



The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Influencer on Brand Trust with Customer Engagement as An Intervening Variable (Study of Wardah Cosmetic Users in Kudus Regency)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of social media marketing and influencer marketing on brand trust with customer engagement as an intervening variable (a study on Wardah cosmetic users in Kudus Regency). This study employs a quantitative approach using purposive sampling technique. The sample consists of 140 respondents who are users of Wardah lipstick. Data analysis is conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the assistance of AMOS 24. The results show that social media marketing and influencer marketing have a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. However, both variables do not have a significant effect on brand trust. Customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. Furthermore, customer engagement fully mediates the effect of social media marketing and influencer marketing on brand trust

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry is a sector that continues to grow alongside increasing public awareness of appearance as part of lifestyle (Aushafina & Purwanto, 2024). This growth is driven by the rising demand for cosmetic products and the positive trend of the beauty industry in Indonesia (Dewi et al., 2023). Lipstick products are one of the most widely used categories by consumers, making them strategically important in the cosmetics market (Mahdi, 2022).

The growth of the beauty industry has intensified competition among brands, including Wardah as a local brand. Although Wardah holds a strong market share in the lipstick category, the Top Brand Index data shows a declining trend in recent years. Wardah was once ranked at the top position with a score of around 33% in the lipstick sub-category during the 2021–2022 period, reflecting a relatively high level of brand trust among consumers. However, this score gradually declined, reaching approximately 15% in 2025. This decline indicates potential issues in consumer trust toward the brand amid increasingly intense market competition (Top Brand Award, 2025).

Brand trust is a crucial factor in the cosmetics industry as it relates to product quality, safety, and the brand's ability to meet consumer expectations. In the context of digital marketing, brand trust is not only built through promotion but also through customer engagement. Consumers who actively interact with a brand tend to have stronger relationships and higher levels of trust (Islami & Winata, 2024).

To enhance customer engagement, companies utilize social media marketing and influencers. Social media enables companies to build direct communication and interaction with consumers, while influencers play a role in shaping perceptions and providing more personal recommendations (Nafiza & Khasanah, 2024). This strategy is considered effective because consumers tend to trust information delivered through more credible experiences and communication.

However, in practice, there is still a gap between promotional activities and actual consumer experiences. Consumer preferences toward Wardah lipstick products can be reflected in the reviews and ratings provided by consumers. The data shows that some consumers give low ratings, with complaints that the product quality does not match the expectations formed through advertisements and influencer testimonials (Processed Data, 2025).

Several complaints include a sticky texture, difficulty in removal, and lips becoming dry and cracked after use. In addition, some consumers question influencer promotions and social media advertisements, as they are considered not fully representative of the actual product quality. Differences between advertised colors and actual results, as well as unproven product durability claims, further reinforce this perception (Processed Data, 2025)

Overall, these findings indicate that the product quality is perceived as not fully aligned with expectations formed through social media and influencer promotions. This phenomenon highlights a gap between promotional efforts and actual consumer experiences. It also suggests that social media marketing and influencer marketing do not always directly increase brand trust without strong customer engagement.

Differences in findings across various studies indicate that the influence of social media marketing, influencer marketing, and customer engagement on brand trust remains inconsistent. Some studies report significant effects, while others show different results. For example Harvina et al. (2022) found that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust, whereas Fauzi & Evanita (2024) found no effect. These inconsistencies highlight the need for further research by incorporating customer engagement as an intervening variable.

This study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory, where social media marketing and influencer marketing act as stimuli that influence customer engagement as the organism, which in turn affects brand trust as the response.

Based on these phenomena and research gaps, this study aims to analyze the effect of social media marketing and influencer marketing on brand trust through customer engagement among Wardah cosmetic users in Kudus Regency.

METHODS

The scope of this research includes exogenous variables, namely social media marketing (X1) and influencer marketing (X2), endogenous variables, namely brand trust (Y), and intervening variables, namely customer engagement (Z). The object of this research is Wardah cosmetic products, specifically lipstick consumers in Kudus Regency. Respondents in this study were consumers who had purchased and used Wardah lipstick at least twice in the past year, were active social media users, and were aware of promotions carried out by influencers related to Wardah products.

This research uses a quantitative method, namely a research approach based on the philosophy of positivism to examine a specific population or sample using research instruments and statistical data analysis (Balaka, 2022:11). The data analysis in this study was carried out using SEM AMOS version 24 software. This study aims to test the hypothesis related to social media marketing and influencers on brand trust with customer engagement as an intervening variable.

The population in this study was consumers in Kudus Regency who use Wardah lipstick products. Because the exact population size was unknown, the sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which is a technique for determining samples based

on specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2022:152). This study was conducted in February 2026 with a total sample of 140 respondents. Variable measurements were conducted using a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

The operational definition of Brand Trust refers to the ability of a brand to fulfill its promise of value so that it can be trusted and relied upon, and plays an important role in building and maintaining long-term relationships between companies and customers (Wardhana, 2024:244). The operational definition of Social Media Marketing refers to a part of a digital marketing strategy that emphasizes the development of engaging and relevant content as a means of attracting and retaining customers (Kusmiati, 2024:210). The operational definition of Influencer Marketing refers to collaboration between brands and individuals or public figures who have influence on social media to market products or services, so that it can help reach a wider audience and build consumer trust in the products offered (Nardo et al., 2024:20). The operational definition of Customer Engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral bond between a customer and a brand that is formed through interactions with a product or service, and influences how customers think, feel, and act toward the brand (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2024:6).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Convergent Validity

The initial validity test is based on the convergent validity value. The results of the convergent validity test are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Test Convergent Validity

No	Indicator	Estimate	Cut-off Value	Description
1	X1_1	0,862	> 0,7	Valid
	X1_2	0,870	> 0,7	Valid
3	X1_3	0,833	> 0,7	Valid
4	X1_4	0,866	> 0,7	Valid
5	X2_2	0,782	> 0,7	Valid
6	X2_3	0,792	> 0,7	Valid
7	X2_4	0,835	> 0,7	Valid
8	Z_1	0,734	> 0,7	Valid

No	Indicator	Estimate	Cut-off Value	Description
9	Z_2	0,859	> 0,7	Valid
10	Z_4	0,846	> 0,7	Valid
11	Z_5	0,851	> 0,7	Valid
12	Y_2	0,835	> 0,7	Valid
13	Y_3	0,806	> 0,7	Valid
14	Y_4	0,855	> 0,7	Valid
15	Y_5	0,838	> 0,7	Valid
16	Y_6	0,843	> 0,7	Valid
17	Y_7	0,848	> 0,7	Valid

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

The Convergent Validity table shows that all loading factors are greater than 0,7, indicating that the statements are valid. This indicates that all statements in the questionnaire meet convergent validity requirements, and the data can be considered valid for further analysis.

In confirmatory factor analysis, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value indicates the ability of an indicator to explain the latent variable. A construct is said to have good convergent validity if the AVE value is $\geq 0,5$. All indicators can be considered valid, as presented in the AVE test table.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Table 2. Test Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	AVE	Cut Off Value	Description
Social Media Marketing (X_1)	0,736	0,50	Valid
Influencer Marketing (X_2)	0,645	0,50	Valid
Customer Engagement (Z)	0,679	0,50	Valid
Brand Trust (Y)	0,702	0,50	Valid

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Based on the AVE test results, it is found that the AVE value for each variable used in this study exceeds 0,5, indicating that the indicators are relatively capable of explaining the constructed latent variables.

Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity test ensures that each variable is distinct from one another. A construct is considered valid if the square root of AVE is greater than the correlations among constructs, as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Test Discriminant Validity

	Social Media Marketing	Influencer Marketing	Customer Engagement	Brand Trust
Social Media Marketing	0,858			
Influencer Marketing	0,051	0,803		
Customer Engagement	0,650	0,548	0,824	
Brand Trust	0,549	0,426	0,736	0,838

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Based on the discriminant validity test results, all indicators are considered valid, as the cross-loading values on their respective variables are higher than those on other latent variables.

Reliability Test

Instrument reliability in this study is tested using construct reliability to assess data consistency. A construct is considered reliable if the CR value is greater than 0.70, and all indicators meet this criterion as shown in the Construct Reliability table

Table 4. Test Construct Reliability

No	Variabel	CR	Nilai Cut Off	Description
1	Social Media Marketing (X ₁)	0,918	0,70	Valid
2	Influencer Marketing (X ₂)	0,845	0,70	Valid
3	Customer Engagement (Z)	0,894	0,70	Valid
4	Brand Trust (Y)	0,934	0,70	Valid

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Based on the Construct Reliability test results, all variables have construct reliability values above 0.70 and are therefore considered reliable. Thus, the research instruments are suitable for further analysis.

Normality Test

The normality test determines whether the data are normally distributed. Data are considered normal if the critical ratio (CR) lies within ±2.58, as shown in the following table:

Table 5. Normality Test Table

Variable	Min	Max	Skew	C.R.	Kurtosis	C.R.
Y_7	1,000	5,000	-0,104	-0,504	-1,308	1,556
Y_6	2,000	5,000	-0,108	-0,523	-1,289	-0,739
Y_5	1,000	5,000	-0,029	-0,141	-1,281	0,211
Y_4	1,000	5,000	0,009	0,043	-1,333	-0,049
Y_3	1,000	5,000	-0,299	-1,446	-0,162	-0,390
Y_2	1,000	5,000	-0,226	-1,094	0,622	1,503
Z_5	1,000	5,000	0,223	1,076	0,301	0,726

Variable	Min	Max	Skew	C.R.	Kurtosis	C.R.
Z_4	2,000	5,000	0,285	1,376	-0,448	-1,081
Z_2	2,000	5,000	0,271	1,309	-0,070	-0,170
Z_1	1,000	5,000	0,057	0,274	-0,252	-0,610
X2_4	2,000	5,000	0,003	0,016	-0,270	-0,651
X2_3	2,000	5,000	0,006	0,030	-0,230	-0,556
X2_2	2,000	5,000	0,107	0,518	0,006	0,015
X1_4	2,000	5,000	-0,023	-0,111	-0,632	-1,526
X1_3	2,000	5,000	0,242	1,171	-0,336	-0,812
X1_2	1,000	5,000	0,151	0,728	-0,226	-0,545
X1_1	2,000	5,000	0,051	0,246	-0,296	-0,714
Multivariate					4,737	1,103

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2026

Based on the Normality Test Table, the multivariate normality assumption is satisfied. The CR values fall within ± 2.58 , indicating that the data are normally distributed.

Confirmatory Analysis of the Full Measurement Model Before Modification

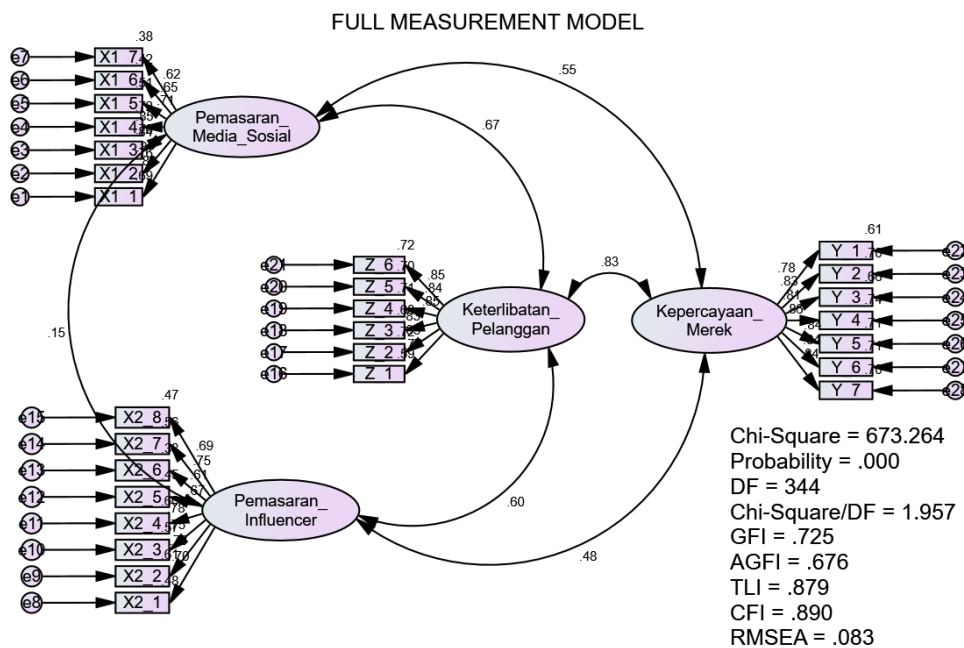


Figure 1. Goodness of Fit Analysis Full Measurement Model Before Modification

Source: Output Amos, 2026

Table 6. Evaluation of Goodness of Fit Index Criteria for the Full Measurement Model before Modification

Goodness of Fit	Cut Off Value	Result Model	Description
Chi-square DF = 344	Expected to be small <388,251	673,264	Not Acceptable
Probabilitas	>0,05	0,000	Not Acceptable
CMIN/DF	<2,00	1,957	Acceptable
GFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,725	Not Acceptable
AGFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,676	Not Acceptable
CFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,890	Not Acceptable
TLI	$\geq 0,95$	0,879	Not Acceptable
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0,083	Not Acceptable

Source: Output Amos, 2026

The results indicate that several goodness-of-fit indices do not meet the required criteria. Therefore, model modification is necessary. **Confirmatory Analysis Full Measurement after Modification**

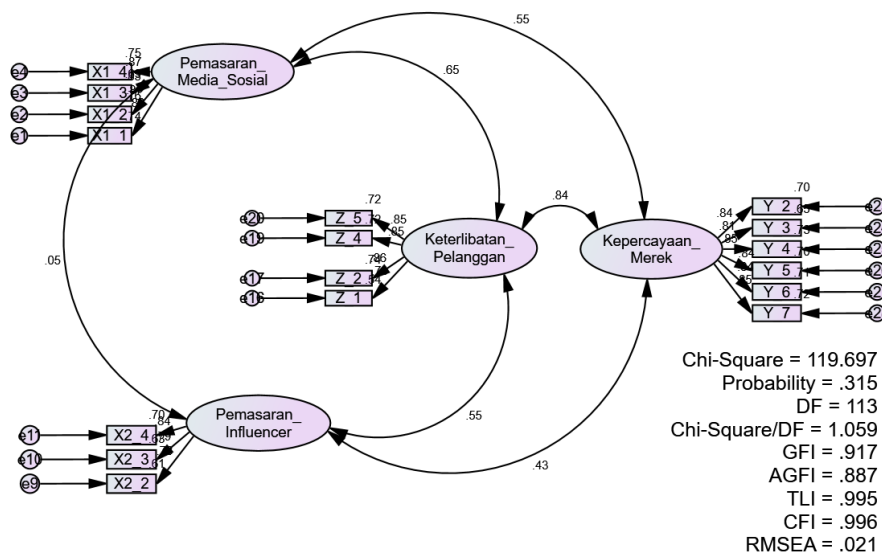


Figure 2. Goodness of Fit Analisis Full Measurement Model After Modification

Source: Output Amos, 2026

Based on the Goodness of Fit analysis of the full measurement model after modification, the results of the improved model fit are presented as follows:

Table 7. Evaluation of Goodness of Fit Index Full Measurement after Modification

Goodness Of Fit	Cut Off Value	Result Model	Description
Chi-square DF = 113	Expected to be small <138,811	119,697	Acceptable
Probability	$\geq 0,05$	0,315	Acceptable
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,00$	1,059	Acceptable
GFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,917	Acceptable
AGFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,887	Not Acceptable
CFI	$\geq 0,95$	0,996	Acceptable
TLI	$\geq 0,95$	0,995	Acceptable
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0,021	Acceptable

Source: Output Amos, 2026

Based on the Goodness of Fit analysis of the full measurement model after modification, The results of the structural model fit test indicate that the values fall within the expected range. Overall, the model can be considered to fit the data well, allowing for further analysis.

Analysis Konfirmatori Full Model

Confirmatory analysis aims to test the proposed model using goodness-of-fit measures. The results of the confirmatory analysis can be seen in the figure:

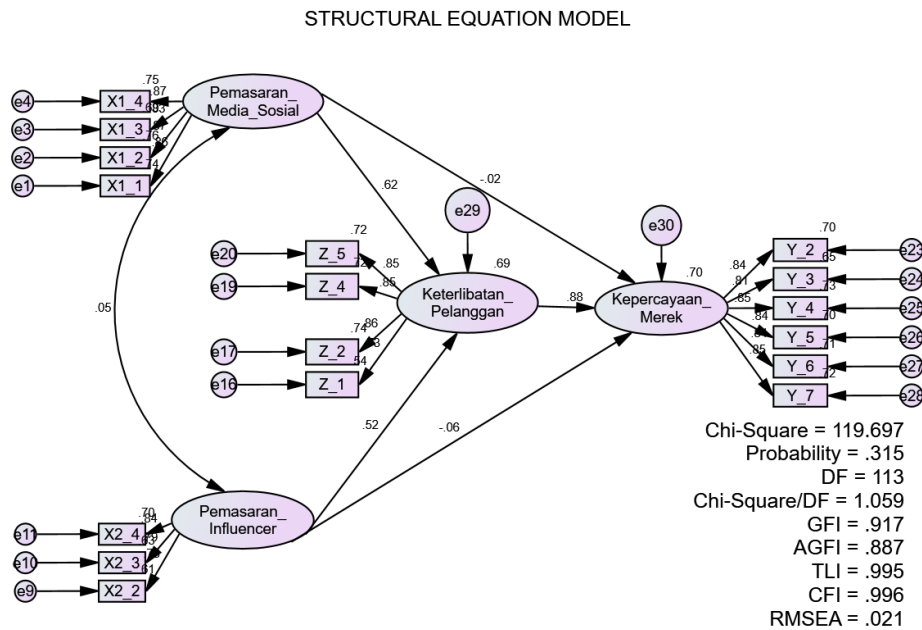


Figure 3. Analysis Konfirmatori Full Model

Source: Output Amos, 2026

Based on the full-model analysis plot, the model testing results indicate that the validity criteria have been met. The validity test met the criteria, meaning that the fit between the predicted model and the observed values is acceptable.

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing in this study was carried out by evaluating the critical ratio and significance probability to assess the relationships and effects among variables. The results of the AMOS analysis

for testing the hypotheses are presented in the regression weights table:

Table 8. Regression Weight

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
<i>CE</i> <- <i>SMM</i>	0,590	0,081	7,290	***	par_15
<i>CE</i> <- <i>IM</i>	0,655	0,109	5,999	***	par_16
<i>BT</i> <- <i>SMM</i>	-0,020	0,105	-0,190	0,849	par_17
<i>BT</i> <- <i>IM</i>	-0,073	0,131	-0,556	0,578	par_18
<i>BT</i> <- <i>CE</i>	0,916	0,164	5,569	***	par_19

Source: Output Amos, 2026

A hypothesis is supported if the critical ratio is $\geq 1,64$ and the significance probability is $\leq 0,05$. The results of the hypothesis test are as follows:

1. Hypothesis Testing 1

Hypothesis 1 states the effect of Social Media Marketing on Customer Engagement. Based on Table Regression Weight, the CR value is $\geq 1,645$, with a CR of $7,290 \geq 1,645$ and a probability (P) value of $0,000 \leq 0,05$. It can be concluded that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement; therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

2. Hypothesis Testing 2

Hypothesis 2 states the effect of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement. Based on the data analysis results, the CR value is $\geq 1,645$, with a CR of $5,999 \geq 1,645$ and a probability (P) value of $0,000 \leq 0,05$. It can be concluded that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement; therefore, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

3. Hypothesis Testing 3

Hypothesis 3 states the effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust. Based on the data

analysis results, the CR value is $\leq 1,645$, with a CR of $-0,190 \leq 1,645$ and a probability (P) value of $0,849 \geq 0,05$. These results do not meet the significance criteria; therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected, indicating that social media marketing does not affect brand trust.

4. Hypothesis Testing 4

Hypothesis 4 states the effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust. Based on the data analysis results, the CR value is $\leq 1,645$, with a CR of $-0,556 \leq 1,645$ and a probability (P) value of $0,578 \geq 0,05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is rejected, indicating that influencer marketing does not affect brand trust.

5. Hypothesis Testing 5

Hypothesis 5 states the effect of Customer Engagement on Brand Trust. Based on the data analysis results, the CR value is $\geq 1,645$, with a CR of $5,569 \geq 1,645$ and a probability (P) value of $0,000 \leq 0,05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is accepted, indicating that customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

Analysis of Direct and Indirect Influences

Table 9. Analysis of Direct and Indirect Influences

Variable	Direct Influence	InDirect Influence	Keterangan
Social Media Marketing -> Brand Trust	-0,020	0,549	Full Mediation
Influencer Marketing -> Brand Trust	-0,055	0,455	Full Mediation

Source: Output Amos, 2026

Table Analysis of Direct and Indirect Influences shows that:

1. Direct Effect

Based on the AMOS output (2026), Social Media Marketing has a direct effect of -0,020 on Brand Trust, while Influencer Marketing has a direct effect of -0,055 on Brand Trust. These coefficients indicate that both variables do not have a meaningful direct impact on Brand Trust.

2. Indirect Effect

The indirect effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust through Customer Engagement is 0,549, while the indirect effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust through Customer Engagement is 0,455. These values are greater than their respective direct effects ($-0,020 < 0,549$ and $-0,055 < 0,455$), indicating that Customer Engagement fully mediates the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Brand Trust, as well as between Influencer Marketing and Brand Trust.

3. Comparison of Direct and Indirect Effects

Overall, it can be concluded that:

- a. The direct effect of Social Media Marketing → Brand Trust is -0,020.
- b. The indirect effect through Customer Engagement is 0,549.
- c. The direct effect of Influencer Marketing → Brand Trust is -0,055.
- d. The indirect effect through Customer Engagement is 0,455.

These results indicate that Customer Engagement is able to fully mediate the effect of Social Media Marketing and Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Customer Engagement

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. This finding suggests that Wardah's social media marketing activities are able to encourage consumers to actively interact with the brand, such as through comments, likes, shares, and engagement with shared content. In today's digital era, social media

has become an important marketing tool to enhance customer engagement. Through social media, companies can interact directly with customers, promote products and services, and obtain quick feedback from consumers. Wardah utilizes these advantages by actively responding to consumer interactions, making customers feel valued and involved (Ifadhila et al., 2024:81).

Wardah consistently uses social media as a communication medium with its consumers, particularly by providing informative, educational, and relevant content that meets the needs of cosmetic users. Content such as halal product information, beauty tips, and consumer-involving campaigns has been proven to increase customer engagement. This indicates that social media marketing functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of building closer relationships between Wardah and its consumers. The results of this study are in line with Rachmadhaniyati (2021) who found that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. However, this finding differs from Mulyati et al., (2024) who stated that social media marketing does not affect customer engagement.

The Influence of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. This means that the more effective the marketing strategy implemented through influencers, the higher the level of customer engagement with the brand. Collaboration with influencers is an effective strategy because influencers possess personal appeal, credibility, and a wide audience reach, enabling them to directly enhance customer engagement (Erwin et al., 2023:18).

Wardah, as a local beauty brand, actively utilizes influencers to strengthen its marketing strategy. Wardah collaborates with popular influencers such as Tasya Farasya, Jharna Bhagwani, and Nanda Arsyinta to promote its products. These collaborations are carried out through various forms of content, including product reviews, makeup

tutorials, beauty tips, digital campaigns, and live streaming that involve direct interaction with consumers. The results of this study are consistent with Sari & Aprialita (2023), who found that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. However, this finding differs from Meilisa & Briliana (2023) who stated that influencer credibility does not affect customer engagement.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that social media marketing does not have an effect on brand trust. This finding suggests that marketing activities carried out through social media are not yet able to directly build or enhance consumer trust in the brand. The mere presence and activity of a brand on social media are not sufficient to make consumers fully trust a brand. Although social media can deliver information and increase brand exposure, consumer trust is not automatically formed solely from promotional content. This can be seen from respondents' answers on the brand trust variable, where the lowest indicator is related to brand security. This condition indicates that consumers are not yet fully confident in the product's safety based only on information provided through social media. Therefore, social media marketing has not been able to directly build consumer trust in Wardah lipstick.

The results of this study are consistent with Fauzi & Evanita (2024) who found that social media marketing does not affect brand trust. However, this finding differs from Harvina et al., (2022), who reported that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

The Influence of Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust

The results of this study indicate that influencer marketing does not affect brand trust. This finding is related to respondents' answers on the brand trust variable, which show the highest value on the brand image indicator, suggesting that consumer trust in Wardah lipstick is more influenced by brand image than by influencer figures.

Based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory, influencer marketing is positioned as a stimulus (S) provided by the company to consumers. This stimulus is expected to influence the internal state of consumers (organism), such as engagement, which then leads to a response (R) in the form of brand trust. However, the results show that the stimulus in the form of influencer promotion does not directly generate a response in the form of brand trust. This indicates that consumer trust in cosmetic products such as Wardah lipstick is not formed instantly through influencer recommendations, but is also influenced by consumers' confidence in brand safety, which in this study received the lowest evaluation from respondents.

The results of this study are consistent with Rahmawati & Madiawati (2025), who found that influencer marketing does not affect brand trust. However, this finding differs from Aisy et al., (2025) who reported that influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust.

The Influence of Customer Engagement on Brand Trust

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. This finding suggests that the higher the level of customer engagement, the stronger the customer trust in the brand. Customer engagement is an important element in building brand trust, especially in the social media era. Active interactions between the brand and customers, such as responding to comments, asking for opinions, and providing feedback, can create closer and more meaningful relationships. When customers feel valued and appreciated, their trust in the brand increases (Erwin et al., 2023:10).

Customer engagement in Wardah can be seen from consumer responses to educational content such as makeup tutorials, beauty tips, and digital campaigns. These activities encourage consumers to participate through comments, sharing experiences, and engaging in various digital activities organized by Wardah. This interaction indicates that consumers

have a high level of interest and attention toward the Wardah brand.

The results of this study are consistent with Islami & Winata (2024), who found that customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. However, this finding differs from Rahmat et al., (2024) who found that customer engagement does not affect brand trust, indicating that customer engagement does not always lead to increased trust in a brand.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust Through Customer Engagement as an Intervening Variable

The results of the direct and indirect effect analysis indicate that customer engagement mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand trust. Social media marketing conducted by Wardah does not directly increase brand trust but first enhances customer engagement. This suggests that brand trust is not formed directly through social media promotion. Consumers initially engage with the brand's content, such as reading product information, viewing posts, and interacting with the content. Once consumers become engaged, trust in the brand begins to develop.

Ifadhila et al., (2024:81) state that social media serves as an important tool for companies to encourage active customer engagement through direct interaction, product promotion, and prompt responses to customers. Social media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium for building closer relationships with consumers. Active interaction, responsiveness to comments, and open communication can strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and the brand, thereby fostering trust.

These findings are consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory, where social media marketing acts as the stimulus, customer engagement represents the internal process, and brand trust becomes the final response. Since there is no direct effect while the indirect effect through customer engagement is significant, it can be concluded that customer engagement fully mediates the relationship. Thus, social media marketing does

not directly build brand trust but does so through customer engagement

The better the social media marketing strategy implemented, the higher the level of customer engagement, which in turn fosters brand trust. These findings are in line with Yudha et al., (2025) who stated that customer engagement mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand trust.

The Influence of Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust Through Customer Engagement as an Intervening Variable

Based on the results of the direct and indirect effect analysis, it can be concluded that customer engagement mediates the influence of influencer marketing on brand trust. This indicates that influencer marketing does not directly increase brand trust but does so through enhancing customer engagement first.

Erwin et al., (2023:18) state that influencers can increase customer engagement through their personal attractiveness, credibility, and closeness to the audience. The selection of the right influencer helps create more active interactions between consumers and the brand. When customers feel engaged in brand activities, a sense of attachment and trust toward the brand will develop

The more effective the influencer marketing strategy implemented by Wardah, the higher the level of customer engagement that is formed. This engagement subsequently encourages the development of brand trust in Wardah. The results of this study are consistent with Sijabat et al., (2022) who stated that customer engagement mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and brand trust.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research entitled “*The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust with Customer Engagement as an Intervening Variable (Study on Wardah Cosmetic Users in Kudus Regency)*”, the conclusions of this study are as follows:

1. Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. The better Wardah manages its social media marketing, the higher the level of customer engagement.
2. Influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement. The more effective Wardah's influencer marketing, the higher the level of customer engagement.
3. Social media marketing has no effect on brand trust. The social media marketing carried out by Wardah has not been able to directly increase consumer trust in Wardah lipstick products.
4. Influencer marketing has no effect on brand trust. This indicates that the presence of influencers in promoting Wardah lipstick products has not increased consumer trust.
5. Customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on brand trust. The higher the level of customer engagement with Wardah lipstick products, the higher the level of consumer trust.

Based on the results of the research conducted, the following recommendations can be proposed:

1. In the social media marketing variable, the accessibility indicator received the lowest response. This indicates that the ease for consumers to access information about Wardah lipstick through social media is not yet optimal. Therefore, the company is recommended to improve the clarity and organization of information presentation, such as placing information in easily accessible locations, utilizing highlight or pinned content features, and ensuring consistency of information across all social media platforms.
2. In the influencer marketing variable, the credibility and influencing power indicators received the lowest responses. This suggests that Wardah's influencers have not fully been able to clearly explain product benefits or effectively encourage consumer interest in trying Wardah lipstick. Therefore, Wardah should select influencers who have a strong understanding of the product and are able to

deliver promotional messages in a more convincing and persuasive manner.

3. In the customer engagement variable, the participation indicator showed the lowest value, indicating that consumers are not yet actively responding to Wardah lipstick content on social media. Therefore, Wardah needs to create more engaging content that is closer to consumers' daily lives. Wardah can also provide clearer calls to action for commenting or sharing opinions to encourage consumer participation. In this way, customer engagement is expected to increase.
4. In the brand trust variable, the brand safety indicator received relatively lower responses compared to other indicators. This shows that although Wardah is widely recognized as a safe and halal brand, some consumers still do not fully feel confident about it. Wardah needs to maintain product quality consistency and continue building trust through simpler and more easily understood communication. Wardah can convey product safety information in a more relatable and consumer-friendly manner, so that the sense of security is not only known but also truly felt by users.
5. Future research is recommended to include additional variables that theoretically may influence customer engagement and brand trust, such as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), brand image, and customer experience. By incorporating these variables, future studies are expected to provide a broader understanding of the factors influencing customer engagement and brand trust, particularly in cosmetic products.

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