Influencer marketing strategies for enhancing brand equity: The role of brand awareness and customer engagement on Le Secre Parfume

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Abstract: This study primarily aims to investigate how influencer marketing affects brand awareness, overall brand equity, and customer brand engagement, and further explores its influence on overall brand attachment when moderated by brand awareness and customer brand engagement. Employing a purposive sampling method, the research collected data from 200 respondents. The analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the AMOS software to examine the complex relationships between the variables. The findings reveal that influencer marketing positively impacts brand awareness, overall brand equity, and customer brand engagement. Moreover, influencer marketing also has a significant positive effect on overall brand attachment, with brand awareness and customer brand engagement serving as moderating variables in this relationship.

Keywords: Brand awareness, Customer brand engagement, Influencer marketing, Overall brand equity.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital era, social media has become a primary tool in marketing strategies across various industries, including the perfume industry [1]. Le Secré Parfume, as a premium local perfume brand, strives to build brand equity through effective digital marketing strategies. One increasingly utilized method is influencer marketing, where brands collaborate with influential individuals on social media to enhance brand awareness and customer engagement [2].

Previous research has shown that influencer marketing has a significant impact on customers' purchasing decisions, especially in experience- based industries such as perfume [3]. Influencers not only serve as brand ambassadors but also establish more personal and authentic connections with their audience, thereby increasing trust in the promoted brand [4]. A study by Ahluwalia [5] also emphasizes that customers tend to trust influencer recommendations more than traditional advertisements, making this strategy an effective tool for brands to reach and influence their target market.

However, despite numerous studies highlighting the importance of influencer marketing in increasing brand awareness and customer engagement, there remains a research gap regarding how this strategy specifically builds brand equity in the perfume industry [6]. Additionally, while brand awareness is often considered a key factor in building brand equity, the role of customer engagement as a mediator in this relationship still needs further exploration [7].

This study aims to explore the relationship between influencer marketing, brand awareness, and customer engagement in building the brand equity of Le Secré Parfume. Using a social media-based approach, this research will examine how collaborations with influencers can enhance brand awareness and customer engagement, ultimately strengthening brand equity. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for Le Secré in designing more effective digital marketing strategies while also contributing academically to understanding the role of influencer marketing in the competitive perfume industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Influencer Marketing

According to Rudd, et al. [8] an influencer is a third party who significantly alters clients' purchasing choices but can also be partially responsible for them (content). Pina, et al. [7] identified influencers as individuals similar to customers who have a direct influence on their followers' behavior since 2008. They use characteristics such as the number of followers, the number of influencers they follow, collaborations with other influencers, and so on, to determine each influencer's level of likability and their impact on consumers.

On the other hand, some studies focus on specific themes, such as the impact of influencer marketing on strategic decisions and corporate communication processes [9]; the use of influencer marketing as a favorable environment for the formation of a Community of Practice; the adoption of new language and changes in communication standards [10]; and the formation of tribes between influencers and followers.

2.2. Brand Awareness

Harvey [11] mentions that brand recognition is to take advantage of strategies, capture the target audience so that they can recognize them beyond their commercial name. By using good strategies, brand recognition would only be to visualize elements: color schemes, logo, even the tone of voice that has been attributed to your brand. Brand recognition can create ties, generate trust and feelings in the consumers, since they believe in the products that a company offers. For, Gupta [12] brand recognition i when a customer can recognize it and differentiate it from other brands, since it is the ability of a user to recognize the brand with features that define it, such as the slogan, logo, audios and others.

2.3. Customer Brand Engagement

Customers' brand engagement pertains to the extent of cognitive, emotional and behavioural involvement that consumers exhibit in their interactions with a brand across various communication channels [13]. Contemporary marketing literature has emphasised customer brand engagement, which constitutes an essential facet of customer engagement [14]. The term "customer brand engagement" has gained significant attention among marketers and scholars in a constantly changing, unpredictable business environment [15]. Various scholars have formulated the concept of customer brand engagement and concur that this involvement leads to behavioural outcomes [16]. The literature suggests that there is a positive correlation between customer brand engagement and various organisational outcomes such as enhanced corporate performance [17] improved competitive positioning [18] the creation of new markets [19] and increased customer satisfaction, loyalty and trust in the brand [20]. According to Pratomo and Magetsari [21] customer engagement with a brand is more than just a contact process between customers and brands; it is a crucial instrument in cultivating more profound connections between them and brands.

2.4. Overall Brand Equity

Through a strong brand, a company can effectively manage its assets, reduce promotional costs, and enhance its competitive advantage. This ultimately leads to greater profitability for the company. According to research conducted by Koay [22] the dimensions contained within brand equity include Brand awareness/association, which refers to the ability of customers to recognize or recall a brand and associate it with a specific product category [23].

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Literature Study

According to Sekaran and Bougie [24] hypothesis testing is a method used to describe the presumed relationship between variables and to verify that relationship through variable testing. Thus,

this study aims to conduct hypothesis testing to determine whether there is an influence between the examined variables.

In this research, the independent variable is influencer marketing, while there are three dependent variables: brand awareness, overall brand equity, and customer brand engagement. Additionally, brand awareness and customer brand engagement serve as moderating variables.

3.2. Research Models and Operational Variables

The data analysis method used in this study to examine the relationships between variables is the Structural Equation Model (SEM), utilizing SPSS AMOS 26 software.

3.3. Sample and Population

In this study, the criteria for respondents are consumers who have a social media account and follow Le Secré's account. The determination of the sample size follows the guideline of at least five times the number of indicators [25]. With 33 indicators, the minimum required sample size is 198 respondents (33×6). However, when using the Structural Equation Model (SEM), the ideal sample size ranges between 200 and 400 respondents. Therefore, the researcher assigns 200 respondents who meet the predetermined criteria to ensure the study meets the necessary requirements [25].

3.4. Analysis and Hypothesis

This study is based on previous research titled "The Effects of Influencer Marketing on Overall Brand Equity through Brand Awareness and Customer Brand Engagement" [26]. The research design employs hypothesis testing, which involves testing a statement using statistical methods to determine whether the results are statistically significant [15].

The data is collected using a cross- sectional approach, meaning that data is gathered only once within a specific period [27].

H_1: The SMIs positively impacts brand awareness.

H_2: The SMIs positively impacts the customer brand engagement.

H_3: The brand awareness positively impacts the overall brand equity.

H_4: The customer brand engagement positively impacts the overall brand equity.

H_5: The SMIs positively impacts the overall brand equity.

H_6: The brand awareness positively mediates between SMIs and overall brand equity.

H_7: The customer brand engagement positively mediates between SMIs and overall brand equity.
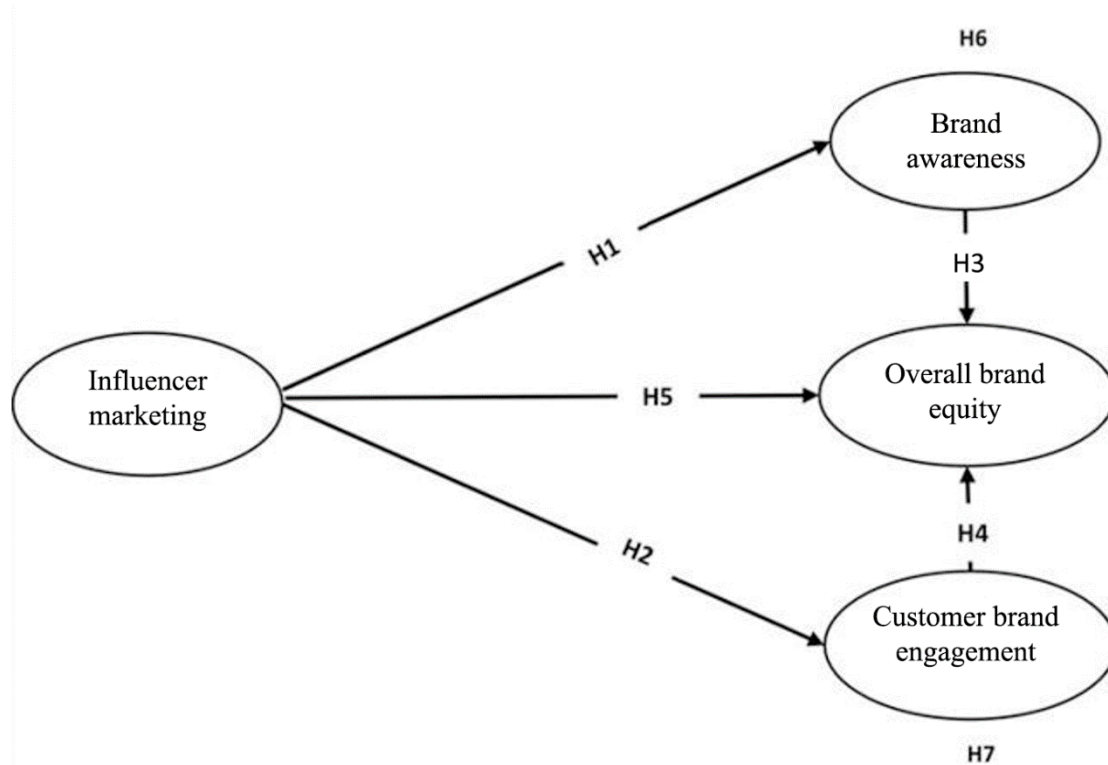
Figure 1.
Research Model.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Respondents' Profile

The study involved 300 respondents. In terms of gender, the majority were female (82.3%), while only 17.7% were male. Regarding age, most respondents were between 20–29 years old (64%), followed by those aged 29–39 years (26.3%). A smaller percentage fell in the age ranges of 39–49 years (6%) and 49–59 years (3.7%).

For education level, 35% had completed senior high school or its equivalent, 23% held a diploma, 35.3% had a bachelor's degree, 5.7% had a master's degree, and 1% held a doctoral degree. In terms of employment status, 34% of the respondents were students. Other employment categories included private employees (29%), civil servants/military/police (9.7%), entrepreneurs (7.7%), housewives (7%), and others (12.6%).

For monthly income, the largest group (46%) earned between Rp2,500,001 and Rp5,000,000. This was followed by those earning Rp5,000,001–Rp7,500,000 (24%) and Rp1,000,001–Rp2,500,000 (15%). Smaller proportions of respondents earned less than Rp1,000,000 (2.7%), Rp7,500,001–Rp10,000,000 (8.3%), and more than Rp10,000,000 (4%).

The detailed dataset used in this study is available at the following link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19snLXXnB5ERL-pLq1rZ7TAjJx-klmjcsc8HHiudOLD8/edit?usp=sharing

Table 1.
Demographic Profile of Respondents'.

Variable	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	53	17.7%
	Female	247	82.3%
	Total	300	100%
Age	20 − 29 years	192	64.0%
	>29 − 39 years	79	26.3%
	>39 − 49 years	18	6.0%
	>49 − 59 years	11	3.7%
	Total	300	100%
Last Education Level	Senior High School or equal	105	35.0%
	Diploma (I/II/III/IV)	69	23.0%
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	106	35.3%
	Master's Degree (S2)	17	5.7%
	Doctoral Degree (S3)	3	1.0%
	Total	300	100%
Employment Status	Student	102	34.0%
	Civil Servant/Military/Police	29	9.7%
	Private Employee	87	29.0%
	Entrepreneur	23	7.7%
	Housewife	21	7.0%
	Others	38	12.6%
	Total	300	100%
Monthly Income	≤ Rp1,000,000	8	2.7%
	Rp1,000,001 − Rp2,500,000	45	15.0%
	Rp2,500,001 − Rp5,000,000	138	46.0%
	Rp5,000,001 − Rp7,500,000	72	24.0%
	Rp7,500,001 − Rp10,000,000	25	8.3%
	>Rp10,000,000	12	4.0%
	Total	300	100%

4.2. Measurement Model

Validity testing aims to determine whether an indicator is appropriate and accurate for measuring a research variable [24]. This study uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess validity by comparing each item's factor loading to the standard threshold. With 300 respondents, a factor loading of ≥ 0.40 is considered valid [25].

Reliability testing evaluates whether each indicator is consistent and accurate in measuring the intended variable. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a coefficient that shows how well the indicators correlate positively with one another. A variable is considered reliable if Cronbach's alpha is ≥ 0.6 ([24].

Table 2.
Shows the results of the reliability and validity tests.

Constructs	Item	Description	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Influencers	SMIs1	I believe the influencer I follow provides honest information about products/brands.	0.893	0.861
	SMIs2	The influencer I follow has a good reputation for giving product recommendations.	0.914	
	SMIs3	I feel that the influencer I follow does not exaggerate when promoting a product.	0.878	
	SMIs4	I trust the influencer's opinions about the products they promote.	0.845	
	SMIs5	The influencer I follow has a good understanding of the products they promote.	0.896	
	SMIs6	I consider the influencer an expert in their field.	0.904	
	SMIs7	The influencer I follow often provides in-depth reviews of products or services.	0.891	
	SMIs8	I feel that the influencer understands the latest trends in the relevant industry.	0.847	
	SMIs9	I am interested in the way the influencer presents information about the product/brand.	0.905	
	SMIs10	The influencer I follow has an attractive and relatable personality.	0.842	
	SMIs11	I am interested in trying the products promoted by the influencer I follow.	0.842	
	SMIs12	The influencer's lifestyle reflects my aspirations toward a certain product/brand.	0.825	
	SMIs13	I often interact with content created by the influencer (likes, comments, shares, etc.).	0.789	
	SMIs14	I follow the influencer because they have many followers and often discuss interesting products.	0.831	
	SMIs15	I feel that the influencer has a close relationship with their followers.	0.853	
	SMIs16	I often seek further information about a product after seeing the influencer talk about it.	0.876	
	SMIs17	I feel that the influencer provides sincere and genuine opinions.	0.857	
	SMIs18	The content shared by the influencer matches my interests and needs.	0.890	
	SMIs19	I feel that the influencer promotes products not only for personal gain but also to help their followers.	0.858	
	SMIs20	I trust influencer recommendations more than traditional advertisements.	0.666	
Customers Brand Engagement	CBE1	I often think about this brand and discuss it with friends or family.	0.670	0.722
	CBE2	I feel an emotional connection to this brand.	0.699	
	CBE3	I feel happy when I see this brand grow.	0.611	
	CBE4	I often share content related to this brand on social media.	0.704	
	CBE5	I tend to participate in promotional campaigns organized by this brand.	0.752	
Brand Awareness	BA1	I instantly recognize this brand when I see its logo or hear its name.	0.736	0.675
	BA2	I can distinguish this brand from other similar brands.	0.735	

	BA3	I can easily recall this brand when I need the products or services it offers.	0.660	
	BA4	I often see or hear this brand's name on social media or other digital platforms.	0.751	
Overall Brand Equity	OBE1	I will continue using products from this brand in the future.	0.747	0.687
	OBE2	I believe that the products/services from this brand are of higher quality than its competitors.	0.741	
	OBE3	I have a positive perception of this brand.	0.680	
	OBE4	This brand reflects the values I believe	0.717	

4.2.1. Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

This construct consists of 20 indicators with factor loadings ranging from 0.666 to 0.914, all exceeding the recommended threshold. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.861, indicating strong internal consistency and high reliability.

4.2.2. Costumers Brand Engagement (CBE)

With 5 items, the factor loadings range from 0.611 to 0.752, all above the acceptable threshold. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.722 suggests good reliability and consistency among the items.

4.2.3. Brand Awareness (BA)

This construct includes 4 indicators with factor loadings between 0.660 and 0.751, meeting the validity requirements. The Cronbach's Alpha of 0.675 confirms the reliability of the construct.

4.2.4. Overall Brand Equity (OBE)

The four items under this construct show factor loadings from 0.680 to 0.747, all above the minimum threshold. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.687, which is acceptable and indicates consistent measurement of the construct.

Table 3.
Result of Goodness of Fit Model.

Type of Measurement	Fit Index	Recommended Cut-off	Value	Conclusion
Absolute Fit Measures	P	≥ 0.05	0.000	Poor fit
	ECVI	Approaches the value of Saturated compared to Independent	5.125	Goodness of fit
	RMSEA	≤ 0.1	0.073	Goodness of Fit
Incremental Fit Measures	IFI	≥ 0.90 or close to 1	0.760	Poor fit
	NFI	≥ 0.90 or close to 1	0.620	Poor fit
	TLI	≥ 0.90 or close to 1	0.735	Poor fit
	CFI	≥ 0.90 or close to 1	0.755	Poor fit
	RFI	≥0.90 or close to 1	0.589	Poor fit
Parsimonious Fit Measures	CMIN/DF	Minimum 1. Maximum 5	2.065	Goodness of Fit
	AIC	Approaches the value of Saturated compared to Independent	1019.833	Goodness of Fit

Table 3 presents the results of the Goodness of Fit test, showing that more than three fit indices—such as ECVI, RMSEA, CMIN/DF, and AIC—meet the recommended criteria, indicating a good model fit [25]. Therefore, the model used in this study is considered appropriate and can proceed to the next stage, which is hypothesis testing.

Table 4.
Hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E	C.R	P-Value	Result
H1	SMIs →BA	0.599	0.214	4.466	0.00	Supported
H2	SMIs →CBE	0.191	0.059	3.21	0.001	Supported
H3	BA →OBE	1.404	0.158	8.862	0.00	Supported
H4	CBE →OBE	0.241	0.079	3.22	0.001	Supported
H5	SMIs → OBE	0.276	0.085	3.242	0.001	Supported

For normalized values, the standardized coefficient (β) was employed to assess the strength and direction of relationships among constructs. Table 4 presents the hypothesis testing results, indicating that all proposed hypotheses (H1–H5) are statistically supported. This is evidenced by critical ratio (C.R.) values exceeding the minimum threshold of 1.96 and p-values ≤ 0.05, confirming the model's robustness and predictive relevance.

H_1: *Social Media Influencers (SMIs) have a significant positive effect on Brand Awareness (BA) (β = 0.599, C.R. = 4.466, p < 0.001), indicating that credible and engaging influencers enhance consumers' recognition and recall of brands.*

H_2: *SMIs also significantly influence Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) (β = 0.191, C.R. = 3.210, p = 0.001), suggesting that interactions with influencers contribute to consumers' emotional and cognitive involvement with the brand.*

H_3: *Brand Awareness (BA) strongly and positively impacts Overall Brand Equity (OBE), as indicated by a high standardized coefficient (β = 1.404, C.R. = 8.862, p < 0.001).*

H_4: *CBE has a positive and significant influence on OBE (β = 0.241, C.R. = 3.220, p = 0.001), highlighting the importance of brand engagement as a predictor of brand equity.*

H_5: *Lastly, SMIs directly influence OBE (β = 0.276, C.R. = 3.242, p = 0.001), demonstrating that influencer-driven marketing efforts not only affect intermediary variables but also directly enhance consumers' perceptions of brand value.*

Collectively, these results underscore the central role of Social Media Influencers in enhancing both intermediate outcomes (brand awareness and engagement) and final outcomes (brand equity). The findings validate the conceptual model and support the continuation to further analysis and discussion.

4.3. Mediating Variable

To test Hypothesis 6, which examines the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between social media influencers and overall brand equity, and Hypothesis 7, which explores the mediating role of consumer brand engagement in the same relationship, the model was divided into two for comparison purposes. The first model represents the direct effect only, while the second model includes the mediating variables that influence the relationship between social media influencers and overall brand equity.

According to Baron and Kenny [28] as cited in Rahayu, F. (2017), brand awareness can be considered a mediating variable if it meets several conditions. These conditions are as follows:
  a) there must be a significant effect of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on Brand Awareness (BA),
  b) there must be a significant effect of BA on Overall Brand Equity (OBE), and
  c) if the effect of SMIs on OBE is significant in Model 1, it becomes non-significant or remains significant but with a reduced level of significance in Model 2 after including the mediator.

The results of Hypothesis 6 testing can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5.
Mediation Test Result for Hypothesis 6.

Model	Path	Estimate (β)	P–Value	Conclusion
Model 1	SMIs → OBE	0.603	0.003	Condition c fulfilled (effect exists in Model 1)
Model 2	SMIs → BA	0.395	0.001	Condition a fulfilled (significant)
Model 2	BA → OBE	1.408	0.000	Condition b fulfilled (significant)
Model 2	SMIs → OBE (after mediation)	0.089	0.125	Condition c fulfilled (becomes non-significant)

These findings confirm that brand awareness fully mediates the relationship between social media influencers and overall brand equity. This suggests that the impact of SMIs on brand equity operates primarily through their ability to enhance consumers' awareness of the brand, rather than through a direct effect alone.

According to Baron and Kenny [28] as cited in Rahayu, F. (2017), Customers Brand Engagement can be considered a mediating variable if it meets several conditions. These conditions are as follows:
a) There must be a significant effect of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on Customers Brand Engagement (CBE),
b) There must be a significant effect of CBE on Overall Brand Equity (OBE), and
c) If the effect of SMIs on OBE is significant in Model 1, it becomes non-significant or remains significant but with a reduced level of significance in Model 2 after including the mediator.

The results of Hypothesis 7 testing can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6.
Mediation Test Result for Hypothesis 7.

Model	Path	Estimate (β)	P–Value	Conclusion
Model 1	SMIs → OBE	0.603	0.003	Condition c fulfilled (effect exists in Model 1)
Model 2	SMIs → CBE	0.241	0.002	Condition a fulfilled (significant)
Model 2	CBE → OBE	0.936	0.000	Condition b fulfilled (significant)
Model 2	SMIs → OBE (after mediation)	0.198	0.007	Condition c fulfilled (becomes non-significant)

These results indicate that CBE partially mediates the relationship between SMIs and OBE. In other words, SMIs influence brand equity both directly and indirectly through consumer brand engagement, with the indirect path playing a substantial role in enhancing brand equity.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that influencer marketing strategies play an important role in shaping brand equity, particularly in the context of local perfume industries like Le Secré Parfume. These findings are in line with previous studies that state that collaborations with influencers can increase brand awareness and customer engagement, which ultimately strengthens overall brand equity [2, 3].

First, the significant impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness indicates that consumers are more likely to recognize and recall Le Secré when information is conveyed by an influencer they trust and follow. This highlights that in the digital age, influencers' presence as authentic sources of information is key to creating a strong brand perception.

Second, influencer marketing also contributes to customer brand engagement. Consumers who are actively engaged through likes, comments, and content sharing demonstrate an emotional and cognitive connection with the brand. This finding supports the argument by Cheung, et al. [13] that engagement is not just about interaction but also an early form of brand loyalty.

Third, brand awareness proves to be a very strong factor in shaping brand equity, even stronger than customer engagement. This suggests that without high brand awareness, brand value cannot be optimally formed, even if consumers are emotionally engaged. Interestingly, when tested as a mediator, brand awareness fully mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and brand equity, while

customer engagement only partially mediates it. This means that influencer strategies will be more effective if focused on increasing brand awareness first.

Overall, these results have important implications for marketing practitioners, particularly Le Secré Parfume, that the selection and management of the right influencers can significantly drive the improvement of brand equity. However, companies also need to develop strategies that can sustain long-term engagement, not just temporary awareness.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results and for future research development:

5.1. Limited to One Brand

This study focuses only on one local brand, Le Secré Parfume. The results may not be generalizable to other brands, especially those from different industries or with target market characteristics that are not similar.

5.2. Specific Population and Sample

The respondents of this study are social media users who follow the Le Secré Parfume account. This limits the scope of the analysis to a group that already has interest or familiarity with the brand, potentially leading to engagement bias.

5.3. Cross-Sectional Data Collection

The study was conducted at a specific point in time (cross-sectional), so it does not capture changes in consumer behavior over time. To understand the long-term effects of influencer marketing on brand equity, a longitudinal approach would be more relevant.

5.4. Suboptimal Model Fit

Some goodness-of-fit indicators, such as CFI, TLI, and NFI, did not meet the recommended standards. This suggests that the structural model used can still be improved to achieve a better representation of the relationships between the variables.

5.5. Limited Variables

This study only includes brand awareness and customer brand engagement as mediators. Other factors, such as brand trust, perceived value, or brand image, may also play a crucial role in shaping brand equity.

Transparency:
The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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