

Analysis of the Role of Factors that Influence Brand Loyalty to Food Influencers as Human Brands in Indonesia

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Abstract

This research analyzes the factors that influence brand loyalty towards food influencers, with a particular focus on the impact of interactivity, authenticity, emotional attachment, brand trust, customer engagement, and involvement. A quantitative approach was adopted, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze data from 215 followers in Indonesia. The SEM-PLS technique allowed for an assessment of both the direct and indirect relationships among the variables impacting loyalty to a human brand. The findings indicate that several factors, including interactivity, brand trust, customer engagement, and involvement, significantly shape brand loyalty. Interactivity is critical to increasing authenticity and emotional engagement, which then strengthens brand trust. This established trust, alongside emotional attachment, drives deeper customer engagement. Engagement plays a mediating role, enhancing the relationship between followers and the brand, resulting in greater brand loyalty. Based on the insights gleaned, influencers are advised to prioritize interactive and authentic communication with their audience, fostering trust and an emotional bond. Consequently, influencers must create content that resonates with their followers to maintain their interest and loyalty over time. This approach reinforces the value of building lasting relationships with an audience in the dynamic sphere of influencer marketing.

Keywords: brand loyalty; influencer; interactivity; customer engagement; authenticity

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Introduction

Social media platforms have revolutionized the dynamics of communication and interaction within our societal constructs, primarily over the last decade. Data reveals that there are approximately 5.04 billion users of social media globally, illustrating that nearly 62.3% of the world's populace is presently interconnected through these online platforms (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2024). The 2024 Digital Global Report suggests that, on average, a user expends roughly 2 hours and 23 minutes each day immersed in social media engagements. It has been observed that users who actively engage in social media activities usually experience increased social support and friendship, which underlines the huge impact of social media in everyday life (Krause et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Pew Research Center has found

that approximately 50% of adults acquire news through social media, which plays a significant role in shaping public opinion (Shearer & Mutsaers, 2018). On the other hand, phenomena such as the "Arab Spring" illustrate how social media facilitates mass collaboration in social and political activities, demonstrating its significant influence on group behavior in society (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). This underlines the fact that the real impact of social media on people's behavior is not just its influence on communication and interaction, but also includes the community's ability to collaborate and form opinions.

On the other hand, digital evolution and rapid advances in social media driving societal transformation have significantly changed consumers' approach to interacting with goods and

services. For example, the methods users use to learn about a brand or product on social media before making a purchase. Data collected by We Are Social & Meltwater (2024) shows that between 57-82% of users who research a brand or product on social media show a tendency to then buy that product. This phenomenon occurs in all age categories. The underlying reason can be attributed to consumers' ability to first obtain product reviews from other consumers who are considered more authentic and trustworthy (Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012). As a result, product reviews have a significant influence on consumer purchasing behavior, where negative reviews can suppress sales (Mani et al., 2023). Brands need to follow consumer evaluations on social media, leveraging this as a tactic to attract new customers to purchase their products. Apple is a good example, with a consistent practice of reposting user-generated photos on social media. This gesture is a form of appreciation for users who give positive assessments of their products, by showing the superior quality of the iPhone camera.

Influencers offer access to an existing and loyal community, providing authenticity and credibility increasingly valued by today's consumers (D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2021). Consumer communications strategies have shifted from traditional marketing approaches to more organic and relationship-based methods. Therefore, the study of influencer marketing is important because it offers enormous benefits for today's businesses (Jun & Yi, 2020) conducted a study on influencers by positioning them as "human brands". A human brand refers to famous individuals who become the subject of marketing communications because they are believed to enhance the connection between a brand and its consumers (Thomson, 2006). Typically, this term is used for celebrities, fashion models, entertainers, CEOs, politicians, among others (Gamson, 2011). What differentiates influencers from other human brands is the level of interaction, where influencers tend to be interactive and carry out two-way communication with their

followers. This leads to high levels of engagement, where followers become not only recipients of messages but also active participants in the dialogue (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Interactive communication between brands and consumers increases trust in the brand, which in turn can also increase loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Additionally, an influencer's authenticity and skill in creating a relevant narrative can engender affective commitment, which is an important prerequisite for long-term loyalty. Therefore, as human brands, influencers not only communicate but also build strong emotional bonds with consumers, which is the key to consumer growth and loyalty.

In a study on influencer marketing, Jun & Yi (2020) suggests that the loyalty factors of an influencer are brand trust and emotional attachment. Both will ultimately be influenced by the influencer's interactivity and authenticity. However, in their research, interactivity and authenticity did not have a direct effect on loyalty. On the other hand, Sallaku & Vigolo (2022) found a direct influence of interactivity and authenticity on brand loyalty. The research carried out was seen from the perspective of Social Exchange Theory which is commonly used in other research to explain the relationship between brands/companies and consumers (Gligor & Bozkurt, 2022). Aside from interactivity and authenticity, the Social Exchange Theory also suggests other factors that may influence customer loyalty, such as customer engagement and involvement (Sallaku & Vigolo, 2022). Customer engagement is defined as the manifestation of customer behavior focused on a brand, not purchasing behavior, but other internally motivated behavior (van Doorn et al., 2010). Meanwhile, involvement is defined as the relevance of an object based on intrinsic needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Both variables, customer engagement and involvement, are factors influencing the loyalty of customer focus, and will be examined for their effect on influencer marketing.

In addition to brand loyalty, interactivity, authenticity, and involvement also affect customer engagement (Sallaku & Vigolo, 2022). Many studies have already been conducted on customer engagement, for instance, in connection with brand communities and social media in the context of brands or companies (Santos et al., 2022). However, there has been no research that clearly links the role of customer engagement and involvement in influencer marketing. Nevertheless, customer involvement and engagement play an important role in improving the performance of a brand (Din et al., 2020; Pambreni et al., 2019), therefore this research also discusses the influence of authenticity, interactivity and involvement on customers' engagement.

This study approaches the concept of the influencer as a human brand by focusing on the dynamics between customer engagement and involvement and their influence on influencer brand loyalty. Although previous research has explored aspects such as interactivity, authenticity, brand trust, and emotional attachment, there is a research gap on how both engagement and involvement interact and contribute to brand loyalty within the context of influencers, who not only promote products but also personify the brand itself. The novelty of this research lies in a deeper exploration of how interactive experiences with influencers' entities with human characteristics and opinion leaders and the degree of consumer involvement can build or strengthen brand loyalty, which has not been fully captured in existing studies. Furthermore, employing a quantitative approach, this study aims to measure the strength and nature of the relationships between variables with empirical data, providing concrete evidence to the proposed theoretical model.

In general, this research aims to examine the factors affecting influencer marketing from the perspective of Social Exchange Theory and Jun & Yi (2020) model in influencer marketing research. Factors including interactivity, authenticity, brand trust, emotional attachment, involvement, and

customer engagement will be tested to determine their influence on influencer brand loyalty. The context of this research is food influencers, who were chosen because of the large number of social media users who follow food influencer content (Willers & Schmidt, 2017). In Indonesia, these influencers often have high views of their content and have many followers. Specifically, the object of this research is Tanboy Kun, a food influencer who has a long history of offering content on social media. Tanboy Kun was chosen because he has the highest number of followers on YouTube, compared to other foodfluencers.

Literature Review

Human Brand in Influencer Marketing

As their influence and power over consumers grows, it is important to think of influencers as a kind of human brand and explore their brand components. In contrast to several previous studies which categorize conventional celebrities as influencers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), recent research differentiates the two concepts and places greater emphasis on the term influencer in relation to social media figures (Audrezet et al., 2020; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015; Khamis et al., 2017; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Raun, 2018). The approaches to brand image development between these entities are distinct (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015; Khamis et al., 2017; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Celebrities primarily build their brand influence through traditional channels such as television or magazines, compared to influencers who utilize social media to grow their influence, primarily by posting their original content. Influencers gain followers by creating unique content based on their expertise in specific areas, such as cooking, technology, fashion, gaming, and sports (Jun & Yi, 2020).

The brand of an influencer is also unique due to their ability to engage in real-time, direct, swift, and interactive two-way communication with their followers. Through active interaction,

followers may feel that influencers perceive them as special individuals rather than anonymous members of a broader fan base. This interactive mode of communication can enhance the emotional attachment of individuals who follow influencers (Labrecque, 2014). Given that most conventional human brand or brand interactions are largely unidirectional, significant two-way interactive communications offered by influencers are expected to have a major impact on brand equity.

Interactivity

Interactivity, or two-way communication between influencers and their followers, is crucial in shaping perceptions and behaviors, affecting the willingness to comment on social media and the perception of brands (Jun & Yi, 2020; D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2023; Lew & Stohl, 2023; Naudé et al., 2022). While mechanical interactivity refers to the reactive features of a website, influencer interactivity distinguishes itself by its rich interpersonal communication characteristics, forming an integral part of the influencer's brand equity (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006). In contrast to traditional brands, which rely on mechanical interactivity that does not carry the same weight in defining brand characteristics or enhancing product augmentation services, influencer interactivity is seen as a unique trait significantly influencing brand equity (Kotler et al., 2017). Other human brands, such as celebrities and public figures, may not leverage interactivity to the same degree, as their social media interactions are often managed by teams, and alternative communication channels can be used to build brand familiarity (Johns & English, 2016). For influencers, however, social media interactivity is paramount in creating closeness and loyalty with followers, making it a distinctive and essential aspect of their brand equity.

Customer Engagement

In the realm of branding, customer engagement is often aligned with the concept of customer brand engagement, which is multifaceted

and subject to various interpretations (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Wang, 2021). One view conceptualizes customer brand engagement as a psychological process that informs how loyalty is developed and maintained as consumers interact with media, serving as a measure of the strength of the consumer-brand relationship (Bowden, 2009). Another view expands beyond purchasing behaviors to include various consumer behaviors influenced by the brand focus on consumer behaviors on a brand's social media pages, defining engagement as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities related to a consumer's interactions with a brand. On social media, engagement behaviors include promoting the brand by sharing positive experiences, making purchases, providing referrals, participating in social media interactions about the brand, and giving feedback or suggestions for better performance (Kumar, 2013; Sashi, 2012). Engaged consumers often advocate for the brand in their social and real-life networks, reinforcing their support and loyalty through these interactions

Involvement

The concept of involvement has been interpreted in various ways across scholarly literature. Lastovicka (1979) describes it as relating to the importance of an object, while Hupfer (1971) views it as a matter of concern. Other definitions point to involvement as central to a consumer's ego structure, making a product's relevance personally significant (Day, 1967; Petty et al., 1983). Additionally, some approaches discuss involvement in terms of the intensity and activation a consumer experiences toward an object (Cohen, 1983). Zaichkowsky (1985) provides a unified definition, stating that involvement is an individual's perception of an object's relevance based on their personal needs, values, and interests. This concept highlights that involvement levels can change with shifts in consumer needs, interests, or values, and that the personally relevant object could be anything from a product or service to a brand, advertisement, purchasing situation, or

decision. Over time, the breadth of involvement has expanded to include aspects like quality, technology, and retail websites (Jiang et al., 2010; Shobeiri et al., 2014).

Hypothesis Development

According to Jun & Yi (2020), interactivity can enhance perceptions of an influencer's authenticity. This is based on findings that strong brand interactions can make consumers feel appreciated and increase trust (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018; J. Kim et al., 2012; Tan et al., 2019). From this explanation, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Interactivity of influencers affects the authenticity of influencers

Besides authenticity, interactivity can also trigger a follower's emotional attachment to an influencer. Previous research suggests that influencers' interactions on social media are similar to celebrity attachments (Ilicic et al., 2016). The reason is, they seem to be able to communicate back and forth in real time, even though in real life they don't know each other. From this explanation, the following hypothesis can be made:

H2: Interactivity influences Emotional Attachment

Interactivity can directly and positively influence brand trust (Jun & Yi, 2020). Someone's experience of trust in a brand through marketing on social media can increase online interaction (Tatar & Erdogmus, 2016) Another study revealed that brands that actively provide useful responses to consumers through platforms such as microblogs and communicate interactively can build higher trust (Coyle et al., 2012). Based on this description, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Interactivity influences Brand Trust

France et al. (2016) state that interactivity influences customer engagement. Interactivity is considered a brand-led customer engagement driver (France et al., 2016). Indeed, various studies show that brands that have a high level of interactivity succeed in creating more intimate relationships with their consumers (Sawhney et al.,

2005). From the explanations given, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Interactivity has a positive effect on Customer Engagement

In addition, various studies show that interactivity has a direct impact on loyalty. For example, Cyr et al. (2009) found that there is a significant and positive influence of interactivity on customer loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Interactivity influences Brand Loyalty

Marwick & boyd (2011) emphasized that the perception of authenticity regarding celebrities as human brands encourages the formation of emotional attachment or closeness with consumers. Specifically, the impact of authenticity is more significant for influencer brands than for other private brands, as consumers tend to value the authenticity of content that is generally managed independently by influencers. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H6: Authenticity affects Emotional Attachment

Authenticity can also influence brand trust when consumers perceive the authenticity of a brand as a way to demonstrate the brand's seriousness in managing communication channels (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). It is expected that followers will trust an influencer when the influencer creates content sincerely and enthusiastically as a result of their intrinsic motivation (Wang, 2021). From this explanation, the following hypothesis is formed:

H7: Authenticity affects Brand Trust

Authenticity in the context of influencers holds a strategic position because it facilitates the formation of a deeper relationship between the influencer and the followers. This significantly contributes to increased consumer engagement and loyalty building towards the targeted brand or persona. Authenticity can also be interpreted as the alignment between the persona projected by the influencer on social media and their real personality (Freberg et al., 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Literature from existing research shows that

when influencers deliver authentic content, they not only succeed in creating more effective communication but also achieve high follower engagement, which is essential for long-term loyalty formation (Casaló et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). From this explanation, the following hypotheses are made:

H8: Authenticity affects Customer Engagement

H9: Authenticity affects Loyalty

Emotional attachment, as defined by Vlachos et al. (2010)) and Kinniburgh et al. (2005), signifies the deep connections individuals form with other people, entities, brands, and even influencers on social media, highlighting its important role in identity formation and relationship building. In the context of influencer marketing, emotional attachment plays an important role in influencing brand trust (D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2023; Shoukat et al., 2023). It has been found that strong emotional attachment to a brand strongly impacts brand support and protects the brand from counterfeit products (Chen et al., 2023). Moreover, emotional attachment can also positively impact brand trust over the long term (Jun & Yi, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that emotional bonds influence brand trust in influencer marketing by fostering loyalty, credibility, and support towards the brand.

H10: Emotional Attachment affects Brand Trust

Many studies have explored the relationship between emotional attachment and brand loyalty (Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012). Emotional marketing strategies that target consumers' feelings have been proven to enhance brand loyalty by creating a strong emotional bond between the customer and the brand. Therefore, it can be interpreted that loyalty to a brand plays an important role in various elements of brand value, and is crucial in building long-term consumer and brand relationships. From this explanation, the following hypothesis is formed:

H11: Emotional Attachment affects Loyalty

Brand trust is conceptualized as either consumers' confidence in a brand's expertise,

reliability, and dedication, or as their willingness to rely on the brand amid uncertainty and vulnerability (Moorman et al., 1993). Brand trust is known to play an important role in influencing brand loyalty in various industries. Research findings from several studies show that individuals' trust in a brand has a significant influence on their loyalty to that brand (Friti Sinta et al., 2023; Sujana et al., 2023). Brand trust is formed from consumer expectations of the reliability of a brand, which influences brand loyalty which is a fundamental component of brand equity (Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). In brief, the following hypothesis can be made:

H12: Brand Trust affects Loyalty

Involvement plays a crucial role in developing customer engagement as it is considered a tool for predicting consumer interest in a brand (Lee & Kim, 2017). As consumers become more involved with a brand, they tend to search for and process more information about the brand (Beatty & Smith, 1987). In particular, it is described that consumer involvement with a brand will form a higher level of customer engagement of that brand. Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H13: Involvement affects Customer Engagement

Besides customer engagement, some studies state that involvement can directly impact brand loyalty. For example, Leckie et al. (2016) revealed that consumer involvement has a positive influence on brand loyalty. Sallaku & Vigolo (2022) also discovered in their research within a brand context that involvement significantly influences enhancing loyalty from customers and audiences. From the explanations mentioned, the following hypothesis can be made:

H14: Involvement affects Loyalty

Customer Engagement to Brand Loyalty

In branding, customer engagement relates to customer brand engagement, referring to the psychological process of establishing and maintaining consumer loyalty and strong consumer-brand relationships (Bowden, 2009;

Hollebeek et al., 2019). A Existing research has found that customer engagement influences loyalty (France et al., 2015; Islam et al., 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H15: Customer Engagement affects Loyalty

Methods

This research method utilized in this thesis is conclusive descriptive research. According to Malhotra (2021), the primary aim of a descriptive study is to delineate the characteristics of a particular group, estimate the percentage of units in a population exhibiting specific behaviors, and reveal particular behaviors. A single cross-sectional approach is used, where data is collected at one time from the population under study without measuring pre- or post-conditions. Sample selection was carried out through convenience sampling, taking into account ease of access to the target population. Sample units are easily accessible, scalable, and tend to be cooperative (Malhotra, 2021). This paper utilized a questionnaire as the data collection instrument, which was distributed to followers of Tanboy Kun in Indonesia. If there are respondents who do not follow (subscribe) the Tanboy Kun YouTube account or do not follow (follow) the Tanboy Kun Instagram account, and have not watched Tanboy Kun channel content in the last 6 months, then the respondent cannot continue filling out the questionnaire and the data will not be used for analysis.

Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent a pretest with 30 respondents to ensure representativeness and feasibility for this research. In the questionnaire, respondents were presented with questions and statements rated on a 7-point scale, where they chose from 'strongly agree,' scoring a 7, to 'strongly disagree,' scoring a 1. There are seven variables that are reviewed to see which factors influence a person's loyalty to influencers. The variable influencer interactivity,

will use instruments from two sources, McMillan & Hwang (2002), and also Thorson & Rodgers (2006), which is quoted from Jun & Yi (2020). Variable influencer authenticity and brand trust will use the statement from Moulard et al. (2016) which is quoted from Jun & Yi (2020). Variable emotional attachment will use the instrument from Kowalczyk & Pounders (2016) which is quoted from Jun & Yi (2020). Variable customer engagement using the instrument from France et al. (2016) taken from Sallaku & Vigolo (2022). Variable involvement using an instrument from Zaichkowsky (1985) taken from (Sallaku & Vigolo, 2022). And variables loyalty will use the instrument from Pappu et al. (2005), Su & Tong (2015), and Yoo et al. (2000) quoted from Jun & Yi (2020). Of all the variables, there are 26 indicators used in this paper. The data employed in this study constitute primary data, which were garnered through questionnaires filled out by respondents. The collected data from respondents were analyzed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) method, where the specific type of SEM applied was partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results and Discussion

Measurement Model

In this paper, the main test was analysis using Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) on SmartPLS software version 4.1.0. The measurement model acceptably all items and variables are valid and reliable. The outer loadings all items was above 0.5, cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability all variables were above 0.7 (Table 1). And average variance extracted (AVE) all variables have values above 0.5. The HTMT value of each construct is under than 0.9 (Table 2). The discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 3) where the square root AVE value of all latent variables is greater than the correlation with other constructs, so that the discriminant validity acceptable

Table 1. Reliability & Validity Testing

Variabel	Indicators	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Influencer Authenticity (AU)	AU.1	0.789	0.746	0.759	0.837	0.564
	AU.2	0.681				
	AU.3	0.75				
	AU.4	0.778				
Brand Loyalty (LY)	LY.1	0.897	0.839	0.847	0.903	0.756
	LY.2	0.844				
	LY.3	0.868				
Brand Trust (BT)	BT.1	0.935	0.909	0.910	0.943	0.846
	BT.2	0.93				
	BT.3	0.894				
Customer Engagement (CE)	CE.1	0.874	0.797	0.807	0.881	0.712
	CE.2	0.791				
	CE.3	0.863				
Emotional attachment (EA)	EA.1	0.895	0.712	0.718	0.874	0.776
	EA.2	0.866				
	EA.3	0.784				
Influencer Interactivity (IN)	IN.1	0.876	0.855	0.857	0.902	0.697
	IN.2	0.791				
	IN.3	0.863				
	IN.4	0.808				
Involvement (IV)	IV.1	0.832	0.914	0.917	0.933	0.701
	IV.2	0.837				
	IV.3	0.88				
	IV.4	0.767				
	IV.5	0.864				
	IV.6	0.837				

Source: Processed data (2024)

Table 2. HTMT

	AU	LY	BT	CE	EA	IN	IV
AU							
LY	0.523						
BT	0.452	0.614					
CE	0.610	0.848	0.780				
EA	0.662	0.720	0.729	0.825			
IN	0.538	0.775	0.882	0.800	0.824		
IV	0.549	0.862	0.861	0.900	0.778	0.879	

Source: Processed data (2024)

Table 3. Fornell Larcker Criterion

	AU	LY	BT	CE	EA	IN	IV
AU	0.751						
LY	0.426	0.870					
BT	0.396	0.542	0.920				

CE	0.475	0.698	0.670	0.844		
EA	0.493	0.562	0.589	0.628	0.881	
IN	0.445	0.663	0.777	0.667	0.647	0.835
IV	0.467	0.761	0.787	0.773	0.631	0.779

Source: Processed data (2024)

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Original sample	St.Dev	T statistics	P values	Hypothesis Support
H1 Influencer Interactivity -> Authenticity	0.445	0.06	7.376	0.000	Yes
H2 Influencer Interactivity -> Emotional Attachement	0.579	0.075	7.131	0.000	Yes
H3 Influencer Interactivity -> Brand Trust	0.675	0.071	9.452	0.000	Yes
H4 Influencer Interactivity -> Customer Engagement	0.138	0.08	1.732	0.042	Yes
H5 Influencer Interactivity -> Brand Loyalty	0.239	0.078	3.057	0.001	Yes
H6 Influencer Authenticity -> Emotional Attachement	0.131	0.075	1.750	0.040	Yes
H7 Influencer Authenticity -> Brand Trust	0.026	0.058	0.455	0.325	No
H8 Influencer Authenticity -> Customer Engagement	0.131	0.075	1.750	0.040	Yes
H9 Influencer Authenticity -> Brand Loyalty	0.026	0.068	0.384	0.351	No
H10 Emotional Attachement -> Brand Trust	0.140	0.081	1.718	0.043	Yes
H11 Emotional Attachement-> Brand Loyalty	0.053	0.052	0.637	0.262	No
H12 Brand Trust -> Brand Loyalty	0.308	0.082	3.772	0.000	Yes
H13 Involvement -> Customer Engagement	0.605	0.086	6.993	0.000	Yes
H14 Involvement -> Brand Loyalty	0.574	0.106	5.434	0.000	Yes
H15 Customer Engagement -> Brand Loyalty	0.255	0.103	2.478	0.007	Yes

Source: Processed data (2024)

Structural Model

This research hypotheses were tested using bootstrap procedure, the subsample used is 5000 with a significance level of 0.05 (5%). This significance level is used because according to Hair

et al. (2017). If the p-value is below 0.05 (5%) it means the variable has a significant influence. The influence test was carried out by comparing the t statistics value with the critical t value of 1.65 (one tailed). From the results of the bootstrapping (Table

4), it can be seen that of the 15 hypotheses proposed, 12 hypotheses were accepted and 3 hypotheses were rejected. A p-value smaller than 0.05 indicates that the hypothesis is accepted and a number greater than 0.05 indicates that the hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

This study discusses the development of influencer marketing in Indonesia, specifically focusing on influencer marketing within the culinary industry, as well as how variables such as authenticity, interactivity, emotional attachment, brand trust, customer engagement, and involvement influence brand loyalty between influencers and followers. Additionally, this research measures the mutual influence of these variables to determine whether any variable moderates the impact on brand loyalty. The brand loyalty measurement model utilized in this study refers to Jun & Yi (2020) and Sallaku & Vigolo (2022). The first variable affecting brand loyalty is interactivity, where interactivity is defined as two-way communication between the influencer and followers, occurring through continuous comments and feedback on the influencer's social media account (Jun & Yi, 2020). In line with the findings of Sallaku & Vigolo (2022), this research also found that interactive communication from an influencer can increase follower loyalty. This means that an influencer who maintains two-way communication with his followers will increase their loyalty. Apart from that, interactive communication can also influence aspects of authenticity, emotional attachment, brand trust, and customer engagement. This shows that these aspects can also moderate interactivity and brand loyalty. This research finds that brand trust and customer engagement are variables that can moderate interactivity with brand loyalty, because both also have an impact on brand loyalty. However, authenticity and emotional attachment cannot moderate interactivity because these variables were found not to influence brand loyalty in this study.

The second variable that affects brand loyalty is authenticity. In contrast to interactivity, researchers found that authenticity does not directly influence an influencer's brand loyalty. This finding is different from the discovery by Sallaku & Vigolo (2022), where authenticity impacts brand loyalty. In this case, authenticity is defined as the authenticity of an influencer in creating content that originates from their intrinsic motivation. From the findings of this research, it can be said that an influencer's sincerity and intrinsic motivation do not make a follower loyal. A possible explanation is that, for Indonesian consumers, the initial perception of an influencer is more of a marketer than a genuine individual (Nadila & Windasari, 2022). In addition to its impact on loyalty, this research also discusses the affects of authenticity on emotional attachment, brand trust, and customer engagement. It was found that authenticity does not affect brand trust but influences emotional attachment and customer engagement. Meaning, emotional attachment and customer engagement could mediate authenticity's effect on brand loyalty. From the results obtained, customer engagement was found not to affect brand loyalty, whereas customer engagement affects brand loyalty. It means that sincerely created content by an influencer will increase loyalty if followers feel engaged with that influencer.

Next, the factor tested for its influence on brand loyalty is emotional attachment. Emotional attachment is explained as the emotional bond between an influencer and their followers (Park et al., 2010) emotional attachment directly does not affect brand loyalty, contrary to what was found by (Jun & Yi, 2020). It means that for followers of food influencers in Indonesia, a strong emotional connection does not necessarily make followers loyal to the liked influencer. Another variable tested for its influence from emotional attachment is brand trust, where the study found that brand trust can be influenced by emotional attachment, and brand trust can also directly affect brand

loyalty. This indicates that although emotional attachment does not directly affect brand loyalty, brand trust can moderate the relationship between these two variables. From this finding, it can be deduced that a strong emotional bond can affect a follower's loyalty towards an influencer if there is trust from the follower towards the influencer.

The next factor is involvement, which is one of the factors affecting brand loyalty. Involvement can be interpreted as the perception of relevance that followers have regarding an influencer, based on the needs, values, and interests they consider important (Zaichkowsky, 1985). From this research findings, it was found that involvement directly influences brand loyalty. It means that if a follower of a food influencer feels that their needs, values, and interests are relevant to what the influencer does, then the follower will become more loyal. Moreover, the study also found that involvement influences customer engagement, and engagement affects brand loyalty. From these findings, it can be stated that the relevance of customer values and needs will more significantly enhance follower loyalty if the follower feels engaged with the liked influencer.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this research aims to determine the affect of influencer interactivity, authenticity, emotional attachment, brand trust, involvement, and customer engagement on brand loyalty in the realm of influencer marketing. Findings show that involvement, brand trust, customer involvement, and interactivity are significant factors influencing brand loyalty. Interactive communication between influencers and their followers increases loyalty significantly. A particularly powerful aspect of this interactivity is influencers' attention to, and incorporation of, their followers' suggestions and comments. While respondents' perceptions suggest that influencers' responses to such feedback have not yet reached their potential, this suggests that an increased focus on heeding followers' suggestions could improve

overall interactive perceptions and foster greater loyalty. Additionally, this research highlights the important role of content relevance, which reflects followers' interests and values, in strengthening brand loyalty. Influencers need to prioritize creating engaging content that aligns with their audience's preferences to strengthen relationships and increase loyalty. Additionally, customer engagement was identified as an important element for influencers to increase the loyalty of their followers. Influencers should seek to spark commercial and non-commercial action through content that captures the thoughts and actions of their audience.

However, this research has certain limitations. It focuses exclusively on food influencer marketing, thereby excluding potential insights from influencers in other domains. Future research should explore diverse contexts for broader applicability. Another limitation is the cross-platform nature of the study, which may result in behavioral bias due to differences in the depiction of influencers across social media platforms. Further research may benefit from using a single platform for more concise analysis. Gender-based respondent bias was also apparent, with a predominance of female participants, indicating that future research should concentrate on male respondents to verify whether the findings can be applied equally. Finally, the age range of respondents is quite narrow, focused on the 18-22 year age group. Comparative studies across different age groups may offer insight into age differences in influencer marketing dynamics.

Contribution & Recommendation

This study offers significant contributions to the field of marketing research by focusing on the concept of a human brand within influencer marketing, emphasizing the integration of variables such as interactivity, authenticity, emotional attachment, brand trust, customer engagement, and involvement. By developing and testing a comprehensive model that includes these factors,

the research underlines their collective impact on the brand loyalty of influencers. The incorporation of frameworks from Jun & Yi (2020) on influencers as human brands and Sallaku & Vigolo (2022) on branding offers a novel perspective on the interplay and contribution of these factors towards brand loyalty in the context of human brands. Moreover, by examining the relationships among these variables, the study not only explores their individual and collective effects but also sheds light on the crucial role of interactivity in influencing other aspects such as authenticity, emotional attachment, brand trust, and customer engagement, thus expanding current branding theories, especially in relation to influencers as human brands.

Based on its findings, the study provides several recommendations for future research and practical applications in influencer marketing. Targeting the Indonesian audience, it reveals that brand loyalty in emerging markets is more influenced by involvement, customer engagement, brand trust, and interactivity rather than authenticity and emotional attachment. This suggests that for influencers, generating content that is original or emotionally resonant might not be as critical for retaining loyalty as previously thought. Instead, loyalty seems to be driven more by the level of interactive communication, relevance, honesty, and follower involvement. This insight paves the way for further research on the dynamics of influencer communication with followers on social media and suggests that influencers who can instill a profound sense of trust and high engagement levels are likely to see increased loyalty from their followers.

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