

**SAVORING LOYALTY: HOW BRAND GESTALT MEDIATES THE SOCIAL  
MEDIA-BRAND LOYALTY RELATIONSHIP**

**MENIKMATI LOYALITAS: BAGAIMANA BRAND GESTALT MEMEDIASI  
HUBUNGAN HUBUNGAN LOYALITAS MEDIA-MEREK**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to construct and validate a theoretical framework that explains the impact of social media on café branding and customer loyalty, with brand gestalt serving as a mediating variable. The study employed a quantitative descriptive and correlational research design, collecting data through questionnaires from a sample of 200 Gen Z café customers in Manado City. Participants were recruited using a combination of snowball and convenience sampling techniques. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explore relationships within the dataset. The results show that SMM has a significant positive impact on story, servicescape, sensescape, stakeholder, and brand loyalty. Additionally, story, sensescape, and servicescape all significantly influence brand loyalty. Furthermore, Result indicate that story dimension of brand gestalt mediates the relationship between SMM and brand loyalty. The emphasis on social media marketing may not fully capture the influence of other marketing channels, and the sample size or geographic scope might limit the generalizability of the results. Future research could explore emotional engagement, brand equity, or other digital marketing strategies like influencer and content marketing, while expanding to different industries or regions for broader insights. The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of brand gestalt by highlighting how specific dimensions—story, sensescape, and servicescape—positively impact customer loyalty. It extends existing theories by demonstrating that these dimensions, along with social media marketing, play crucial roles in shaping brand perceptions and loyalty.*

**Keywords:** Brand Gestalt, Brand Loyalty, Gen Z, Social Media Marketing.

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membangun dan memvalidasi kerangka teori yang menjelaskan dampak media sosial terhadap branding kafe dan loyalitas pelanggan, dengan brand gestalt sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif dan korelasional, dengan mengumpulkan data melalui kuesioner dari sampel 200 pelanggan kafe Gen Z di Kota Manado. Partisipan direkrut dengan menggunakan kombinasi teknik snowball dan convenience sampling. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan dalam kumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa SMM memiliki dampak positif yang signifikan terhadap story, servicescape, sensescape, stakeholder, dan brand loyalty. Selain itu, story, sensescape, dan servicescape secara signifikan mempengaruhi loyalitas merek. Selain itu, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dimensi story dari brand gestalt memediasi hubungan antara SMM dan loyalitas merek. Penekanan pada pemasaran media sosial mungkin tidak sepenuhnya menangkap pengaruh saluran pemasaran lainnya, dan ukuran sampel atau cakupan geografis dapat membatasi generalisasi hasil. Penelitian di masa depan dapat mengeksplorasi keterlibatan emosional, ekuitas merek, atau strategi pemasaran digital lainnya seperti influencer dan pemasaran konten, sambil memperluas ke industri atau wilayah yang berbeda untuk mendapatkan wawasan yang lebih luas. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman teoritis tentang brand gestalt dengan menyoroti bagaimana dimensi spesifik - story, sensescape, dan servicescape - secara positif berdampak pada loyalitas pelanggan. Penelitian ini memperluas teori yang sudah ada dengan menunjukkan bahwa dimensi-dimensi ini, bersama dengan pemasaran media sosial, memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk persepsi dan loyalitas merek.

**Kata Kunci:** Gestalt Merek, Loyalitas Merek, Gen Z, Pemasaran Media Sosial

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the café industry has experienced significant growth,

becoming a dynamic and competitive sector (Fernando, 2022). This expansion has prompted many entrepreneurs to either establish new ventures or enhance their existing businesses to stay competitive. With the proliferation of cafés in Indonesia, particularly in Manado, café owners are faced with the challenge of offering more than just products—they must create compelling experiences that differentiate their brand from the competition (Sudirjo et al., 2023). The increasing number of cafés signals an urgent need to focus not only on the quality of goods and services but also on branding strategies that appeal to modern consumers.

Coffee culture has evolved into a core element of contemporary lifestyles, with cafés serving as social hubs where individuals not only enjoy beverages but also socialize and relax with friends and family (Pratiwi & Yasa, 2019). In Manado, coffee-centric cafés have risen to prominence, attracting customers who seek both a quality coffee experience and an inviting atmosphere. This growing trend underscores the need for café owners to strategically brand their businesses in a way that resonates with customers on a deeper, more meaningful level.

Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses to engage with customers and promote their brands. The rapid growth of the internet and social media has revolutionized communication patterns, shifting from one-way messages to interactive, many-to-many exchanges. For businesses, effective communication through social media is key to crafting persuasive branding efforts, as social

media provides platforms to disseminate brand messages, engage with audiences, and build lasting relationships (Kurniawan & Adiwijaya, 2018). In the context of cafés, social media marketing offers an opportunity to showcase the brand's identity, engage with customers, and foster loyalty through consistent online presence and interaction.

Branding, an essential marketing tool, extends beyond logos and visual identities. It encompasses a holistic approach that includes the identity, image, and positioning of a business. A comprehensive branding strategy aligns a company's personality with its products or services, creating an emotional connection between the brand and its consumers. In today's competitive landscape, utilizing social media platforms for branding allows businesses to reach broader audiences, showcase their unique offerings, and build meaningful customer relationships (Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023).

Despite the growing importance of social media marketing, limited research has explored its impact on the holistic concept of brand gestalt. Brand gestalt emphasizes the interconnectedness of various brand dimensions—story, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholders—that work together to create a unified brand experience (Mandagi & Centeno, 2021). While previous studies have examined the relationship between social media and customer engagement in the culinary sector (Begum et al., 2020; Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021), there is a notable gap in research investigating how social media marketing influences the multiple dimensions of brand gestalt, particularly in the café industry. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the interplay between social media marketing, brand gestalt, and customer loyalty.

The objective of this study is twofold: first, to develop and validate a theoretical framework that examines the influence of social media marketing on café branding through the lens of brand gestalt; and second, to investigate how brand gestalt mediates the relationship between social media marketing and café branding. To achieve these objectives, an empirical study was conducted on café customers in Manado. By understanding the role of social media in shaping café branding through brand gestalt, this research provides valuable insights for café owners and entrepreneurs looking to craft effective marketing strategies and build enduring brands in a competitive market.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### **Social Media Marketing**

Social media marketing (SMM) has become an essential tool for businesses to connect with customers and build brand recognition in today's digital age. Defined as the use of social media platforms to promote products or services, SMM involves creating and sharing content with the goal of increasing brand awareness, driving website traffic, and generating sales. It stands out as a vital marketing strategy for several reasons: it enables businesses to reach a broad audience, fosters direct engagement and community building, and is typically more cost-effective than traditional marketing methods (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). Moreover, social media platforms provide advanced targeting options, allowing businesses to tailor their campaigns to specific demographics, while also offering valuable data on customer behavior and preferences (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Warbung et al., 2023). This helps refine marketing strategies and improve return

on investment (Tuten, 2023; Li et al., 2021).

The importance of social media marketing is underscored by its ability to transform how brands interact with consumers. Social media revolutionizes the distribution, creation, and consumption of brand content, allowing customers to not only interact with a brand but also experience its online presence in a more immersive and engaging way (Alves et al., 2016; Mandagi, 2023). By fostering consistent interaction, brands can cultivate loyalty and create a community of engaged customers, which is crucial for long-term business success (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Manggopa et al., 2023).

In the hospitality, tourism, and travel sectors, social media plays a critical role in attracting tourists, promoting destinations, and enhancing customer experiences. Chu et al. (2020) highlight that social media advertising in these industries has become increasingly important as it allows businesses to reach potential travelers and create compelling content that drives tourism engagement. Similarly, in retail, the use of social media marketing has been shown to significantly boost website traffic, orders, and sales. Dolega et al. (2021) demonstrate how social media can amplify retail presence online, thereby increasing customer engagement and sales through targeted campaigns.

The impact of social media marketing extends beyond brand awareness and sales; it also shapes customer behavior. Research by Wibowo et al. (2020) explores how SMM influences customer behavior, focusing on the role of customer experience in shaping purchasing intentions. Jamil et al. (2022) similarly examine the role of social media marketing activities in influencing customer intentions, highlighting how

businesses can leverage these platforms to create engaging content and enhance customer interaction to drive sales.

### **Brand Gestalt**

Gestalt theory, originating from psychology, is grounded in the idea that individuals perceive interconnected components as a unified whole rather than as isolated parts. At its core, *Gestalt* refers to a coherent pattern or meaningful structure, which guides individuals to perceive something as a complete entity (Wulyatiningsih & Mandagi, 2023). This theory is largely informed by a structural perspective, positing that people naturally organize specific information or objects into coherent perceptions (Diamond et al., 2009; Rantung et al., 2023). It has been the subject of extensive research, particularly in understanding how the brain and eyes collaborate to interpret visual stimuli. The gestalt concept, therefore, not only explains how people visually perceive the world but also suggests how these perceptions evoke cognitive and emotional responses.

Building on gestalt theory, Mandagi & Centeno (2024) introduced the concept of *brand gestalt*, which views brands as intricate systems of interrelated components that work together to create a cohesive whole. Brand gestalt is crucial in branding and brand management, as it allows for a holistic assessment of a brand, recognizing it as more than just a collection of individual parts (Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023). This concept posits that a brand comprises various elements—such as narrative, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholders—that dynamically interact to form a unified entity (Wulyatiningsih & Mandagi, 2023). By viewing a brand as a cohesive system, the idea of brand gestalt enhances understanding of how

consumers perceive and experience brands.

Brand gestalt plays a critical role in shaping the overall impression a consumer has of a brand. This impression is formed by the collective impact of a brand's elements, including its visual design, messaging, and customer experience (Mandagi & Centeno, 2024). A well-defined brand gestalt creates a distinct and recognizable identity, making it easier for consumers to identify and remember the brand. This differentiation provides the brand with a competitive edge in the marketplace. Furthermore, a unified and consistent brand experience strengthens customer loyalty and fosters repeat business (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Walean et al., 2022). Consumers are more likely to return to a brand that delivers a coherent and reliable experience, thus reinforcing long-term loyalty (Mandagi et al., 2024).

Brand gestalt also shapes how consumers perceive a brand, significantly influencing their purchasing decisions (Walean et al., 2022). By offering a cohesive brand image, businesses can shape consumer attitudes and behaviors in their favor. Beyond functional aspects, brand gestalt helps in building emotional connections with consumers. When the various elements of a brand resonate emotionally with consumers, they are more likely to feel connected to the brand, leading to greater brand loyalty (Rantung et al., 2023; Mandagi et al., 2024). These emotional ties are often what distinguish successful brands in highly competitive markets.

Several studies have explored the impact and importance of brand gestalt across different industries, particularly in tourism and destination branding. For example, Diamond et al (2009) explore how the American Girl brand uses brand

gestalt to create a sociocultural identity, exemplifying the effectiveness of a cohesive brand strategy in building a strong, culturally resonant brand. Mandagi et al. (2021) discuss the creation and validation of a scale to measure brand gestalt, focusing on its application in tourism destination branding. Mandagi et al. (2022) examine how destination brand gestalt influences brand attachment and loyalty, highlighting the importance of cohesive branding in the tourism sector. Similarly, Walean et al., (2023) propose a model demonstrating the relationship between brand gestalt, brand attitude, and revisit intention, underscoring the role of a unified brand identity in shaping consumer behavior and intentions to revisit. Meanwhile, Wulyatiningsih and Mandagi (2023) investigate how brand gestalt affects customers' intentions to revisit destinations, showing that a strong and cohesive brand identity can encourage repeat visits.

### **Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty refers to the extent to which consumers remain committed to purchasing a specific brand over time, even when faced with competing alternatives. It represents a deep emotional and attitudinal attachment to a brand that leads to repeated purchasing behavior and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. According to Parris and Guzman (2023), brand loyalty is a key outcome of brand equity, which encompasses the consumer's perception of brand value, brand image, and brand experience. It serves as a fundamental driver of sustained business success, as loyal customers are more likely to continue buying from the same brand and exhibit a higher tolerance for price increases or market fluctuations.

The importance of brand loyalty lies in its ability to provide businesses

with a competitive advantage. A loyal customer base is less likely to switch to competitors, resulting in stable revenue streams and reduced marketing costs associated with acquiring new customers (Atulkar, 2020). Additionally, loyal customers are often willing to pay premium prices, enhancing profitability for the brand. Brand loyalty is also linked to the long-term success of a company, as satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to advocate for the brand through positive recommendations, contributing to organic growth through word-of-mouth (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022).

Several factors influence the development of brand loyalty, with brand experience being one of the most significant. Brand experience refers to the sensations, feelings, and behaviors that a consumer associates with a brand during their interactions with it. Research by Hwang et al. (2021) on the hospitality industry highlights how positive brand experiences—whether delivered by human or robotic baristas—can significantly impact brand satisfaction, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. A consistent and enjoyable brand experience strengthens consumers' emotional connection with the brand, fostering long-term loyalty. Similarly, Mostafa and Kasamani (2021) suggest that brand experience, particularly emotional engagement, plays a crucial role in building brand loyalty, indicating that loyalty is not merely a rational decision but also a deeply emotional one.

Trust also plays a critical role in the formation of brand loyalty. As Akoglu and Özbek (2022) emphasize, perceived quality and brand trust act as mediators between brand experience and brand loyalty. When consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, they are more likely to develop loyalty because trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty associated with purchasing decisions.

Trust is particularly important in contexts where consumers engage with a brand over long periods, as seen in mall shoppers, where brand trust reinforces loyalty due to consistent positive experiences and the assurance of product quality (Atulkar, 2020). Additionally, Bae and Kim (2023) argue that brand love, a deep emotional affection toward a brand, further enhances loyalty, with brand trust acting as a moderator. Their research shows that when brand trust is present, the emotional bond between consumers and the brand (brand love) amplifies loyalty even further.

### **The Effect of Social Media Marketing**

The story dimension of brand gestalt refers to the narrative that encapsulates a brand's identity, values, and mission. SMM allows brands to craft compelling narratives through various content formats, such as posts, videos, and stories, effectively communicating their brand message and values (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). By fostering interactions and engagement, SMM provides a platform for brands to share their stories, enhancing brand recognition and customer connection. Research by Waworuntu et al. (2021) indicates that effective storytelling through SMM can lead to positive brand attitudes, reinforcing the notion that engaging narratives contribute to the overall perception of a brand. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**H1a:** Social media marketing positively influences the story dimension of brand gestalt.

The sensescape dimension focuses on sensory experiences and emotional responses that a brand evokes in consumers. SMM allows brands to engage consumers' senses through visually appealing content, interactive media, and immersive experiences

(Mandagi, 2023). Social media platforms can showcase products or services in a way that resonates emotionally with consumers, creating memorable experiences that shape perceptions of the brand. Studies highlight that brands utilizing sensory-rich content in their SMM strategies have a higher likelihood of creating favorable brand views and enhancing customer engagement (Rantung et al., 2023).

**H1b:** Social media marketing positively influences the sensescape dimension of brand gestalt.

The servicescape dimension encompasses the physical and digital environments where consumers interact with a brand. SMM plays a critical role in shaping customers' perceptions of these environments through visual branding, layout, and presentation (Walean et al., 2022). Effective social media campaigns can create a cohesive online presence that reflects a brand's values and enhances customer experience. Research suggests that a positive online representation through SMM can significantly influence customer behavior and loyalty, as it effectively sets expectations about the brand's offerings and services (Mandagi et al., 2024).

**H1c:** Social media marketing positively influences the servicescape dimension of brand gestalt.

The stakeholder dimension refers to the relationships and interactions between a brand and its various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and the community. SMM fosters direct communication and engagement with stakeholders, allowing brands to address concerns, gather feedback, and build community around their brand (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). The interactive nature of social media facilitates the development of trust and loyalty among

stakeholders, as brands can demonstrate transparency and responsiveness in their communication. Studies indicate that positive stakeholder interactions on social media contribute to favorable brand perceptions and enhance overall brand loyalty (Wibowo et al., 2020; Jamil et al., 2022).

**H1d:** Social media marketing positively influences the stakeholder dimension of brand gestalt.

Social media meets customers' informational and interpersonal needs by allowing them to share their knowledge and experiences related to specific businesses with other users. Cam et al. (2019) argue that social media empowers consumers to build online networks, exchange information, and engage in brand communities, ultimately fostering brand loyalty. Additionally, social media platforms offer a cost-effective way for companies to enhance their image and promote customer loyalty (Cam et al., 2019). Recent research in tourist marketing has demonstrated that positive experiences on social media contribute significantly to consumer loyalty, a finding supported by several studies conducted by Mendes (2023). Based on this evidence, the following theory was proposed:

**H2:** Social media marketing has a positive influence on brand loyalty.

### ***The Effect of Brand Gestalt on Brand Loyalty***

The concept of brand gestalt views brands as interconnected systems where storytelling plays a crucial role in fostering emotional connections with consumers. Engaging narratives create a distinct brand identity, making it easier for consumers to remember and recognize the brand, ultimately enhancing their emotional engagement and attachment (Mandagi, 2023; Rantung et al., 2023; Wulyatiningsih &

Mandagi, 2023). Research indicates that compelling brand stories significantly influence consumer perceptions and attitudes, leading to increased loyalty behaviors such as repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Mandagi et al., 2022; Walean et al., 2023). Empirical studies further demonstrate that cohesive branding, including effective storytelling, positively impacts brand attachment and loyalty across various contexts, underscoring the importance of the story dimension in cultivating brand loyalty (Diamond et al., 2009; Mandagi et al., 2021; Parris & Guzman, 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H3a:** Story dimension of brand gestalt positively influence brand loyalty.

Gestalt theory suggests that individuals perceive interconnected components as a unified whole (Wulyatiningsih & Mandagi, 2023). This cohesive perception of a brand, encompassing its sensory experiences—such as sight, sound, touch, and smell—enhances consumer engagement and emotional connections (Mandagi, 2023). Studies have shown that a well-defined sensescape can create memorable brand experiences that evoke positive emotions, thereby fostering brand loyalty (Hwang et al., 2021; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). Furthermore, the emotional engagement facilitated by sensory stimuli not only enhances consumers' attachment to a brand but also contributes to their willingness to revisit and recommend the brand to others (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022; Rantung et al., 2023). The collective impact of these sensory experiences, as part of the brand gestalt, reinforces consumers' perceptions of brand quality and trust, which are critical mediators in the formation of brand loyalty (Atulkar, 2020; Bae & Kim, 2023; Parris &

Guzman, 2023). Therefore, the sensescape dimension serves as a vital element in shaping brand loyalty through its ability to evoke emotional responses and create lasting impressions, ultimately leading to a strong commitment to the brand.

**H3b:** Sensescape dimension of brand gestalt positively influence brand loyalty.

Within the context of branding, servicescape—the physical environment where services are delivered—contributes significantly to the overall brand gestalt, impacting how consumers interpret and emotionally connect with a brand (Hwang et al., 2021). A well-designed servicescape not only enhances the consumer experience but also creates a positive emotional response, fostering brand attachment and loyalty (Mandagi et al., 2022). Research indicates that a cohesive and positive brand experience, particularly through servicescape, strengthens the emotional ties between consumers and brands, leading to higher loyalty (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022; Bae & Kim, 2023). Furthermore, when consumers find a brand's servicescape appealing, it enhances their perception of quality and trust, which are crucial mediators in building brand loyalty (Atulkar, 2020). This conceptualization leads to the formulation of this hypothesis:

**H3c:** Servicescape dimension of brand gestalt positively influence brand loyalty.

The stakeholder dimension of brand gestalt encompasses the interconnected relationships and interactions between a brand and its various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and the broader community. This dimension is essential in shaping consumers' perceptions of a brand, as it fosters a sense of connection and engagement that

can significantly impact brand loyalty (Mandagi et al., 2024). According to Wulyatiningsih and Mandagi (2023), a cohesive brand gestalt that integrates stakeholder perspectives creates a holistic brand identity, enhancing consumers' emotional attachment to the brand. This emotional connection is crucial for brand loyalty, as consumers who feel that their values align with a brand's stakeholders are more likely to develop a lasting commitment to it (Atulkar, 2020). Parris and Guzman (2023) highlight that brand loyalty is a key outcome of positive brand experiences and perceptions, reinforcing the idea that a strong stakeholder dimension in brand gestalt can cultivate a favorable brand image and lead to sustained loyalty. Furthermore, research by Akoglu and Özbek (2022) indicates that perceived quality and brand trust—mediated by stakeholder relationships—play a vital role in fostering brand loyalty, demonstrating that a well-managed stakeholder engagement strategy can enhance consumer trust and commitment. Therefore, the following hypothesis was introduced:

**H3d:** Stakeholder dimension of brand gestalt positively influence brand loyalty.

### ***The Mediating Effect of Brand Gestalt***

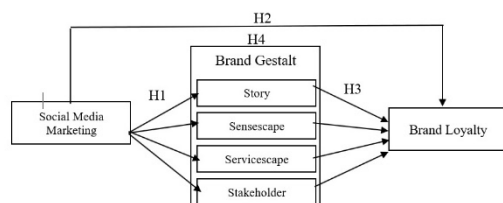
Previous research suggests that social media can significantly impact brand loyalty, potentially influenced by brand gestalt. The concept of brand gestalt refers to how customers perceive a brand in their minds. According to Erdoğan and Cicek (2012), brand loyalty is established through the aggregation of past customer experiences and the cognitive appraisal of brand information. A consumer's perception of a brand, known as brand gestalt, is shaped by a collection of significant information, which



ultimately leads to the development of brand loyalty. In simpler terms, the influence of social media on brand loyalty becomes more pronounced when the overall perception of the brand is positive and well-established. Consequently, following hypothesis was proposed:

**H4:** Brand gestalt mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty

The relationship among variables in this study and the corresponding hypothesis is summarized in the Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This research employs a descriptive and causal quantitative design, which is particularly well-suited for inferential research in the context of hypothesis testing. By utilizing quantitative methods, the study seeks to determine the significance of group differences and explore the relationships among social media marketing, brand gestalt, and brand loyalty.

The café business serves as the research context due to the rapid proliferation of coffee shops in Indonesia in recent years. This growth is evident in the notable increase in the number of coffee shops and the rising popularity of coffee consumption in households. Technological advancements have significantly impacted the food industry, especially cafés, presenting opportunities for entrepreneurs and café professionals to capitalize on changing consumer lifestyles. Coffee has become

an integral part of contemporary life, with many individuals visiting cafés not only to savor unique coffee offerings but also to socialize and relax with friends and family.

This study specifically targets café customers in Manado, a city known for its diverse coffee-centric establishments that excel in both coffee production and presentation. These cafés draw a substantial customer base eager to enjoy the overall coffee experience. By focusing on this sector, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamic relationships between social media marketing, brand gestalt, and brand loyalty within the café industry.

### Population and Sample

The study sample consisted of Gen Z café customers in Manado City, recruited using snowball and convenience sampling methods. This demographic was chosen because Gen Z is particularly adept at using social networking platforms. To confirm the appropriateness of the sample selection, three filter questions were employed. The first question pertained to the respondents' age, the second asked whether they had ever visited a café, and the third inquired about the social media platform they used to contact a café.

The sample size was determined using the N5 formula, which calculates the number of item indicators multiplied by five—a common practice in research employing structural equation modeling for data analysis (e.g., Mandagi et al., 2022; Walean et al., 2023). Based on this formula, a total of 114 respondents participated in the study.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents. Out of a total of 200 respondents, 114 were women (57%). The age category was predominantly composed of individuals aged 16 to 30 years, totaling

180 participants (90%). This profile aligns with the characteristics of social media users, as the majority of respondents were employees, amounting to 110 individuals (55%). Among the various social media platforms, WhatsApp emerged as the most widely used, with 90 respondents (45%) indicating its use for café communication.

**Table 1. Respondent Demographic**

Characteristics	Category	N=200	%
Gender	Male	86	43
	Female	114	57
Age	16 – 30	180	45
	31 – 40	10	50
	41 – 50	10	5
Occupation	Student	90	45
	Worker	110	55
Social Media Use	Facebook	6	3
	Instagram	38	19
	X/Twitter	52	26
	WhatsApp	90	45
	Telegram	14	7

### Data and Instrumentation

This study employs a questionnaire as the measurement instrument to collect data, comprising two components. The first component gathers the demographic traits of the participants and provides guidelines for completing the questionnaire. The second section includes measuring questions utilizing a 7-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

All four variables in this research were assessed using a multi-item scale adapted from previous measures with minor adjustments to suit the current study. Social Media Marketing (SMM) was evaluated through seven items adapted from the research conducted by Alves et al. (2016), focusing on various aspects of users' assessments of social media interactions, including perceived entertainment, interaction, and trendiness. Brand gestalt was measured

using a 19-item scale proposed by Mandagi et al. (2021), which encompasses four dimensions: story, sensescape, servicescape, and stakeholder. The brand loyalty construct consisted of five items developed based on the prior study by Erdoğan and Cicek (2012).

### Data Collection Procedure

Data for this study was collected through an online survey conducted from February to April 2024. The researchers opted for online surveys due to the younger target audience's preference for responding via smartphones rather than traditional paper or telephone surveys. They provided a questionnaire link along with links to the festival's social media profiles in a single invitation. Throughout the data collection process, the researchers individually contacted target respondents to obtain their consent for survey participation. After receiving agreement, an invitation to participate in the study was sent via email or social media

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and SmartPLS statistical software tools. The data for this study was collected through an online survey targeting a younger audience, and it was first compiled and organized for analysis to ensure all responses were complete and accurate. Descriptive statistics were extracted using SPSS to provide insights into the demographic characteristics of the sample population, including variables such as age, gender, education, and other relevant factors to understand the sample composition.

The measurement model was then assessed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs used in the study, which involved conducting Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

using SmartPLS to examine the relationships between observed variables and their corresponding latent constructs. Validity testing included assessing convergent validity by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, ensuring values above 0.5 for sufficient convergent validity, and evaluating discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires the square root of the AVE for each construct to be greater than the correlations with other constructs. Reliability testing was also performed by calculating the Composite Reliability (CR) for each construct, ensuring it exceeds the threshold of 0.7 for acceptable reliability, and assessing Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency with a value above 0.7.

After validating the measurement model, the next step involved analyzing the structural model to test the proposed hypotheses. Path analysis was conducted to estimate the relationships among the latent variables using SmartPLS, and the significance of the path coefficients was assessed through bootstrapping, a resampling technique used to determine the t-values and p-values for each hypothesized relationship. Hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on significance levels (typically  $p < 0.05$ ). Although SEM primarily focuses on causal relationships, assessing model fit is also essential. Various fit indices were examined, including the SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) and NFI (Normed Fit Index), to evaluate how well the proposed model fits the data. The results from the structural model were interpreted to understand the implications of the relationships among social media marketing, brand gestalt, and brand loyalty within the café industry, with significant paths providing insights into

how these constructs interact, thus supporting or refuting the initial hypotheses.

Finally, the findings were compiled into a comprehensive report detailing the methodology, analysis results, and implications of the research, with the discussion focusing on how the results align with existing literature and their relevance to practitioners in the café business. Overall, the analysis was carried out using SPSS for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS for SEM, following the two-stage approach proposed by Gerbing and Anderson (1988). SEM was selected due to its capacity to provide relevant and reliable findings when investigating complex relationships among multiple variables (Hair et al., 2017), and this structured approach to data analysis allowed for a thorough examination of the proposed model, facilitating insights into the factors influencing brand loyalty in the context of café businesses.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)**

Before assessing the hypotheses, the measurement model, also known as the outer model, is examined to evaluate its validity and reliability. Validity tests are conducted to confirm the appropriateness of the research model concerning the study's objective of determining how well the indicator variables support the latent variables. The validity of a measurement model is assessed through its convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity testing involves examining the factor loading values. The loading factor values for all indicators in the measurement model, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, exceed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.7, indicating

that convergent validity has been achieved (Hair et al., 2017).

**Figure 2. Measurement Model**



Subsequently, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this criterion, a construct is considered valid if the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is greater than the correlation coefficients between latent variables (Hair et al., 2017). The findings presented in Table 2 show that the  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  value for each construct, indicated along the diagonal, is higher than the correlation values with other constructs. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrates high discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

**Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Brand Loyalty (1)	0.815					
Sensescape (2)	0.599	0.816				
Servicescape (3)	0.195	0.264	0.869			
SMM (4)	0.423	0.225	0.664	0.812		
Stakeholder (5)	0.290	0.295	0.385	0.409	0.834	
Story (6)	0.618	0.647	0.459	0.401	0.315	0.808

The next validity measure is cross-loading, which refers to the extent to which an indicator variable (or item) correlates with multiple constructs rather than exclusively with its intended construct. In a well-structured measurement model, each indicator should load significantly higher on its associated construct compared to other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). If an indicator exhibits substantial loadings on multiple constructs, it may indicate validity issues, suggesting that the indicator is not specific to the intended

construct. Table 3 presents the cross-loadings for the indicators, showing that each intended construct displays higher values compared to those of neighboring constructs. This indicates good measurement validity, affirming that the indicators are specifically linked to their respective constructs and do not interfere with other constructs.

**Table 3. Cross Loading**

	Brand Loyalty	Sensescape	Servicescape	Stakeholder	Story	SMM
M1.1	0.479	0.444	0.323	0.154	0.782	0.295
M1.2	0.518	0.593	0.395	0.320	0.833	0.339
M1.3	0.408	0.403	0.362	0.227	0.764	0.321
M1.4	0.548	0.580	0.411	0.255	0.851	0.352
M1.5	0.494	0.532	0.361	0.306	0.795	0.303
M2.1	0.454	0.849	0.281	0.248	0.612	0.229
M2.2	0.454	0.809	0.202	0.242	0.499	0.171
M2.3	0.422	0.755	0.187	0.205	0.481	0.159
M2.4	0.471	0.820	0.211	0.241	0.499	0.164
M2.5	0.441	0.812	0.184	0.251	0.491	0.169
M3.1	0.247	0.257	0.891	0.372	0.406	0.613
M3.2	0.183	0.245	0.835	0.320	0.408	0.529
M3.3	0.166	0.222	0.888	0.350	0.373	0.585
M3.4	0.271	0.245	0.850	0.281	0.473	0.580
M3.5	0.121	0.173	0.873	0.349	0.336	0.581
M4.1	0.218	0.239	0.355	0.889	0.230	0.385
M4.2	0.128	0.260	0.281	0.775	0.317	0.273
M4.3	0.218	0.239	0.355	0.889	0.231	0.386
M4.4	0.127	0.259	0.281	0.775	0.318	0.273
X1	0.405	0.141	0.482	0.393	0.342	0.836
X10	0.383	0.259	0.593	0.266	0.373	0.801
X11	0.322	0.122	0.552	0.283	0.260	0.789
X2	0.360	0.108	0.497	0.364	0.322	0.848
X3	0.319	0.187	0.569	0.315	0.283	0.817
X4	0.387	0.269	0.593	0.251	0.365	0.762
X5	0.364	0.197	0.580	0.309	0.337	0.785
X6	0.367	0.142	0.489	0.351	0.296	0.826
X7	0.358	0.106	0.468	0.374	0.307	0.824
X8	0.409	0.193	0.534	0.382	0.368	0.868
X9	0.305	0.220	0.568	0.309	0.291	0.752
Y1	0.888	0.491	0.221	0.163	0.539	0.430
Y2	0.872	0.472	0.238	0.203	0.530	0.416
Y3	0.772	0.459	0.137	0.149	0.489	0.276

Y4	0.883	0.489	0.253	0.226	0.53 0	0.42 3
Y5	0.830	0.444	0.121	0.173	0.50 6	0.34 8

Furthermore, discriminant validity testing is conducted by examining the average variance extracted (AVE) value. The minimum acceptable AVE value is more than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017). The AVE value for all variables in table 4, it is more than 0.5. Discriminant validity is achieved according to the AVE criterion. Once convergent and discriminant validity have been confirmed, the following step involves conducting reliability testing, specifically focusing on internal consistency.

### Reliability Test

Reliability testing was conducted to evaluate the consistency of findings generated by multiple items measuring the same concept. This study examined three indicators of reliability: Cronbach's Alpha (CA), rho\_A, and Composite Reliability (CR), along with the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The minimum required values for CA, rho\_A, and CR are 0.7, while the minimum for AVE is 0.5. As shown in Table 4, all variables achieved CA, rho\_A, and CR values exceeding 0.7, and AVE values above 0.5, indicating strong reliability (Hair et al., 2017)

**Table 4. Reliability Test**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Description
Brand Loyalty	0.874	0.881	0.908	0.664	Reliable
Sensescape	0.872	0.879	0.908	0.666	Reliable
Servicescape	0.919	0.923	0.939	0.755	Reliable
SMM	0.948	0.951	0.955	0.659	Reliable
Stakeholder	0.858	0.887	0.901	0.696	Reliable
Story	0.867	0.879	0.904	0.653	Reliable

### Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

#### Coefficient Determination ( $R^2$ )

The  $R^2$  (R-squared) analysis presented in Table 5 shows that the stakeholder variable, described by social

media marketing, has a weak influence, accounting for 16.3%. Additionally, the sensescape, servicescape, and story variables are influenced by social media marketing, with contributions of 4.9%, 44.5%, and 16%, respectively. Meanwhile, brand loyalty can be explained by social media marketing through the sensescape, servicescape, stakeholder, and story variables, with a total contribution of 52.9%, indicating a moderate influence of these variables.

**Table 5. Coefficient Determination**

	R-square
Brand Loyalty	0.529
Sensescape	0.049
Servicescape	0.445
Stakeholder	0.163
Story	0.160

#### Model Fit (NFI)

In SEM, assessing model fit is essential for determining how well the proposed model represents the data, utilizing indices like the Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Root Mean Square Theta (RMS Theta). The NFI score of 0.676 indicates good covariance, suggesting some degree of fit but also room for improvement. Conversely, the RMS Theta score of 0.131 exceeds the threshold of 0.12, indicating a lack of fit and significant discrepancies between predicted and observed relationships. Together, these indices suggest that while the model shows acceptable covariance, it requires refinements to enhance its overall representation of the data and improve the accuracy of the conclusions drawn from the SEM analysis.

**Table 6. Model Fit**

Fit Model	Value
Rms Theta	0.131
NFI	0.676

### Predictive Relevance

A model's predictive significance is determined by its  $Q^2$  value, which indicates the model's ability to effectively predict outcomes. When the  $Q^2$  value is greater than zero, it signifies that the model possesses predictive relevance, meaning it can be effectively utilized for outcome prediction. Conversely, a  $Q^2$  value less than zero suggests inadequate predictive capabilities or lower projected significance. As illustrated in Table 8, the  $Q^2$  values for the endogenous variables—Branding (0.376), Sensescape (0.031), Servicescape (0.331), Stakeholder (0.000), and Story (0.101)—are all greater than zero. This finding indicates that the model demonstrates strong predictive relevance for the endogenous variables under investigation. In summary, the substantial  $Q^2$  values suggest that the model is well-equipped to predict outcomes related to these parameters, confirming its robustness and reliability in the context of the study

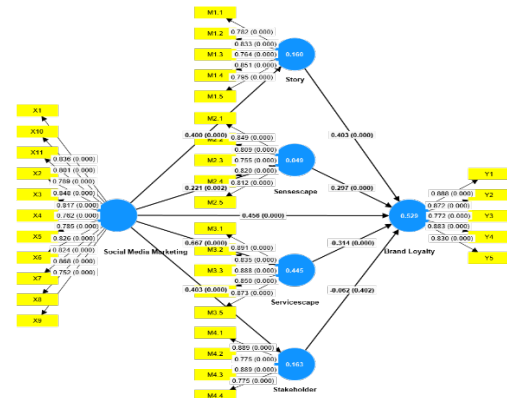
**Table 7. Predictive Relevance**

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1 - SSE/SSO)$
Brand loyalty	1000.000	624.482	0.376
Sensescape	1000.000	969.242	0.031
Servicescape	1000.000	668.569	0.331
Social Media Marketing	2200.000	2200.000	0.000
Stakeholder	800.000	713.769	0.108
Story	1000.000	898.925	0.101

### Hypothesis Testing

In the second step of data analysis, the structural model was developed using PLS Bootstrapping to evaluate the study hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017). The results, presented in Figure 3 and Table 9, demonstrate the relevance of each path coefficient within the model and indicate strong support for nearly all hypotheses in this investigation. Specifically, the analysis reveals that social media marketing (SMM) has a positive influence on various constructs: it significantly impacts Story ( $T = 4.159$ ,  $p$

$< 0.001$ ), Servicescape ( $T = 11.133$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Sensescape ( $T = 2.16$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ), and Stakeholder ( $T = 5.381$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), leading to the acceptance of hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d. Additionally, SMM enhances Brand Loyalty ( $T = 2.812$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), confirming hypothesis H2. The findings further indicate that Story ( $T = 3.273$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), Sensescape ( $T = 3.275$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), and Servicescape ( $T = 3.974$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) significantly contribute to Brand Loyalty, supporting hypotheses H3a, H3b, and H3c. In contrast, the relationship between Stakeholder and Brand Loyalty was not statistically significant ( $T = 0.318$ ,  $p = 0.751$ ), leading to the rejection of hypothesis H3d. Overall, the results highlight the essential role of social media marketing and its related constructs in fostering brand loyalty, with the exception of the stakeholder dimension.



**Figure 3. Structural Model**

**Table 8. Result of Hypotheses Testing**

Path	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Conclusion
SMM → Story	4.159	0.000	H1a Accepted
SMM → Servicescape	11.133	0.000	H1b Accepted
SMM → Sensescape	2.16	0.031	H1c Accepted
SMM → Stakeholder	5.381	0.000	H1d Accepted
SMM → Brand loyalty	2.812	0.005	H2 Accepted

Story -> Brand loyalty	3.273	0.001	H3a Acc ept
Sensescape -> Brand loyalty	3.275	0.001	H3b Acc ept
Servicescape -> Brand loyalty	3.974	0.000	H3c Acc ept
Stakeholder -> Brand loyalty	0.318	0.751	H3d Reje ct

### ***Analysis of Mediation Effect***

The mediation analysis results indicate that SMM has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty, as evidenced by a T statistic of 2.812 and a P value of 0.005. However, the analysis reveals that brand gestalt does not mediate this relationship, with a T statistic of 0.054 and a P value of 0.957 leading to the rejection of hypothesis 4 (H4). Consequently, while SMM directly influences brand loyalty, brand gestalt does not enhance or weaken this effect.

**Table 9. Mediation Effect Results**

Path	T statistics ( O/STDE V )	P values	Con clusi on
SMM-> Brand Loyalty	2.812	0.005	
SMM -> Brand Gestalt -> Brand Loyalty	0.054	0.957	H4 Reje ct

### **Discussion**

The findings from the structural model testing, illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 4, affirm the four assumptions regarding the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on brand gestalt. Social media serves as a potent promotional tool, effectively disseminating information and crafting engaging visual narratives that link customers' experiences with brands. For instance, users encountering coffee-related content may reminisce about previous visits to cafés, establishing emotional connections. Mandagi and Aseng (2021) highlight that narratives are pivotal to a brand's gestalt, embodying memorable moments that forge connections between consumers

and brands. Hypothesis 1a, which examines the influence of SMM on brand narratives, reveals a substantial positive impact, supporting its acceptance. Similarly, Hypothesis 1b demonstrates that SMM significantly enhances brand sensescape, defined as consumers' perceptions based on prior experiences with a brand (Mandagi et al., 2021), aligning with Schmitt's (2000) notion of sensory experience aimed at generating impactful sensations. Furthermore, Hypothesis 1c confirms a positive relationship between SMM and the brand's servicescape, indicating that a well-designed servicescape fosters customer comfort and satisfaction. By facilitating interactive communication between businesses and consumers, social media not only conveys information but also bolsters brand reputation through customer engagement (Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012). Analytical findings for Hypothesis 1d affirm that SMM positively influences brand stakeholders, whose engagement is crucial for successful customer relationships within the gestalt framework (Pratiwi & Yasa, 2019). Although the findings for H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d appear independent, they collectively reinforce the research by Wantah and Mandagi (2024), which identified a positive relationship between SMM and brand gestalt in the culinary context.

Hypothesis 2 highlights the significant role of SMM in enhancing café branding by fulfilling customers' informational and social needs, enabling them to share experiences and build brand communities. Ebrahim (2020) asserts that social media facilitates consumer networking, leading to increased brand loyalty. The study corroborates existing literature, indicating that positive social media interactions foster customer loyalty

(Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023; Sudirjo et al., 2023; Yadav & Rahman, 2018), and underscores the importance of social media for culinary entrepreneurs to optimize their marketing efforts.

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c explore the influence of three brand gestalt dimensions—narrative, sensescape, and servicescape—on café branding. Conversely, Hypothesis 3d indicates a lack of support for the stakeholder dimension. While consumers may initially prioritize the brand owner, they may not consider this factor significant in the long term. This finding suggests that brand loyalty is formed through a blend of cognitive, emotional, and conative preferences. Tuten (2023) emphasizes the importance of cognitive evaluations of brand performance in driving loyalty. The study aligns with the theory by demonstrating a correlation between brand gestalt and customer loyalty, despite stakeholders showing an insignificant effect. Consumers may not be perceived as stakeholders, potentially diminishing their loyalty to a café brand. The earlier study by Wantah and Mandagi (2024) also noted a positive and significant relationship between brand gestalt and loyalty; however, this research dissects the gestalt dimension into sub-variables, revealing that stakeholder presence has a negligible impact on café branding.

Hypothesis 4 concludes that brand gestalt does not mediate the relationship between SMM and customer loyalty in café branding. Previous studies suggest that brand gestalt could influence social media's effect on loyalty. Defined as the overall perception of a brand in consumers' minds (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021), brand gestalt shapes brand loyalty through significant interactions and cognitive assessments (Tuten, 2023). While social media is shown to enhance brand loyalty, the strength of this effect

is contingent on a favorable overall brand perception. This finding, however, contrasts with earlier research results, indicating a need for further exploration into the dynamics between these variables.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of social media marketing (SMM) on brand gestalt and brand loyalty within the culinary sector. The findings confirm that SMM positively influences various dimensions of brand gestalt, including brand narratives, sensescape, and servicescape. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of how SMM shapes consumer perceptions and enhances brand loyalty, aligning with prior literature that underscores the importance of storytelling and sensory experiences in marketing strategies (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Tuten, 2023). Additionally, the study reinforces the notion that effective SMM fosters customer engagement and community building, ultimately leading to increased brand loyalty (Ebrahim, 2020; Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023).

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that businesses, particularly in the culinary industry, should leverage SMM as a key component of their branding strategies. By crafting compelling narratives and engaging sensory experiences through social media platforms, brands can strengthen customer connections and enhance their market positioning. Furthermore, the study indicates the necessity for businesses to prioritize interactive communication with consumers, which can foster positive perceptions and customer loyalty.

However, this study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as



participants might have varying levels of engagement with social media or differing perceptions of brand gestalt. Additionally, the focus on the culinary sector may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries. Future research could expand the scope by exploring the impact of SMM on brand gestalt and loyalty across diverse sectors and demographics. Furthermore, longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into how these relationships evolve over time and allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of SMM on brand loyalty

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