan Keterlibatan Pelanggan. Selanjutnya, *Brand Love* berpengaruh signifikan terhadap Keterlibatan Pelanggan dan memediasi hubungan SMMA terhadap Keterlibatan Pelanggan. Sebaliknya, *Celebrity Endorser* tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap Keterlibatan Pelanggan dan tidak memediasi hubungan tersebut. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya ikatan emosional dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan pelanggan melalui strategi pemasaran media sosial.

Kata kunci: Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA), Customer Engagement, Brand Love, Celebrity Endorser

Introduction

The development of digital marketing has encouraged companies to optimize Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) as a key strategy in building Customer Engagement. Current technological advancements have made everything easier (Rachmat & Aprianingsih, 2025). The ability to detect market trends is a fundamental asset for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the context of the digital business environment, as it enables entities to identify opportunities and respond quickly to signals from consumers and competitors (Roosdhani et al., 2024). The world's increasingly rapid development makes it very easy for traditional practices to be abandoned and started shifting to social media marketing.

Social media has experienced rapid global growth and has had a substantial impact on communication and marketing, with billions of active users across various platforms, including TikTok, which is the fastest-growing platform in the world. This is supported by data from Dataloka.id, which indicates that by 2025, TikTok will have reached over 1.9 billion active users globally, predominantly from various countries, including Indonesia, which ranks first with over 180 million. The phenomenon of TikTok's rapid growth as one of the world's largest social media platforms is evidence of the transformation currently taking place.

Businesses have widely adopted TikTok as a marketing tool (Husna & Mairita, 2024). This platform is used to convey product promotional messages and build brand image through engaging content, while also facilitating two-way interaction among companies and consumers in the form of comments, responses, and the rapid dissemination of information (Refilia et al., 2023). In this context, Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) encompass various marketing activities conducted via social media to attract attention, create interaction, and build relationships with consumers.

The implementation of SMMA on the TikTok is carried out through the creation of visually appealing and communicative content. This content not only serves as a promotional medium but is also designed to encourage user interaction. Through these activities, the company can establish two-way communication, thereby enhancing Customer Engagement. Customer engagement itself refers to the level of consumer involvement with a brand, reflected in active

interactions such as visiting the account, liking posts, and commenting on published content. This engagement enables the company to build stronger relationships and enhance emotional closeness among the brand and consumers (Huda et al., 2023).

Customer engagement is the level of customer involvement with a brand that is formed through active interaction among consumers and the company on social media platforms. This engagement is reflected in increased user activity, such as visiting the company's social media accounts, liking posts, and commenting on published content. Through such engagement, companies can build stronger relationships with consumers and enhance the emotional connection among the brand and its audience (Roosdhani & Azhari, 2025).

Theoretically, this study draws upon the Source Credibility Theory (SCT) proposed by Hovland & Weiss, (1952) as quoted (Wijaya & Nurfalah, 2026). This theory emphasizes that source credibility comprising expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness influences the effectiveness of persuasion in marketing communication. Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) cited by Trisasetianto, (2025) according to this theory, it can be explained how Social Media Marketing Activities influence Customer Engagement through the perceived credibility of Celebrity Endorsers, where the endorser is considered credible, thereby increasing consumer trust in a piece of content and fostering emotional engagement. This emotional engagement is closely related to Brand Love; when consumers feel a sense of love for a brand, it can foster sustained loyalty and commitment.

Thus, the credibility of a Celebrity Endorser not only plays a role in increasing trust in the content but also strengthens consumers' emotional engagement. This engagement contributes to the formation of Brand Love, which in turn drives Customer Engagement in the form of active interactions, such as commenting, liking, and sharing content. Therefore, the use of SCT in this study is relevant to explain the mechanism of how marketing activities on the TikTok social media platform can influence consumer behavior and engagement more deeply.

Previous research findings indicate inconsistencies (research gaps) regarding the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) and Customer Engagement. Purwianti & Fionna, (2023) found that Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) can strengthen consumer relationships with brands through interactive social media activities, which ultimately encourage higher engagement. Likewise, (Roosdhani et al., 2025) reported that Social Media Marketing Activities positively influence consumer interactions and contribute to stronger engagement on social media platforms. In line with these findings, Syalsabila & Hermina, (2023) also found that social media activities play an important role in increasing customer engagement in digital marketing contexts. However, different findings were reported by Alatas et al., (2019) who suggested that excessive exposure to social media content may reduce consumers' responses to marketing messages. Furthermore, Lelasari Sijabat, Danny I. Rantung, (2023) argued that customer engagement is not solely influenced by social media marketing activities but is also affected by consumers' perceptions of influencers and brand-related factors. These findings indicate that the influence of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) on Customer Engagement remains inconsistent and requires further investigation.

Inconsistencies were also found in the relationship among Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Love. Safira & Halim, (2024) demonstrated that Social Media Marketing Activities have a positive effect on the formation of Brand Love. However, Zhang et al., (2021) found that excessive exposure to social media activities can lead to information fatigue, which results in a decrease in consumers' emotional attachment to the brand.

Furthermore, the relationship among celebrity endorsers and customer engagement also yields mixed results (Zhang et al., 2021). Found that celebrity endorsers have a positive effect on

customer engagement. Levitan, (2020) suggests that overuse of celebrity endorsers and excessive promotion can reduce engagement because consumers perceive them as inauthentic. Additionally, Brand Love, as an emotional factor, also plays a substantial role in enhancing Customer Engagement. Research by Sales & Mulyati, (2024) indicates that Brand Love has a positive effect on Customer Engagement. Angelika & Setiawan, (2020) found that this effect is not always consistent, as it can weaken if the brand is irrelevant to the consumer's identity. On the other hand, the direct influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Engagement also remains inconsistent. Sales & Mulyati, (2024) found that Social Media Marketing has a positive and substantial effect on Customer Engagement. Voorveld et al., (2018) demonstrated that not all social media activities can increase engagement; in certain conditions, they may even have a negative impact depending on the type of content and platform used.

Given these differing research findings, a research gap exists regarding the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) and Customer Engagement. Furthermore, there is still limited research integrating Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA), Celebrity Endorser, Brand Love, and Customer Engagement within a single research model. Previous studies generally position Customer Engagement as an antecedent or independent variable, whereas this study positions Customer Engagement as the dependent variable. In addition, studies examining the combined roles of Celebrity Endorser and Brand Love in mediating the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) and Customer Engagement remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) influence Customer Engagement through the mediating roles of Celebrity Endorser and Brand Love in the context of TikTok marketing.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Source Credibility Theory

The source credibility theory used in this study was proposed by Hovland & Weiss, (1952) in (Wijaya & Nurfalalah, 2026). Source Credibility Theory (SCT) is a simple theory that explains how the credibility of a message's source can influence how readily people accept and believe the information. When someone is perceived to have a high level of credibility such as through evident expertise or honesty listeners tend to trust what is communicated more readily and grasp and understand the content more effectively (Vincent et al., 2025). According to this theory, it can be explained how Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) can influence Customer Engagement through the perceived credibility of a Celebrity Endorser, where the endorser is considered credible, thereby increasing consumer trust in a piece of content and fostering emotional engagement. This emotional engagement is closely related to Brand Love; when consumers feel love for a brand, it can drive sustained loyalty and commitment (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

This theory has three dimensions: Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise (Saskara & Achmad, 2024). These three dimensions are used to explain consumer perceptions of Celebrity Endorsers as messengers in Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA). In the context of this study, Celebrity Endorsers are perceived as figures in social media content and are evaluated according to the extent to which they are considered attractive and skilled at engaging consumers to interact with the content created. Celebrity Endorsers can provide an appeal that captivates, influences, and enhances message acceptance, thereby fostering engagement through. This credibility can increase consumers' emotional engagement with the content and contribute to the formation of Brand Love, which in turn can drive Customer Engagement in the form of active interactions, such as commenting, liking, and sharing content.

Social Media Marketing Activities Regarding Celebrity Endorsers

Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) refer to marketing activities conducted through social media platforms to create value, facilitate interactions, and strengthen relationships between brands and consumers. Social media engagement has become an important strategic outcome of digital marketing activities because it strengthens marketing success through continuous interaction between firms and consumers (Komariyatin et al., 2025). According to Godey et al. (2016) in Bushara et al., (2023), SMMA encompasses a series of activities designed to engage consumers through entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth communication on social media platforms. Through these activities, organizations can increase brand awareness, improve customer engagement, and encourage favorable consumer responses toward a brand. Social media marketing enables firms to communicate directly with consumers and build long-term relationships through the creation and dissemination of relevant content (Voorveld et al., 2018). Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media platforms provide opportunities for two-way communication, allowing consumers to actively participate in discussions, share experiences, and interact with brand-related content. Consequently, social media has become an essential tool for organizations seeking to enhance customer engagement and influence consumer behavior. In this study, Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) are reflected through the company's efforts to create engaging content, provide up-to-date information, encourage interaction with followers, and present services in a way that is relevant to consumer needs. Effective implementation of these activities is expected to strengthen consumer perceptions of the brand and positively influence behavioral outcomes (Roosdhani et al., 2024).

Consistent and creative marketing activities can enhance a celebrity's visibility in conveying brand messages, thereby increasing the appeal, credibility, and trust of the audience in the endorser. Research conducted by Cita et al., (2023) shows that Social Media Marketing Activities substantially influence brand awareness through the role of Celebrity Endorsers, as interactive and viral content strengthens the endorser's credibility and appeal in the eyes of consumers. As demonstrated by research conducted by Solicitor et al., (2023), which analyzed the role of Social Media Marketing in supporting the effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsers in digital marketing strategies, indicates that Social Media Marketing has a positive and substantial impact on the effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsers, where intensive and interactive marketing activities on social media can enhance the appeal, credibility, and influence of Celebrity Endorsers on the audience.

H1: Social Media Marketing Activities Have a Substantial Positive Effect on Celebrity Endorsers

Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Love

Strategically designed Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) can strengthen consumers' emotional attachment to a brand by providing engaging content, facilitating interactions, and creating positive brand experiences. Through continuous communication and interaction on social media platforms, consumers become more familiar with the brand, develop favorable perceptions, and ultimately establish stronger emotional bonds. Therefore, effective social media marketing activities are expected to enhance Brand Love.

Empirical studies provide support for this relationship. Purwianti & Fionna, (2023) found that Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) have a positive and significant direct effect on Brand Love. Similarly, Roosdhani & Azhari, (2025) reported that Social Media Marketing Activities positively influence Brand Love, indicating that consumers who perceive social media content as

attractive, interactive, and relevant tend to develop stronger affection toward a brand. These findings suggest that social media marketing activities can directly foster consumers' emotional attachment and affection toward brands. Although some studies have reported that the effect of SMMA on Brand Love occurs indirectly through mediating variables such as Brand Awareness and Brand Image, these findings still indicate that social media marketing activities play an important role in shaping consumers' emotional relationships with brands. Based on the theoretical arguments and prior empirical findings, it is proposed that Social Media Marketing Activities have a positive effect on Brand Love.

H2: Social Media Marketing Activities Have a Substantial Positive Effect on Brand Love

Celebrity Endorsers on Customer Engagement

According to Yunita & Indriyatni, (2022), Celebrity Endorsers (CE) leverage their popularity to increase brand awareness and gain acceptance among the general public, with the aim of boosting the marketing success of specific products. Through Celebrity Endorsers, the messages conveyed become more convincing and capable of establishing strong emotional connections; the involvement of Celebrity Endorsers can also expand market reach by attracting the attention of a broader fan base (Purbohastuti & Hidayah, 2020). Celebrity endorsers are chosen to promote products or services because they are perceived to have a positive image and influence that can boost sales. The use of well-known figures in commercial campaigns is also known as Celebrity Endorsement, and marketers can use Celebrity Endorsement to differentiate their products from competitors' products in the market (Cita et al., 2023). In this context the Driver and Co-driver as micro-celebrities according to trust and authenticity who are active on social media. The popularity, talent, charisma, and credibility possessed by a celebrity have the potential to increase sales (Panjaitan, 2022). Drivers and Co-drivers serve as frontline service representatives capable of demonstrating service quality tangibly through content uploaded to their TikTok accounts, thereby building emotional engagement with customers through the everyday content they create and the interactions they engage in.

Customer engagement has become a key idea in modern marketing because it shows how much consumers invest in their encounters with a brand on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral level. Customer engagement reflects the active participation of customers in maintaining relationships with companies through interaction, communication, and involvement in value creation. Higher customer involvement enables firms to better understand customer needs and strengthen long-term relationships that contribute to business performance (Ali, 2021). According to Hollebeek, (2011), The degree of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity a consumer exhibits in relation to particular brand encounters is referred to as customer engagement. Similarly, Yunita & Indriyatni, (2022) believed that interactive and co-creative experiences lead to a psychological state known as customer engagement between customers and brands. Within the framework of social media, engagement with customers is reflected through customers' active participation in actions connected to the brand, like sharing, liking, and commenting, and interacting with other users. Higher levels of engagement indicate stronger relationships between customers and brands, which can contribute to favorable outcomes such as increased brand loyalty, brand love, and purchase intentions.

H3: Celebrity Endorsers Have a Substantial Positive Impact on Customer Engagement

Brand Love and Its Impact on Customer Engagement

Brand Love (BL) can be defined as an emotional feeling that fosters love and loyalty toward a brand (Angelika & Setiawan, 2020). Brand love is an experience felt by a group of consumers who are highly satisfied with a specific brand (Roosdhani & Azhari, 2025). When consumers feel love

for a brand, they become more actively engaged in interactions such as liking, sharing, and commenting on content created by that brand (Musyfiqoh & Roosdhani, 2024). Brand love is formed through continuous, periodic interactions among consumers and the company (Purwanto & Syam, 2022). In this context, Brand Love can be formed through the intensity of interaction and the closeness consumers feel toward a brand. In this context, companies operating in the transportation sector build Brand Love through consumer experiences that involve service, fleet maintenance, and interactions showcased through shared content.

Consumers who have a strong affinity for a brand tend to demonstrate higher levels of customer engagement through active interactions such as commenting, sharing content, and participating in digital brand communities, as this emotional connection motivates them to engage more deeply with the brand both cognitively and behaviorally. Research conducted by the " states that Brand Love has a positive influence on Customer Engagement; feelings of love for a brand do not merely result in positive attitudes but also encourage active consumer participation in building a closer relationship with the brand, thereby strengthening Customer Engagement. According to studies carried out by (Vikranof & Irmawati, 2024), Customer engagement is said to be positively and significantly impacted by brand love.

H4: Brand Love Has a Substantial Positive Effect on Customer Engagement

Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Engagement

Social Media Marketing Activities are a key strategy for companies in creating interactive relationships through social media platforms, which ultimately can increase Customer Engagement. Research conducted by So et al., (2024) states that there is a positive influence and a tendency to show higher engagement in the subsequent period among Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Engagement Giningroem et al., (2025) states that Social Media Marketing Activities have a substantial positive influence on Customer Engagement. In line with the research conducted by Panjaitan, (2022), which states that the higher the marketing activity on social media, the higher the customer engagement that occurs. This is reinforced by research Andika et al., (2025) which states that Social Media Marketing has a positive and substantial influence on Customer Engagement.

H5: Social Media Marketing Activities Have a Substantial Positive Effect on Customer Engagement

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA), Celebrity Endorser, Brand Love, and Customer Engagement. Social Media Marketing Activities served as the independent variable, Customer Engagement as the dependent variable, and Celebrity Endorser and Brand Love as mediating variables. The target population consisted of individuals who follow and interact with the company's TikTok account and have viewed its content. Because the exact number of followers and viewers meeting these criteria was unknown, the population was treated as infinite. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, with the following criteria: (1) actively using TikTok, (2) having viewed content from the company's TikTok account, and (3) being familiar with the bus transportation services promoted through the platform. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to eligible respondents. The collected data were subsequently analyzed to test the proposed relationships among the study variables and evaluate the research hypotheses.

The sample size was determined based on the recommendation of Hair et al., (2019), which suggests that the minimum sample size in SEM studies should be adequate relative to the complexity of the model and the number of indicators used. As this study employed 22 measurement indicators, a total of 219 valid responses were collected, which exceeds the minimum sample size requirement and is considered sufficient for SEM analysis. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms using a 1-10 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (10). The collected data were subsequently analyzed to evaluate the proposed research model and test the study hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

Data analysis in this study was conducted using the *Partial Least Squares* (PLS) approach, which was carried out in stages. The first stage of the analysis procedure focused on testing the measurement model (*outer model*). The evaluation at this stage aimed to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument, to ensure that each indicator accurately represented the latent construct it measured and provided consistency in the measurement results. The results of the measurement model testing are presented in Figure 1.

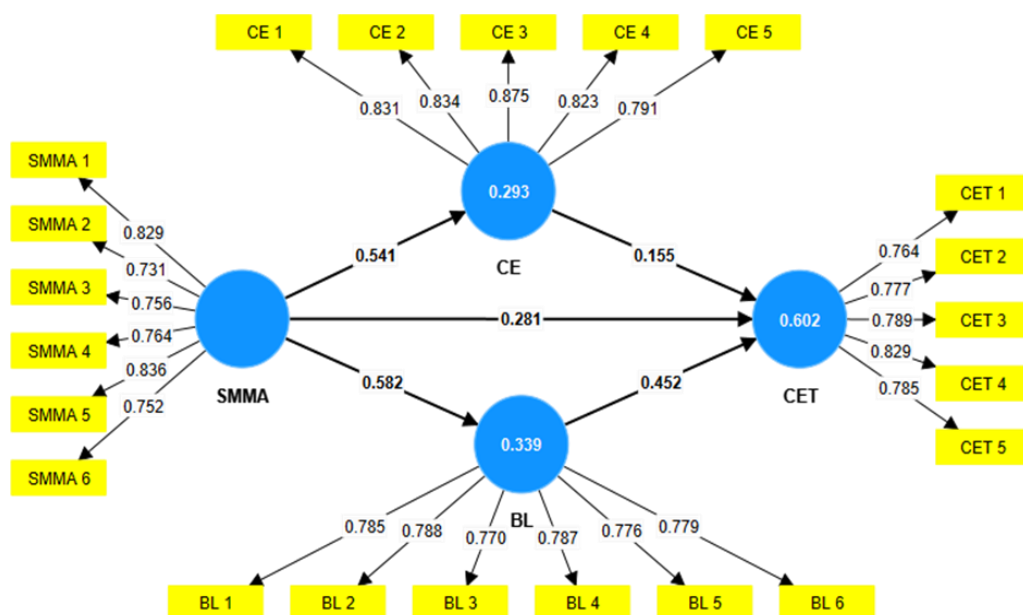


Figure1. Measurement Model

Based on the criteria established by Hamid (2019), an indicator is considered to have convergent validity if it has an *outer loading* value of ≥ 0.70 . This threshold indicates that the indicator has sufficient power to explain the variance of its construct, making it appropriate to retain in the model. Based on the data analysis results, all indicators comprising the constructs *Brand Love* (BL), *Celebrity Endorser* (CE), *Customer Engagement* (CET), and *Social Media Marketing Activities* (SMMA) showed *outer loading* values above the specified minimum threshold. Furthermore, no indicator was found to have a value below 0.70 for any of the four constructs. Thus, it can be concluded that all indicators have met the criteria for convergent validity as a whole.

Outer Model

Based on these criteria, a minimum AVE value of 0.50 indicates that the relationship between indicators is sufficiently strong. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test results presented in Table 1 show that all constructs meet the validity criteria required for the PLS-SEM measurement model. The AVE values for Brand Love, Celebrity Endorser, Customer Engagement, and Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) all exceed the 0.50 threshold, thereby confirming their validity.

Table 1. Outer Model Results

Variabel	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability
BL	0.610	0.874	0.904
CE	0.691	0.888	0.918
CET	0.623	0.849	0.892
SMMA	0.607	0.871	0.902

Source: Data processed in SmartPLS

All variables in this study have a composite reliability coefficient above 0.70, with Brand Love at 0.904, Celebrity Endorser at 0.918, Customer Engagement at 0.892, and Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) at 0.902. Therefore, every variable in this study is considered reliable. All research variables showed an alpha value of 0.70. The Brand Love variable had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.874, Celebrity Endorser of 0.888, Customer Engagement of 0.849, and Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) of 0.871.

Hypothesis Testing

Based on the results presented in table 2, the R-Square value indicates that the factors included in this research model explain 33.9% of the variation in *Brand Love*, 29.3% of the variation in perceptions of *Celebrity Endorsers*, and 60.2% of the variation in *Customer Engagement*. These results indicate that the factors in the model contribute to explaining the endogenous variables under study, although there remains a proportion of variation that the model cannot explain—namely, 66.1% for *Brand Love*, 70.7% for *Celebrity Endorser*, and 39.8% for *Customer Engagement*. This remaining variation suggests the possibility of influences from other factors or external factors not included in this research model.

Table 2. Table R-Square Analysis

Variable	R-square	Adjusted R-Square
BL	0.339	0.336
CE	0.293	0.289
CET	0.602	0.596

Source: Data processed in SmartPLS

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing presented in table 3, the research findings indicate that social media marketing initiatives have a positive and significant effect on *Brand Love*, with a path coefficient of 0.582, a t-value of 7.157, and a p-value of 0.000. These findings indicate that the more effective a company's social media marketing activities are, the higher the level of consumer brand love for that brand.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	Original sample	T-statistics	P-values
BL -> CET	0.452	3.616	0.000
CE -> CET	0.155	1.218	0.112
SMMA -> BL	0.582	7.157	0.000
SMMA -> CE	0.541	11.911	0.000
SMMA -> CET	0.281	2.930	0.002
SMMA -> BL -> CET	0.263	3.376	0.000
SMMA -> CE -> CET	0.084	1.199	0.115

Source: Data processed in SmartPLS

SMMA also has a positive and significant effect on *Celebrity Endorser* (CE), with a coefficient of 0.541, a t-statistic of 11.911, and a p-value of 0.000. These results indicate that effective social media marketing activities can enhance consumers' perceptions of the role of celebrity endorsers used by companies. Furthermore, SMMA has a positive and significant effect on *Customer Engagement* (CET), with a coefficient of 0.281, a t-statistic of 2.930, and a p-value of 0.002. This suggests that improving the quality of various social media marketing initiatives can increase consumer engagement with the brand. Furthermore, as shown in **Table 3**, *Brand Love* was found to have a positive and significant effect on *Customer Engagement* ($\beta = 0.452$; $p = 0.000$). Additionally, the indirect effect of SMMA on *Customer Engagement* through *Brand Love* is also significant ($\beta = 0.263$; $p = 0.000$). Thus, *Brand Love* acts as a mediator in the relationship between SMMA and *Customer Engagement*. Since the direct effect of SMMA on *Customer Engagement* remains significant, the type of mediation occurring is partial mediation. Meanwhile, *Celebrity Endorsers* do not have a significant effect on *Customer Engagement* ($\beta = 0.155$; $p = 0.112$). The indirect effect of SMMA on *Customer Engagement* through *Celebrity Endorsers* is also not significant ($\beta = 0.084$; $p = 0.115$). Therefore, *Celebrity Endorsers* do not act as mediators in the relationship between SMMA and *Customer Engagement*.

Discussion

The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Celebrity Endorsers

Marketing initiatives on social media have a substantial positive impact on celebrity endorsers. Social media marketing activities conducted on the TikTok such as the presentation of creative, interactive, and informative content, as well as reliable communication with the viewers have proven effective in enhancing the effectiveness and positive perception of the celebrity endorsers used. These results are consistent with studies carried out by the Cita et al., (2023), which states that Social Media Marketing Activities have a substantial positive impact on Celebrity Endorsers.

The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Love

Social Media Marketing Activities have a substantial positive effect on Brand Love. Social Media Marketing Activities mean that the more intense, engaging, and interactive the marketing activities conducted through social media are, the stronger the consumers' liking, emotional attachment, and love for the brand. These findings align with the research conducted by Musyfiqoh & Roosdhani, (2024), which states that Social Media Marketing Activities have a substantial positive effect on Brand Love.

The Influence of Celebrity Endorsers on Customer Engagement

Celebrity endorsers do not influence customer engagement. Although the presence of celebrity endorsers is often associated with increased public attention, this research demonstrates that celebrity endorsements do not have a substantial direct impact on customer engagement. In this context, audience engagement is driven more by content value, brand experience, and emotional connections with the brand, rather than solely by the celebrity featured in the content. According to studies carried out by the Agustina et al., (2022), states that celebrity endorsers have an adverse effect on consumer involvement.

The Influence of Brand Love on Customer Engagement

Brand Love has a substantial positive effect on Customer Engagement. The greater the consumer's affection, emotional bond, and positive sentiments toward a brand, the more they engage in interactions with that brand, especially on social media. In line with research conducted by Vikranof & Irmawati, (2024), which states that Brand Love has a positive and substantial effect on Customer Engagement.

The Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer Engagement

Social Media Marketing Activities have a substantial favorable impact on Customer Engagement. This means that the more active, creative, consistent, and interactive the marketing activities conducted through social media are, the more customers interact with the brand. This aligns Using research carried out by So et al., (2024), which states that Social Media Marketing Activities have a substantial positive effect on Customer Engagement.

The Influence of Brand Love as a Mediating Variable Among Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Engagement

The outcomes of the indirect effect test indicate that Brand Love, acting as a mediating variable, has a substantial influence on the relationship among Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Engagement. This finding suggests that the social media marketing activities conducted by the TikTok not only directly increase customer engagement but also operate through the mechanism of fostering emotional bonds among consumers and the brand. This supports the findings of Syalsabila & Hermina, (2023) regarding the positive influence of celebrity endorsers and social media activities on consumer engagement, where emotional mechanisms such as brand love serve as the primary link.

The Influence of Celebrity Endorsers as a Mediating Variable Among Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Engagement

The indirect effect test's findings show that Celebrity Endorsers do not serve as a substantial mediator among Social Media Marketing Activities and Customer Engagement specifically, emotional and behavioral engagement. This suggests that the presence of celebrity endorsers in the TikTok content is not yet strong enough to drive customer engagement on either an emotional or behavioral level. Consumer engagement is more influenced by other factors, such as content quality and brand relevance, as demonstrated by Jin & Phua, (2014) who found that the excessive and overly promotional use of celebrity endorsers can reduce engagement because consumers perceive it as inauthentic.

Limitations

This research has numerous limitations that must be acknowledged. Initially, the research concentrates solely on individuals who are users and followers of the TikTok; therefore, the findings have limited generalizability to other industries, other social media platforms, or different transportation brands. The characteristics of the TikTok audience and the context of transportation services mean that the study's findings are context-specific.

Second, the study employs a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional design, which means that information was only gathered for a limited amount of time and cannot capture dynamic changes in customer engagement behavior over the long term. The relationships among variables identified also do not fully demonstrate longitudinal causal relationships.

Third, the study only examines Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA), Celebrity Endorsers, Brand Love, and Customer Engagement, while there are other factors outside the model that could potentially influence customer engagement, such as content quality, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), trust, perceived value, brand image, and customer experience. This is also reflected in the R-square value, indicating that there are still other variables outside the model that explain the research construct.

Fourth, data collection using self-report questionnaires allows for potential response biases, such as respondent subjectivity, common method bias, or social desirability bias.

Fifth, the use of Celebrity Endorsers in this study is contextualized within the roles of drivers and co-drivers as micro-celebrities; therefore, the findings regarding the insignificance of this variable may differ if tested with other kinds of endorsers, such as macro-influencers, public figures, or professional influencers.

Conclusion

According to the research findings, Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) play a crucial role in enhancing Customer Engagement on the TikTok, both directly and indirectly through Brand Love. Creative, consistent, informative, and interactive social media marketing activities have proven effective in building consumers' emotional attachment to the brand, which in turn drives customer engagement through active interactions such as liking, commenting, and sharing content. Additionally, SMMA also have a substantial positive influence on perceptions of Celebrity Endorsers. However, Celebrity Endorsers were not found to have a substantial direct influence on Customer Engagement nor to act as mediators in this relationship. Conversely, Brand Love was found to be a substantial mediating variable that strengthens the influence of SMMA on Customer Engagement. These findings indicate that the success of digital marketing strategies on TikTok depends not only on the endorser figure but more on the quality of social media marketing activities capable of creating a strong emotional connection with consumers. Therefore, companies like PO Bejeu need to focus their content strategies on creating meaningful brand experiences to build brand love and sustainably increase customer engagement. Theoretically, these research results support Source Credibility Theory (SCT), which states that source credibility can influence the audience's acceptance of a message. However, in the context of this study, SCT was not fully confirmed as a mediator through the Celebrity Endorser; rather, it reinforced the role of SMMA in building consumer trust and emotional engagement through Brand Love. In other words, these findings indicate that effective SMMA can increase Customer Engagement, while the role of endorser credibility is not a direct determining factor in driving such engagement.

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