

How do Social Media Environments and Self-Brand Connection Give an Impact on Brand Advocacy?

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Abstract: - This study examines the effects of social media marketing activity and social media influencer attributes on brand advocacy among millennials in Indonesia. The study found that efficient use of social media marketing activity improves self-brand connection, which in turn leads to brand advocacy among millennials. However, the study found that social media influencer attributes do not have a direct impact on self-brand connection or brand advocacy. The study used online questionnaires and path analysis to analyze the data and the results provide valuable insights for companies looking to boost brand advocacy in the volatile business landscape of Indonesia.

Key-Words: Social media marketing activities, social media influencers, self-brand connections, brand advocacy, millennials.

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1 Introduction

Indonesia has the largest digital economy in Southeast Asia, with a total value of IDR 255.5 trillion in 2019, and is predicted to continue to increase to IDR 707.6 trillion in 2024, [1]. This shows an increase and competition in digital business, especially in e-commerce. One of the reasons for the development of online business and e-commerce in Indonesia is the COVID-19 pandemic that has ravaged the entire planet, including Indonesia. The pandemic condition also gives an impact on the rapid growth of internet usage and leads to contributing changes in business processes, where originally business processes were run offline (face to face) during the pandemic many businesses were forced to switch to using online methods.

This circumstance necessitates a business' ability to increase consumer trust in its brand. Which is currently the customers dominated by millennials, the changes in the situation also make consumer behaviors change, nowadays customers attend to buy and choose products quicker than before, whether in an online or offline situation. Millennials consumers still become the main target of marketing activities in Indonesia, millennials will directly or indirectly be affected by many stimuli from various marketing activities, especially from internet

exposure, one of the platforms most often used by millennials is social media.

Social media marketing activity (SMM) has been defined as a two-way communication seeking empathy towards young consumers, and even reinforcing the familiar feelings linked with established brands to a higher age range, [2]. This indicates that through such actions, brands have the opportunity to not only promote their brands but also create a deeper and more holistic connection to those clients through social media, [2], [3].

Consequently, it has been proposed that social media marketing activity predicts the degree to which a self-brand connection is formed. Moreover, according to several studies, another way for a brand to be trusted by millennial consumers is through social media influencers (SMI), it is well acknowledged that the utilization of social media influencers to promote a brand is a marketing strategy that is highly effective.

It's been shown that getting product recommendations from social media influencers can boost trust. It levels up to 40% higher than products recommended by family or friends, many consumers choose products used by social media influencers. This research illustrates that currently, a recommendation from a social media influencer is necessary for a brand, according to another research,

prospective consumers will have more confidence in audiences who say positive statements related to a brand, compared to promotions from the brand itself, [4]. Adding up the statement, [5] revealed that millennial consumers are more receptive to and trust recommendations from influencers on social media.

The relationship that SMI builds with its followers brings significant effect towards marketing activities, what is built between SMI and its followers (millennial consumers) will be stronger then provide a sense of trust and closeness through social media influencers, [6]. The relationship created between SMI and millennials consumers will increase consumer trust in a brand [7] argues that the impact of persuasive communication can be increased by building a relationship; this relationship could give the consumer a sense of closeness between themselves and the brand which is significantly built self-brand connection (SBC).

This situation can occur if a good relationship is built with the SMI. A good relationship is built based on the closeness of the character possessed by SMI with its followers (millennials consumers), millennials consumers will have more confidence in SMI and increase their likeliness toward the SMI that form PSR and SBC, [8], [9], [10], [11].

The phenomenon that occurs related to this is the emergence of SMM (Social Media Marketing Activity) and SMI (Social Media Influencer) which are often used by marketers to make a brand, one of the interesting things about SMI is that they can build very close relationships with their followers and SMM is a strategy that can reach the current market target.

Self-Brand Connection (SBC) is suspected to be able to influence the behavior of millennial consumers toward a brand, millennials consumers can become an advocate for the brand that is used by influencers in social media marketing activity. Discussions related to brand advocacy (BA) which are thought due to the influence of social media influencers, social media marketing activity, and self-brand connections are discussions that still deserve to be analyzed. Research related to brand advocacy and its relationship with self-brand connection has not been widely discussed in previous studies, previous research.

Furthermore, brand advocacy can also be created because of the presence of an approach that arises between a person and a brand (self-brand connection), when consumers have extensive knowledge about the brand and are involved in an active relationship with the brand it is likely to result in brand advocacy. This study will discuss the relationship between social media influencers, social

media marketing activity, self-brand connections & brand advocacy.

The research aims to examine the relationship between social media influencers, social media marketing activity, self-brand connections, and brand advocacy among the millennial market in Indonesia.

Another aim of this study is to investigate how social media marketing activity and the influence of social media influencers can affect the formation of self-brand connections and ultimately, brand advocacy among millennials.

However, there are several gaps and challenges that the research may face. One gap is that previous studies have not widely discussed the relationship between brand advocacy and self-brand connection. This lack of research in this area means that the study may be one of the first to explore this relationship and can be considered pioneering research. Another challenge is that the study only focuses on the millennial generation in Indonesia, which means that the findings may not be generalizable to other demographic groups or other countries.

2 Literature Review

Marketers use social media to achieve marketing goals, by serving customers, advertising, and making trades. Social media marketing can be defined as the use of technology, channels, and software to produce, communicate, deliver, and trade offerings that are valuable to both sides, [12]. There are studies investigating the specific goals of social media marketing, [13], [14], [15]. These include increasing sales, expanding brand awareness, improving a company's image, driving commerce to online platforms, lowering marketing expenses, and encouraging platform users to contribute or share specific content, [16].

According to, [17] social media was designed specifically for conversational media. Social media is a mechanism and platform that facilitates customer-generated content, which is information and opinions collected online and presented in the form of photographs or images, written text, videos, or audio clips. It can be concluded that social media marketing activities are processes where a marketer markets their products, both goods, and services by creating certain content for the targeted audience or customers. Social media marketing activity is a strategy that can bridge the relationship created between a company or a brand to a consumer or prospective customer, social media is a forum that is currently widely used by a company to build good

relationships between companies and consumers. as well as when you want to attract new customers.

According to prior research, social media marketing can be used to develop a brand's story, hence increasing the perceived degree of self-brand ties, [18], [19]. This will raise the customers' levels of involvement, [20], [21], [22], and provide them with the materials they need to construct their identities and communicate with others, [23].

Through such strategies, they are able to increase not just the depth of their connection with consumers, but also the frequency with which consumers receive brand-related information or news., [13], [24]. The researcher formulates the following hypotheses based on the given statement:

H1: Social media marketing activity significantly affects self-brand connection

H2: Social media marketing activity significantly affects brand advocacy

Social Media Influencers are those who actively utilize their social media accounts, are frequently involved in particular topics, and give fresh information. Influencers are often considered partners by their followers and it is not uncommon for followers to trust the support and recommendations provided by influencers, [25]. According to the research, an influencer may review a product that people would admire, so persuading them to buy it.

The internal characteristics of an influencer play an important role in attracting the attention of a brand and marketers to carefully recruit an influencer. The advantage of this is that brands can choose influencers who are more affordable than well-known celebrity endorsers who have much higher costs, [4].

Therefore, one of the attributes of an influencer is credibility, the credibility of a message source can substantially be used to evaluate the effectiveness of an endorser, in addition to credibility, other elements related to influencers are generally discussed including expertise and trustworthiness. Credibility affects the audience through the internalization process, this arises when a message source has the same values and attitudes as his followers.

Social media influencers are a promotional tool that can be used by a brand in order to attract the attention of its consumers, this study will discuss millennials consumers. To get the attention of consumers, the closeness between social media influencers and consumers is important. This requires a brand to be able to build relationships

with its consumers, parasocial relationships are one of the relationships that can be created between social media influencers and their consumers, so the relationship between these two variables is needed.

According to, [17] consumers who value and prioritize SMI are more likely to develop a self-brand connection. Self-brand connection takes place when the image of a public personality can have resemblances with the consumer's self-image (or desired ambitious self-image), the endorsement of the public personality can provide symbolic significance for a brand that consumers want, and the consumer's social identity can be adapted to meet the needs of its affiliates. So, the similarity of the image of the media persona with the image of the audience or consumers can make them more connected with the brand, [26].

Referring to, [27] the involvement of a consumer can increase the positive relationship of self-brand connection and brand use intention, through consumer involvement in the context of social media. The interactive features of social media can promote relationships with various SMI and reduce doubts about a brand, thus SMI is predicted to influence responses related to brands that connect with audiences or consumers.

It is true that consumers associated with SMI will expand and establish a range of self-concepts that they present to others or to themselves, [28]. When consumers have a greater connection to a brand, they are better able to express their intended or actual selves. Based on this statement, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Social media influencer significantly affects self-brand connection

H4: Social media influencer activity significantly affects brand advocacy

Self-brand connection refers to the degree to which consumers integrate a brand into their sense of self, [26]. From a customer's perspective, the potential for self-brand connection shows a greater depth of identification with a brand, [3]. Self-brand connection refers to the connection that people make between a brand and their individual identity, in this case, the brand is considered more important to consumers, self-brand connection is a term used for a customer who has a close relationship with a brand and incorporates the brand into brand identity or self-concept, [29].

In addition to this, emotional factors such as self-brand connection have an important role to increase the creation of brand advocacy, [29]. When a self-brand connection is presently based on efforts to

brand a product, awareness of a brand can be realized where consumers will become supporters of the brand, [30].

Consumers' effective brand communication can speed the acceptance and adoption of new products, [31]. This may be the most significant source of information when purchasing certain products, as it is deemed to be from sources with less prejudice.

Consumers frequently utilize word-of-mouth recommendations to lessen the amount of data to be digested and worry, [32]. When a consumer develops an emotional connection with a brand, this can result in brand advocacy, in which people share favorable word of mouth about the company. Several studies have shown a correlation between self-brand connection and brand advocacy, but in the context of millennials this relationship is still worthy of analysis, so this study proposes:

H5: Self-brand connection significantly affects brand advocacy

Brand advocacy can be defined as the extent to which a person actively endorses and promotes a brand to the exclusion of all other brands in the same product category, [33]. Brand advocacy is described as how a consumer creates and enhances customer relationships so that consumers can voice positive comments about a brand, [34]. According to, [35], argues that brand advocacy is a brand recommendation to others, defending the brand when attacked or recruiting potential customers.

Social media influencers and social media marketing activity hopefully will have a positive impact on a brand, this brings its own advantages for a brand, one form of the positive impact that is formed from the presence of social media influencers is the creation of brand advocacy from millennial consumers. The assumption in this study (H6 and H7) is that there is a relationship between social media influencers, social media marketing activity, and millennials consumer with the self-brand connection who will have an influence on the forming of brand advocacy, and to summarize it, all of the hypotheses are stated on Figure 1.

H6: Social media marketing activity significantly affects brand advocacy through self-brand connection as mediating variable

H7: Social media influencer significantly affects brand advocacy through self-brand connection as mediating variable

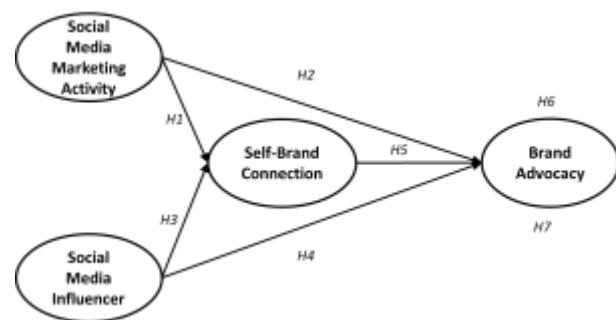


Fig. 1: Research Model

3 Methodology

This study employed a quantitative methodology and a cross-sectional design to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The data collection techniques used were a Literature review and a survey with 7-point Likert scale questionnaires through online distribution that was shared on social media (Instagram).

The questionnaire was issued to Instagram users in Indonesia who follow Instagram influencer accounts in Indonesia. As of July 2021, there would be 91.77 million Instagram users, and probability sampling with simple random samples was used for this study. According to, [36], a sample size should be 100 or more is adequate enough to run the analysis, while in this study, 215 respondents were collected.

Smart-PLS 3 was used in this study to process the data, and the technique for analyzing the data was path analysis. In this study, outer and inner model tests were employed as statistical procedures. The outer model test assessed validity and reliability, whereas the inner model test investigated models and assumptions.

The measuring model (Outer Model) consists of two tests: validity and reliability, [37]. In this study, convergent and discriminant validity—the amount of loading factor for each construct—will be used to measure validity. If the loading value between each indicator is greater than 0.50, then the instrument (questionnaire) that has been designed has good convergent validity based on the loading factor approach. Discriminant validity will be measured by comparing the convergent and discriminant validity scores.

It is possible to draw the conclusion that the instrument or questionnaire that was designed for this research has good convergent validity because the results of the data processes are shown in Table 1. These results show the results of calculating the loading factor for the instrument (questionnaire) between each indicator. The results show that all of

the indicators gain more than 0.50 (loading value more than 0.7).

This research also made use of discriminant validity as another measurement for validity. The purpose of this validity test was to assess the association between latent variables by comparing the square roots value of the average variance extracted (AVE's), which are often viewed diagonally.

It is necessary for constructs to have an AVE value that is more than 0.50 in order for them to be considered to have good validity. As a result of the fact that the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable is higher than the correlation value between latent variables and other latent variables, the instrument (questionnaire) that was constructed has good discriminant validity, as is also described in Table 1.

Following the completion of the convergent and discriminant validity analyses, the reliability analysis of each indicator will be carried out. The results of the reliability testing could be seen from Cronbach's Alpha value, which had to be greater than 0.60. After that, it was possible to see in Table 1 that the value of the composite reliability coefficients was greater than 0.70, which indicated that all of the indicators used in this research were reliable.

Table 1. Validity & Reliability test results

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Advocacy	0,872	0,922	0,797
Self-Brand Connection	0,969	0,974	0,844
Social Media Influencer	0,967	0,972	0,792
Social Media Marketing Activity	0,939	0,949	0,701

Afterward, the analysis of coefficient determination (R²) was examined, and the results of the analysis of the coefficient of determination (R²) are employed to determine the degree to which the independent variable is capable of describing the dependent variable. The R² values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 respectively imply that the model has good, moderate, and weak capabilities, respectively. In Table 2, the R² value for each dependent variable that was investigated in this study was described.

Table 2. Coefficient determination (R²) results

	R Square	Status
Brand Advocacy	0,725	Moderate
Self-brand Connection	0,584	Moderate

To describe the results more clearly and in detail, this research provides the results of validity, reliability, and coefficient determination (R²) in the form of SmartPLS results, the results shown in Figure 2.

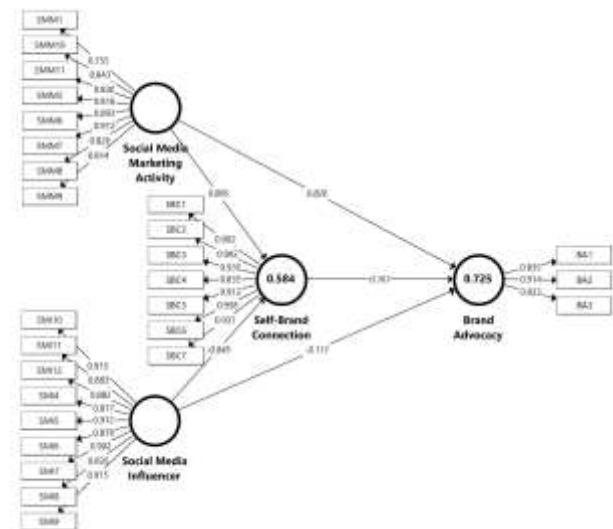


Fig. 1: Complete Research Model for Validity, Reliability, and R² (outer model)

4 Results

The results of analyzing the model studied, it comes up that for several tests of variables, there were a significant effect and relation between Social Media Marketing Activity (SMM) toward SBC with a T-Value = 8.992 > 1.65 & P-values = 0.000 < 0.05, which means that **hypothesis 1** was **accepted**.

This research also examined the direct effect between social media marketing activity and brand advocacy the result was the T-Value = 9.063 > 1.65 & P-values= 0.000 < 0.05, which means that **hypothesis 2** was **accepted**.

Both **hypotheses 3 & 4** are **rejected** because the T-Value was < 1.65 and the P-value > 0.05, the results shown in Table 3, this is shown that the relation between social media influencers cannot affect self-brand connection and brand advocacy. Next, Self-Brand Connection (SBC) toward Brand Advocacy (BAV) with a T-value = 2.642 > 1.65 also with a P-value = 0.009 < 0.05) which means that **hypothesis 5** was **accepted**.

It can conclude that there was a significant effect between social media marketing activity toward

self-brand connection and brand advocacy, moreover, a self-brand connection also has a significant effect on brand advocacy. Another result from the test showed that social media influencers (SMI) didn't have a significant effect on SBC, the construct between SMI, SBC, and BAV didn't happen.

Table 3. Hypotheses testing results (Direct Effect)

Hypotheses	Relation	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H5	SBC -> BAV	0.161	0.158	0.063	2.543	0.011
H4	SMI -> BAV	-0.125	-0.127	0.109	1.145	0.253
H3	SMI -> SBC	-0.049	-0.041	0.170	0.290	0.772
H2	SMM -> BAV	0.958	0.959	0.106	9.063	0.000
H1	SMM -> SBC	0.809	0.801	0.149	5.432	0.000

From the results (Table 3) it can be seen that SBC did stimulate the formation of brand advocacy but it just doesn't influence by the presence of SMI, but self-brand connection (SBC) and brand advocacy (BAV) were influenced by other factors such as social media marketing activity (SMM).

Table 4. Hypotheses testing results (Indirect Effect)

Hypotheses	Relation	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H7	SMI -> SBC -> BAV	-0.008	-0.005	0.028	0.283	0.777
H6	SMM -> SBC -> BAV	0.130	0.126	0.055	2.385	0.017

It was shown from Table 4, that **hypothesis 6 was accepted** with the T-value = 2.385 > 1.65 & P-value = 0.017 < 0.05, while hypothesis 7 was rejected. It can be concluded that indirectly Social Media Marketing Activity has a significant effect on brand advocacy through self-brand connection as mediating variable. The results of all hypotheses testing can be shown in Figure 3.

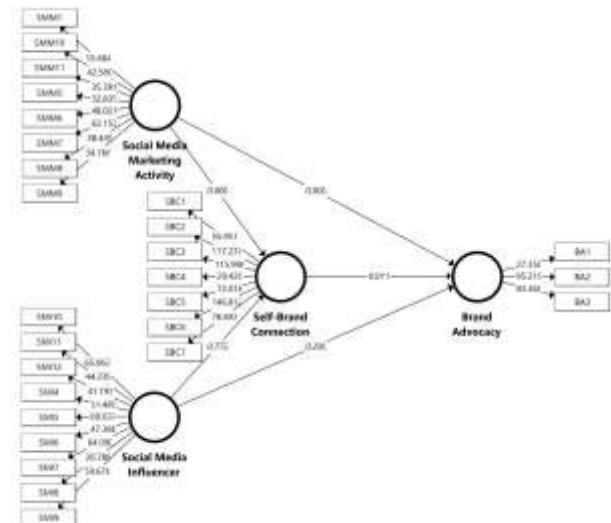


Fig. 2: Complete Research Model for hypotheses testing (inner model)

The study found that social media marketing activity has a significant impact on self-brand connection and brand advocacy among millennials in Indonesia. The results of the analysis, using T-value and P-value, show that hypotheses 1 and 2, which state that there is a significant effect of social media marketing activity on self-brand connection and brand advocacy respectively, are accepted.

However, the study found that social media influencer attributes do not have a direct impact on self-brand connection or brand advocacy, as hypotheses 3 and 4 were rejected. The results, as shown in Table 3, indicate that there is no significant relationship between social media influencers and self-brand connections or brand advocacy. Additionally, the study also found that self-brand connection has a significant impact on brand advocacy, as hypothesis 5 is accepted. The T-value and P-value for this relationship are 2.642 and 0.009 respectively, which means that self-brand connection is positively related to brand advocacy.

In conclusion, this study shows that social media marketing activity plays an important role in promoting self-brand connection and brand advocacy among millennials in Indonesia, while social media influencer attributes do not have a direct effect on these constructs. Moreover, the self-brand connection is also found to be a significant factor in promoting brand advocacy.

5 Conclusion

This research provides evidence that social media marketing plays an important role in promoting self-brand connections and brand advocacy among millennials in Indonesia. The study found that social media marketing activity has a significant impact on self-brand connection, which in turn leads to brand advocacy. Additionally, the study found that self-brand connection has a significant impact on brand advocacy.

On the other hand, the study found that social media influencer attributes do not have a direct impact on self-brand connection or brand advocacy. This result may be different from previous research, as the study focuses on millennials in Indonesia, a demographic that may be more likely to form brand advocacy in the digital era due to their fast-moving lifestyle and potential ignorance.

Overall, this research provides valuable insights for companies looking to boost brand advocacy among millennials in Indonesia by utilizing social media marketing and focusing on promoting self-brand connections. The research also highlights the limited role of social media influencers in promoting self-brand connection and brand advocacy among this demographic.

There are several limitations within this study that should be improved for advancing the topics and study. The study focuses on millennials in Indonesia, which means that the findings may not be generalizable to other demographic groups or other countries, and relies on self-reported data obtained through online questionnaires, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies.

The study only focuses on social media marketing activity and social media influencer attributes as factors impacting brand advocacy, but there may be other important factors that were not considered. The study uses path analysis to analyze the data, but this method has its own limitations and assumptions that need to be considered.

To overcome these limitations, future research may consider using other methods, such as experiments or case studies, to provide more robust and generalizable findings. The research may also consider including other factors that may impact brand advocacy, such as customer satisfaction, trust, or loyalty. The research may consider studying other demographic groups and other countries to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media marketing, social media influencer, self-brand connection, and brand advocacy.

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