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Understanding the Role of Brand Love and Digital Marketing in Shaping Customer Loyalty Among Generation Z Consumers: A Case Study of Beauty Products in Medan Perjuangan District

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the role of brand love and digital marketing in shaping customer loyalty among Generation Z users of beauty products in Medan Perjuangan District, Medan. A quantitative explanatory design was applied. Data from 140 respondents, selected by purposive sampling and surveyed with a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, were analysed with PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4. Brand love had a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (β = 0.234; *t* = 2.320; *p* = 0.020), and digital marketing also had a positive and significant effect (β = 0.493; *t* = 4.881; *p* < 0.001). Together, the two constructs explained 45.4% of the variance in customer loyalty (R^2 = 0.454), a moderate level of explanatory power, leaving 54.6% to factors outside the model. The effect size of digital marketing (f^2 = 0.243) was considerably larger than that of brand love (f^2 = 0.055). These results indicate that the loyalty of Generation Z consumers to beauty brands rests on emotional attachment as well as on the quality of a brand's digital engagement, with the latter carrying more weight. Beauty brands are therefore advised to combine credible, interactive digital content with efforts to deepen consumers' emotional bonds with the brand.

Keywords: *Brand Love, Digital Marketing, Customer Loyalty, Generation Z, Beauty Products*

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry in Indonesia has grown rapidly in recent years. This growth is driven by increasing public awareness of self-care, advances in digital technology, and changes in consumer behavior, which increasingly rely on the internet for information before purchasing. Digitalization has transformed the way companies market their products. Furthermore, people are willing to spend their money on beauty and skincare products (Burhanudin & Febryanti, 2023). Marketing is shifting from traditional methods to digital media, creating increasingly fierce competition between local and international cosmetic brands. Companies must now build strong relationships with their consumers.



Figure 1. *Projected Growth of the Indonesian Skincare Market*

Source: YCP Solidience (2026)

According to the YCP Solidiance (2024) report in the article (Khoriyah, 2025), the Indonesian skincare market is expected to continue growing at an annual growth rate of around 4.6% in the next few years. This growth is influenced by increasing public awareness of skin health, high social media usage, and the development of e-commerce platforms as the main channel for purchasing beauty products. The report also shows that Indonesian consumers, especially the younger generation, are increasingly selective in choosing products.

#	BRAND	MARKET SHARE	ORIGIN / TIER
1	**Glad2Glow**	6.3%	Local · mass
2	**Wardah**	4.6%	Local · mass
3	**Skintific**	4.4%	Local-led · mass-premium
4	**Skin1004**	3.7%	Korean import · premium
5	**Cetaphil**	2.6%	Global derma
6	**Facetology**	2.3%	Local
7	**Hanasui**	2.1%	Local · value
8	**Scora**	2.0%	Local
9	**Garnier**	2.0%	Global mass
10	**La Roche-Posay**	1.9%	Global premium derma

Figure 2. *Top Skincare Brands in Indonesia's E-Commerce Market*

Source: Magpie IQ (2026)

Magpie IQ (2026) reports that local brands dominate Indonesia's skincare e-commerce market. The top five brands hold over 21.6% of the market and the top ten around 31.9%, and six of the top ten are local: Glad2Glow, Hanasui, Skintific, Facetology, Wardah, and Scora. This dominance suggests that the ability to build relationships through digital media matters as much as product quality for brand competitiveness. Generation Z, defined by Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik) as people born between 1997 and 2012 and thus aged 14 to 29 in 2026, is a key segment for the beauty industry. Francis & Hoefel (2018) describe it as the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital age.

Brand love is the deep emotional connection a consumer feels toward a brand, marked by passion, attachment, and a desire to maintain the relationship over the long term (Batra et al., 2012). Digital marketing uses internet-based platforms to reach consumers, communicate with them, and convey the value of products or services (Razak, 2022). Firms need both: digital channels to reach and retain customers, and emotional ties to keep them.

Evidence on both drivers tends to come from separate lines of research. Studies of Indonesian Generation Z cosmetic consumers place emotional attachment at the centre of loyalty Suwandi & Balqiah (2023), whereas studies of digital marketing treat online interaction and content as the main levers (Diana et al., 2024 ; Yasik et al. 2025). Among the studies reviewed here, few estimate both predictors in one structural model, so their relative weight in retaining Generation Z beauty consumers remains unclear. These studies were also conducted on other product categories or in other regions, which leaves evidence on Generation Z beauty consumers in Medan limited.

This study contributes in two ways. First, it estimates the effects of brand love and digital marketing on customer loyalty in one model, so that their relative contributions can be compared through path coefficients and effect sizes. Second, it tests these relationships among Generation Z beauty consumers in Medan Perjuangan District, where the pre-survey (Table 1) points to weak loyalty. The local setting is not claimed as novelty in itself; its value lies in checking whether relationships reported elsewhere hold for a population whose consumption is heavily mediated by digital platforms.

Table 1 .
Summary of Pre-survey Findings of Generation Z Consumers in Medan Perjuangan District

Indicator	Empirical Evidence	Implications
Use of beauty products	All respondents (100%) had used beauty products in the last six months.	Respondents are relevant for evaluating loyalty toward beauty brands.
Type of product used	53.3% used skincare and makeup; 33.3% used skincare only.	Multi-category use gives more opportunity to compare brands.
Digital marketing exposure	86.7% learned about beauty products through social media and marketplaces.	Digital media is the main information source, so digital marketing may shape loyalty.
Purchase frequency	53.3% bought beauty products two or three times in six months.	Respondents are active buyers with the potential to become loyal.
Brand Love	A total of 64.5% of respondents liked the brand they used, but only 40% of valid respondents reported having an emotional connection to that brand.	Liking a brand does not necessarily reflect a strong emotional attachment to it.
Customer loyalty	Only about 50% would keep choosing the same brand despite many alternatives; the rest were neutral or disagreed.	Loyalty is not yet optimal, which warrants analysis of its drivers.
Brand switching behavior	Some respondents use several brands, e.g., Skintific, Glad2Glow, Azarine, Wardah, and Emina.	Brand exploration points to the need for emotional bonds (brand love).

Source: Pre-Survey Questionnaire (2026)

Table 1 shows that respondents are active, digitally informed beauty users, yet only about half would stay with the same brand when alternatives are available. The pre-survey indicates that emotional attachment to beauty brands remains relatively weak. This calls for an examination of how brand love and digital marketing shape customer loyalty toward beauty brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

Loyalty rests not only on product quality but also on emotional experiences and psychological connections with brands. Suwandi & Balqiah (2023) found that brand love directly influences loyalty to local cosmetic brands, and Veas-gonzález et al. (2025) showed that loyalty forms through brand image and brand love rather than directly from company activities.

Tijjang et al. (2023) treat loyalty as the outcome that shows whether a firm's relational efforts have succeeded, and Kamaaluddin et al. (2025) note that loyalty grows when a brand helps consumers express who they are and earns them positive responses from their online networks. In this study, customer loyalty is defined as a customer's commitment to keep buying from and supporting the beauty brand they use most often. It is measured with the four behaviours proposed by Jill Griffin (2002): regular repeat purchases, purchases across the firm's product lines, referrals, and immunity to the pull of competitors. Because these behaviours are directed at a particular provider, they capture loyalty toward a specific brand when the items name that brand.

Brand Love

According to Carroll & Ahuvia (2006), brand love refers to the intense emotional connection that happy customers have for a specific brand. Meanwhile, according to Batra et al. (2012), brand love is a connection that lasts a long time and includes passion, emotional attachment, good affect, self-brand integration, and a dedication to keeping the relationship with the brand running smoothly.

Burhanudin & Febryanti (2023) showed that brand love plays a role in shaping brand satisfaction, brand engagement, and brand loyalty, which implies that firms need to create consistently positive experiences. The brand love indicators in this study refer to Batra et al. (2012): love for the brand, self-brand integration, emotional bond, committed relationship, and anticipated separation distress.

Digital Marketing

Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) define digital marketing as achieving marketing objectives by using digital technology to create, communicate, and deliver customer value. It enables firms to build more personal, engaging, and sustainable relationships with customers (Kotler et al., 2017), which is particularly relevant for Generation Z.

Razak (2022) notes that Generation Z prefers digital marketing that is authentic, creative, interactive, and aligned with its values, and that relevant content, two-way communication, and positive digital experiences increase engagement with brands.

The digital marketing indicators used in this study, namely accessibility, interactivity, entertainment, credibility, and informativeness, follow the operationalisation of Aryani, (2021). Several of them derive from research on online advertising value: Ducoffe (1996) identified informativeness and entertainment as its determinants, and Brackett & Carr (2001) added credibility.

Brand Love towards Customer Loyalty

Consumers who feel a strong emotional connection to a brand tend to trust it, buy it again, recommend it, and resist competing offers. Empirical studies support this link. (Maduretno & Junaedir, 2022) showed that brand love positively affects brand loyalty, with self-esteem and social influence as moderators. Among Indonesian Generation Z buyers of local cosmetics, Suwandi & Balqiah (2023) found a direct positive effect of brand love on loyalty. Kamaaluddin et al. (2025) reported the same effect in the Indonesian photography industry, and Veas-gonzález et al. (2025) found that brand love channels the effect of corporate social responsibility into consumer loyalty

H1: Brand love has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty.

Digital Marketing for Brand Loyalty

Digital platforms such as social media, websites, and marketplaces let firms inform and engage consumers and deliver positive experiences that build trust and satisfaction. Yasik et al. (2025) found that digital marketing interaction significantly increased the loyalty of Generation Z consumers toward local beauty products, and Diana et al. (2024) identified digital marketing, alongside product quality, user experience, and sustainability, as a driver of Generation Z loyalty to local skincare brands. Anjeli & Sinaga (2025) reported a significant effect of digital marketing strategy on brand loyalty at The Body Shop, Hou & Situmorang (2025) found that it raised repurchase intention, and Mokhtaruddin et al. (2023) argue conceptually that social media marketing builds brand loyalty

H2: Digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty.

The two predictors are expected to complement each other: brand love supplies the emotional bond (Panjaitan et al., 2026), while digital channels keep the brand present and responsive (Andriany & Situmorang, 2026); (Situmorang, 2025). Their joint contribution is evaluated through R^2 rather than as a separate hypothesis, because PLS-SEM tests individual structural paths. Figure 3 presents the research framework.

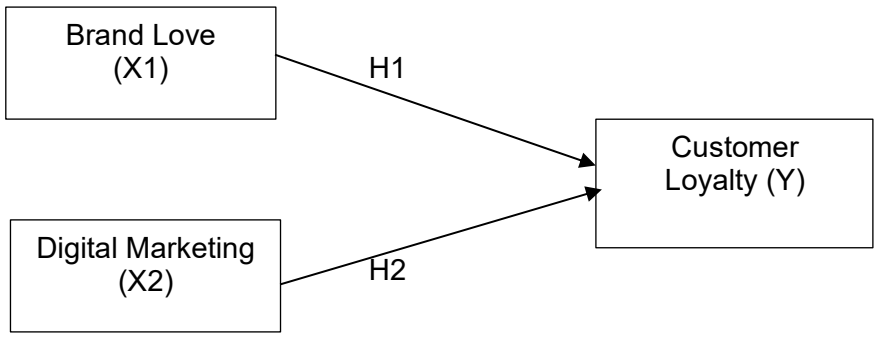


Figure 3. *Hypothesis Framework*

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative explanatory design to estimate the effects of brand love and digital marketing on customer loyalty among Generation Z beauty product users in Medan Perjuangan District, Medan. The population comprised Generation Z residents of Medan Perjuangan District who had bought or used beauty products in the past six months. As no sampling frame was available, purposive sampling was applied with five criteria: (1) born between 1997 and 2012, (2) residing in the district, (3) having purchased a beauty product in the past six months, (4) currently using beauty products, and (5) willing to participate. Data were collected online through Google Forms.

Sample adequacy was judged with two guidelines. The ten-times rule (J. F. Hair et al., 2021) requires at least 20 respondents, because two structural paths point at customer loyalty. A more conservative ratio of five respondents per indicator, applied to the 28 indicators in the model, requires 140. The final sample of 140 meets both.

The measurement model was evaluated before the structural model. Outer loadings should exceed 0.70 (J. Hair et al., 2017), although loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained if their removal does not raise the AVE or composite reliability above the threshold (Hair et al., 2022). Discriminant validity was assessed with the HTMT ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and reliability with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, both of which should exceed 0.70 (Zhang et al., 2026). Hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping at the 5% significance level ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$).

Measurement

All constructs were measured with items adapted from earlier studies on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Brand love used ten items adapted from Batra et al. (2012), covering love for the brand, self-brand integration, emotional bond, committed relationship, and anticipated separation distress. Digital marketing used ten items reflecting accessibility, interactivity, entertainment, credibility, and informativeness (Aryani, 2021). Customer loyalty used eight items based on the four indicators of Griffin (2002): repeat purchase, purchase across product lines, referral, and immunity to competitors. Each loyalty item refers to the beauty brand that each respondent reported using most frequently. Therefore, brand loyalty is measured with respect to the specific beauty brand chosen by each respondent, not with respect to beauty products in general.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

All 140 respondents met the research criteria (Table 2). Most were aged 21–24 (45.7%) and female (92.1%). Glad2Glow was the most used brand (20.0%), followed by Wardah (15.0%) and Skintific (12.1%), and 61.4% had bought beauty products two or three times in the past six months.

Table 2.
Respondent Characteristics

Profile	Category	n	%
Age	14–16 Years	22	15.7%
	17–20 Years	36	25.7%
	21–24 Years	64	45.7%
	25–29 Years	18	12.9%
Gender	Woman	129	92.1%
	Man	11	7.9%
Beauty Brand	Glad2Glow	28	20.0%
	Wardah	21	15.0%
	Skintific	17	12.1%
	Something	11	7.9%
	Emina	10	7.1%
	Maybelline	7	5.0%
	MS Glow	5	3.6%
	Scarlett	4	2.9%
	Azarine	4	2.9%
	Avoskin	4	2.9%

Profile	Category	n	%
Purchase Frequency	Makeover	2	1.4%
	Luxcrime	2	1.4%
	Other brands	25	17.9%
	Once in 6 months	19	13.6%
	2–3 times in 6 months	86	61.4%
	> 3 times in 6 months	35	25.0%
Total		140	100.0%

Source: Google Form Data, 2026

Outer Model Evaluation

The measurement model was estimated with SmartPLS 4; Figure 4 shows the estimated model.

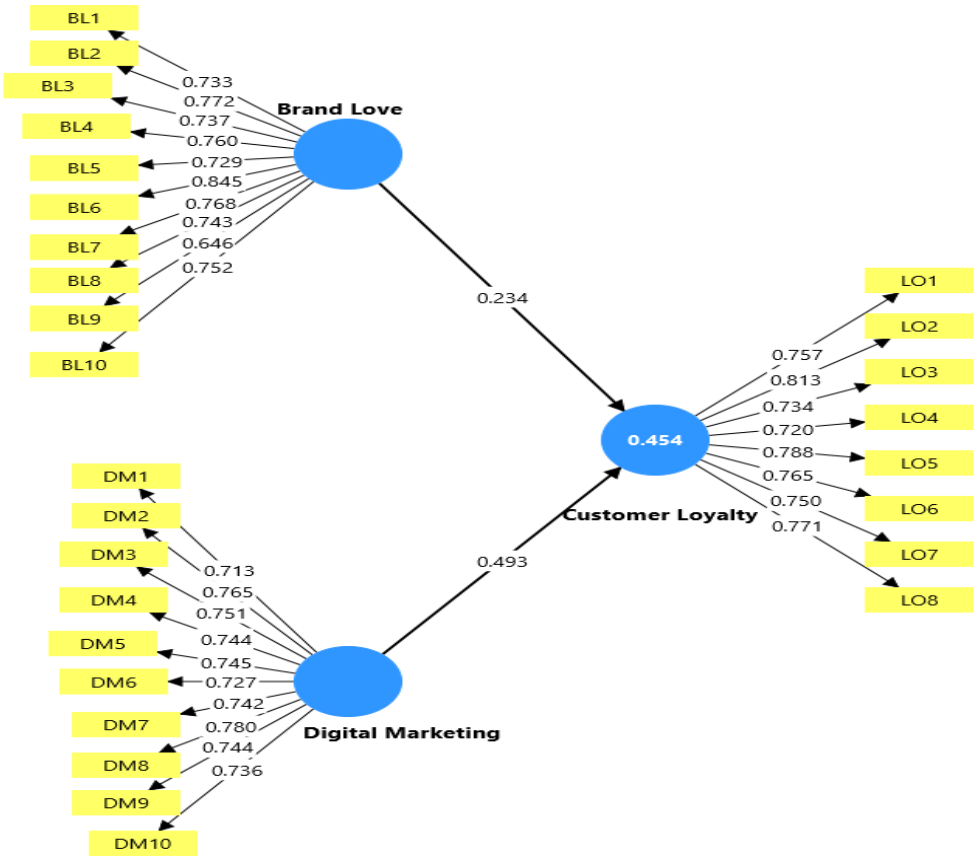


Figure 4. Partial Least Square (PLS) Model Scheme
Source: Processed primary data, 2026

Convergent Validity Test

Table 3.
Outer Loading Test Results

Construct	Item	Outer Loadings
Brand Love	BL1	0.733
	BL2	0.772
	BL3	0.737
	BL4	0.760
	BL5	0.729
	BL6	0.845
	BL7	0.768
	BL8	0.743
	BL9	0.646
	BL10	0.752
Digital Marketing	DM1	0.713
	DM2	0.765
	DM3	0.751
	DM4	0.744
	DM5	0.745
	DM6	0.727
	DM7	0.742
	DM8	0.780
	DM9	0.744
	DM10	0.736
Customer Loyalty	LO1	0.757
	LO2	0.813
	LO3	0.734
	LO4	0.720
	LO5	0.788
	LO6	0.765
	LO7	0.750
	LO8	0.771

Source: Data processed with Smart PLS 4, 2026.

All loadings exceed 0.70 except BL9 (0.646). Because the brand love construct still meets the AVE and composite reliability criteria, BL9 was retained (J. F. Hair et al., 2021).

Construct Reliability Test

Table 4.
Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity Tests

Construct	Alpha	rho A	rho C	AVE
Brand Love	0.913	0.918	0.928	0.563
Digital Marketing	0.898	0.912	0.926	0.555
Customer Loyalty	0.911	0.902	0.918	0.582

Source: Data processed with Smart PLS 4, 2026

Table 4 shows that Cronbach's alpha (0.898 to 0.913) and composite reliability (0.918 to 0.928) exceed 0.70 and that AVE (0.555 to 0.582) exceeds 0.50 for all constructs, so convergent validity and reliability are established.

Discriminant Validity Test

Table 5.
Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT

	Brand Love	Customer Loyalty	Digital Marketing
Brand Love	**0.750**	*0.617*	*0.741*
Customer Loyalty	0.567	**0.763**	*0.709*
Digital Marketing	0.676	0.652	**0.745**

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2026

In Table 5, each bold diagonal value exceeds the correlations below it, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and all HTMT ratios (0.617 to 0.741) are below the strict threshold of 0.85. Discriminant validity is therefore established.

Inner Model Evaluation

Both inner VIF values are 1.840, below the threshold of 3, so collinearity is not a concern (Hair et al., 2022). Customer loyalty has an R^2 of 0.454 (adjusted R^2 = 0.446): brand love and digital marketing together explain 45.4% of its variance, a moderate level, while 54.6% is attributable to factors outside the model. Using 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as thresholds for small, medium, and large effects, brand love has a small effect on customer loyalty (f^2 = 0.055) and digital marketing a medium effect (f^2 = 0.243).

Predictive Relevance and Model Fit

Table 6.
Predictive Relevance Test Results (Q^2predict)

Item	Q^2predict	PLS RMSE	LM RMSE
LO1	0.222	0.842	0.927
LO2	0.341	0.876	0.930
LO3	0.223	0.910	1.033
LO4	0.130	0.964	1.083
LO5	0.247	0.753	0.832

Item	Q^2predict	PLS RMSE	LM RMSE
LO6	0.324	0.933	1.027
LO7	0.236	0.984	1.067
LO8	0.198	0.985	1.053

Source: Data processed with Smart PLS 4, 2026.

All Q^2predict values are positive (0.130 to 0.341), and the PLS-SEM RMSE is lower than the linear model benchmark for every indicator, indicating predictive power for all customer loyalty indicators. For model fit, the SRMR of 0.073 is below the 0.08 threshold, but the NFI of 0.705 falls short of 0.90, so model fit should be interpreted with caution.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 7.
Hypothesis Test Results

H Line	β	t	P	CI-LB	CI-UB	Results
H1 X1 →Y	0.234	2.320	0.020	0.029	0.425	Supported
H2 X2 →Y	0.493	4.881	< 0.001	0.291	0.687	Supported

Source: Data processed with Smart PLS 4, 2026.

Both hypotheses are supported. Brand love (H1) and digital marketing (H2) each have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, and the 95% confidence intervals of both paths exclude zero.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Brand Love on Customer Loyalty

Brand love has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (β = 0.234; *t* = 2.320; *p* = 0.020), so consumers who feel stronger affection for their beauty brand are more inclined to keep buying and recommending it. This finding is consistent with the studies reviewed earlier. It agrees with Suwandi & Balqiah (2023), who found a direct effect of brand love on loyalty among Indonesian Generation Z buyers of local cosmetics, and with Le (2021) and Kamaaluddin et al. (2025), who reported positive effects of brand love on brand loyalty. It also supports Burhanudin & Febryanti (2023) and Veas-gonzález et al. (2025) who placed brand love on the path toward loyalty. None of these studies reported a non-significant effect, so the direction of the present result does not contradict earlier evidence.

The magnitude of the effect, however, adds nuance to this agreement. The effect of brand love is small (f^2 = 0.055) and clearly weaker than that of digital marketing. Because most earlier studies examined brand love without digital marketing in the same model, their results cannot be compared directly in terms of relative weight; the present result indicates that, once digital marketing is accounted for, brand love explains a smaller share of Generation Z loyalty. The pre-survey offers a plausible reason: many respondents use several brands and readily try alternatives, which leaves emotional attachment less room to translate into exclusive repurchase. Minh T.H. Le (2021) also showed that the brand love effect depends on self-esteem and social influence, moderators that were not tested here.

The Influence of Digital Marketing on Customer Loyalty

Digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (β = 0.493; *t* = 4.881; *p* < 0.001) with a medium effect size (f^2 = 0.243). This finding is consistent with Yasik et al. (2025), who found that digital marketing interaction increased Generation Z loyalty toward local beauty products, and with Diana et al. (2024), who identified digital marketing as a driver of Generation Z loyalty to local skincare brands. It is also consistent with Anjeli & Sinaga (2025), who reported a significant effect of digital marketing strategy on brand loyalty (β = 0.408), and with Hou & Situmorang (2025), whose result on repurchase intention suggests that the mechanism extends beyond beauty products. The finding further offers empirical support for the conceptual argument of Mokhtaruddin et al. (2023). No inconsistency in direction was found with any of these studies.

The strength of the effect fits the respondents' profile. Because 86.7% of them learned about beauty products through digital media, a brand's continued visibility, responsiveness, and credible content weigh heavily in their decision to keep buying it, in line with Razak (2022) observation that Generation Z favours interactive and authentic digital communication. Digital marketing thus works less as a one-off persuasion tool than as an ongoing relationship channel.

Joint Explanatory Power of Brand Love and Digital Marketing

Together, the two predictors explain 45.4% of the variance in customer loyalty (R^2 = 0.454), which reflects their combined explanatory capacity rather than a test of a simultaneous effect. The pattern resembles Panjaitan et al. (2026), who argued that brand love and other relationship-building factors complement each other in shaping loyalty: here, brand love supplies emotional attachment, while digital marketing provides the channel through which the relationship is maintained.

CONCLUSION

Both hypotheses are supported. Brand love has a positive and significant effect on the customer loyalty of Generation Z beauty product users in Medan Perjuangan District (H1), and digital marketing has a positive and significant effect that is larger than that of brand love (H2). Together they explain 45.4% of the variance in customer loyalty. Accessible, interactive, entertaining, credible, and informative digital communication therefore plays the stronger role in retaining these consumers, while emotional attachment adds a smaller but significant contribution.

RECOMMENDATION

Beauty brands targeting Generation Z in Medan should treat digital channels as relationship tools by providing credible information, responding quickly, and inviting interaction, while building emotional attachment through consistent product experiences. This study is limited by purposive sampling in a single district, a predominantly female sample (92.1%), unexplained variance of 54.6%, and an NFI of 0.705 that calls for cautious interpretation of model fit. Future studies could use probability sampling across several cities, compare male and female consumers, add variables such as brand trust, customer satisfaction, and brand image, and test whether brand love mediates or moderates the effect of digital marketing.

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