

## Social media marketing impact on Gen Z's brand engagement, awareness and image

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### Abstract

*The research aims to advance our understanding of the realm of social media marketing and how these dynamics influence consumers' engagement with brands and subsequently shape brand awareness and brand image. The research methodology utilized a rigorous quantitative approach, systematically gathering and analyzing numerical data through structured surveys and statistical techniques to uncover patterns, measure variables, and derive objective conclusions. Respondents consist of people in Bali who used social media to connect with the brand. The total number of respondents for this study is 138. They were particularly used for hypotheses testing. Elements of social media marketing, particularly entertainment and trendiness, play a more significant role in fostering Consumer-Brand Engagement. Additionally, Consumer-Brand Engagement has a notable impact on brand awareness and brand image.*

**Keywords:** brand awareness, brand image, consumer brand engagement, generation z, social media marketing

### Introduction

In the year 2015, a significant 74 percent of online consumers utilized social media for interacting with sellers (Duggan et al., 2015). Additionally, over half of social media users obtained brand-related information by following brand pages (Ismail, 2017). Recent statistics indicate a global social media penetration rate of approximately 42 percent Statista (2019), boasting more than 3 billion active monthly users (Amrouche & Hababou, 2022). This widespread adoption is the reason why more than 90 percent of businesses incorporate social media communication into their marketing strategies, utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to communicate brand information to consumers (Michael, 2011). Beyond merely sharing updates and feedback, businesses leverage social media platforms to gain insights into consumer preferences and effectively manage customer interactions. All of these practices collectively contribute to the cultivation of Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) and the establishment of a robust brand presence (De Vries & Carlson, 2014). In the coming five years, more than 80 percent of marketers Hollebeek et al., (2019) are anticipated to actively pursue consumer engagement through relationship-building. The expectation is that such engagement efforts can lead to a 40 percent annual increase in visits, subsequently driving profitability up by 20

percent (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) stands out as a crucial concept in influencing customer satisfaction, fostering brand affinity, and cultivating brand loyalty (Islam & Rahman, 2016). It also plays a significant role in enhancing advertising effectiveness Yang et al., (2016) and overall business performance. Consequently, marketers are striving to deepen their comprehension of how CBE can be developed (Harrigan et al., 2017). However, consumer behavior today is very complex and diverse, especially young consumers or generation z consumers. For brand owners, generation Z becoming topic of conversation. Generation Z consumers now have purchasing power and their behavior towards purchases and brands is quite difficult to understand. Understanding consumer preferences of Gen Z make products and brands still relevant to them (Ameen & Anand, 2020). Previous research about social media marketing and consumer brand engagement was mostly conducted when generation Z did not yet have income power. This research seeks to investigate the impact of social media marketing on brand engagement, brand image and brand awareness among generation Z.

In conclusion, there is a pressing need for further empirical research on CBE to advance our understanding of how marketing communication can be utilized to acquire and retain young consumers through improved relationships between consumers and brands. Young consumers (generation Z) is widely common using social media for everyday lives now (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015; Siagian & Yuliana, 2023; Statista, 2019).

Implementation of social media marketing strategies created to understand and serve Generation Z has the impact of providing competitive advantages, market penetration, customer loyalty and customer engagement to win industry competition.

The persistent difficulties encountered by marketers in formulating and executing compelling and valuable Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategies for consumers underscore the need for additional research on SMM content and consumer interactions (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Presently, the research landscape is inclined towards exploring strategies and content that can foster Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) and examining their influence on CBE (Barger et al., 2016).

Social media should serve as an effective platform to strengthen interactions between consumers and brands (Barger et al., 2016), thereby contributing to Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE). It is recommended to focus on social media content that can drive consumer engagement through postings in brand-based social media communities, aiming to reinforce CBE (Barger et al., 2016). Interactive and multisensory brand postings have a positive impact on CBE, subsequently enhancing brand popularity (L. De Vries et al., 2012). This article explores the influence of social media marketing elements, such as entertainment, customization, interaction, word-of-mouth promotion (EWOM), and trends, on Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

The novelty of the research on "Social Media Marketing Impact on Gen Z's Brand Engagement, Awareness, and Image" lies in its focus on a specific and highly influential demographic—Generation Z. This study provides fresh insights into how social media marketing strategies uniquely affect this generation's brand engagement, awareness, and perception. Unlike previous studies, this research

dives into the nuanced preferences and behaviors of Gen Z, considering their distinct digital nativity, consumption patterns, and values. By examining the intersection of social media dynamics and Gen Z's brand interactions, this study offers valuable contributions to both academic literature and practical marketing strategies, highlighting innovative ways to engage a generation that is reshaping consumer culture.

*H1: Customization SMM has a significant positive effect on Consumer-Brand Engagement*

*H2: Entertainment SMM has a significant positive effect on Consumer-Brand Engagement*

*H3: E-word of mouth SMM has a significant positive effect on Consumer-Brand Engagement*

*H4: Interaction SMM has a significant positive effect on Consumer-Brand Engagement*

*H5: Trendiness SMM has a significant positive effect on Consumer-Brand Engagement*

Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) is a multifaceted concept encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Dessart et al., 2016). The motivation for this research stems from the acknowledgment of the significance of CBE in marketing strategies, particularly in shaping and strengthening relationships between consumers and brands (Chiang et al., 2017). A specific aspect of interest for researchers is the notion of brand knowledge, recognized as a catalyst for business success, given its potential impact on brand loyalty, purchase intent, and competitive advantage (Algharabat et al., 2020).

*H6: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on brand awareness*

*H7: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on brand image*

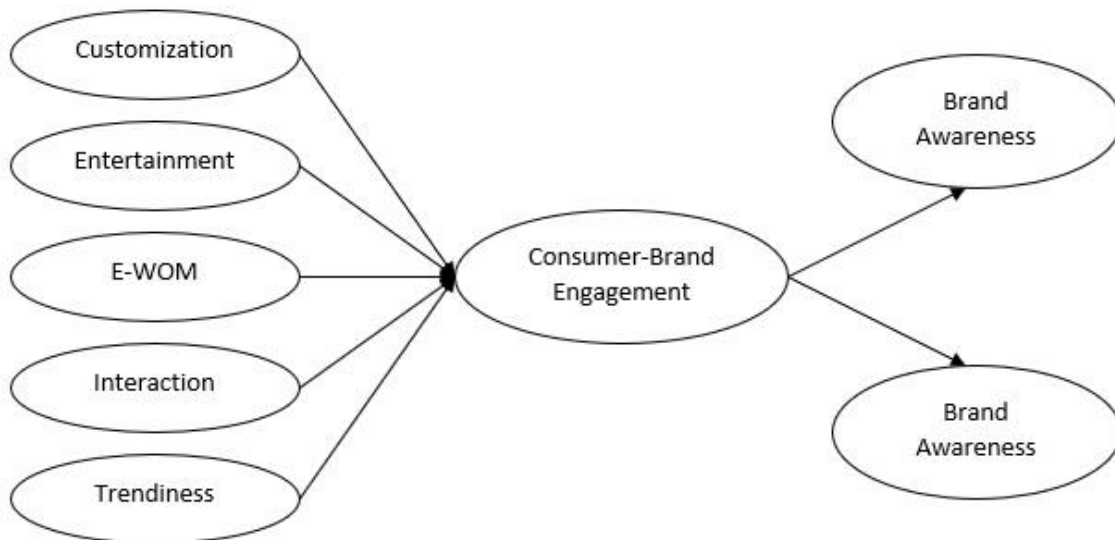
Closely linked to Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE), Social Media Marketing (SMM) entails the creation and execution of marketing strategies utilizing social media platforms to communicate brand information and handle customer interactions (Solem & Pedersen, 2016). Indeed, SMM plays a vital role in shaping consumer perceptions of brands Langaro et al., (2018), as consumers increasingly turn to social media for information about products and brands (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Consequently, there is a perspective that SMM has a more significant impact on reinforcing consumer brand knowledge (brand awareness and brand image) compared to conventional marketing communication methods (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016; Godey et al., 2016). Therefore, SMM is still considered a relatively new marketing tool, and our understanding of its influence on Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) remains limited (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

*H8: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of customization on brand awareness*

*H9 : Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of entertainment on brand awareness*

- H10 : Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of e-word of mouth on brand awareness*
- H11: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of interaction on brand awareness*
- H12: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of trendiness on brand awareness*
- H13: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of customization on brand image*
- H14: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of entertainment on brand image*
- H15: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of e-word of mouth on brand image*
- H16: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of interaction on brand image*
- H17: Consumer-Brand Engagement has a significant positive effect on mediating influence of trendiness on brand image*

This step leads to the built of conceptual framework, as seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Research Model**

**Methods**

This study employs a quantitative approach to elucidate the relationship between variables. Data is gathered through a questionnaire is primary data. Questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire for social media marketing comprises five customization questions, four entertainment questions, three e-WOM questions, four interaction questions, and three trends questions (Kim et al., 2018). Additionally, the questionnaire includes five questions on consumer brand engagement Islam and Rahman (2016), five on brand awareness (Godey et al., 2016), and five on brand image. Data were collected through a self-administered online survey. Convenience sampling was utilized, encompassing the relevant population of all consumers having a Facebook

account in the Bali Province. This research gathered 138 respondents, which were used as the sample.

A reliability test, convergent validity test, and discriminant validity test were conducted to assess the appropriateness of the questionnaire data. The reliability test was performed by examining the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with a minimum threshold set above 0.6. The convergent validity test utilized an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value exceeding 0.5 (Hair Jr et al., 2021). The discriminant validity test involved comparing the square root value of AVE with the correlation between constructs. SmartPLS v3.2.8 is employed in this study to evaluate reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity tests and hypotheses tests. The PLS method is well-suited for research with smaller sample sizes.

### Result and Discussions

The collected sample exhibited various characteristics. The sample included both males (44.2 percent) and females (55.8 percent), with an average age falling within the range of 19 to 23 years. A significant portion of the respondents were either working students or university students (76 percent). In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents were at the university level (54.4 percent) or at other higher education levels (40.6 percent). Regarding monthly income, 95 percent of the respondents had an income of up to Rp. 6,000,000.

**Table 1. Measurement Model**

Build		Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Customization	CT1	0.742	0.831	0.880	0.595
	CT2	0.791			
	CT3	0.775			
	CT4	0.810			
	CT5	0.737			
Entertainment	ET1	0.820	0.846	0.897	0.684
	ET2	0.821			
	ET3	0.839			
	ET4	0.829			
E-WOM	EW1	0.756	0.636	0.804	0.578
	EW2	0.753			
	EW3	0.772			
Interaction	IT1	0.772	0.861	0.906	0.706
	IT2	0.829			
	IT3	0.871			
	IT4	0.885			
Trendiness	TD1	0.848	0.831	0.899	0.747
	TD2	0.873			
	TD3	0.873			
Consumer Brand Engagement	CBE1	0.726	0.847	0.891	0.622
	CBE2	0.809			
	CBE3	0.826			
	CBE4	0.809			
	CBE5	0.769			



Build		Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Awareness	BA2	0.793	0.795	0.867	0.619
	BA3	0.799			
	BA4	0.760			
	BA5	0.796			
Brand Image	BI1	0.725	0.790	0.864	0.614
	BI3	0.802			
	BI4	0.803			
	BI5	0.801			

Table 1 displays the measurement model results, including the reliability and validity values of each item. The results of the reliability test, as indicated by the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, show values above 0.6. The results of the convergent validity test demonstrate an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.5. The discriminant validity test results, shown in Table 2 using Fornell Lacker criteria, indicate that the square root value of AVE is greater than the correlation between variables. The reliability and validity criteria for the questionnaire are satisfactorily met.

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity Fornell Lacker**

	BA	BI	CBE	CT	ET	EW	IT	TD
BA	<b>0.787</b>							
BI	0.771	<b>0.784</b>						
CBE	0.677	0.688	<b>0.789</b>					
CT	0.658	0.613	0.719	<b>0.771</b>				
ET	0.526	0.572	0.672	0.674	<b>0.827</b>			
EW	0.607	0.543	0.700	0.690	0.578	<b>0.760</b>		
IT	0.546	0.505	0.715	0.735	0.586	0.720	<b>0.841</b>	
TD	0.616	0.624	0.706	0.636	0.577	0.659	0.685	<b>0.864</b>

**Table 3. Testing the hypothesis**

Structural Relationships	Std.Est.	t-value	p	Commentary
CT → CBE	0.176	1.556	0.120	H1 Not Supported
ET → CBE	0.215	2.390	0.017	H2 Supported
EW → CBE	0.173	1.916	0.055	H3 Not Supported
IT → CBE	0.172	1.412	0.158	H4 Not Supported
TD → CBE	0.239	2.216	0.027	H5 Supported
CBE → BA	0.677	12.188	0.000	H6 Supported
CBE → BI	0.688	12.641	0.000	H7 Supported
CT → CBE → BA	0.119	1.497	0.134	H8 Not Supported
ET → CBE → BA	0.146	2.352	0.019	H9 Supported
EW → CBE → BA	0.117	1.838	0.066	H10 Not Supported
IT → CBE → BA	0.116	1.434	0.152	H11 Not Supported
TD → CBE → BA	0.162	2.078	0.038	H12 Supported
CT → CBE → BI	0.121	1.499	0.134	H13 Not Supported
ET → CBE → BI	0.148	2.342	0.019	H14 Supported
EW → CBE → BI	0.119	1.902	0.057	H15 Not Supported
IT → CBE → BI	0.118	1.409	0.159	H16 Not Supported
TD → CBE → BI	0.164	2.097	0.036	H17 Supported

After conducting reliability and validity testing, hypothesis testing was performed. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 3. The hypothesis testing indicates that customization, e-WOM, and interaction do not have a significant relationship with Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) ( $p < 0.05$ ), thereby not supporting H1, H3, H4. Meanwhile, entertainment and trendiness have a significantly positive relationship with Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), thus supporting H2 and H4. The results show that Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) has significant relationships with brand awareness and brand image ( $\beta = 0.67$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and  $\beta = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), supporting H6 and H7.

This study also examines the impact of Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) in mediating the elements of social media marketing on brand awareness and brand image. The results indicate that Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) does not mediate customization, e-WOM, and interaction regarding brand awareness and brand image, thus H8, H10, H11, H13, H15, and H16 are not supported. However, positive Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between entertainment and trendiness regarding brand awareness and brand image, supporting H9, H12, H14, and H17.

The findings of this study indicate that SMM elements entertainment and trendiness play a significant role in building Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE) which, in turn, enhances brand awareness and brand image brand awareness and brand image. These findings partially confirm previous literature, as revealed by (Cai et al., 2019; Kim & Kim, 2019).

Therefore, it is acknowledged that entertainment and trendiness are effective factors in enhancing the consumers brand engagement towards the focal brand. The study results state that interaction, electronic word of mouth and customization is not considered significant terhadap Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE). It is related to findings Gandana and Oktaviandy (2021) research that find generation z use social media entertainment purpose and information seeking purposes.

Moreover, the research findings also reveal that CBE has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness and brand image, affirming the crucial role of CBE in building brand knowledge (Keller, 2013). The findings also indicate the indirect effects of entertainment and trendiness on brand awareness and brand image. This further supports the use of social media content with entertainment elements and trendy content in the brand-building process, as suggested by previous research such as (Chan et al., 2014; Godey et al., 2016).

Interestingly, these findings are not consistent with previous research results, as revealed by (Barger et al., 2016; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Godey et al., 2016). In this context, the impact of interaction, electronic word of mouth and customization on CBE is not considered significant, indicating that interaction, electronic word of mouth and customization content on social media does not play a determinant role in brand formation for products with high engagement levels, for example iPhone brand. This finding can be explained by the nature of customer value, following Holbrook's (2000) argument that consumer experiences with interaction, electronic word of mouth and customization content can be considered weak experiences.

The insignificance of the relationship between customization and CBE is

also not in line with previous research findings (Schulze et al., 2015). Referring to Holbrook (2000), both customized and standardized experiences have similar impacts on customer satisfaction because both are useful in building positive consumer perceptions. This helps explain the finding that customized content is ineffective in building CBE.

The level of engagement can also explain the non-significant relationship between customization and CBE. In high engagement situations, consumers value access to more detailed information about the product and brand, such as product comparisons and taking more time to develop expectations or ideas about a brand (Chen & Chang, 2008). Nevertheless, highly engaged consumers prefer information that is general and comprehensive rather than specific and customized information. Because the product with high-engagement and tends to be standardized, highly engaged consumers prefer reading comprehensive information and specifications in their decision-making process rather than expecting customized information. Therefore, it can be concluded that customized SMM content may not directly influence CBE in a high-engagement context.

Interaction content initiated by companies may not positively impact consumer perceptions of the brand. Applied to the context of social media, even though social media brand communications with interactive elements might be engaging, the interaction value is seen as weak appreciation in social media brand. Young consumers consider interactions must be relevant and provide real value. They would not pay attention to interactions they consider unimportant or annoying (Salam & Pratiwi Ar, 2024). The interactions that occur between consumers and brands depend on the extent of customer relations that are built. Relationships between consumers and the community environment would increase interaction with the brand (Brandão et al., 2019).

However, product complexity and involvement did not moderate e-WOM's relationship to CBE. This clarifies e-WOM play a bigger part in experience products than search products. (Huang et al, 2009). Other research states that word of mouth is the result of engagement and interactivity (Cantone et al., 2022).

Social media marketing trendiness and entertainment aspects have been demonstrated to have a significant influence on consumer brand engagement among middle-class Generation Z. However, the customization, interaction, and e-WOM variables from social media marketing do not have the same influence on customer brand engagement. This is because today's young consumers grow up in an era of abundant information, so they face too many choices (Siagian & Yuliana, 2023). The large number of choices makes young consumers (generation Z) confused and tired in making decisions. Customization is considered additional information that is not always appreciated. Customization that does not meet young consumers' expectations will be reacted negatively, reducing consumer engagement and brand image.

Young consumers pay more attention to the quality of interactions than quantity. Interactions that are not authentic, consistent and transparent will appear insincere in the eyes of generation Z (Salam & Pratiwi Ar, 2024). This can make young consumers unwilling to engage and lose trust in the brand.

The large amount of information provided made e-WOM received critically. Young consumers will feel skeptical if e-WOM in the form of reviews and



recommendations provided is too promoted or not authentic (Kim & Kim, 2019). For generation Z, E-WOM that comes from unknown sources will receive less trust than from their social networks. This is why E-WOM has no effect on consumer engagement, brand awareness and brand image. These results highlight the intricacy of the dynamics of consumer-brand interactions on social media platforms as well as the importance of understanding the influence of trending and interesting content on customer engagement. Young consumer (Generation Z) wants authentic, transparent and meaningful experiences from brands (Ameen & Anand, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of social media marketing elements, Consumer-Brand Engagement (CBE), and their impact on brand awareness and brand image. The results indicate that entertainment and trendiness play a significant role in fostering CBE, while customization, e-WOM, and interaction may have less pronounced effects in the context of social media marketing. Additionally, CBE proves to be a crucial factor in influencing both brand awareness and brand image positively. Since Generation Z is more likely to follow trends and seek out enjoyable experiences, trendiness and entertainment may have a greater effect on customer brand engagement.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the non-significant relationships found in this study further. Investigating the factors that may moderate or influence the impact of customization, e-WOM, and interaction on CBE could provide a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics. Additionally, exploring the role of different demographics or cultural factors in shaping consumer responses to social media marketing elements could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour in diverse contexts. Exploring the effectiveness of various types of entertainment and trendiness in different cultural contexts could also offer valuable insights for marketers aiming to tailor their strategies for diverse audiences.

In conclusion, future research endeavours should continue to delve into the complex interplay between social media marketing elements, Consumer-Brand Engagement, and its influence on brand perceptions. Brand advocacy can be considered as a performance assessment in addition to brand image and brand awareness. The variables authenticity, transparency, online presence, customer experience and group reference can be considered for inclusion in social media marketing variables in further research. Continuous exploration and adaptation are crucial in the rapidly evolving landscape of social media marketing.

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