

# Exploring the Role of Brand Engagement in Meme Marketing Effectiveness

*Brand Engagement  
in Meme Marketing  
Effectiveness*

Siti Alhamra Salqaura  
Universitas Medan Area; Medan, Indonesia  
E-Mail: sitialhamrasalqaura@staff.uma.ac.id

**5467**

Nasib  
Universitas Mahkota Tricom Unggul; Medan, Indonesia

Siti Sabrina Salqaura  
Universitas Medan Area; Medan, Indonesia

Submitted:  
OCTOBER 2025

Accepted:  
DECEMBER 2025

## **ABSTRACT**

*Social media development and the phenomenon of meme marketing have become increasingly viral. The shift from traditional advertising to community-based and participatory content, such as memes, has emerged as a trending notion in contemporary marketing. This shift has necessitated companies to become more innovative in capturing attention, engaging consumers, and fostering loyalty. This research aims to examine the relationship between virality meme marketing, brand personality, and consumer loyalty, with brand engagement acting as a mediator. This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing PLS-SEM through SmartPLS 4.0 software, with a sample of 220 active respondents. The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms, and purposive sampling was applied. The findings indicate that virality meme marketing, and brand personality have a significant enhancing effect on brand engagement, which in turn mediates the effect on customer loyalty. However, a surprising finding emerged regarding the direct effect of virality meme marketing on customer loyalty, where virality meme marketing negatively and insignificantly influences customer loyalty.*

**Keywords:** Brand Engagement, Brand Personality, Consumer Loyalty, Social Media, Viral Meme Marketing.

## **ABSTRAK**

*Perkembangan media sosial dan fenomena pemasaran meme semakin viral selama dekade terakhir. Alterasi periklanan tradisional ke konten berbasis komunitas dan partisipatif, seperti meme, telah muncul sebagai tren dalam pemasaran kontemporer. Pergeseran ini mengharuskan perusahaan untuk menjadi lebih inovatif dalam menarik perhatian, melibatkan konsumen, dan menumbuhkan loyalitas. Berdasarkan hal ini, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara pemasaran meme viral, kepribadian merek, dan loyalitas konsumen, dengan keterlibatan merek sebagai mediator. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, memanfaatkan PLS-SEM melalui perangkat lunak SMARTPLS 4.0, dengan sampel 220 responden aktif. Kuesioner didistribusikan secara daring menggunakan Google Forms, dan pengambilan sampel dilakukan secara purposif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran meme viral dan kepribadian merek memiliki efek peningkatan yang signifikan terhadap keterlibatan merek, yang selanjutnya memediasi efek terhadap loyalitas konsumen. Namun, temuan mengejutkan muncul terkait efek langsung pemasaran meme viral terhadap loyalitas konsumen, di mana pemasaran meme viral memengaruhi loyalitas konsumen secara negatif dan tidak signifikan.*

**Kata kunci:** Keterlibatan Merek, Kepribadian Merek, Loyalitas Konsumen, Media Sosial, Pemasaran Meme Viral.

**JIMKES**

Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen  
Kesatuan  
Vol. 13 No. 6, 2025  
pp. 5467-5478  
IBI Kesatuan  
ISSN 2337 – 7860  
E-ISSN 2721 – 169X  
DOI: 10.37641/jimkes.v13i6.4455

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social media has in rapid evolution over the past decade (Malodia et al., 2022). It has fundamentally transformed the way brands communicate with consumers, shifting from traditional advertising to community-driven and participatory content digital formats such as internet memes (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025; Ward, 2025). The meme marketing, which is defined as the strategic use of humorous, culturally relevant, and easily shareable visual-textual content, has emerged as a powerful tool for generating online virality and driving consumer conversations (Razzaq et al., 2024). This alteration demonstrates an overarching trend toward User-Generated Content (UGC) and viral marketing, where a brand's message organically generates social interactions, thereby enhancing the perceived authenticity of brand communications (Naeem et al., 2025).

In the marketing literature, virality pertains to the rapid and widespread dissemination of content through peer-to-peer sharing across digital platforms (Tellis et al., 2019). Viral Meme Marketing (VMM) leverages humor, emotional appeal, and cultural congruence to increase shareability, which in turn can enhance brand engagement, a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in brand-related interactions (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Vieira et al., 2023). Moreover, Kim and Kim (2024) elucidate that a meme-centric marketing strategy has proved to intensify brand engagement. Prior research by Fang et al. (2025) has evidenced that superior levels of brand engagement are associated with improved consumer loyalty; engaged consumers tend to demonstrate higher frequencies of repeat purchases and are more inclined to promote the brand within their social circles.

In tandem with the growth of meme marketing, brand personality continues to play a pivotal function in forming customer perceptions, emotional bonds, and loyalty outcomes (Garanti & Kissi, 2019; Pratama et al., 2025). A consistent and relatable brand personality not only facilitates stronger emotional connections but can also amplify the effectiveness of meme marketing by ensuring congruence between the brand's identity and the cultural narratives embedded within the memes (Balabanis & Karpova, 2025). Furthermore, the brand personality has a profound impact on brand engagement and consumer loyalty (Molinillo et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2020; Villagra et al., 2021).

Despite growing scholarly attention to both meme virality and brand personality, the intersection of these constructs and their combined influence on consumer loyalty remains underexplored. Most prior research examines meme marketing or brand personality in isolation, without considering the combination effects in a unified conceptual model (Vieira et al., 2023). Subsequently, while brand engagement has been established as a critical driver of loyalty, few empirical studies explicitly test its mediating role between viral meme marketing, brand personality, and loyalty (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Fang et al., 2025). However, inconsistencies exist in the measurement and operationalization of virality- some studies rely on platform metrics such as views and shares, while others employ self-reported perceptions- limiting comparability and generalizability (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025; Ward, 2025).

Eventually, empirical evidence on whether viral meme marketing has a direct effect on consumer loyalty is inconclusive, with some studies reporting positive relationships (Taecharunroj & Nueangiamnong, 2015; Rathi & Jain, 2024). However, Razzaq et al. (2024) found non-significant or even negative associations. Addressing these gaps, this study's purpose is to examine the influence of viral meme marketing and brand personality on consumer loyalty, with brand engagement as a mediating variable. A quantitative method is employed in this study, utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Hence, this current research is poised to make a noteworthy impact on the digital marketing and consumer behaviour field.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Effect of Viral Meme Marketing and Brand Personality on Brand Engagement**

Consumer loyalty alludes to consumers' commitment to consistently repurchase a brand, despite marketing pressure from competitors (Oliver, 1999; Rehman et al., 2025).

Loyalty is not only behavioral loyalty, but also includes attitudinal loyalty, which reflects emotional attachment and trust in the brand (Juhaidi et al., 2025). Studies in digital marketing strategies have revealed that positive engagements and impactful brand experiences, such as exposure to pertinent viral content, can enhance consumer loyalty (Vieira et al., 2023; Anita et al., 2025). Moreover, the role of social media can enhance the trust in building brand loyalty (Fitriyana et al., 2025).

Meme marketing is a form of digital marketing that utilizes visual content and short texts with humor, satire, or cultural relevance to attract audience attention and trigger rapid dissemination on social media (Razzaq et al., 2024). The uniqueness of memes lies in their ability to convey brand messages implicitly while maintaining the characteristics of user-generated content (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025). Virality in this context is defined as the rate at which content spreads rapidly and widely through digital social networks (Tellis et al., 2019). Viral memes hold strong potential for marketing communication because they can improve both brand awareness and audience interaction. According to Malodia et al. (2022), memes that are relevant to current topics and easily relatable tend to be positively received by target audiences, which in turn enhances customer engagement and strengthens brand memory.

Brand personality denotes a constellation of human characteristics linked to a brand (Aaker, 1997). These characteristics empower consumers to form emotional connections with brands, similar to interpersonal relationships (Sung & Kim, 2010). Recent research shows that consistency in brand personality across various digital channels increases perceptions of brand authenticity, which in turn strengthens engagement and loyalty (Lu et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024).

H1: Viral meme marketing exerts a significant positive impact on brand engagement.

H2: Brand personality exerts a significant positive impact on brand engagement.

### **The Determinants of Consumer Loyalty**

Memes have become simple forms of marketing communication, helping brands connect with target audiences. Meme-based advertising offers several benefits, including low production costs compared to other formats, the ability to use familiar meme formats that are easily relatable, and the opportunity to engage audiences organically due to their widespread popularity (Malodia et al., 2022). Previous research shows that humor, cultural relevance, and message congruence are the main drivers of successful meme marketing (Naeem et al., 2025). Viral Meme Marketing (VMM) is also successful in influencing consumer purchase intentions on social media (Tsai & Hsiao, 2025). However, findings regarding the direct effect of VMM on consumer loyalty are still mixed. Some studies find a positive relationship (Lee & Hong, 2020). Meanwhile, Razzaq et al. (2024) see no significant effect.

Brand personality distinguishes four facets of personality, namely: intended, projected, perceived, and communicated (Jun & Lee, 2024). Therefore, brands with distinct personalities are more prone to effectively utilizing memes to attract consumer engagement. Research by Pham (2017) stated that brand personality affects customer loyalty. A clear brand personality can increase campaign effectiveness because the message conveyed is in accordance with the brand image being established (Letukytė & Urbonavičius, 2022).

Brand engagement represents active consumer involvement with a brand beyond transactional activities, including behaviors such as word-of-mouth, recommendations, user interactions, writing reviews, and sharing brand-related content, which demonstrate a strong relational connection to the brand. This form of engagement enhances emotional and psychological bonds, fosters trust and satisfaction, and encourages advocacy behaviors. Empirical research by Adhikari and Panda (2019) shows that consumer-brand engagement has a significant positive influence on consumer loyalty, indicating that the more consumers engage with a brand, the stronger their commitment and likelihood to remain loyal.

- H3: Viral meme marketing exerts a significant positive impact on consumer loyalty.
- H4: Brand personality exerts a significant positive impact on consumer loyalty.
- H5: Brand engagement exerts a significant positive impact on consumer loyalty.

**Effect Brand Engagement as Mediating Variable**

Brand engagement is the cognitive, affective, and behavioral involvement of consumers in brand-related interactions, reflecting attention, emotional connection, and active participation in brand activities (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Vieira et al., 2023). This construct plays a pivotal role in digital marketing, as consumers increasingly interact with brands through online platforms and user-generated content. Previous studies have demonstrated that BE serves as a crucial mediator linking marketing stimuli to consumer loyalty outcomes (Fang et al., 2025). In the context of social media, engagement is strengthened when brand content encourages consumers to communicate, provide feedback, and share their experiences with others.

Meme marketing, which utilizes humorous and culturally relevant content, can generate strong engagement by creating relatable emotional experiences and encouraging viral sharing (Razzaq et al., 2024). Such engagement fosters brand memory and positive associations that support long-term loyalty. Consistent brand personality expression across digital channels also enhances authenticity perceptions, which further stimulates engagement and attachment to the brand (Lu et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024). Moreover, when consumers actively participate in spreading brand-related memes, they become co-creators of brand communication, reinforcing their loyalty through deeper involvement. Therefore, Brand engagement functions as a mediating mechanism that translates successful marketing content, including viral memes, into sustainable brand loyalty.

- H6: Brand engagement mediates the relationship between viral meme marketing and consumer loyalty.
- H7: Brand engagement mediates the relationship between brand personality and consumer loyalty.

This research considers viral meme marketing, brand personality, and brand engagement as the drivers. This study selected these factors to represent various tests as empirical evidence in the field of digital marketing and consumer behavior. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

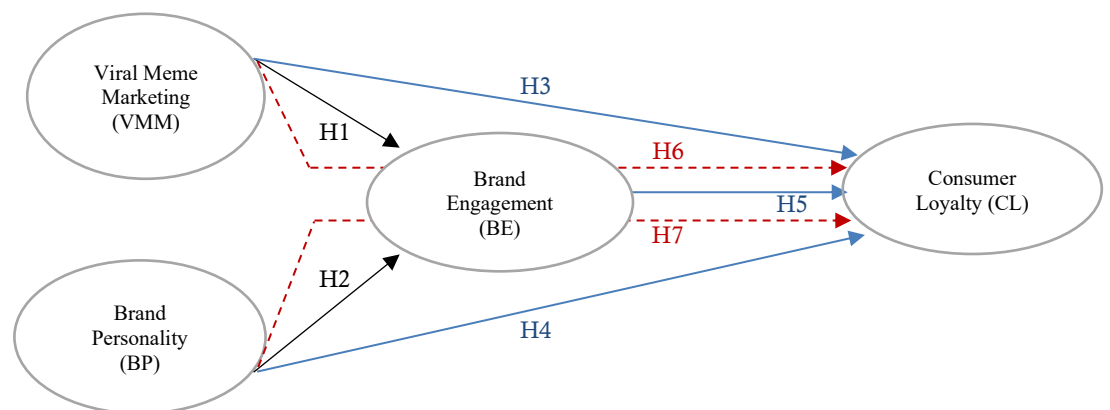


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

**RESEARCH METHODS**

A quantitative research method is employed in this study with a focus on Generation Z in Medan. The Z Generation in Medan is determined as the population of this study. The sample for this study includes Generation Z individuals in Medan who have been exposed to promotional content through social media. The sample was determined using

purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: the sample is located in Medan, the sample is part of Generation Z, the sample uses social media platforms (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.), and the sample has encountered viral meme marketing promotional content. The sample size was determined using the formula proposed by Hair et al. (2014) which suggests a minimum sample size of 5 to 10 times the total number of indicators. the minimum sample size is calculated as 5 times the total number of indicators, resulting in 185 samples. To enhance the accuracy of the study, the sample size was rounded up to 200 respondents.

The total number of indicators is 37, comprising 9 indicators for Viral Meme Marketing (VMM), 13 indicators for Brand Personality (BP), 9 indicators for Brand Engagement (BE), and 6 indicators for Consumer Loyalty (CL). Furthermore, a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “strongly disagree” and 5 indicates “strongly agree,” is employed in this study.

Data in this study were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the SmartPLS software. The analysis process included the assessment of the outer model to evaluate construct validity and reliability through indicators such as loading factors, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the inner model was examined to assess the structural relationships among variables using path coefficients, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ). Significance testing was performed using bootstrapping to ensure the robustness of the relationships among constructs within the model.

## RESULTS

This study employs structural equation model analysis with SmartPLS. The initial stage of the PLS model serves to assess the quality, evaluate the data quality, and measure the variables in the research model. Several tests exist, including convergent validity, construct validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity. The first analysis is convergent validity, which assesses the validity of research indicators. Convergent validity refers to the loading factor value on each study indicator, which must be greater than 0.5 or ideally greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). This research analysis demonstrates that all indicators were valid.

**Table 1.** Outer Model

Variables	Code	Indicators	Loading Factor
Viral Meme Marketing (VMM)	VMM1	Frequently liking smartphone product memes on social media	0.865
	VMM2	Frequently share smartphone product memes on social media	0.872
	VMM3	Resharing smartphone product memes on various social media platforms	0.837
	VMM4	Finding it easy to share smartphone product memes on social media	0.860
	VMM5	Smartphone product memes frequently appear on my social media feed	0.814
	VMM6	Drawn to click on the links included in smartphone product memes	0.867
	VMM7	Interested in finding out more about smartphone products after seeing the memes	0.917
	VMM8	The designs of smartphone product memes on social media are attractive	0.898
	VMM9	Smartphone product memes have a variety of creative designs	0.862
Brand Personality (BP)	BP1	The smartphone product appears trustworthy based on its social media content	0.891
	BP2	The smartphone product content demonstrates attention to consumer needs	0.866
	BP3	Feeling the memes about the smartphone product use humor or fresh ideas	0.814
	BP4	The smartphone product campaign conveys positive energy through its social media content	0.816

Variables	Code	Indicators	Loading Factor	
	BP5	The smartphone product appears to meet the needs of Generation Z through its social media content	0.901	
	BP6	The smartphone product appears reliable based on my impressions on social media	0.874	
	BP7	The smartphone product content confirms the brand's competence	0.932	
	BP8	The smartphone product appears sophisticated on social media	0.870	
	BP9	The smartphone product content is presented with an elegant impression	0.846	
	BP10	The smartphone product campaign emphasizes prestige through its messaging	0.774	
	BP11	The smartphone product image reflects exclusivity that appeals to the younger generation	0.792	
	BP12	The smartphone product content visually displays the product's durability	0.815	
	BP13	Seeing a tough impression on smartphone products from content on social media	0.898	
	Brand Engagement (BE)	BE1	Rethink the information about smartphone products that I see on social media	0.865
		BE2	Finding out more about smartphone products after seeing the content on social media	0.871
		BE3	The information in the smartphone product content captures my attention	0.890
		BE4	The information in the smartphone product content captures my attention	0.864
BE5		Feeling emotionally connected to the smartphone product after seeing the content	0.772	
BE6		The smartphone product content creates a deep emotional experience for me	0.726	
BE7		Feeling an emotional connection after interacting with smartphone product content on social media	0.791	
BE8		Liking smartphone product content on social media	0.776	
BE9		Sharing smartphone product content that I find interesting	0.806	
Consumer Loyalty (CL)	CL1	Satisfied with the quality of the smartphone product I chose	0.776	
	CL 2	Intended to continue using this smartphone product in the future	0.882	
	CL 3	Feeling emotionally satisfied after using this smartphone product	0.933	
	CL 4	Likely to continue choosing the same smartphone product in the future	0.890	
	CL 5	Recommending the smartphone product I use to others based on personal experience	0.799	
	CL 6	Sharing my positive experience using this smartphone product with others	0.789	

Table 1 demonstrates that all indicators meet the loading factor's threshold of 0.5 or even greater than 0.7, indicating that the indicators in this study have successfully fulfilled it. It can be concluded that the loading factor values have been appropriate with the convergent validity test. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) can be seen as the lower limit of internal consistency, while Composite Reliability (CR) is considered as the upper limit (Hair et al., 2014). Since the CR value in this study exceeds the construct reliability standard of 0.7 ( $CR > 0.7$ ), CA for each construct must be above 0.6 ( $CA > 0.6$ ). Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.5 ( $AVE > 0.5$ ). Thus, all variables in this study can be categorized as valid and reliable. It is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Reliability Test**

Variables	CA	CR	AVE
Brand Engagement	0.939	0.947	0.672
Brand Personality	0.969	0.971	0.730
Consumer Loyalty	0.920	0.926	0.717
Virality Meme Marketing	0.959	0.964	0.751

Table 2 presents that the Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values in this study for all variables also have met the construct validity criteria. Moreover, the discriminant validity results of viral meme marketing, brand personality, brand engagement, and consumer loyalty are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity

Construct	Items	Viral Meme Marketing	Brand Personality	Brand Engagement	Consumer Loyalty
Viral Meme Marketing (VMM)	VMM1	0.865	0.473	0.493	0.422
	VMM2	0.872	0.484	0.492	0.389
	VMM3	0.837	0.415	0.535	0.392
	VMM4	0.860	0.390	0.412	0.307
	VMM5	0.814	0.232	0.313	0.188
	VMM6	0.867	0.469	0.497	0.433
	VMM7	0.917	0.399	0.419	0.306
	VMM8	0.898	0.467	0.487	0.388
	VMM9	0.862	0.452	0.530	0.363
Brand Personality (BP)	BP1	0.474	0.891	0.769	0.803
	BP2	0.511	0.866	0.718	0.734
	BP3	0.394	0.814	0.625	0.598
	BP4	0.454	0.816	0.646	0.657
	BP5	0.445	0.901	0.689	0.701
	BP6	0.447	0.874	0.731	0.799
	BP7	0.418	0.932	0.707	0.751
	BP8	0.390	0.870	0.705	0.678
	BP9	0.420	0.846	0.662	0.654
	BP10	0.392	0.774	0.566	0.639
	BP11	0.360	0.792	0.631	0.693
	BP12	0.396	0.815	0.773	0.739
	BP13	0.414	0.898	0.811	0.827
Brand Engagement (BE)	BE1	0.418	0.789	0.865	0.733
	BE2	0.353	0.780	0.871	0.784
	BE3	0.376	0.773	0.890	0.807
	BE4	0.423	0.765	0.864	0.761
	BE5	0.445	0.520	0.772	0.588
	BE6	0.438	0.504	0.726	0.521
	BE7	0.461	0.551	0.791	0.541
	BE8	0.607	0.614	0.776	0.604
	BE9	0.590	0.644	0.806	0.615
Consumer Loyalty (CL)	CL1	0.400	0.689	0.597	0.776
	CL 2	0.370	0.752	0.663	0.882
	CL 3	0.399	0.780	0.824	0.933
	CL 4	0.341	0.733	0.755	0.890
	CL 5	0.325	0.641	0.611	0.799
	CL 6	0.307	0.666	0.686	0.789

As shown in Table 3, the indicators of the study variables show the highest cross-loading values on the variables they represent. These results confirm that the indicators employed in this study demonstrate robust discriminant validity in aligning with their respective factors. The ensuing analysis is a discriminant validity test to verify whether the indicators in this study were accurately measured on each variable. Furthermore, discriminant validity is defined as two tests: the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The Fornell-Larcker criterion relates to each construct's AVE root. The square root of the AVE indicates excellent discriminant validity for each concept and is more significant than the correlation between components in the model.

Table 4 presents the Fornell-Larcker criterion values used to assess discriminant validity. The findings indicate that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each research variable exceeds the correlation values between the variables.

Therefore, based on the data in Table 4, this study satisfies the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variable	BE	BP	CL	VMM
Brand Engagement (BE)	0.820			
Brand Personality (BP)	0.819	0.854		
Consumer Loyalty (CL)	0.819	0.840	0.847	
Viral Meme Marketing (VMM)	0.548	0.497	0.422	0.866

Table 5. Determination Coefficient (R-Square)

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Engagement	0.697	0.694
Consumer Loyalty	0.762	0.759

Based on Table 5, the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value for Brand Engagement (BE) was found to be 0.694, or 69.4%, indicating that Viral Meme Marketing (VMM) and Brand Personality (BP) explained 69.4% of the variance in BE. Similarly, the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value for Consumer Loyalty (CL) was 0.759, or 75.9%, indicating that VMM, BP, and BE collectively explained 75.9% of the variance in CL. The study demonstrates a strong coefficient of determination.

The Q<sup>2</sup> value is analogous to the coefficient of determination (R-squared). A Q<sup>2</sup> value of 0 signifies that the model possesses predictive relevance, while a Q<sup>2</sup> value below 0 indicates that the model demonstrates limited predictive relevance. A Q<sup>2</sup> value of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively, suggests that an exogenous construct has a low, medium, or high predictive influence on a particular endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2014). Put differently, higher Q<sup>2</sup> values suggest that the model is better suited to the data. The Q<sup>2</sup> value can be determined using the following method:

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2)(1 - R^2) \dots (1 - R^2)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0.694)(1 - 0.759)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - 0.074$$

$$Q^2 = 0.926$$

According to the results, the Q<sup>2</sup> value is 0.926. Consequently, it can be concluded that the factors examined in this study, i.e., viral meme marketing, brand personality, and brand engagement, had a significant impact on consumer loyalty within the current structural model, explaining 92.6% of the variance. The remaining 7.4% should be accounted for independently, without relying on the factors studied.

Table 6 directly states that viral meme marketing significantly influences brand engagement. Moreover, brand personality also significantly influences brand engagement. However, virality meme marketing does not affect consumer loyalty significantly. Meanwhile, brand personality and brand engagement significantly affect consumer loyalty, respectively. For the indirect effect, brand engagement has a significant role in mediating viral meme marketing in consumer loyalty. Ultimately, brand engagement has a significant role in mediating brand personality in consumer loyalty.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Conclusion
Viral Meme Marketing → Brand Engagement	0.187	0.188	0.041	4.561	0.000	H1 Accepted
Brand Personality → Brand Engagement	0.726	0.737	0.049	14.799	0.000	H2 Accepted
Viral Meme Marketing → Consumer Loyalty	-0.075	-0.070	0.045	1.687	0.092	H3 Rejected

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Conclusion
Brand Personality → Consumer Loyalty	0.526	0.534	0.074	7.155	0.000	H4 Accepted
Brand Engagement → Consumer Loyalty	0.429	0.417	0.074	5.823	0.000	H5 Accepted
Viral Meme Marketing → Brand Engagement → Consumer Loyalty	0.080	0.078	0.021	3.811	0.000	H6 Accepted
Brand Personality → Brand Engagement → Consumer Loyalty	0.312	0.306	0.054	5.773	0.000	H7 Accepted

## DISCUSSION

Viral meme marketing positively and significantly influences brand engagement ( $\beta = 0.187$ ;  $t = 4.561$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that memes enhance consumer involvement and emotional connection with brands. This finding aligns with Mia et al. (2024) and Rai et al. (2024), who emphasized memes as interactive triggers for engagement and stimuli for social interaction and brand recall through participatory communication dynamics. The results confirm that virality functions not merely as a visibility metric but as an antecedent of consumer-brand resonance, where the humorous and shareable nature of memes encourages meaning co-creation that strengthens engagement through symbolic interaction processes (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Berthon et al., 2022).

Brand personality demonstrates a strong and significant effect on brand engagement ( $\beta = 0.726$ ;  $t = 14.799$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), showing that consumers are more likely to engage with brands exhibiting distinctive and consistent personality traits such as sincerity, enthusiasm, and competence. This reinforces Dessart et al. (2015), who established that brand personality dimensions stimulate emotional identification and interactive engagement behaviors. Brand personality serves as a symbolic cue enabling consumers to express their self-concept through brand association (Iglesias & Ind, 2020). It is motivating them to share and participate in brand-related discussions when brands are perceived as having relatable “human-like” identities, which aligns with Alfakih et al. (2022), who found that personality-driven brands foster greater engagement and brand trust.

The relationship between viral meme marketing and consumer loyalty is insignificant ( $\beta = -0.075$ ;  $t = 1.687$ ;  $p = 0.092$ ), implying that memes only attract attention and stimulate temporary engagement without directly building long-term loyalty. This is consistent with Chairunnisa and Ruswanti (2023), who noted that short-term digital engagement requires deeper psychological mechanisms such as brand trust and satisfaction to evolve into loyalty, and Mi et al. (2025), who found that virality alone is insufficient to sustain loyalty without continuous relationship management and value co-creation. Memes can trigger interaction but often lack the emotional depth to build sustained commitment (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Brand personality positively and significantly influences consumer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.526$ ;  $t = 7.155$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that consumers tend to remain loyal to brands whose personalities align with their self-concept and values. According to Keller and Swaminathan (2020), coherent brand personality establishes reliability and trust as essential antecedents of loyalty and can also elevate impulsive buying (Fadilah et al., 2025). Empirical studies by Alwi and Kitchen (2014) and Balabanis and Karpova (2025) found that traits such as sincerity and competence lead to repeat purchase intentions and advocacy behavior, confirmed by Dwivedi et al. (2021), who showed that brand personality reinforces customer commitment when mediated by emotional attachment.

Brand engagement significantly predicts consumer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.429$ ;  $t = 5.823$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), meaning that consumers who actively interact with brands through online discussions, sharing, or co-creation are more likely to develop long-term commitment. This corresponds with Hollebeek and Macky (2019), who identified engagement as a

central mechanism transforming brand experience into loyalty intentions, and Vivek et al. (2012), who emphasized that engagement fosters emotional bonding and advocacy behavior. The mediating role of engagement between marketing stimuli and loyalty is documented by Algharabat et al. (2020), confirming that engaged consumers display stronger resistance to competitor influence, and engagement can enhance company outcomes (Djohan et al., 2025).

Brand engagement mediates the relationship between viral meme marketing and consumer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.080$ ;  $t = 3.811$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), implying that viral memes indirectly affect loyalty by enhancing engagement rather than producing direct loyalty outcomes. This aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Brodie et al. (2022), which highlights engagement as the central conduit through which marketing communications translate into relational outcomes. Viral memes may generate emotional reactions and participation, but loyalty formation occurs only when engagement transforms into trust and identification (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Brand engagement significantly mediates the relationship between brand personality and consumer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.312$ ;  $t = 5.773$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that strong brand personality promotes engagement, which subsequently enhances loyalty. This supports the conceptual framework proposed by Dessart et al. (2015), showing that personality-driven engagement acts as an emotional mechanism linking brand image and loyalty. When consumers engage with brands that reflect their identity, the interaction fosters trust and advocacy behaviors (Iglesias & Ind, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates three key findings. First, viral meme marketing positively influences brand engagement, confirming its capacity to drive consumer interaction and temporary emotional resonance. However, viral meme marketing does not directly foster consumer loyalty, indicating that visibility and entertainment alone are insufficient to build lasting attachment. Second, brand personality significantly enhances both brand engagement and consumer loyalty, proving that relatable and consistent brand characteristics promote deeper emotional connections and ongoing commitment. Third, brand engagement plays a critical mediating role, strengthening the indirect effects of both viral meme marketing and brand personality on loyalty. This indicates that active involvement with the brand is a necessary mechanism for converting attention and identification into sustained loyalty.

As a suggestion, companies engaged in meme marketing should be more selective in designing meme content that is not only funny or entertaining, but also relevant to brand values and strengthens product image. This is crucial; therefore, virality not only builds engagement but also encourages long-term loyalty. Furthermore, brand personality is recommended to continuously strengthen personality dimensions such as competence and excitement, as these characteristics have been shown to drive engagement and loyalty. This research has limitations. The focus on Generation Z in Medan limits generalizability to broader demographic or geographic groups. Additionally, the cross-sectional design cannot fully capture long-term behavioral outcomes of meme exposure. Future researchers are encouraged to broaden this study by incorporating additional variables such as brand trust, brand satisfaction, or media interactivity to explore potential mediating or moderating effects in digital contexts. They may also expand the research scope and respondent characteristics to produce findings that are more comprehensive and comparable across different consumer segments, such as generational or regional groups.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356.
- [2] Adhikari, K., & Panda, R. K. (2019). The role of consumer-brand engagement towards driving brand loyalty: Mediating effect of relationship quality. *Journal of Modelling in Management*, 14(4), 987-1005.
- [3] Alfakih, K. A. A., Saraih, U. N., Al-Shammari, S. A., Abdulrab, M., Ur Rehman, A., & Al-Mamary, Y. H. S. (2022). Determinants of the Malaysian cars brand loyalty: Mediating effect of brand satisfaction. *Journal of Industrial Integration and Management*, 7(4), 555–598.
- [4] Algharabat, R., Rana, N. P., Alalwan, A. A., Baabdullah, A., & Gupta, A. (2020). Investigating the antecedents of customer brand engagement and consumer-based brand equity in social media. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53(1), 1-13.
- [5] Alwi, S. F., & Kitchen, P. J. (2014). Projecting corporate brand image and behavioral response in business schools: Cognitive or affective brand attributes? *Journal of Business Research*, 67(11), 2324–2336.
- [6] Anita, T. L., Simanihuruk, M., Kusumawardhani, Y., & Wijaya, L. (2025). Digital marketing strategies and their impact on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 13(4), 2631–2642.
- [7] Balabanis, G., & Karpova, A. (2025). The personality of luxury. A new measure and the effects of brand personality distinctiveness and congruence on consumer responses. *Journal of Business Research*, 189(1), 115-130.
- [8] Berthon, P., Chohan, R., Pehlivan, E., & Rabinovich, T. (2022). Fixing fake news: Understanding and managing the marketer-consumer information ecosystem. *Business Horizons*, 65(6), 729–738.
- [9] Brodie, R. J., Soutar, G. N., & McColl-Kennedy, J. R. (2022). Research performance of Australian and New Zealand marketing academics: Achieving rigor and relevance. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 30(4), 273-277.
- [10] Chairunnisa, A., & Ruswanti, E. (2023). The impact of customer engagement on brand loyalty: The mediation roles of brand attachment and customer trust. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Madani*, 3(4), 789–801.
- [11] Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 24(1), 28–42.
- [12] Djohan, D., Budiman, I., Nasib, Razaq, M. R., & Fathoni, M. (2025). Fintech, digital branding, and customer engagement to enhance gayo arabica coffee smes' performance. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 13(5), 3449–3460.
- [13] Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59(1), 102-118.
- [14] Fadilah, F. Y. D., Hapsari, R. D. V., & Yulianti, I. (2025). The influence of time pressure and brand personality on impulsive buying among Generation Z: Local Indonesian skincare brands. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 13(5), 3409–3420.
- [15] Fang, L. B., Cheng, T., Yang, H., & Duan, Y. (2025). Capturing brand loyalty through customer relationship management: exploring the roles of customer brand engagement and psychological contracts from a dual perspective. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12(1), 1251-1265.
- [16] Fitriyana, N. A., Suryadi, N., & Hapsari, R. D. V. (2025). The role of social media and online reviews in building brand loyalty through trust. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 13(5), 3324–3336.
- [17] Garanti, Z., & Kissi, P. S. (2019). The effects of social media brand personality on brand loyalty in the Latvian banking industry: The mediating role of brand equity. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 37(6), 1480–1503.
- [18] Hair, J. F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M. (2014). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. London: Sage Publishing.
- [19] Hollebeek, L. D., & Macky, K. (2019). Digital content marketing's role in fostering consumer engagement, trust, and value: Framework, fundamental propositions, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45(2), 27–41.
- [20] Iglesias, O., & Ind, N. (2020). Towards a theory of conscientious corporate brand co-creation: the next key challenge in brand management. *Journal of Brand Management*, 27(6), 710-720.
- [21] Juhaidi, A., Al-Ansi, A. M., Fitria, A., Hidayati, N., & Huriyah. (2025). Understanding the role of university commitment, socioeconomic background, and brand trust in shaping brand loyalty in Islamic higher education in Indonesia. *Sustainable Futures*, 10(1), 1-13.
- [22] Jun, Y., & Lee, H. (2024). Measuring brand personality in the digital age: A review, theoretical reconceptualization, and research agenda. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 1(2), 45-60.
- [23] Keller, K. L., & Swaminathan, V. (2020). *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity, 5th Edition* (5th Edition). New York: Pearson.
- [24] Kim, J., & Kim, M. (2024). Viral dynamics on social media: Enhancing brand engagement through meme marketing strategies. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 1(2), 1-18.

- [25] Lee, J. K., Hansen, S. S., & Lee, S. Y. (2020). The effect of brand personality self-congruity on brand engagement and purchase intention: The moderating role of self-esteem in Facebook. *Current Psychology*, 39(6), 2116–2128.
- [26] Letukytė, N., & Urbonavičius, S. (2022). Impact of the congruence between brand personality and consumer personality on emotional loyalty: what makes Apple and Samsung different?. *Market-Tržište*, 34(1), 59-77.
- [27] Liu, Y., Zhao, Z., Wang, J., & Qiu, Z. (2024). Consumer engagement on social media: an analysis of brand post characteristic combinations. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 40(9–10), 704–742.
- [28] Lu, Y. Q., Ong, D., Huat, C., Zhang, J., & Lu, X. Y. (2024). Influence of Chinese brand personality on brand loyalty dimensions: An insight into China's tea beverage brands. *SSRN*, Retrieved in 1 July 2025 from <https://www.ssrn.com/>
- [29] Pham, T. M. L. (2017). The relationship between brand experience, brand personality and customer loyalty. *International Journal of business and economics*, 16(2), 109-126.
- [30] Malodia, S., Dhir, A., Bilgihan, A., Sinha, P., & Tikoo, T. (2022). Meme marketing: How can marketers drive better engagement using viral memes? *Psychology and Marketing*, 39(9), 1775–1801.
- [31] Mi, L. P. T., Tran, C. D., Vy, L. T., Ngan, L. D. T., & Tam, T. H. (2025). Tradition or innovation approaches? The role of meme marketing on brand recall and brand engagement: The evidence in Vietnam. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 15(1), 16–41.
- [32] Mia M., B., Laloum, D. J. G., & Arribart, G. (2024). Shockingly offensive: The deliberate use of slurs in prosocial advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 64(4), 95-110.
- [33] Molinillo, S., Japutra, A., Nguyen, B., & Chen, C. H. S. (2017). Responsible brands vs active brands? An examination of brand personality on brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 35(2), 166–179.
- [34] Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Ranfagni, S., & Howell, K. (2025). User generated content and brand engagement: Exploring the role of electronic semiotics and symbolic interactionism on Instagram. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 168(1), 13-25.
- [35] Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63(4), 33–44.
- [36] Pratama, M. R. A., Puspaningrum, A., & Prabandari, S. P. (2025). Perceived value, emotional bonds, and pop culture: Drivers of brand loyalty. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan*, 13(5), 3473–3484.
- [37] Rai, J. S., Cho, H., Itani, M., & Singh, A. (2024). The impact of social media-related motivation on fantasy sport users' playing skills, sense of competition and performance expectancy. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 36(11), 2931–2952.
- [38] Rathi, N., & Jain, P. (2024). Impact of meme marketing on consumer purchase intention: Examining the mediating role of consumer engagement. *Innovative Marketing*, 20(1), 13-25.
- [39] Razzaq, A., Shao, W., & Quach, S. (2024). Meme marketing effectiveness: A moderated-mediation model. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 78(1), 37-51.
- [40] Rehman, M., Zelin, T., & Hussain, T. (2025). Influence of consumer satisfaction on brand allegiance: An empirical investigation in Pakistan's safety and luxury automobile sector. *Acta Psychologica*, 252(1), 67-80.
- [41] Sung, Y., & Kim, J. (2010). Effects of brand personality on brand trust and brand affect. *Psychology and Marketing*, 27(7), 639–661.
- [42] Taecharungroj, V., & Nueangjamnong, P. (2015). Humour 2.0: Styles and types of humour and virality of memes on Facebook. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 10(3), 288–302.
- [43] Tellis, G. J., MacInnis, D. J., Tirunillai, S., & Zhang, Y. (2019). What drives virality (sharing) of online digital content? The critical role of information, emotion, and brand prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(4), 1–20.
- [44] Theodorakopoulos, L., Theodoropoulou, A., & Klavdianos, C. (2025). Interactive viral marketing through big data analytics, influencer networks, ai integration, and ethical dimensions. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 20(2), 43-53.
- [45] Tsai, P. H., & Hsiao, W. H. (2025). Turning laughs into buys: The influence of meme marketing on consumer purchase intentions in e-commerce using media richness theory. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 74(1), 54-65.
- [46] Vieira, V. A., Liu, R. L., & Mello, V. G. de. (2023). The mediating role of brand engagement in the self-concept (besc) in explaining consumer response: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 31(1), 97–114.
- [47] Villagra, N., Monfort, A., & Sánchez Herrera, J. (2021). The mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 20(5), 1153–1163.
- [48] Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 20(2), 122–146.
- [49] Ward, M. R. (2025). Internet meme marketing over the fad cycle. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 2(3), 14-25.