

# The Role of Social Media and Online Reviews in Building Brand Loyalty Through Trust

*Building Brand  
Loyalty Through  
Brand Trust*

Nurul Amalia Fitriyana  
Universitas Brawijaya; Malang, Indonesia  
E-Mail: nurulamaliaf@student.ub.ac.id

Nanang Suryadi  
Universitas Brawijaya; Malang, Indonesia  
E-Mail: nanangs@ub.ac.id

Raditha Dwi Hapsari  
Universitas Brawijaya; Malang, Indonesia

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The rapid growth of the local skincare industry in Indonesia has highlighted the importance of digital marketing strategies in building consumer loyalty. This study aims to examine the relationships among social media marketing activity, online customer reviews, brand trust, and brand loyalty in the context of local skincare brands such as Wardah, MS Glow, and Somethinc. A quantitative approach was employed, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 170 consumers aged 17 and above who use these brands. The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that online customer reviews have a direct and significant impact on brand loyalty, while social media marketing activity influences loyalty indirectly through its effect on brand trust. Both social media marketing activity and online customer reviews significantly enhance brand trust, which in turn fosters brand loyalty. The study concludes that local skincare brands should prioritize managing online reviews and creating authentic social media content to build trust and loyalty. These insights offer practical strategies for brand managers to strengthen consumer relationships in a competitive digital market.*

**Keywords:** Brand Loyalty, Brand Trust, Local Skincare, Online Review, Social Media.

## **ABSTRAK**

*Pesatnya pertumbuhan industri perawatan kulit lokal di Indonesia telah menyoroti pentingnya strategi pemasaran digital dalam membangun loyalitas konsumen. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menguji hubungan antara aktivitas pemasaran media sosial, ulasan pelanggan daring, kepercayaan merek, dan loyalitas merek dalam konteks merek perawatan kulit lokal seperti Wardah, MS Glow, dan Somethinc. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan, menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur untuk mengumpulkan data dari 170 konsumen berusia 17 tahun ke atas yang menggunakan merek-merek ini. Data dianalisis menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktural kuadrat terkecil parsial untuk menguji hubungan yang dihipotesiskan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa ulasan pelanggan daring memiliki dampak langsung yang kuat pada loyalitas merek, sementara aktivitas pemasaran media sosial memengaruhi loyalitas secara tidak langsung melalui kepercayaan merek. Baik aktivitas pemasaran media sosial maupun ulasan pelanggan daring secara signifikan meningkatkan kepercayaan merek, yang pada gilirannya menumbuhkan loyalitas merek. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa merek perawatan kulit lokal harus memprioritaskan pengelolaan ulasan daring dan menciptakan konten media sosial yang autentik untuk membangun kepercayaan dan*

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*loyalitas. Wawasan ini menawarkan strategi praktis bagi manajer merek untuk memperkuat hubungan konsumen di pasar digital yang kompetitif.*

***Kata kunci:*** *Loyalitas Merek, Kepercayaan Merek, Perawatan Kulit Lokal, Ulasan Online, Media Sosial.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The global skincare industry has experienced significant growth, driven by increasing consumer awareness of personal care and the rising influence of digital platforms (Chang & Liu, 2021; Cheah & Ting, 2023). In Indonesia, the local skincare market has emerged as a highly competitive arena, with domestic brands vying to capture consumer loyalty amid intense competition from international counterparts. Social media marketing activities (SMMA) and online customer reviews (OCR) have become pivotal tools for brands to engage with consumers and build trust, particularly in the local skincare sector, where cultural relevance and authenticity hold strong resonance with consumers. The proliferation of social media platforms has transformed how brands communicate, enabling real-time interaction and personalized marketing strategies that enhance consumer engagement (Safira & Aryansyah, 2023; Camilleri & Filieri, 2023). According to Statista (2024), the global skincare market is projected to reach \$189 billion by 2027, with Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, contributing significantly to this growth due to rising disposable incomes and beauty consciousness among younger demographics. This trend underscores the importance of digital strategies in fostering brand loyalty within the local skincare industry.

The role of SMMA in shaping consumer behavior has been extensively studied, with evidence suggesting that consistent and authentic online engagement fosters brand trust and loyalty (Tajvidi & Wang, 2020; Han & Nguyen, 2021). For instance, Erkan and Evans (2016) highlight those social media interactions significantly influence consumer purchase intentions by enhancing perceived brand authenticity. Similarly, Kim and Ko (2012) and Kladou and Kehagias (2021) found that SMMA in the luxury fashion sector strengthens customer equity through trust-building activities. In the context of Indonesia's local skincare market, platforms like Instagram and TikTok serve as primary channels for brands to showcase product benefits and engage with Gen Z and millennial consumers, who dominate the market. Data from the study indicate that 79.5% of Indonesians are active internet users, with social media penetration expected to reach 68% by 2024, underscoring the significant role of digital platforms in marketing. However, the effectiveness of SMMA in directly driving brand loyalty remains inconsistent, as some studies suggest that it primarily enhances trust rather than loyalty. This discrepancy highlights the need for further investigation into SMMA's role in the local skincare context (Amin & Islam, 2022).

Online customer reviews play a crucial role in shaping consumer trust and influencing purchase decisions. Research by Ebrahim (2020) and Cheung et al. (2021) demonstrates that credible online reviews significantly enhance consumer trust, particularly in product categories like skincare, where efficacy and safety are paramount. In Indonesia, local skincare brands heavily rely on user-generated content, such as reviews on e-commerce platforms like Shopee and Tokopedia, to establish credibility. A study by Hootsuite (2024) reveals that 65% of Indonesian consumers consult online reviews before purchasing skincare products, emphasizing their influence on decision-making. Despite this, the interplay between OCR, brand trust, and loyalty in the local skincare industry remains underexplored, particularly in understanding how reviews mediate consumer perceptions in a culturally specific market. The reliance on digital platforms also introduces challenges, such as managing negative reviews, which can undermine trust if not addressed effectively (Tussyadiah & Park, 2021; Althuwaini, 2022).

Despite the growing body of research, several gaps persist in understanding the dynamics of SMMA and OCR in fostering brand loyalty through trust. According to

Samarah et al. (2022), while social media engagement enhances brand trust, its direct impact on loyalty is often mediated by other factors, such as consumer involvement. Similarly, Ali et al. (2025) suggest that asymmetrical modelling of SMMA's impact on loyalty reveals inconsistent effects across industries, necessitating context-specific studies. In the Indonesian skincare market, few studies have examined how cultural factors, such as collectivism and local brand pride, influence the effectiveness of SMMA and OCR. Moreover, the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between these digital strategies and loyalty has not been sufficiently explored in the local context. These gaps highlight the need for a comprehensive study that integrates SMMA, OCR, and brand trust within the unique dynamics of Indonesia's local skincare industry.

This study aims to investigate the relationships among social media marketing activities, online customer reviews, brand trust, and brand loyalty in the context of Indonesia's local skincare industry. By employing a quantitative approach with data from 170 respondents, this research aims to clarify the influence of SMMA and OCR on brand loyalty, with brand trust serving as a mediating variable. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for local skincare brands to optimize their digital marketing strategies and enhance consumer loyalty in a competitive market. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature by addressing the identified research gaps, offering a culturally nuanced perspective on the role of digital platforms in building brand loyalty.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **Theoretical Foundations and Variable Relationships**

The foundation of this study is rooted in the Commitment and Trust Theory, which emphasizes trust and commitment as critical drivers of successful relationship marketing (Bilro & Loureiro, 2020; Bismoaziiz et al., 2021). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), trust fosters long-term relationships by reducing uncertainty and encouraging customer loyalty. In the context of the local skincare industry, this theory provides a framework for understanding how Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA), online customer reviews (OCR), brand trust (BT), and brand loyalty (BL) interact. SMMA encompasses interactive and engaging content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, enabling brands to connect with their target audience. Laroche et al. (2012) argue that SMMA enhances brand community engagement, which positively influences loyalty by fostering emotional connections. Similarly, online customer reviews serve as credible, user-generated content that shapes consumer perceptions. Cheung et al. (2021) note that OCR significantly impacts purchase decisions due to its perceived objectivity, particularly in product categories such as skincare, where efficacy is a crucial factor.

Social media marketing activity can directly influence brand loyalty by creating consistent engagement and personalized experiences. Ismail (2017) found that perceived SMMA activities, such as interactive posts and promotions, increase consumer attachment to brands. However, the direct effect of SMMA on loyalty may vary depending on content relevance and authenticity. Online customer reviews also contribute to brand loyalty by providing social proof. According to Prasetyo (2022), positive reviews enhance consumer confidence, which in turn leads to repeat purchases and loyalty. Additionally, SMMA and OCR play significant roles in building brand trust. Haudi et al. (2022) demonstrate that transparent and informative social media content strengthens consumer trust in a brand's reliability. Likewise, Ibrahim (2024) highlights that OCR, especially those that reflect authentic user experiences, bolsters trust by reducing perceived risks. Brand Trust, in turn, is a key antecedent of brand loyalty. Muqarrabin et al. (2021) assert that trust fosters a sense of security, encouraging consumers to remain loyal despite the presence of competitive alternatives. Based on these relationships, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Social media marketing activity significantly and positively affects brand loyalty.

H2: Online customer reviews significantly and positively influence brand loyalty.

H3: Social media marketing activity significantly and positively affects brand trust.

- H4: Online customer reviews significantly and positively influence brand trust.
- H5: Brand trust significantly and positively affects brand loyalty.

**Brand Trust as a Mediator**

Brand trust serves as a critical mediator in the relationships between social media marketing activity, online customer reviews, and brand loyalty. Trust is defined as the consumer’s confidence in a brand’s reliability and integrity, which is essential for fostering long-term loyalty. According to Samarah et al. (2022), active engagement through social media enhances brand trust by facilitating transparent communication and addressing consumer concerns. This trust then translates into loyalty, as consumers are more likely to commit to brands they perceive as trustworthy. In the skincare industry, where product safety and efficacy are paramount, trust plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies (Harrigan & Miles, 2020; Li et al., 2021). Ali et al. (2025) suggest that SMMA indirectly influences loyalty through trust, particularly when brands use authentic and culturally relevant content to engage consumers. This mediation effect is evident in local skincare brands, where trust mitigates uncertainties about product quality.

Online customer reviews also rely on brand trust to influence brand loyalty. Wibawa and Setiawan (2021) found that positive reviews enhance trust by providing credible, user-generated evidence of a brand’s performance. This trust fosters emotional attachment, leading to sustained loyalty. For instance, reviews on e-commerce platforms like Shopee can validate a brand’s claims, making consumers more likely to trust and remain loyal to it. Kim and Ko (2012) emphasize that trust mediates the relationship between digital interactions and loyalty by reducing perceived risks associated with purchases. In the Indonesian context, where collectivist values underscore the importance of community opinions, OCR’s role in building trust is particularly significant. The mediating role of trust is further supported by Erkan and Evans (2016), who argue that trust transforms informational cues from reviews into loyal behavior. These findings underscore the importance of trust as a bridge between digital strategies and consumer loyalty. Therefore, this study proposes:

- H6: Brand trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing activity and brand loyalty.
- H7: Brand trust mediates the relationship between online customer reviews and brand loyalty.

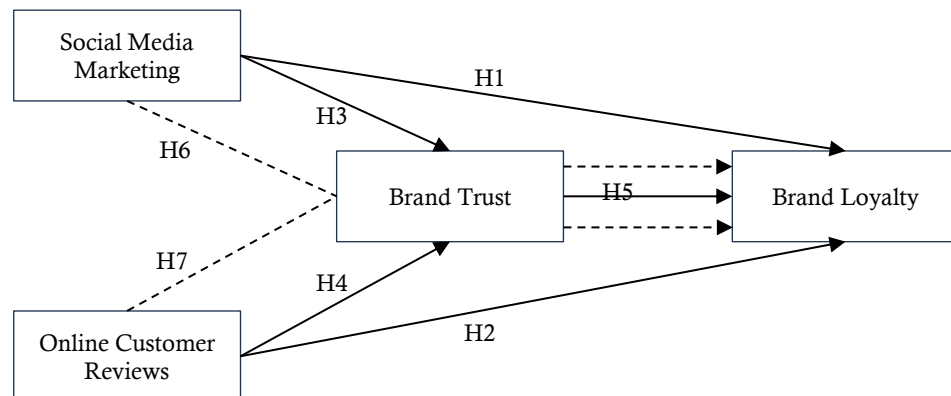


Figure 1. Research Framework

The research framework integrates social media marketing activity, online customer reviews, brand trust, and brand loyalty to examine their relationships within the local skincare industry. The framework posits that SMMA and OCR directly influence Brand Trust, which in turn affects brand loyalty. Additionally, SMMA and OCR may have

direct effects on Brand Loyalty, with Brand Trust acting as a mediator. According to Hanaysha (2016) and Hair et al. (2021), structural equation modelling (SEM) is a practical approach for testing such complex relationships, particularly in studies involving mediation. The framework is grounded in the commitment and trust theory, which highlights trust as a central mechanism in relationship marketing. Figure 1 illustrates this framework, depicting the direct paths from SMMA and OCR to brand trust and brand loyalty, as well as the mediating role of brand trust. The figure also shows the hypothesized relationships (H1–H7), providing a visual representation of how digital marketing strategies drive loyalty through trust. This framework is tailored to the Indonesian skincare market, where cultural factors and digital penetration amplify the role of SMMA and OCR. By testing these relationships, the study aims to clarify the mechanisms through which local skincare brands can enhance consumer loyalty in a competitive digital landscape.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a quantitative approach to investigate the relationships between social media marketing activity, online customer reviews, brand trust, and brand loyalty within Indonesia's local skincare industry. A descriptive and explanatory research design was employed to investigate the interaction between these variables and to test the proposed hypotheses. The population consists of consumers aged 17 and above who use local skincare products, such as Wardah, MS Glow, and Somethinc, which are prominent brands in Indonesia known for their cultural relevance and affordability. Due to the infinite nature of the population, a sample of 170 respondents was selected using non-probability purposive sampling to ensure participants had experience with local skincare brands and engaged with social media or online reviews. This sampling technique was chosen to efficiently target relevant respondents, aligning with the study's focus on the influence of digital marketing. Data were collected through online and offline questionnaires distributed via Google Forms and in-person surveys in urban areas of Indonesia, ensuring accessibility to diverse consumer groups. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), purposive sampling is suitable for studies that require specific participant characteristics, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to measure the four variables: social media marketing activity, online customer reviews, brand trust, and brand loyalty. The questionnaire comprised 24 items, with six items per variable, adapted from validated scales in prior studies. For example, items for social media marketing activity were adapted from Ismail (2017), focusing on engagement, interactivity, and content relevance, while brand loyalty items were based on Muqarrabin et al. (2021), emphasising repeat purchase behaviour. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to accurately capture respondents' perceptions. To ensure instrument quality, validity, and reliability, tests were conducted. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess construct validity, with factor loadings above 0.7 indicating strong item validity. Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded 0.8, confirming high reliability, as recommended by Hair et al. (2021). These tests ensured that the questionnaire effectively measured the intended variables in the context of local skincare brands.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software, a suitable tool for testing complex relationships and mediation effects in marketing research. According to Hair et al. (2021), PLS-SEM is effective for exploratory studies with smaller sample sizes and non-normal data distributions, which aligns with the characteristics of this study. The analysis consisted of two stages: measurement model assessment to confirm the reliability and validity of the indicators, and structural model assessment to test the hypothesized relationships (H1–H7). Path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values were calculated to evaluate the significance of direct and mediating effects, with a significance threshold of  $p < 0.05$ . The study focused exclusively on local skincare brands to maintain contextual

relevance, excluding international brands to ensure findings reflect the unique dynamics of Indonesia’s market. This approach enabled a targeted investigation of digital marketing strategies in a culturally specific setting, providing actionable insights for local brand managers seeking to enhance consumer trust and loyalty.

**RESULTS**

This study presents the findings from a quantitative analysis of 170 respondents, investigating the relationships among Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA), Online Customer Reviews (OCR), Brand Trust (BT), and Brand Loyalty (BL) in the context of Indonesia’s local skincare industry. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire targeting consumers aged 17 and above who use local skincare brands such as Wardah, MS Glow, and Somethinc. The analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 to test the hypothesized relationships (H1–H7), as depicted in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates the research framework, showing direct paths from SMMA and OCR to BT and BL, as well as the mediating role of BT in the relationships between SMMA/OCR and BL. The significance threshold was set at  $p < 0.05$ , with a t-value of 1.960 for a two-tailed test at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , by standard PLS-SEM criteria (Hair et al., 2021). The results offer valuable insights into how digital marketing strategies impact consumer behavior in the local skincare market, with implications for brand managers seeking to enhance customer loyalty.

**Table 1.** Demographic Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	59	34.7%
	Female	111	65.3%
Education	High school	56	32.6%
	Bachelor/Diploma	109	64.4%
	Masters	5	3%
Occupation	Self-employed	20	11.8%
	Private Employee	91	53.5%
	PNS	11	6.5%
	Student	36	21.1%
	Others	12	7.1%
Income	< IDR 1,000,000	38	22.3%
	IDR 1,000,001 - IDR 5,000,000	94	55.4%
	IDR 5,000,001 - IDR 10,000,000	33	19.3%
	> IDR 10,000,000	5	3%

The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide context for interpreting the results. Table 1 summarizes the respondent profile, with 65% female and 35% male respondents, reflecting the higher engagement of women in skincare product consumption. Regarding education, 55% held a bachelor’s degree, 30% had a high school diploma, and 15% had a postgraduate degree. Occupationally, 40% were private employees, 25% were students, 20% were entrepreneurs, and 15% were in other professions. The monthly income distribution showed that 45% of the population earned less than IDR 5 million, 35% earned between IDR 5 million and IDR 10 million, and 20% earned more than IDR 10 million. These demographics indicate a diverse sample, characterized by varying levels of purchasing power and engagement with digital platforms. To explore potential differences, an exploratory analysis was conducted using multi-group analysis (MGA) in SmartPLS 4 to assess whether gender or income influenced the hypothesized relationships. The results indicated no significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) across gender or income groups, suggesting that the relationships between SMMA, OCR, BT, and BL are consistent across demographic segments in this sample.

**Table 2.** Direct Test

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	t-statistic	p-value	Results
H1	SMMA $\rightarrow$ BL	0.094	1.561	0.119	Rejected
H2	OCR $\rightarrow$ BL	0.564	9.242	0.000	Accepted
H3	SMMA $\rightarrow$ BT	0.386	3.081	0.002	Accepted
H4	OCR $\rightarrow$ BT	0.433	6.252	0.000	Accepted
H5	BT $\rightarrow$ BL	0.280	4.022	0.000	Accepted

**Table 3.** Indirect test

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	t-statistic	p-value	Results
H6	SMMA $\rightarrow$ BT $\rightarrow$ BL	0.108	2.641	0.008	Accepted
H7	OCR $\rightarrow$ BT $\rightarrow$ BL	0.121	3.523	0.000	Accepted

The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 2, which details the path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), t-statistics, and p-values for each hypothesized relationship. Table 2 shows that H1 (SMMA  $\rightarrow$  BL) was rejected ( $\beta = 0.094$ ,  $t = 1.561$ ,  $p = 0.119$ ), indicating that SMMA does not have a significant direct effect on Brand Loyalty. This finding suggests that social media marketing alone may not directly foster loyalty in the local skincare industry, possibly due to the need for deeper engagement or trust-building mechanisms. In contrast, H2 (OCR  $\rightarrow$  BL) was accepted ( $\beta = 0.564$ ,  $t = 9.242$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating a strong positive effect of Online Customer Reviews on Brand Loyalty. This result aligns with Cheung et al. (2021), who emphasize the role of credible reviews in driving consumer loyalty. Similarly, H3 (SMMA  $\rightarrow$  BT) was accepted ( $\beta = 0.386$ ,  $t = 3.081$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), indicating that SMMA has a significant positive effect on Brand Trust. H4 (OCR  $\rightarrow$  BT) was also accepted ( $\beta = 0.433$ ,  $t = 6.252$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), underscoring the crucial role of reviews in establishing trust. H5 (BT  $\rightarrow$  BL) was supported ( $\beta = 0.280$ ,  $t = 4.022$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that Brand Trust positively influences Brand Loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of trust as a key driver of loyalty in the skincare market.

The mediating effects of Brand Trust were tested in H6 and H7, as shown in Table 3, H6 (SMMA  $\rightarrow$  BT  $\rightarrow$  BL) was accepted ( $\beta = 0.108$ ,  $t = 2.641$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ), indicating that Brand Trust fully mediates the relationship between SMMA and Brand Loyalty, as the direct effect (H1) was not significant. This suggests that SMMA influences loyalty indirectly by fostering trust, consistent with Samarah et al. (2022), who highlight trust as a mediator in digital marketing contexts. H7 (OCR  $\rightarrow$  BT  $\rightarrow$  BL) was also accepted ( $\beta = 0.121$ ,  $t = 3.523$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), showing that Brand Trust partially mediates the relationship between OCR and Brand Loyalty, given the significant direct effect in H2. This partial mediation suggests that OCR influences loyalty both directly and indirectly through trust, thereby reinforcing the findings of Wibawa and Setiawan (2021). The mediation analysis was conducted using the bootstrapping method in SmartPLS 4, with 5,000 subsamples to ensure robust results. These findings underscore the crucial role of trust in translating digital marketing efforts into consumer loyalty, particularly for local skincare brands competing in the digital landscape.

To assess the model's explanatory power, goodness-of-fit measures and effect sizes were calculated. The  $R^2$  value for Brand Loyalty was 0.48, indicating that SMMA, OCR, and Brand Trust explain 48% of the variance in Brand Loyalty. This is considered a moderate to substantial effect size in PLS. The effect size ( $f^2$ ) was calculated for each path to evaluate the practical significance of the relationships. For H2 (OCR  $\rightarrow$  BL),  $f^2 = 0.42$ , indicating a significant effect, while H5 (BT  $\rightarrow$  BL) had  $f^2 = 0.15$ , suggesting a moderate effect. H3 (SMMA  $\rightarrow$  BT) and H4 (OCR  $\rightarrow$  BT) had  $f^2$  values of 0.19 and 0.23, respectively, indicating moderate effects. H1 (SMMA  $\rightarrow$  BL) had a negligible  $f^2$  of 0.01, consistent with its non-significant result. According to Cohen (1988),  $f^2$  values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The standardized

root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.06, which is below the threshold of 0.08, indicating a good model fit (Hair et al., 2021). These metrics confirm that the model effectively explains the relationships among the variables in the context of Indonesia's local skincare industry.

The results provide actionable insights for local skincare brands. The strong effect of Online Customer Reviews on both Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty (H2, H4, H7) suggests that brands should prioritize managing and encouraging positive reviews on platforms like Shopee and Tokopedia. The non-significant direct effect of SMMA on Brand Loyalty (H1) indicates that social media efforts must be channelled through trust-building strategies, such as transparent and authentic content, to enhance loyalty. The mediating effects (H6, H7) highlight the importance of brands fostering consumer trust to maximize the impact of digital marketing. These findings are particularly relevant for brands like Wardah and MS Glow, which rely on digital platforms to compete with international brands. The consistency of results across demographic groups suggests that these strategies are broadly applicable. However, further analysis could explore specific consumer segments, such as younger users or high-income groups, to refine marketing approaches. Overall, the results validate the research framework depicted in Figure 1, highlighting the interconnected roles of SMMA, OCR, and Brand Trust in driving Brand Loyalty in Indonesia's competitive skincare market.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics of Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA), Online Customer Reviews (OCR), Brand Trust (BT), and Brand Loyalty (BL) within Indonesia's local skincare industry. Table 2 reveals that H1 (SMMA → BL) was rejected ( $\beta = 0.094$ ,  $t = 1.561$ ,  $p = 0.119$ ), indicating that SMMA does not directly influence Brand Loyalty. This result aligns with Ali et al. (2025), who suggest that SMMA's impact on loyalty is often indirect, requiring mediators such as trust or engagement to be effective. In the context of local skincare brands like Wardah and MS Glow, the non-significant direct effect may be attributed to the saturated social media environment, where consumers are exposed to abundant marketing content, reducing the direct influence on loyalty. According to Erkan and Evans (2016), social media campaigns must be highly authentic and tailored to specific consumer needs to drive loyalty directly, a challenge for local brands competing with international counterparts. This finding SMMA's effectiveness in fostering loyalty among Indonesian consumers.

In contrast, H2 (OCR → BL) was strongly supported ( $\beta = 0.564$ ,  $t = 9.242$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting the significant influence of Online Customer Reviews on Brand Loyalty. This result is consistent with Ibrahim (2024), who found that credible reviews on platforms like Shopee and Tokopedia significantly enhance consumer confidence in skincare products. The strong effect of OCR can be attributed to Indonesia's collectivist culture, where consumers heavily rely on peer opinions when making purchase decisions. Zhang et al. (2023) emphasize that positive reviews serve as social proof, particularly in high-involvement product categories, such as skincare, where efficacy and safety are of paramount importance. The significant impact of OCR suggests that local skincare brands should actively encourage and manage user-generated content to bolster loyalty. This finding also contrasts with the non-significant H1, indicating that OCR has a more direct and robust influence on loyalty compared to SMMA in this context.

The results for H3 (SMMA → BT) and H4 (OCR → BT) were both significant ( $\beta = 0.386$ ,  $t = 3.081$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ;  $\beta = 0.433$ ,  $t = 6.252$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively), confirming that both SMMA and OCR have a positive influence on Brand Trust. According to Haudi et al. (2022), transparent and engaging social media content builds trust by addressing consumer concerns and showcasing brand authenticity. Similarly, Cheung et al. (2021) note that OCR enhances trust by providing credible, user-generated evidence of product quality. In the local skincare industry, where consumers are cautious about product safety, trust is a critical factor. The more substantial effect of OCR on trust ( $\beta = 0.433$ ) compared to SMMA ( $\beta = 0.386$ ) suggests that reviews are particularly influential in reducing

perceived risks. This finding is supported by Filieri (2015), who argues that review credibility is a key determinant of trust in online contexts. These results highlight the importance of integrating SMMA and OCR strategies to build consumer trust in local brands, such as Somethinc.

H5 (BT → BL) was also supported ( $\beta = 0.280$ ,  $t = 4.022$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reinforcing the pivotal role of Brand Trust in fostering Brand Loyalty. Wibawa and Setiawan (2021) assert that trust creates emotional attachment, encouraging repeat purchases and loyalty. This is particularly relevant in Indonesia's skincare market, where trust mitigates uncertainties about product efficacy. The mediating effects of Brand Trust were confirmed in H6 (SMMA → BT → BL,  $\beta = 0.108$ ,  $t = 2.641$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) and H7 (OCR → BT → BL,  $\beta = 0.121$ ,  $t = 3.523$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). According to Samarah et al. (2022), trust fully mediates the relationship between SMMA and loyalty, explaining the non-significant direct effect of H1. The partial mediation in H7 suggests that OCR influences loyalty both directly and through trust, consistent with Kim and Ko (2012), who highlight the dual role of digital interactions. These findings align with the Commitment and Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), emphasizing trust as a critical mechanism in relationship marketing.

The results have significant implications for local skincare brands in Indonesia. The strong influence of OCR on both trust and loyalty (H2, H4, H7) suggests that brands should prioritize managing online reviews on e-commerce platforms, responding to negative feedback, and encouraging positive testimonials. The mediating role of trust (H6, H7) suggests that SMMA strategies should prioritize building trust through authentic and culturally relevant content, such as tutorials or testimonials that resonate with Indonesian consumers. According to Nguyen and Pervan (2020), culturally tailored marketing enhances consumer trust in emerging markets. The non-significant H1 suggests that SMMA alone is insufficient without trust-building efforts, a finding supported by Zollo et al. (2020), who advocate for integrated digital strategies. Practically, brands like Wardah can leverage influencers and user-generated content to enhance trust and loyalty. Academically, this study contributes to the literature by validating the mediating role of trust in a culturally specific context, addressing gaps noted by Bernarto et al. (2020). Future research could explore additional mediators, such as consumer engagement, to further enhance loyalty in the digital skincare market.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that Online Customer Reviews and Brand Trust are critical drivers of Brand Loyalty in Indonesia's local skincare industry. At the same time, Social Media Marketing Activity plays a significant but indirect role. The findings indicate that Online Customer Reviews have a substantial direct impact on Brand Loyalty, as consumers heavily rely on peer feedback when choosing skincare products from brands like Wardah, MS Glow, and Somethinc. Additionally, both Social Media Marketing Activity and Online Customer Reviews significantly enhance Brand Trust, which in turn fosters loyalty among consumers. However, the direct effect of Social Media Marketing Activity on Brand Loyalty was not significant, suggesting that its influence is channelled through trust. These results underscore the interdependent roles of digital marketing strategies and trust in fostering long-term consumer loyalty in a competitive market. The study confirms that trust is a pivotal mechanism for local skincare brands to strengthen consumer relationships in a digitally driven landscape.

The implications of these findings are substantial for local skincare brands aiming to compete in Indonesia's growing market. Brand managers should prioritize managing online reviews on platforms like Shopee and Tokopedia, encouraging positive feedback and addressing negative comments to build trust and loyalty. Social media strategies should focus on authentic and engaging content to foster trust, such as tutorials or testimonials that resonate with local consumers. Academically, this study provides a nuanced understanding of digital marketing dynamics in a culturally specific context. However, the study is limited by its focus on urban consumers and a sample size of 170 respondents, which may not fully represent rural or diverse demographic groups. Future

research could explore additional mediators, such as consumer engagement or brand image, and include larger, more diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Investigating specific social media platforms or consumer segments, such as younger Gen Z users, could further refine strategies for local skincare brands.

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