

The Effect of Social Media Marketing and Customer Relationships in Creating Customer Response

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the influence of social media marketing and customer relationships on creating profitable customer responses for marketers. Social media engagement mediation roles were also tested to see their relationship. The survey included 463 respondents who had purchased a product in response to marketing stimuli on social media. The research model was tested using the AMOS covariance-based structural equation modeling approach. Customer relationships significantly influence social media engagement and customer response. Meanwhile, social media marketing significantly influences social media engagement but has no significant direct effect on customer responses. Therefore, the mediating role of social media engagement is needed to strengthen the relationship between social media marketing and customer relationships in generating positive customer responses. This research provides new insights into social media marketing by showing that successful marketing efforts should not only rely on social media marketing but also on the essential role of customer relationships in increasing positive customer relationships. This research is the first to examine the effect of social media involvement on customer responses as a measure of the success of social media marketing.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Social media engagement, Customer relationship, Customer response, Structural equation modeling

INTRODUCTION

The use of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, etc., is an essential part of marketing products to society today (Bali et al., 2022; Obermayer et al., 2022; Sedalo et al., 2022). We Are Social (2022) reports the potential

reach of TikTok users of 970.2 million and Instagram 1.45 billion, with their main activities being viewing funny content, entertainment, searching for products from particular brands, up-to-date news, sending messages to friends and family, and posting photos and videos. Business actors should utilize this amount to reach a broader market. Social media has proven more economical and adaptive in attracting many users than traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and radio, which cannot target specifically (Lopes et al., 2020). One example of a country experiencing an increase in online sales is Indonesia. There will be an increase in online sales dominated by marketing through social media in the form of online campaigns and activities (Reken, 2024). Marketers constantly seek the most effective new ways to communicate with customers through social media (Grewal et al., 2018). The challenge for novice marketers is developing the right strategy to engage consumers as their target audience on social media (Griffiths & McLean, 2015; Youngtae & Andrew, 2016). Meanwhile, firms that already engage in social media marketing must develop appropriate strategies and how their marketing strategy to foster long-term relationships so that consumers are voluntarily involved in the company's social media (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Meanwhile, firms that already engage in social media marketing must develop appropriate strategies to foster long-term relationships with consumers and encourage their voluntary participation in the firm's social media activities (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Although previous research has investigated the importance of the influence of social media marketing on engagement (Dolan et al., 2019; Y. Li & Xie, 2020; Liu et al., 2019), this study still has limitations it only focuses on social media marketing but does not include other factors that can increase engagement, such as the critical role of customer relationships, which can increase engagement on social media (Arora et al., 2021; Bazi et al., 2020; Qalati et al., 2021). Customer relationships can facilitate the development of new marketing strategy conceptualizations through two-way interactive communication (Rodriguez et al., 2012). Marketing strategies on social media don't just stop at content or information conveyed in one direction. However, how can the content delivered also synergize with maintaining customer relationships to increase customer engagement? These two variables must be combined to create customer engagement on social media.

So et al.(2016) and Upadhyay et al.(2022) suggest that researchers focus on the engagement level and how this engagement can increase customer response. Customer response is a manifestation of engagement on social media (Hollebeek et al., 2016). Various social media certainly have different characteristics. Instagram users tend to

show higher engagement than Facebook and Twitter users (Phua et al., 2017). This indicates a need to prove whether customer involvement will impact consumer reactions to various types of social media (Chu et al., 2019). Marketing on social media is complex, requiring businesses to continue to develop their skills in managing social media channels (Qalati et al., 2021). To gain a competitive position and increase consumer awareness of the products offered.

This study has several objectives to investigate this issue. First, it will examine the impact of social media marketing and customer relationships on social media engagement and customer response. Second, it will examine the effect of engagement on increasing customer response, which has never been studied before. Third, it will examine the role of social media engagement as a mediator among other variables. Ultimately, it will form a social media marketing model that can be effectively used to market products to online consumers.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social Media Marketing

Social media is a marketing tool that makes sharing content, collaborating, and interacting with fellow users easy (Febrian, 2023; Seo & Park, 2018). Abed et al. (2015) defines social media marketing as communication initiated by one of the audience or business actors that benefits all parties involved through product promotion information. This allows companies to incur relatively low costs to achieve marketing objectives (Zubair et al., 2022). When associated with the resource dependence theory, social media marketing aims to obtain external resources and customers who are these resources (Harmeling et al., 2017; Hillman et al., 2009). This shows the importance of social media marketing for product promotion.

Previous research describes the factors that can shape social media marketing. Godey et al. (2016) explain the behavior of social media users that can be used as a form of marketing on social media, namely entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. Entertainment can provide pleasure and is defined as communication that reaches a large audience (Bates & Anthony J, 2010; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). Social media users enjoy the fun of finding other users' posts in the form of humor or funny videos (Qin, 2020). Marketers must allocate resources to spread entertainment content (Vrontis et al., 2021). The second form of social media marketing is interaction, defined as users' ability to exchange information (Kirk et al., 2015; Yang & Shen, 2018). Marketers must be able to provide relevant information about their needs. Third, trendiness refers to the extent to which a company can communicate up-to-date information about a product that others are discussing (Naaman et al., 2011).

Marketers can provide this information to create value for consumers, as it reduces their need to search elsewhere for it.

Furthermore, customization is defined as the marketer's ability to satisfy customers with different tastes according to their requests (Seo & Park, 2018). The customized social media strategy emphasizes responding more effectively to individual customers than the masses (Hewett et al., 2016). Finally, word of mouth (WOM) has been a marketing success factor for small and medium businesses (Cuesta-Valino et al., 2022). WOM is the exchange of information from consumers based on experiences about company products and services (Dellarocas, 2003; Mikalef et al., 2013).

One of the benefits of social media marketing is increasing social media engagement (Dolan et al., 2019; Y. Li & Xie, 2020; Liu et al., 2019). Companies can facilitate customer engagement by actively participating on social media. For example, many companies create engagement through Facebook pages (Hinson et al., 2019). Marketers need to understand how to develop effective social media marketing to increase customer engagement. This marketing is customized, entertaining, educational, and exciting content (Barger, 2016; Koch & Benlian, 2015).

H1: Social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on social media engagement

Customer Relationship

Customer experience enables companies to engage directly with consumers by providing sustainable solutions and fostering long-term relationships (Rose et al., 2021; Urdea et al., 2021). Customer relations serve as a strategic mechanism for addressing customer needs by segmenting markets, developing targeted product offerings, and fostering communication that encourages customer involvement (Arora et al., 2021). Social media is widely used by companies today to build customer relationships, which has implications for increased purchases (Rose et al., 2021). Marketers need to learn how to create customer relationships that have value for their customers. Customer intimacy, trust, and active listening are key components in the construction of customer relationships (Gautam & Sharma, 2017; Park et al., 2015). This research will investigate how this can affect customer engagement on social media. It is necessary to discuss each of these constructs so that they can be easily understood.

Trust is the basis of long-term success that companies must create (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Tabrani et al., 2018). Trust is a willingness to exchange with others (Moorman et al., 1993). When customer trust is obtained, it will create customer intimacy, strengthening the customer relationship with the company (Nora, 2019).

Customer intimacy is a multi-dimensional construct of perceived value, closeness, and mutual understanding (Tabrani et al., 2018). This closeness is marked by collaboration in fulfilling requests, developing peers in technology, and strategic alignments that arise through relational intimacy through available media (Yeung, 2022). Social media is considered the right place to build customer relationships through real-time chat features that are easy for many users. The emergence of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube provides another alternative for companies to communicate in two directions, including listening to the wishes of their consumers (Gearhart & Maben, 2019). Long before the existence of social media, Marshall et al. (2003) emphasized that successful sellers wanted to listen rather than talk. The highest level of listening is active, empathetic listening, where the listener is present with an emotional understanding of the customer's similarities and provides verbal and nonverbal reactions (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).

The factors that form these customer relationships can be used as identifiers to increase customer engagement on social media. Repeated. Such repeated interactions between sellers and buyers create trust and emotional bonds, facilitating customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). This interaction can be carried out through positive experiences and the exchange of information (Itani et al., 2020). Given the importance of customer relationships for marketing, we propose the following hypothesis.

H2: Customer relationship has a positive and significant effect on social media engagement.

Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement is the actions and attitudes of consumers toward products or services (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022). This attitude is reflected in customers who click the like button or leave comments on posts on social media. This happens quickly as consumers' implicit active response to browsing social media content (C. Kim & Yang, 2017). Customers involved with the brand tend to think more positively of the seller than those not involved (Harrigan et al., 2018). As with e-commerce, engagement helps them decide to purchase products online (Majeed et al., 2022). This cues marketers to understand what factors can shape customer engagement on social media.

Cao et al. (2021) and Chahal and Rani (2017) provide a form of consumer involvement in social media in consumption, contribution, and creation behavior. Consumption is defined as consumers' desire to understand information from the press,

such as reading articles, watching videos, and passively viewing photos on social media, without taking action afterward. It is a contribution if they comment and share this information with their friends (Piehler et al., 2019). They do it because they find valuable information for themselves and maybe others. The most profitable engagement occurs when they are willing to write opinions about the content they receive and post them on their social media (Cao et al., 2021). The three forms of engagement are used to measure the extent of consumer involvement in the social media they follow. Nearly 49% of consumers who engage on social media will make future purchases from that company (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Customer involvement will generate customer responses that involve investment in customers' wills that focus on cognitive, emotional, and social knowledge, in which there is company interaction (Hollebeek et al., 2016). When social media is used as a medium for selling, marketers must see it through to customer response (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016). Referring to the theory of stimuli, organism, and response (SOR), engagement is only an organism that has not yet received a response, followed by buying behavior (Islam et al., 2020; Tak & Gupta, 2021). This research will measure whether consumers involved in social media can increase customer response that benefits the company, which has not been studied by previous research. We hypothesize:

H3: Social media engagement has a positive and significant impact on customer responses.

Customer Responses

Customer response is defined as a form of perception, preference, and consumer behavior in response to marketing activities carried out by marketers (Keller, 1993). For example, based on images and videos, Instagram will have a different response than Twitter and Facebook, which also focus on captions or explanatory sentences (Chu et al., 2019). This explains how marketers should be able to focus on the different responses of each consumer to be used as a benchmark for marketing success on social media. Customer response can be seen from brand preferences, price premiums, and brand loyalty (Khan et al., 2019; Zarei et al., 2022). Brand preference is defined as consumers' attitude toward remembering several brands and tending to choose specific brands based on their knowledge and feelings (Keller et al., 2003). Premium prices are defined as product prices that exceed market prices (Fuerst & McAllister, 2011) but are desired by customers willing to pay for them (Aaker, 1996; Buil et al., 2013). Meanwhile, brand loyalty is defined as a behavioral response to a series of alternative brands, and they choose or recommend them to others (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973).

Customer responses are the ultimate goal of the stimulus provided by marketers on social media (Raji et al., 2020). Social media marketing encourages customer response through a positive buying decision-making process (Chen & Lin, 2019; Ebrahim, 2020). Marketers posting trends-related information are likely to increase customer response on social media (Khan et al., 2019). This has been proven by increasing customer response to luxury brands, including through e-commerce purchases (Febrian, 2025; Godey et al., 2016)

Customer relationships are another stimulus that can increase customer response (King & Burgess, 2008). Through these relationships, companies can better understand customer behavior and needs in detail (A. J. Campbell, 2003; King & Burgess, 2008). Thus, it effectively provides different offers according to consumer needs (Mithas et al., 2005). This relationship can be interpreted as a consumer experience of services offered by marketers, which can increase consumer responses in the form of cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses (Palmer, 2010). However, the consequence is that if marketers fail to serve and lack responsiveness, it will result in reduced consumer responsiveness (De Matos et al., 2009).

H4: Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer response.

H5: Customer relationship has a positive and significant effect on customer response.

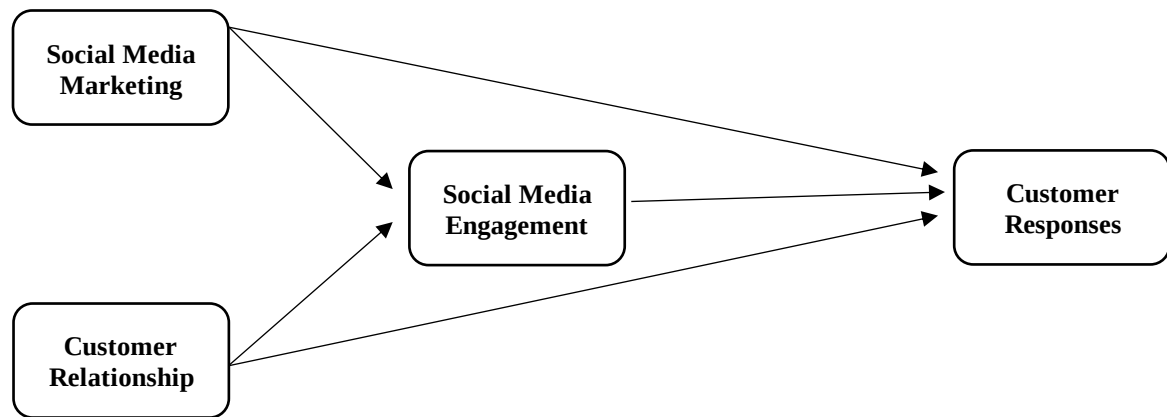
Social Media Engagement as Mediation

Social media is a place to interact with each other, producing higher customer involvement compared to traditional methods, which only focus on the company's relationship with consumers (Trusov et al., 2009). When companies want to get customer reactions by liking, commenting, or sharing, customer engagement must increase because they want a better feeling. Companies with this capability have proven more effective in improving customer response (Wang & Kim, 2017). Marketers must manage customer involvement as the first level of ability in a customer relationship (Harrigan et al., 2020). Social content strategy requires the company's active participation in communicating to elicit customer responses (Barger, 2016; F. Li et al., 2020). Given the importance of this involvement, it is necessary to test whether customer involvement also influences the success of a marketing strategy to get a response from customers.

H6: Social media engagement mediates the impact of social media marketing on customer responses.

H7: Social media engagement mediates the influence of customer relationships on customer response.

Figure 1 *Research model*



METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative method involving 463 respondents, considered the most representative of the population, using a purposive sampling technique (S. Campbell et al., 2020). The selected sample quality is based on subjective interpretation according to the characteristics appropriate to the research context. Questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents via WhatsApp, asking them to fill in the questionnaires according to their experience. The electronic survey method is used because it minimizes costs and makes it easier to reach many respondents than an independent survey.

The questionnaire was designed using previous literature with as many as 44 items. Social media marketing variables are measured based on a framework (Godey et al., 2016), which uses 11 question items consisting of five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. The customer relationship variable is measured based on a framework (Gautam & Sharma, 2017) that uses 12 question items divided into three dimensions: customer intimacy, trust, and active empathetic listening. Social media engagement is measured based on a framework (Cao et al., 2021; Chahal & Rani, 2017) using 12 question items of three dimensions: consumption, contribution, and behavior creation. The customer response variable is measured based on a framework (Khan et al., 2019; Zarei et al., 2022) using 9 question items of brand preference, price premium, and brand loyalty. The study items were anchored on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 = Strongly agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly disagree.

RESULTS

Data Analysis and Findings

The sample consists of consumers who have shopped online for certain products, which are the result of the stimulus provided by the company through social media. Specifically, the demographics of the participants showed that the age of the participants was between 16 and 46 years, with as many as 176 males and 287 females, senior high school education level 324, degree 99, and post-degree 40 respondents. They have accessed social media such as Facebook 120, Instagram 210, YouTube 21, TikTok 104, and Twitter 8 respondents. Products purchased are fashion (clothes, pants, shoes) 341, electronics 21, food and beverages 35, and electronics 66.

This study analyzes data through the AMOS structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. The first step is to test confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the stability of the measurement construct and know its nature. CFA testing was carried out on all exogenous and endogenous variables by performing first-order CFA and second-order CFA. There are 44 indicators analyzed from four latent variables: social media marketing, customer relationships, engagement, and customer responses. First Order (CFA) determines all indicators' construct validity and reliability.

Furthermore, the second-order CFA is carried out by showing the sub-constructs on all exogenous and endogenous variables. Social media marketing sub-constructive is entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. Customer relationships are characterized by customer intimacy, trust, and active empathetic listening. Social media engagement is consumption, contribution, and creation behavior. Customer response is brand preference, price premium, and brand loyalty. Thus, we divide CFA into two parts, namely first-order CFA and second-order CFA, which are analyzed sequentially. After mapping the measurement model, the first step is to see that the loading factor value must be > 0.5 (J. F. Hair, Matthews, et al., 2017) so that it can determine the reliability and validity of the constructs.

CFA first order

The first-order CFA measurement model shows a good loading factor between 0.631 and 0.901, as shown in Table 1. The average variance extracted (AVE) value measures convergent validity, considering the AVE threshold value ≥ 0.50 . Reliability is seen from composite reliability (CR) ≥ 0.7 (J. F. Hair, Babin, et al., 2017). Measurement of the fit model is also tested on each construct and obtains the required fit model. Thus, the first-order CFA showed fit results, and the second-order CFA was measured.

Table 1 *Loadings of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) First-Order*

First-order construct	Code	CFA Loading	AVE	CR
Entertainment	Ent2	0.859	0.77	0.87
	Ent1	0.894		
Interaction	Int3	0.767	0.62	0.83
	Int2	0.817		
	Int1	0.773		
Trendiness	Tren2	0.737	0.58	0.74
	Tren1	0.791		
Customization	Cust2	0.861	0.71	0.83
	Cust1	0.826		
word of mouth	Wom2	0.672	0.55	0.71
	Wom1	0.808		
customer intimacy	Intim3	0.809	0.63	0.83
	Intim2	0.77		
	Intim1	0.796		
Trust	Trus5	0.794	0.65	0.90
	Trus4	0.803		
	Trus3	0.858		
	Trus2	0.799		
	Trus1	0.764		
active, empathetic listening	Act4	0.714	0.66	0.88
	Act3	0.832		
	Act2	0.85		
	Act1	0.842		
consumption,	Cons4	0.679	0.55	0.83
	Cons3	0.82		
	Cons2	0.744		
	Cons1	0.712		
Contribution	Cont4	0.631	0.55	0.83
	Cont3	0.743		
	Cont2	0.804		
	Cont1	0.771		
Creation	Crea4	0.692	0.68	0.9
	Crea3	0.94		
	Crea2	0.92		
	Crea1	0.725		
Brand preference	Pref2	0.737	0.57	0.88
	Pref1	0.77		
price premium	Pric3	0.888	0.75	0.86
	Pric2	0.815		
	Pric1	0.901		
brand loyalty	Loy4	0.735	0.55	0.83
	Loy3	0.776		
	Loy2	0.703		
	Loy1	0.752		

CFA second order

The second-order CFA measurement model shows all the proposed loading factors as required ≥ 0.5 , ranging from 0.728 to 1.037, as shown in Table 2. The measurement model also offers a fit model GOF (> 0.90), CFI (> 0.90), TLI (> 0.90), and RMSEA (< 0.08) (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). All factor loadings tests, construct validity, and reliability tests showed a good value for each data point. Thus, the proposed model can be tested for hypotheses by conducting a structural equation model (SEM) as needed in this study.

Table 2 *Loadings of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Second-Order*

Construct	Code	CFA Loading	C.R	AVE
Social media marketing	Ent	0.795	0.93	0.73
	Int	0.828		
	Tren	0.967		
	Cust	0.858		
	Wom	0.808		
Customer relationship	Intim	0.960	0.98	0.95
	Trus	0.997		
	Act	0.962		
Social media engagement	Cons	1.037	0.92	0.79
	Cont	0.882		
	Crea	0.728		
Customer response	Pref	0.864	0.92	0.80
	Price	0.867		
	Loy	0.954		

Direct Effects of the Structural Model

Hypothesis testing was carried out by paying attention to the proposed model's model fit index, and the results provided evidence of good model fit (CMIN/DF = 199.414, GOF = 0.942, TLI = 0.964, CFI = 0.974, RMSEA = 0.65. Testing the effect between variables was based on a review of the literature and empirical evidence to form this research model. Table 3 shows that social media marketing significantly affects social media engagement ($\beta = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$), and hypothesis 1 is accepted. Customer relationship significantly affects social media engagement ($\beta = 0.238$, $p < 0.001$); hypothesis 2 is accepted. Social media engagement significantly positively affects customer response engagement ($\beta = 0.205$, $p < 0.001$), and hypothesis 3 is accepted. Social media marketing significantly affects customer response ($\beta = -0.09$, $p > 0.001$); hypothesis 4 is rejected. Customer relationship significantly impacts customer response ($\beta = 0.685$, $p < 0.001$), and hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Table 3 *Result of the SEM Model*

Hypotheses			Standardized Estimate	SE	CR	P
Social media marketing	→	Social media engagement	0.735	0.069	10.629	0.000
Customer relationship	→	Social media engagement	0.238	0.051	4.658	0.000
Social media engagement	→	Customer response	0.205	0.03	6.756	0.000
Social media marketing	→	Customer response	-0.09	0.051	-1.771	0.076
Customer relationship	→	Customer response	0.685	0.049	14.101	0.000

The Mediation Role of Social Media Engagement

This research not only tests the variables directly. Still, it examines the indirect effect, which is pushed through the variance accounted for (VAF) through the formula $VAF = (\text{indirect effect})/(\text{total effect}) = (axb)/(axb+c)$ (Chauhan et al., 2021). The final VAF value represents the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect (Ali et al., 2016). From this total, it can be concluded through a percentage value such as if $VAF < 20\%$ means it is not proven to mediate, $20\% - 80\%$ points to mediate partially, and if $> 80\%$ means complete mediation, which means that without the presence of these variables, there will be no significant effect (Bari et al., 2020; J. f Hair et al., 2014). The results of the research are shown in Table 4. It offers a VAF value of 2,483 or $> 80\%$ of the indirect effect of social media engagement on the influence of social media marketing on customer response. Hypothesis 6 is accepted with the conclusion that it has a full mediating effect. The indirect effect of social media engagement on customer relationships on customer response shows a VAF value of 0.066 or 66%, $< 80\%$. Hypothesis 7 is accepted with the conclusion that it has a partial mediating effect.

Table 4. *Path Mediation*

Hypotheses	Mediation path relationship	Indirect effect	Total effect	VAF	Result
H6	Social media marketing → Social media engagement → Customer response	0.150	0.060	2.483	Full mediation
H7	Customer relationship → Social media engagement → Customer response	0.238	0.733	0.066	Partial mediation

DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the theory by testing a model of insight into how marketing strategies on social media are not only related to the content but can also be related to maintaining customer relationships. This research expands the social media

marketing and customer relationship literature in the context of product marketing on social media. Social media is essential for today's marketing media because it can impact customer engagement and response. Therefore, research on consumer attitudes toward social media has received much attention from previous studies. However, empirical research in consumer product marketing has not been widely studied. This research contributes to developing theories in social media marketing and customer relationships in the context of increasing customer engagement and response. This study is the first to discuss how social media marketing differs from the perspective of content and marketing as a customer relationship that marketers must maintain. Consumer involvement can be achieved when researchers can identify exactly what and how social media can affect consumers (Hudson & Thal, 2013). In detail, the results of the research are discussed as follows:

Social Media Marketing and Social Media Engagement

The study results show that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on increasing social media engagement. These results confirm findings (Dolan et al., 2019; Duong & Sung, 2021), which focus on increasing engagement on social media due to marketing being used as a stimulus. However, this research differs from this research because they only focus on social media marketing in the form of self-generated content. We also see from word of mouth that consumers want to convey directly, which is essential in increasing engagement on social media (Hudson et al., 2015; Srivastava et al., 2021). This emphasizes that social media marketing is not only a way of creating content (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) but can also be seen from the consumer's perspective of delivering the content.

Customer Relationship and Social Media Engagement

The study results show that customer relationships have a more significant positive influence on increasing social media engagement. These results are consistent with those of Arora et al. (2021b), and Wang and Kim (2017), demonstrating that customer relationships have an important role. Unfortunately, many companies view customer relationships as beneficial only to customer engagement when proven face-to-face and not associated with social media (Ho & Lee, 2015). Dewnarain et al. (2021) tried to test it on social media, and the results were excellent in the tourism industry. This research expands on the findings by focusing on how product marketing services are used on social media. Consumers' willingness to view, respond to, and share posts shared by marketers in the photo and video content shows increased social media engagement. Good customer relationships influence these consumer actions. Increased engagement

can be done with good service quality online, such as by providing a responsive admin team to respond to all forms of consumer involvement and give input to meet appropriate consumer needs. Since social media is not a sales medium like e-commerce, more stimulus is needed to provide knowledge and attract customers, utilizing digital marketing (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

Social Media Engagement and Customer Response

Social media engagement is proven to increase customer response. This test is the first finding, as the social media engagement literature has discussed previous research. This test is based on suggestions provided by Meire et al. (2019) and Upadhyay et al. (2022) for small enterprises or companies to test whether increased consumer involvement can help build customer response. Customer response measures marketing success on social media (Upadhyay et al., 2022), examining how attitudes after an engagement can create and increase customer response (Hollebeek et al., 2016). Customer involvement is characterized as a form of consumer behavior when they want to read (consumption), respond to posts made by marketers (contribution), and are willing to share existing posts as well as their posts related to the product they like. Researchers must distinguish between consumers at the consumption, contribution, or creation level to determine which involvement level influences the most in creating a customer response. In the context of this research, creation is the highest form of involvement by sharing their positive experiences with service providers.

Social Media Marketing and Customer Response

The higher the social media marketing is, the less impact it has on increasing customer response. This does not confirm the findings (Upadhyay et al., 2022), which also focus on social media consumer behavior. The difference arises from the characteristics of respondents who only access social media, such as Facebook, unlike this study, which sampled from several popular and widely used social media platforms by marketers, including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp. Differences in behavior will occur in each respondent. Like Instagram, which only focuses on photos and videos, Facebook focuses on pictures and is text-based, and Twitter focuses on text-based (Pittman & Reich, 2016). These findings suggest that effective social media marketing does not necessarily lead to a positive customer response. Maybe they feel they are used as marketing objects only for the benefit of marketers. Marketing content, which consumers need, should be preferred. Better still, we can focus on the role of other variables that can help strengthen the marketing strategy.

Customer Relationship and Customer Response

A positive and significant influence occurs when the customer relationship has a significant influence on customer response. These findings highlight the importance of enhancing customer relationship quality to elicit positive customer responses. These results confirm (Wibowo et al., 2020) that customer response occurs because customers get very positive experiences from service providers. This experience is formed from the services marketers provide in the form of customer intimacy, trust, and active empathetic listening. The more marketers can maintain a good relationship with consumers. They will provide feedback in the form of a positive response. This happens because of the emergence of customer trust due to successful relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

The Mediating Effect of Social Media Engagement

The study results indicate that social media engagement plays a full mediating role in influencing social media marketing variables on customer response. These results suggest that social media marketing cannot directly influence whether you create a positive customer response, but rather, it must be achieved through social media engagement. That is, without these variables, marketing will not be effective. Meanwhile, regarding the indirect effect of customer relationships on customer response, social media engagement has an indirect impact through partial mediation. That is, customer relationships can also directly impact response rates. These results emphasize the importance of social media engagement in maintaining consumer connections on social media (Silva Santos et al., 2021). Business performance on social media will be higher if, through indirect influence, consumers are involved in social media (Garg et al., 2020). This proves that social media engagement can be used as an organic instrument capable of increasing the influence of the stimulus provided through social media. Marketing carried out on social media must prioritize whether it can increase consumer engagement. This has implications for a high increase in customer response.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research demonstrates that accuracy in social media marketing and customer relationship strategies can significantly impact social media engagement and customer response. These results suggest that marketers who use social media focus not only on creating content in social media marketing but also on the quality of customer relationships they provide to consumers, which can influence the creation of customer responses. Social media marketing is not limited to creating content by marketers. Still,

it can also utilize content consumers create through word of mouth, which can be packaged into testimonial content resulting from product use. Word of mouth is part of social media marketing, which is proven to strongly encourage the creation of a high response from the target audience (Mazzarol et al., 2007). Therefore, we suggest that social media marketers create content that not only seems to benefit consumers directly but is also informative and entertaining, which can increase consumer engagement on social media.

The marketing strategy on social media focuses on content and maintaining customer relationships through exemplary service, such as promptly and accurately responding to consumer feedback, being transparent with the information submitted, and being willing to assist with product-related consumer issues. Marketers can form special social media teams that have proven effective in responding to customer complaints and providing customer support (Balaji et al., 2015). This is due to the nature of social media, which is primarily a medium for exchanging information rather than an e-commerce platform that offers sales transaction features. It can also be a tool for listening to customer wishes, which becomes an insight into their marketing decision-making (Febrian & Mero, 2026; Moe & Schweidel, 2017). It is necessary to raise the desire of consumers to be actively involved in marketers' social media.

Empirical testing was conducted to examine the indirect effect of social media engagement on the role. The results state that social media marketing cannot influence customer response directly. The mediating role of social media engagement is necessary to achieve significant effects in increasing customer response. This confirms that when conducting social media marketing, marketers must focus on how the content they create can increase engagement. Can this content spark a desire in consumers to engage with consumer involvement, re-share the post, or create content? Consumers will voluntarily report on the products they buy according to the positive experiences marketers provide. When consumers demonstrate their involvement on social media, they become loyal to the brand, making repeat purchases a priority, and the price is no longer a reason to choose a different product.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research examines how marketers utilize social media marketing and customer relationships to enhance social media engagement, with implications for fostering positive customer responses among companies. The findings indicate that social media marketing has no significant effect on customer response; however, it can have a significant impact through social media engagement as a mediating factor. The influence of customer relationship and response also shows the partial mediation effect.

This research confirms that in social media marketing, marketers can enhance their efforts by delivering content that offers consumer value and fosters customer relationships, thereby creating customer engagement and response. Customer response is a key measure of success in marketing on social media, as it indicates whether consumers provide positive feedback in response to the stimuli provided by marketers on social media.

Although this study has implications that contribute to both theory and practice, it is not without limitations that can serve as input for further research to enhance the social media marketing model's effectiveness in selling retail products. This study uses a quantitative method, which may have weaknesses in interpreting the results. Future research can achieve better results by combining the opinions of general consumers who use them with expert opinions. This research is also limited to the consumer experience of shopping for retail products through social media exposure. Future research can test this model on service products widely marketed through social media. Of course, they will have different characteristics and possibly have different results.

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