Emotional Connections Between Brands and Consumers in Digital Age

Aminatul Musyfiqoh[1], Mohamad Rifqy Roosdhani[2]

Department Postgraduate of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas nahdlatul Ulama Jepara, Indonesia[1,2]

Corresponding Author: Aminatul Musyfiqoh (aminatulmusyfiqoh10@gmail.com)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explores the relationship between social media marketing activities (SMMA), brand love, and purchase decisions in Indonesia's transportation sector, focusing on PO Bejeu. Social media acts as an interactive medium fostering emotional bonds between brands and consumers, termed brand love. The research reveals that SMMA significantly enhances brand love, which directly impacts purchase decisions. Additionally, social ties mediate this relationship, as interactions on social media strengthen loyalty and influence purchasing behavior. A survey of 103 Facebook community members who actively discuss Bejeu products was conducted, with data analyzed using the SEM-PLS method, confirming the validity and reliability of all variables. Results indicate full mediation between SMMA and purchase decisions via brand love and partial mediation through social ties. These findings underscore the strategic role of SMMA in cultivating emotional connections to boost loyalty and purchases. The study suggests further research into brand love dynamics across diverse cultural and industrial settings to expand understanding. Keywords: Brand Love, Purchase Decision, Social Media Marketing Activity, Social Ties.

INTRODUCTION

Social media serves as a strategic resource that enhances a company's agility and adaptability, enabling carriers to react swiftly to shifting consumer demands and market conditions (Ye et al., 2022). The integration of social media into business processes enables bus companies to interact with customers more effectively, foster loyalty, and improve services (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2020). The development of relational capabilities, such as internal networks and external partnerships, is critical to the successful implementation of efforts on online platforms (Witschel et al., 2019). While social media marketing provides many advantages, carriers need to be aware of challenges such as brand reputation management. Mismanaging social media can damage a brand's image, requiring strategic oversight and investment in additional capabilities to maintain a competitive advantage (Rashid & Ratten, 2020).

Social media has become a key platform in the digital age that allows customers and businesses to interact directly. (Shiratina et al., 2020). (Demir, 2021) shows that strong interactions on social media platforms can cultivate an optimistic outlook towards the brand, which in turn strengthens user commitment and influences purchasing decisions. One of the main effects is the formation of brand love, where customers not only feel satisfied, but also become emotionally attached to the brand. Study (Q. Zhang et al., 2024) shows believe social media is crucial for creating deep emotional bonds between customers and brands. Frequent interactions through social media can increase brand love and strengthen social bonds through communities formed around shared interests. This relationship encourages brand advocacy and increases consumer loyalty. (Kiki, 2018).

Brand love has become an important paradigm in modern marketing research, including strong emotions and emotional connections in addition to the conventional consumer-brand relationship. This attachment allows consumers to see the brand as part of their identity, thus creating a deeper and more sustainable relationship (Shimul et al., 2024). Brand love is becoming one of the important paradigms in modern marketing research, going beyond the traditional consumer-brand relationship to include deep emotional ties as well as strong attachments (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). In an increasingly competitive business world, companies are not only required to offer high quality products or services, but also build strong emotional relationships with their consumers (Khuan et al., 2023). This phenomenon is increasingly significant as businesses seek to build a sustainable competitive advantage in today's digital marketplace. Research shows that a deep emotional bond with a brand can enhance client happiness and lessen the possibility that they may go to a different brand (Javed et al., 2023). These strong emotional bonds drive crucial marketing outcomes, including increased loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and readiness to pay higher costs (Liebl, Turčínková, Beinhauer, Magano, et al., 2022). One concrete example of the brand love phenomenon can be found in the Black Bus Community, a community of Bejeu Bus users and fans active in the Facebook group. The forms of marketing carried out directly by PO Bejeu through social media marketing include marketing in collaboration with Traveloka, red bus and bus boss. The transportation industry in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation in marketing strategies, Visual content such as travel videos, unique bus designs, or user stories are becoming powerful marketing tools. Companies use Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok to share customer experiences as well as showcase their services. Digitization of services such as e-ticketing, booking apps, and real-time tracking are also becoming part of the broader marketing strategy (Indonesia). In addition to demonstrating strong brand loyalty, this community gives users a forum to exchange product usage-related experiences, anecdotes, and suggestions. The existence of this community shows how a strong emotional engagement with the brand can develop into a sustainable relationship between consumers and the company (Al-Aulawi & Roosdhani, 2023).

Even though a lot of studies have examined how social media marketing affects customer behavior, most have focused on the consumer goods industry or other service sectors that are digital in nature, such as e-commerce and tourism (Alifahmi, 2018; Subarkah & Rachman, 2020). There is limited research on brand love in Indonesian transportation companies, creating a knowledge gap in understanding how local cultural and market factors influence the development of brand love. There is also a lack of research examining how brand love develops and functions specifically in the context of bus transportation services, where the service experience differs significantly from traditional consumer products.

Table 1: State of the art SMMA

Year - writer	Research Area	Objective	Primary Findings	Limits
(Alifahmi, 2018)	Destination Brand Development (DEBRA	Tourism Destination Brand Identity and Image	This research highlights the DEBRA model in aligning the	The research was limited to existing literature and

	model), Brand Identity and Brand Image, Destination Brand Dimensions	Framework	identity and brand image of tourist destinations, resulting in a conceptual framework to understand it.	did not include empirical data or case studies to support the findings.
(Subarkah & Rachman, 2020)	Halal tourism and destination branding in Indonesia.	Destination Branding Indonesia sebagai Destinasi Wisata Halal	Halal tourism diplomacy increases Middle Eastern tourists, supported by logos and campaigns to attract Muslim tourists.	This study suggests the need for increased regulation, halal certification, and halal tourism human resources..
(Hafez, 2021)	The impact of social media marketing (SMM) on business ethics (BE) in Bangladesh's banking industry.	Brand love and brand trust operate as mediators in the relationship between social media marketing efforts and brand equity in Bangladesh's banking industry	Results show that SMM activities do not affect BE directly; brand love fully mediates this relationship, while brand trust partially mediates it..	This research is limited to specific sectors and regions; cross-cultural studies in different sectors are needed to generalize the findings.
(Algharabat, 2017)	Marketing, SMM, brand love, self-expressive brands	Brand love and social media marketing: The mediation function of self-expressive brands	SMMA strengthen brand love and brand loyalty through expressive brands, with (inner) expressive brands as full mediators and (social) as partial mediators.	The study pointed up the necessity for more research on measuring brand love in marketing and the absence of correlation between SMM activities and brand love.

By looking into the connection between social ties, brand love, purchasing decisions, and SMMA under the framework of the transportation industry. Social media marketing activities (SMMA) involve utilizing platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp to engage consumers and increase brand awareness. In Indonesia, with 167 million active users (60.4% of the population), SMMA is particularly important for competitive industries such as transportation. Companies like Gojek and Grab effectively use SMMA to build loyalty through interactive content and promotions. Similarly, PO Bejeu can leverage SMMA to strengthen its online presence by offering personalized updates and promotional campaigns (Irdasyah et al., 2022). Brand love is an emotional attachment that fosters loyalty and influences purchasing decisions, making it critical for differentiation in Indonesia's competitive transportation industry.For example, Gojek has built a strong emotional connection with its users by meeting local needs (e.g., offering affordable rides

during economic hard times) and maintaining high service quality (Riyasa et al., 2023). Social ties refer to interpersonal relationships among consumers that influence their perception of the brand. In the case of PO Bejeu, leveraging user-generated content (e.g., customer reviews or shared travel experiences) on social media can strengthen social ties. For example, Gojek has benefited from word-of-mouth marketing facilitated by its loyal user base sharing positive experiences online (Santoso & Economics, 2023).

Using PO Bejeu, this work aims to bridge the research gap as a case study. Specifically, this study focuses on exploring SMMA's effects on brand love, assessing the function of mediation in social ties in the relationship between SMMA and purchase decisions, and evaluating how brand love influences consumer purchase decisions. Based on this research, it aims to determine the function of mediation in brand love and social ties in the connection between social media marketing and purchase decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Social Media Marketing Activities
SMMA examine the tactics and measures used by businesses to communicate with customers on social media sites. (Q. Yang et al., 2022). In the B2B sector, social media is often used more as an analytics tool than simply for promotional purposes, highlighting the diverse applications of social media marketing across different contexts (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Governments, government agencies, and corporations use social media for marketing and promotion. Social media allows for smooth communication and engagement between stores, events, media, digital services, and customer partners, allowing for the execution of integrated marketing initiatives with less expense and effort (Tafesse, 2018). According to previous research, the five dimensions of SMMA are interactivity, informativeness, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth (Guha et al., 2021). According to the study, active interactions on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter boost customer loyalty and brand awareness. These platforms enable businesses to establish direct relationships with their customers, fostering a strong sense of community and boosting engagement (Alalwan et al., 2017). Social media makes it easier to establish online brand communities where customers may exchange suggestions and experiences (Al-Dmour et al., 2023).

Brand Love
Consumers who experience brand love are more likely to interact with in brand-related activities online, such as commenting, sharing, and creating brand-related content, especially when they perceive high brand value (Castro-González et al., 2024). Brand equity is more impacted by brand love than by brand loyalty alone (Robertson et al., 2022). Love for the brand may boost good word-of-mouth intentions, brand loyalty, and readiness to spend more, all of which improve brand equity (Rahman et al., 2021). Brand love is seen as a valuable goal for marketers, as it can increase purchase frequency, brand advocacy, and resistance to competitive offers (Q. Yang et al., 2022). While brand love is associated with materialism, brand love is different in that it often involves a positive emotional connection to a brand that the consumer already owns, rather than an aspirational desire (Ahuvia et al., 2020).

Social Ties
Social ties refer to connections and relationships among team members, which include instrumental ties (knowledge of coworkers' previous experience and skills) and expressive ties (personal relationships) (Rasmussen et al., 2020). In the collaborative project delivery model, social ties-categorized as strong or weak-strengthen communication and cooperation. Strong ties encourage trust and collaboration, while weak ties provide limited, yet valuable, connections (af Hällström et al., 2021). Maintaining close and extensive ties can improve overall well-being and resilience (Tunçgenç et al., 2023). Social ties connected to online marketing activities are crucial for customers in making decisions (Roosdhani et al., 2021).

Purchase Decision
According (Gunawan et al., 2019) the procedure for creating purchases enables customers to determine their needs, select specific brands and items, and make product selections. Purchasing decisions are The method via which customers choose to purchase goods or services, influenced by personal preferences, needs, and external factors (Matanović & Markov, 2020). Humanity, profit, and convention are just a few examples of the organizational and personal values that influence purchase decisions in the corporate world. These values influence the perceived role in business purchasing decisions (Anwer et al., 2020). Customers often plan their purchasing decisions with timing and products in mind, which can influence buying patterns and increase sales (Chen & Trichakis, 2021). Purchasing decisions are critical to marketing because they effects on brand loyalty and customer behavior (Iskuntianti et al., 2020).

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT
The effect Social Media Marketing Activity on Brand Love
Investigations into (Wallace et al., 2022) demonstrated that the development of relationships between young consumers and the brands they follow on social media is notably influenced by brand love. This study investigates the relationship between brand love and sports promotional material (Sport Related Branded Entertainment, or SRBE) (Liebl, Turčínková, Beinhauer, & Magano, 2022). The idea of brand love is intimately related to the consumer-brand relationship fostered through marketing activities. Social networking sites provide a distinctive opportunity for brands to engage with consumers on a personal level, enhancing emotional connections and fostering brand love (Singh, 2024). (Masciantonio et al., 2021) presents a model that examines the role of active social media engagement in fostering brand love. (Elhajjar & Yacoub, 2024) looked at how SMMA campaigns, especially on Instagram and TikTok, affect emotional connections with businesses. They found a positive correlation between users' love for the brand and their engagement on social media, suggesting that regular interaction can increase users' loyalty to the brand.
H1 : *Social Media Marketing Activity has a significant positive influence with brand love*

The effect Social Media Marketing Activity on Social Ties
Consumers can express their opinions, like material, respond on Twitter, and converse with others about a specific company across several social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. This helps to build stronger social bonds (Fetais et al., 2023). (Simon & Tossan, 2018) argues that the value consumers share through Their feeling of community grows as a result of social media platforms' tendency to improve their interaction with companies. For example (Cheung et al., 2021) discovered a favorable correlation between SMMA (i.e., interactions, eWOM, and trends) and brand interaction among consumers. Results show that users who frequently engage in brand activities have higher levels of social connectivity, indicating a strengthening of social relationships (Abdullah & Faisal, 2022).
H2 : *Social Media Marketing Activity has a significant positive influence with social ties*

The effect Brand Love on Purchase Decision
Research shows that when customers own a strong emotional bond with a brand, It has a favorable impact on their purchasing behavior (Christivany & Iskamto, 2023). Consumers who love a brand tend to have strong emotional ties and make the brand their first choice (Nawaz et al., 2020). Love of brands can be an important part of consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers who love a particular brand will tend to choose that brand over other brands, even if it costs more (Robertson et al., 2022). Consumers who develop a deep emotional attachment and passionate feelings for a brand are more likely to make a purchase decision in favor of the beloved brand (Malhotra, 2021). Love for the brand significantly influences selections about what to buy, as it increases brand equity and consumer perceptions (Robertson et al., 2022).
H3 : *Brand love has a significant positive influence with purchase decision*

The effect Social Ties on Purchase Decision

Social ties have a major positive influence on purchasing decisions, because strong ties, such as with friends, increase trust, emotional connection, and consumer involvement, thereby increasing purchase intentions (Ma et al., 2020). These results explain that reviews and recommendations social media posts from friends or family have a big impact on what people decide to buy. In research by (R. Yang & Che, 2020) It was found that shoppers with strong social ties have a higher shopping frequency compared to those with weak social ties. (Haikal, 2018) explores how social ties influence purchasing decisions and research shows that social ties have a significant positive impact on purchasing decisions.

H4 : *Social Tie has a significant positive influence with purchase decision*

The effect Social Media Marketing Activity on Purchase Decision

The ascent of social media and online platforms has changed the way consumers collect data and communicate with brands. Features such as live-streaming have been shown to increase engagement and influence purchase intent through the relationship established between buyers and sellers (Hossain et al., 2023). Purchasing choices are significantly and favorably influenced by SMM. The use of social media will encourage more people to make purchases (Upadana & Pramudana, 2020). Another study (Dini et al., 2023) found that factors such as interactivity, informativeness, personalization, and trends influence consumer purchasing decisions. Research results (J. R. J. I. J. o. I. M. D. I. Hanaysha, 2022) showed that these features significantly influenced purchase decisions, confirming the importance of effective marketing strategies on social media platforms. SMMA have a significant positive influence on purchase decisions by strengthening the bond between customers and brands, which increases purchase intentions in the context of apparel retail (Sharma et al., 2020).

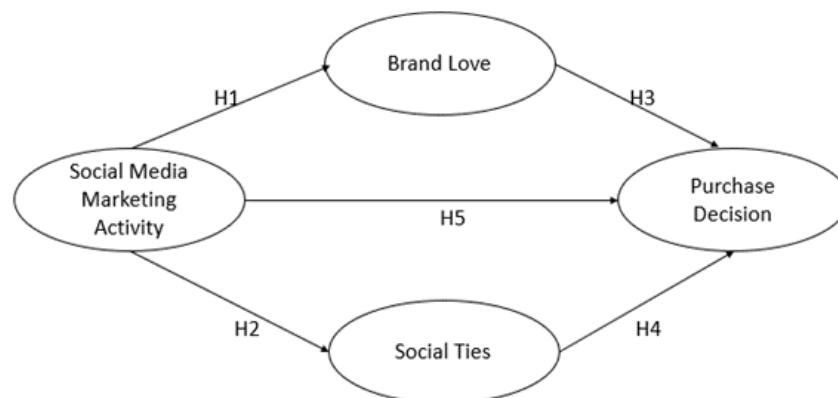**H5 :** *Social Media Marketing Activity has a significant positive influence with purchase decision*

Figure 1. Theoritical Framework
Source : Data Processed

METHODS

Quantitative approaches are the methodology employed in this study. This study examines four variables: Social Media Marketing Activiy (X1), Brand Love (X2), Social Ties (X3) and Purchase Decision (Y) among social media users who interact with PO Bejeu on Facebook. Since the population size of this study is unknown, the Rao Purba formula is applied to the sample (Sujarweni, 2015). In order to overcome the complexity and ambiguity involved in calculating the

size of concealed or sparse populations, the researcher employed the Rao Purba formula, which is highly beneficial when working with unknown populations(Robb & Böhning, 2011). Up to 103 samples of primary data were collected directly from respondents for this investigation. A Google form was used to distribute questionnaires with a Likert scale of 1–10 in order to collect data. Non-probability sampling was used for sampling in this investigation. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which each member of the population is not given equal opportunities when they are chosen as samples. (Ayhan, 2011). Accidental sampling is the sampling technique employed in this study to choose samples from the population. (Zickar et al., 2023) As long as they are deemed relevant, anyone who occurs to cross paths with the researcher can be sampled using the technique known as accidental sampling. A pilot test was conducted prior to distributing the questionnaire by distributing the questionnaire to a small sample of the target population to identify ambiguous or irrelevant questions and refine the wording if necessary (Sage, 2016). This process ensures that data collected through accidental sampling is valid and reliable, reducing potential bias and improving overall data quality. With SmartPLS 4.0 software, data analysis is done using the Structural Equation Modelling, or SEM, approach. Hypothesis testing, inner model testing, and outer model testing are among the tests that are conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model
There are two methods of measurement used in this investigation, these models are the Validity Test and Reliability Test.

Convergent Validity Test
This test's objective is to evaluate how well the indicator captures the idea being measured. In the event that the AVE value exceeds 0.5 and the loading factor exceeds 0.7, the test results are deemed sufficient (Ghozali, 2006).

Table 2. Convergent Validity Test

Variabel	Indikator	Outer Loading	AVE	Hasil
Social Media Marketing Activity	SMMA1	0.702	0,661	VALID
	SMMA2	0.843		
	SMMA3	0,844		
	SMMA4	0,778		
	SMMA5	0,808		
	SMMA6	0,794		
	SMMA7	0.830		
	SMMA8	0,870		
	SMMA9	0,867		
	SMMA10	0,784		
Brand Love	BL1	0,902	0,763	VALID
	BL2	0,879		
	BL3	0,868		
	BL4	0,934		
	BL5	0,776		
Social Ties	ST1	0,879	0,807	VALID
	ST2	0,914		
	ST3	0,898		
	ST4	0,930		

	ST5	0,869		
Purchase Decisison	PD1	0,870	0,731	VALID
	PD2	0,896		
	PD3	0,899		
	PD4	0,890		
	PD5	0,821		
	PD6	0,879		

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS version 4.0.

The Convergent Validity Test results show that all variables are declared valid as the AVE value is more than 0.5 and all outside loading values are greater than 0.7.

Reliability Test
Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are metrics that are considered reliable, with a value scale from zero to one. If the value is more than 0.7 then the reliability test is considered to have reliability**.**

Table 3. Composite reliability & Cronbach's alpha

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Hasil
SMMA	0,943	0,951	Reliabel
Brand Love	0,922	0,941	Reliabel
Social Ties	0,940	0,954	Reliabel
Purchase Decision	0,938	0,950	Reliabel

Source : The data primer that was created using SmartPLS version 4.0.

In the Reliability Test, it can ensure that all variable indicators get a value above 0.7 and get a value above 0.7, so they can be declared reliable.

Inner Model (Model Struktural)
Using hidden variables, a structural model known as the inner model is used to predict causal relationships between variables that are not readily quantifiable.
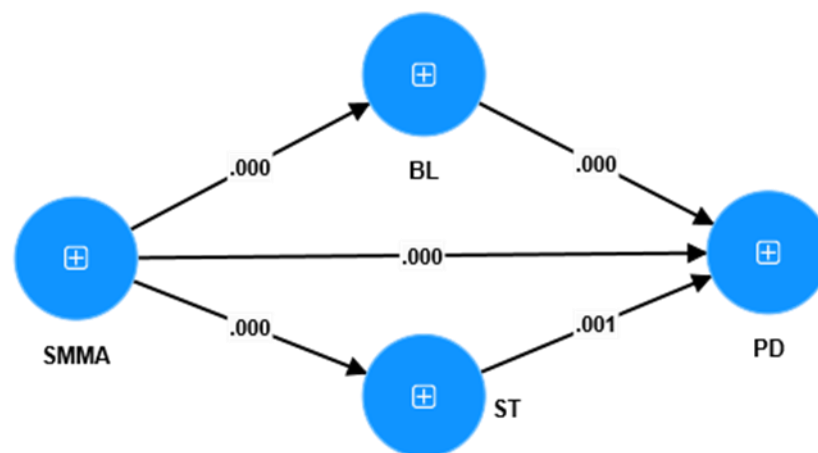

Figure 2. Structural Model
Sources : Data Processed (2024)

R-Square

A test called R-Square is used to show how much the independent variable influences the dependent variable. When the R-Square value is 0.67, it is deemed strong; when it is 0.33, it is deemed moderate; and when it is 0.19, it is deemed weak.

Table 4. R-square

Variabel	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Love	0,313	0,307
Purchase Decision	0,837	0,832
Social Tie	0,395	0,389

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4.0.

From the table data, the conclusion is that the R-Square for Brand Love is 0.313, with a 0.307 Adjusted R-Square, indicating a moderate level of correlation. This figure shows that the SMMA variable influences around 31.3% of the variation in Brand Love. Variables not included in this study have an impact on the remaining 68.7%.

The R-Square obtained by Purchase Decision, which is 0.837 with an Adjusted R-Square of 0.832, further suggests a high degree of connection. These findings clarify that social media marketing activity, brand love, and social tie account for around 83.7% of the variation in purchase decisions. However, the remaining 16.3% are affected by additional factors not included in the study.

The R-square for Social Tie is 0.395, with an Adjusted R-Square of 0.389, indicating a moderate level of correlation. This figure shows that the Social Media Marketing Activity variable accounts for around 39.5% of the variation in Social Tie. Variables not included in this study have an impact on the remaining 60.5%.

Mediation test

To test for mediation effects in this research model, we used the systematic procedure outlined by (Hair et al., 2022), which is called the "Mediation Analysis Procedure". It should be noted that if the P-value in the statistical test result is more than 0.05, the result is not significant. Conversely, if the P-value is less than 0.05, the result shows a significant effect.

Here are the steps of the procedure analysis method by (Hair et al., 2022) : Using bootstrapping to assess the importance of indirect impacts. These indirect effects must be significant to indicate mediation. Make sure the model incorporates the mediator variable, then assess the significance of the indirect effect between the independent and dependent variables through the mediator.Evaluate the type of mediation based on the analysis results: "Full mediation" takes place when the direct effect is negligible and the indirect effect is substantial. "Partial mediation" occurs when both direct and indirect effects are noteworthy. However, there is "No mediation" if the indirect impact is negligible.

Table 5. Path Coeffien

Variabel	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Love -> Purchase Decision	0,389	0,396	0,069	5,594	0,000
SMMA -> Brand Love	0,560	0,570	0,103	5,420	0,000
SMMA -> Purchase Decision	0,465	0,464	0,069	6,700	0,000
SMMA -> Social Tie	0,628	0,635	0,058	10,823	0,000
Social Tie -> Purchase Decisio	0,222	0,210	0,067	3,338	0,001

Source : Primary data processed

Table6. Specifik Indirect Effect

Variabel	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
SMMA -> Brand Love -> Purchase Decision	0,218	0,229	0,071	3,061	0,002
SMMA -> Social Tie -> Purchase Decision	0,140	0,133	0,043	3,234	0,001

Source: Primary data processed on SmartPLS version 4.0

Based on the attached tables 4 and 5, the conclusions are:

The influence of Social Media Marketing Activity on Purchase Decision mediated by Brand Love

Table 5 shows that the Specific Indirect Effect regarding SMMA with Purchase Decision through Brand Love is positive, and significant with a P-Value of 0.002 <0.05. The bootstrapping results show that there is a significant indirect relationship (Brand love that successfully mediates Social media marketing with purchase decision) but the direct effect (Brand Love with purchase decision) is not significant with a value of 0.000 so that complementary partial mediation occurs.

The influence of Social Media Marketing Activity on Purchase Decision mediated by Social Tie

Table 5 shows that the Specific Indirect Effect regarding SMMA with Purchase Decision through Social Tie is positive and significant with a P-Value = 0.001 <0.05. In the bootstrapping results show that the indirect relationship is significant (Social Tie which successfully mediates Social media marketing activity with purchase decision) and the direct relationship (Social media marketing activity with social tie is significant with a value of 0.000 and social tie to purchase decision is also significant with 0.001) then there is what is called complementary partial mediation.

Hypothesis Test

In hypothesis testing, we look at the T-Statistics and P-Value of each path coefficient. The hypothesis is accepted if the P-Value is less than 0.05. To find out, look at the Path Coefficient that the Smart-PLS version 4.0 programme obtained using the Bootstrapping approach.

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Analysis
SMMA -> Social Ties	Coeffisien = 0,628 P value = 0,000 T- Statistics = 10,823 T-tabel = 1,659 T-Statistics > T tabel
SMMA -> Brand Love	Coeffisien = 0,560 P value = 0,000 T- Statistics = 5,420 T-tabel = 1,659 T-Statistics > T tabel
Brand Love -> Purchase Decision	Coeffisien = 0,389 P value = 0,000 T- Statistics = 5,594 T-tabel = 1,659 T-Statistics > T tabel
SMMA -> Purchase Decision	Coeffisien = 0,465 P value = 0,000 T- Statistics = 6,700

	T-tabel = 1,659 T-Statistics > T tabel
Social Ties -> Purchase Decision	Coeffisien = 0,222 P value = 0,000 T- Statistics = 3,338 T-tabel = 1,659 T-Statistics > T table

Source: Processed data SmartPLS versi 4.0 (2024)

Impact of Social Media Marketing Activity on Brand Love
It is evident if the Coeffisien value is (0.560) with t-statistics (5.420) > t-table (1.659) and p value (0.000) <0.05. Thus, H0 is rejected and Ha1 is accepted. This indicates that the variable social media marketing activity with brand love has a positive and significant effect on PO Bejeu Jepara.

Impact of Social Media Marketing Activity on Social Ties
It can be seen if the Coeffisien value is (0.628) with t-statistics (10.823) > t-table (1.659) and p value (0.000) <0.05. Thus, H0 is rejected and Ha2 is accepted. This indicates that the Social Media Marketing Activity variable with Social tie has a positive and significant effect on PO Bejeu Jepara.

Impact of Brand Love on Purchase Decision
It can be seen if the Coeffisien value is (0.389) with t-statistics (5.594) > t-table (1.659) and p value (0.000) <0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and Ha3 is accepted. This indicates that the Brand Love variable with Purchase Decision has a positive and significant effect on PO Bejeu Jepara.

Impact of Social Ties on Purchase Decision

It can be seen if the Coeffisien value is (0.222) with t-statistics (3.338) > t-table (1.659) and p value (0.000) < 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and Ha4 is accepted. This indicates that the social tie variable with purchase decision has a positive and significant effect on PO Bejeu Jepara.

Impact of Social Media Marketing Activity on Purchase Decision
It is evident that the coefficient value is (0.465) with t-statistics (6.700) > t-table (1.659) and p value (0.000) < 0.05. Therefore, H0 is rejected and Ha5 is accepted. This indicates that the variable SMMA on purchase decision has a favourable and noteworthy effect on PO Bejeu Jepara.

According to the research findings, the SMMA, brand love, social tie, and purchase decision variables' validity and reliability tests are both valid and reliable since all of the variables' outer loading values are more than 0.7. The R-Square value for Brand Love is 0.313, with an Adjusted R-Square of 0.307, indicating a moderate correlation. This suggests that the SMMA variable explains approximately 31.3% of the variation in Brand Love, while the remaining 68.7% is influenced by factors outside this study. For Purchase Decision, the R-Square is 0.837, and the Adjusted R-Square is 0.832, reflecting a strong correlation. These results indicate that social media marketing activity, brand love, and social ties collectively account for about 83.7% of the variation in purchase decisions, leaving 16.3% influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Similarly, the R-Square for Social Tie is 0.395, with an Adjusted R-Square of 0.389, showing a moderate correlation. This implies that Social Media Marketing Activity explains roughly 39.5% of the variation in Social Tie, while the remaining 60.5% is attributed to variables excluded from this research.. Testing the mediation of the relationship between SMM on purchase decision mediated by brand love is partial mediation. And testing the mediation of the relationship between SMMA on purchase decision mediated by social tie. In addition, hypothesis testing also shows a supportive and noteworthy relationship between Social Media Marketing Activity on Brand Love. This is in line with research by (Masciantonio et al., 2021). In research (Fetais et al., 2023) discovered that there is a strong and favourable correlation between SMMA on Social Tie. It also shows if there is a positive and significant influence of Brand Love on Purchase Decision. It was

found that there was a positive and significant influence of Social ties on Purchase Decision. This is in accordance with research by (R. Yang & Che, 2020) does not match the research by (S. Zhang & Zhang, 2023). It was found that the positive and significant influence of Social media marketing activity on Purchase Decision, this is in line with research by (Upadana & Pramudana, 2020) and different from research by (J. R. J. P. R. R. Hanaysha, 2018).

The analysis reveals that SMMA positively and significantly influence purchase decisions through brand love, with a P-value of 0.002, indicating significance below the 0.05 threshold. Bootstrapping results confirm a significant indirect relationship, demonstrating that brand love effectively mediates the connection between SMMA and purchase decisions; however, the direct effect of brand love on purchase decisions is not significant (P-value = 0.000), suggesting complementary partial mediation. Additionally, SMMA also shows a positive and significant relationship with purchase decisions through social ties, with a P-value of 0.001. The bootstrapping results indicate that social ties significantly mediate the relationship between SMMA and purchase decisions, as both the direct effect of SMMA on social ties (P-value = 0.000) and the effect of social ties on purchase decisions (P-value = 0.001) are significant, further supporting the presence of complementary partial mediation in this context.

The analysis's findings indicate that several variables have the highest scores in determining consumer attachment to the PO Bejeu brand on social media. The highest variable on Social Media Marketing Activities is SMMA8, which describes how consumers feel it is possible to share opinions about brands, products, or services obtained from PO Bejeu's social media with their acquaintances. In the Brand Love variable, the highest indicator is BL4, which shows that consumers have a tendency to always follow PO Bejeu Jepara's social media. Furthermore, in the Social Ties variable, the highest score is in indicator ST4, which shows that consumers communicate quite frequently with other members of the BBC (Black Bus Community) community. Finally, in the Purchase Decision variable, the highest indicator PD3 shows that consumers are satisfied and happy with their decision to buy tickets from PO Bejeu compared to other PO.

The results of this investigation highlight the crucial part that SMMA in shaping brand love and influencing purchase decisions in the transportation industry in Indonesia, specifically through the case study of PO Bejeu. The study reveals that SMMA significantly increases brand love, which in turn positively influences consumer purchasing decisions. This relationship is further mediated by social ties, indicating that the emotional connection fostered through social media interactions increases loyalty and results in making purchase decisions.

The practical implications of these findings suggest that companies should prioritize their social media strategies not only to promote their products, but also to foster emotional bonds with consumers. To strengthen its brand loyalty and engagement, PO Bejeu can implement several practical steps. First, prioritize timely and authentic engagement by actively responding to customer questions and comments on social media to foster trust and satisfaction. Second, create content that resonates with the target audience. Third, utilize user-generated content (UGC) by encouraging customers to share their experiences with PO Bejeu and feature them on social platforms to build community trust

These theoretical implications expand the understanding of the mediating role of brand love and social ties in the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase decisions, particularly in the context of the transportation industry. The results add to the body of knowledge in marketing by demonstrating how social media marketing activities can influence purchase decisions through the formation of brand love and the strengthening of social ties. This study enriches the understanding of the dynamics of brand love in specific cultural and industry contexts, adding new dimensions to branding theory and consumer behavior. The research provides a conceptual framework for understanding how online social interactions can translate into tangible

marketing outcomes, such as purchase decisions. The findings support and extend previous theories on the role of social media in building brand-consumer relationships, with a particular focus on the transportation industry which has been previously under-explored in this context.

CONCLUSION

The validity and reliability test findings, as well as the discussion and research findings, make it possible to draw conclusions. All variables are considered valid because the outer loading value is greater than 0.7 and the AVE value is greater than 0.5. The results of the R-Square test of the Brand love and Social ties variables show that these variables are moderate, while the Purchase Decision variable shows strong. The mediation test's findings indicate that there is full mediation because the effect of social media marketing activity on purchase decisions mediated by Brand love is 0.002 and there is partial mediation of the influence of Social ties of 0.001. Because all relationships have a P value <0.05, there is a positive and significant relationship between SMMA on brand love, social media marketing activity on social ties, brand love on purchase decision, social ties on purchase decision, and social media marketing activity on purchase decision.

The findings of this study highlight the important role of SMMA in shaping brand love and influencing purchase decisions in the transportation industry in Indonesia, specifically through the case study of PO Bejeu. The study reveals that SMMA significantly increases brand love, which in turn positively influences consumer purchasing decisions. This relationship is further mediated by social ties, indicating that the emotional connection fostered through social media interactions increases loyalty and leads to purchase decisions.

Future research should look at the dynamics of brand love in many cultural contexts and sectors outside of transportation. Investigating how different demographic factors affect the relationship between SMMA and brand love could provide deeper insights. In addition, it would also be advantageous to look into how social media use affects customer behaviour and brand loyalty over the long run.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, M. H. S., & Faisal, A. J. J. E. (2022). The Role Of Social Media Marketing Activities In Increasing Brand Loyalty. *27*(3), 478-499.

af Hällström, A., Bosch-Sijtsema, P., Poblete, L., Rempling, R., Karlsson, M. J. C. m., & economics. (2021). The role of social ties in collaborative project networks: A tale of two construction cases. *39*(9), 723-738.

Agnihotri, R., Bakeshloo, K. A., & Mani, S. J. I. M. M. (2023). Social media analytics for business-to-business marketing. *115*, 110-126.

Ahuvia, A., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rindfleisch, A. J. J. o. P., & Management, B. (2020). Is brand love materialistic? *, 30*(3), 467-480.

Al-Aulawi, A., & Roosdhani, M. R. J. E. J. I. E. d. B. (2023). Mobilitas Berkelanjutan: Meningkatkan Minat Pembelian Ulang Melalui Kualitas Layanan Dan Promosi Yang Ditargetkan Pada Industri Bus. *14*(2), 117-125.

Al-Dmour, R., Alkhatib, O. H., Al-Dmour, H., & Basheer Amin, E. J. S. O. (2023). The influence of social marketing drives on brand loyalty via the customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in travel and tourism offices. *13*(2), 21582440231181433.

Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., Algharabat, R. J. T., & informatics. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *34*(7), 1177-1190.

Algharabat, R. S. (2017). Linking social media marketing activities with brand love. *Kybernetes, 46*(10), 1801-1819. doi:10.1108/K-04-2017-0130

Alifahmi, H. J. J. I. P. (2018). IDENTITAS MEREK TUJUAN PARIWISATA DAN

KERANGKA KERJA GAMBAR. *1*(1), 20-29.

Anwer, E., Deshpande, S., Derry, R., Basil, D. Z. J. J. o. B., & Marketing, I. (2020). The value of values in business purchase decisions. *35*(8), 1323-1334.

Ayhan, H. Ö. J. I. e. o. s. s. (2011). Non-probability Sampling Survey Methods. *14*, 979-982.

Castro-González, S., Bande, B., Fernández-Ferrín, P. J. E. J. o. M., & Economics, B. (2024). "I love your brand! I engage with you, and I do online brand-related activities (COBRAs)": the role of brand value.

Chen, Y., & Trichakis, N. J. O. R. (2021). on revenue management with strategic customers choosing when and what to buy. *69*(1), 175-187.

Cheung, M. L., Pires, G. D., Rosenberger III, P. J., De Oliveira, M. J. J. M. I., & Planning. (2021). Driving COBRAs: the power of social media marketing. *39*(3), 361-376.

Christivany, C., & Iskamto, D. J. J. (2023). IMPACT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND BRAND LOYALTY ON PURCHASE DECISION FOR BRAND LOVE KPOP TREASURE MUSIC ALBUMS. *9*(2), 65-80.

Demir, M. (2021). *SAR Image Reconstruction from 1-Bit Quantized Data with Sign-Flip Errors*.

Dini, A. M., Abdurrahman, A. J. I. J. o. S., Technology, & Management. (2023). The influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions is Influenced by brand awareness in avoskin beauty products. *4*(4), 1009-1014.

Elhajjar, S., & Yacoub, L. J. P. o. (2024). Social media research: We are publishing more but with weak influence. *19*(2), e0297241.

Fetais, A. H., Algharabat, R. S., Aljafari, A., & Rana, N. P. J. I. S. F. (2023). Do social media marketing activities improve brand loyalty? An empirical study on luxury fashion brands. *25*(2), 795-817.

Garrido-Moreno, A., García-Morales, V., King, S., & Lockett, N. J. J. o. S. M. (2020). Social Media use and value creation in the digital landscape: a dynamic-capabilities perspective. *31*(3), 313-343.

Ghorbanzadeh, D., & Rahehagh, A. (2021). Emotional brand attachment and brand love: the emotional bridges in the process of transition from satisfaction to loyalty. *Rajagiri Management Journal, 15*(1), 16-38. doi:10.1108/RAMJ-05-2020-0024

Ghozali, I. J. S. P. U. D. (2006). Structural Equation Modeling Alternative Methods with Partial Least Square.

Guha, S., Mandal, A., & Kujur, F. (2021). The social media marketing strategies and its implementation in promoting handicrafts products: a study with special reference to Eastern India. *Journal of Research in Marketing Enterpreneurship*, 339-364.

Gunawan, A. V., Linawati, & Kartono, R. (2019). Determinant Factors of E-Commerce Purchase Decision in Jakarta and Tangerang *Binus Business Review*, 21-29.

Hafez, M. (2021). The impact of social media marketing activities on brand equity in the banking sector in Bangladesh: the mediating role of brand love and brand trust. *International Journal of Bank Marketing, 39*(7), 1353-1376. doi:10.1108/IJBM-02-2021-0067

Haikal, D. M. J. J. A., Manajemen dan Ekonomi. (2018). The Effect of Consumer Ethnocentrism, Brand Image, and Perceived Quality, on Purchase Decisions With Purchase Intention as Intervening Variable. *20*(2), 38-49.

Hair, J., Hult, G., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. J. S. P. I. (2022). A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)(Third Edit).

Hanaysha, J. R. J. I. J. o. I. M. D. I. (2022). Impact of social media marketing features on consumer's purchase decision in the fast-food industry: Brand trust as a mediator. *2*(2), 100102.

Hanaysha, J. R. J. P. R. R. (2018). An examination of the factors affecting consumer's purchase decision in the Malaysian retail market. *2*(1), 7-23.

Hossain, M. A., Kalam, A., Nuruzzaman, M., & Kim, M. J. S. O. (2023). The power of live-streaming in consumers' purchasing decision. *13*(4), 21582440231197903.

Indonesia, K. P. R. (Producer). Kemenhub Terus Dorong Digitalisasi di Sektor Transportas. *Portal Resmi Kementerian Perhubungan Republik Indonesia*. Retrieved from https://portal.dephub.go.id/post/read/kemenhub-terus-dorong-digitalisasi-di-sektor-

transportasi

Irdasyah, R. R., Risqiani, R., & Margaretha, F. J. J. E. R. (2022). The Influence of Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Against Purchase Intention. *5*(2), 402-416.

Iskuntianti, N. D., Faisal, M. A., Naimah, J., Sanjaya, V. F. J. J. o. B., & Review, M. (2020). The Influence of brand image, lifestyle, and product quality on purchasing decisions. *1*(6), 436-448.

Javed, N., Khalil, S. H., Ishaque, A., & Khalil, S. M. J. P. o. (2023). Lovemarks and beyond: Examining the link between lovemarks and brand loyalty through customer advocacy in the automobile industry. *18*(4), e0285193.

Khuan, H., Setiawan, Z., Munizu, M., Sintesa, N., & Sono, M. G. J. J. I. E. (2023). Hubungan Keterikatan Merek Emosional, Kepuasan Dan Loyalitas Pelanggan. *8*(1).

Kiki, J. J. J. V. (2018). Pengaruh word of mouth terhadap keputusan pembelian konsumen pada media online shop shopee di pekanbaru (Survey pada Mahasiswa Semester VII Jurusan Pendidikan Akuntansi Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Islam Riau). *4*(1), 2502-1419.

Liebl, H., Turčínková, J., Beinhauer, R., & Magano, J. (2022). Do you love me? The relationship between sport-related branded entertainment and brand love. *Cogent Business & Management, 9*(1), 2143014. doi:10.1080/23311975.2022.2143014

Liebl, H., Turčínková, J., Beinhauer, R., Magano, J. J. C. B., & Management. (2022). Do you love me? The relationship between sport-related branded entertainment and brand love. *9*(1), 2143014.

Ma, L., Zhang, X., Ding, X., Wang, G. J. J. o. T., & Research, A. E. C. (2020). How social ties influence customers' involvement and online purchase intentions. *16*(3), 395-408.

Malhotra, S. J. S. J. o. I. M. (2021). Studying the Influence of Brand Love on Brand Jealousy for Premium Clothing Brands. *18*(2), 5-18.

Masciantonio, A., Bourguignon, D., Bouchat, P., Balty, M., & Rimé, B. J. P. o. (2021). Don't put all social network sites in one basket: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and their relations with well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *16*(3), e0248384.

Matanović, J., & Markov, K. J. M. (2020). Relations between purchase decision styles and personal characteristics of buyers. *51*(4), 237-246.

Mix.co.id. (Producer). ekuatan Diferensiasi dan Komunikasi Bus Bejeu. *Mix Marcomm*. Retrieved from https://mix.co.id/marcomm/brand-communication/branding/kekuatan-diferensiasi-dan-komunikasi-bus-bejeu/

Nawaz, S., Jiang, Y., Alam, F., & Nawaz, M. Z. J. S. O. (2020). Role of brand love and consumers' demographics in building consumer–brand relationship. *10*(4), 2158244020983005.

Rahman, R., Langner, T., & Temme, D. J. J. o. B. M. (2021). Brand love: conceptual and empirical investigation of a holistic causal model. *28*(6), 609-642.

Rashid, S., & Ratten, V. J. J. o. F. B. M. (2020). A dynamic capabilities approach for the survival of Pakistani family-owned business in the digital world. *10*(4), 373-387.

Rasmussen, M. B., Tolsgaard, M. G., Dieckmann, P., Østergaard, D., White, J., Plenge, P., & Ringsted, C. V. J. B. m. e. (2020). Social ties influence teamwork when managing clinical emergencies. *20*, 1-7.

Riyasa, I. A. P. W., Dewi, N. I. K., & Lina, N. P. M. J. J. J. I. M. (2023). Peran Brand Love Memediasi Pengaruh Social Media Marketing Terhadap Brand Loyalty Pada UMKM Kuliner di Denpasar. *13*(1), 14-25.

Robb, M. L., & Böhning, D. J. B. J. (2011). Imputing unobserved values with the EM algorithm under left and right-truncation, and interval censoring for estimating the size of hidden populations. *53*(1), 75-87.

Robertson, J., Botha, E., Ferreira, C., & Pitt, L. J. J. o. B. R. (2022). How deep is your love? The brand love-loyalty matrix in consumer-brand relationships. *149*, 651-662.

Roosdhani, M. R., Komaryatin, N. J. J. o. M., & Research, E. (2021). The Creation of Intention To Buy through Online Social Ties and Social Media Advertisement. *2*(1), 19-26.

Santoso, S. J. W. T. o. B., & Economics. (2023). The Influence of Social Media, Brand Trust, Brand Affect and Value Consciousness on Brand Loyalty: Online Transportation Cases in Indonesia. *20*, 564-572.

Sharma, S., Singh, S., Kujur, F., Das, G. J. J. o. T., & Research, A. E. C. (2020). Social media activities and its influence on customer-brand relationship: an empirical study of apparel retailers' activity in India. *16*(4), 602-617.

Shimul, A. S., Faroque, A. R., & Cheah, I. (2024). Does brand attachment protect consumer–brand relationships after brand misconduct in retail banking? *International Journal of Bank Marketing, 42*(2), 183-204. doi:10.1108/IJBM-10-2022-0453

Shiratina, A., Indika, D. R., Komariyah, I., Kania, D., & Solihin, E. H. J. J. S. M. (2020). Pemasaran Online Melalui Penerapan Iklan Secara Digital. *2*(1), 15-23.

Simon, F., & Tossan, V. J. J. o. B. r. (2018). Does brand-consumer social sharing matter? A relational framework of customer engagement to brand-hosted social media. *85*, 175-184.

Singh, P. (2024). Beyond the basics: Exploring the impact of social media marketing enablers on business success. *Heliyon, 10*(5), e26435. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e26435

Subarkah, A. R., & Rachman, J. B. J. J. K. D., Hospitalitas Dan Perjalanan. (2020). Destination branding Indonesia sebagai destinasi Wisata halal. *4*(2), 84-97.

Sujarweni, V. W. (2015). Metodologi Penelitian Bisnis Dan Ekonomi (Vol. 33). In: Pustaka Baru Press.

Tafesse, W. (2018). Implementing social media marketing strategically: an empirical assessment. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 732-749.

Tunçgenç, B., van Mulukom, V., & Newson, M. J. S. a. (2023). Social bonds are related to health behaviors and positive well-being globally. *9*(2), eadd3715.

Upadana, M. W. K., & Pramudana, K. A. S. J. E.-J. M. (2020). Brand Awareness Memediasi Pengaruh Social Media Marketing Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian. *9*(5), 1921-1941.

Wallace, E., Torres, P., Augusto, M., Stefuryn, M. J. J. o. P., & Management, B. (2022). Do brand relationships on social media motivate young consumers' value co-creation and willingness to pay? The role of brand love. *31*(2), 189-205.

Witschel, D., Döhla, A., Kaiser, M., Voigt, K.-I., & Pfletschinger, T. J. J. o. B. E. (2019). Riding on the wave of digitization: Insights how and under what settings dynamic capabilities facilitate digital-driven business model change. *89*(8), 1023-1095.

Yang, Q., Hayat, N., Al Mamun, A., Makhbul, Z. K. M., & Zainol, N. R. J. P. o. (2022). Sustainable customer retention through social media marketing activities using hybrid SEM-neural network approach. *17*(3), e0264899.

Yang, R., & Che, T. J. J. C. i. H. B. (2020). Do social ties matter for purchase frequency? The role of buyers' attitude towards social media marketing. *110*, 106376.

Ye, Y., Yu, Q., Zheng, Y., & Zheng, Y. J. J. o. B. R. (2022). Investigating the effect of social media application on firm capabilities and performance: The perspective of dynamic capability view. *139*, 510-519.

Zhang, Q., Wang, Y., & Ariffin, S. K. J. P. o. (2024). Consumers purchase intention in live-streaming e-commerce: A consumption value perspective and the role of streamer popularity. *19*(2), e0296339.

Zhang, S., & Zhang, L. J. S. O. (2023). The Influence of Brand Social Interaction on Purchase Intention: A Perspective of Social Capital. *13*(2), 21582440231169933.

Zickar, M. J., Keith, M. G. J. A. R. o. O. P., & Behavior, O. (2023). Innovations in sampling: Improving the appropriateness and quality of samples in organizational research. *10*(1), 315-337.