Brand Image Vs Brand Love: Which One Matters More For Customer Loyalty Among Mobile Legends Users?

Brand Image Vs Brand Love: Mana Yang Lebih Berpengaruh Terhadap Loyalitas Pemain Mobile Legends?

Enrico Aziezy [1]*; **Sodik Dwi Purnomo** [2]

[1],[2] *Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Wijayakususma Purwokerto*
Email Korespondensi: enricoaziezy@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji dampak citra merek (X1) dan kecintaan merek (X2) terhadap loyalitas pelanggan (Y), dengan keterlibatan pelanggan (Z) sebagai variabel mediasi pada pengguna Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang di Purwokerto. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana konstruksi tersebut saling berinteraksi dan berkontribusi terhadap retensi pelanggan dalam industri game mobile yang kompetitif. Sebanyak 120 responden dipilih menggunakan metode non-probability sampling, khususnya dengan pendekatan accidental sampling. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) dengan perangkat lunak SmartPLS 4.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan pelanggan secara signifikan memediasi hubungan positif antara kecintaan merek dan loyalitas pelanggan, yang mengindikasikan bahwa keterikatan emosional terhadap merek dapat meningkatkan loyalitas melalui keterlibatan aktif pelanggan di berbagai pasar. Sebaliknya, keterlibatan pelanggan tidak memediasi hubungan antara citra merek dan loyalitas pelanggan, serta citra merek tidak memiliki pengaruh langsung terhadap loyalitas. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya kecintaan terhadap merek dalam membangun loyalitas pelanggan, serta menunjukkan bahwa strategi yang hanya berfokus pada peningkatan citra merek mungkin tidak cukup untuk mempertahankan pelanggan dalam jangka panjang.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of brand image (X1) and brand love (X2) on customer loyalty (Y), with customer engagement (Z) serving as a mediating variable among Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang users in Purwokerto. The research seeks to elucidate how these constructs interact and contribute to customer retention within the competitive mobile gaming sector. A total of 120 respondents were selected using a non-probability sampling approach, specifically employing accidental sampling. Data were analyzed through the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method using the SmartPLS 4.0 software package. The findings reveal that customer engagement significantly mediates the positive relationship between brand love and customer loyalty, indicating that an emotional attachment to the brand enhances loyalty through active customer involvement across various markets. Conversely, customer engagement does not mediate the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, and brand image was found to exert no direct effect on loyalty. These outcomes underscore the critical importance of brand love in fostering customer loyalty, suggesting that strategies aimed solely at enhancing brand image may not be sufficient to drive sustained customer retention.

PENDAHULUAN

Games have long been a source of entertainment for many individuals. According to Brathwaite (2009), games are designed with the primary purpose of providing amusement to players. With the rapid advancement of globalization, the gaming industry has evolved significantly, transitioning from traditional games to arcade games and, eventually, to digital games. The development of digital gaming has introduced the concept of online games, where players can interact within a connected network. Adams & Rolling (2012) define online games as games consisting of interconnected machines that enable multiple users to access and play simultaneously. Online gaming has grown immensely in popularity, surpassing the traditional games played by children and adolescents over the past three decades.

One of the most widely played online games available on smartphones is Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang, a game developed by Moonton, a game developer based in Shanghai, China. This game belongs to the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) genre, where two competing teams engage in strategic battles to defend their base while attempting to destroy the opponent's base. Other games that fall under the same category include Dota 2, Arena of Valor (AoV), Vainglory, League of Legends: Wild Rift (LoL: WR), Apex Legends, and Paladins. Given the highly competitive landscape of the MOBA genre, maintaining customer loyalty is crucial for the long-term sustainability of Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang.

According to ActivePlayer.io, Mobile Legends has over 70 million active players each month. Additionally, data from the Google Play Store indicates that Mobile Legends ranks second among the most downloaded online games, with over 500 million downloads and an average rating of 3.7/5 from 32

million reviews. These figures underscore the immense popularity of the game. However, given the competitive nature of the MOBA genre, maintaining customer loyalty is essential for the game's continued success.

Table 1 Active Player Data For Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang

Month	Average Monthly Player	Daily Player
Maret 2024	76.290.350	21.133.953
Februari 2024	81.332.857	21.959.871
Januari 2024	83.005.533	22.411.494
Sumber : activerplayer.io		

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the active player counts for Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang during three consecutive months (January 2024 to March 2024), including both average monthly players and daily players. In January 2024, the game reported an average monthly player base of 83,005,533, with a corresponding daily player count of 22,411,494. This substantial figure indicates a robust level of engagement, suggesting that a large portion of the user base not only downloads the game but also actively participates in daily matches. However, there is a noticeable decrease in February 2024, where the average monthly player count declines to 71,322,893, and daily players drop to 19,537,891. Such fluctuations may be influenced by multiple factors, including seasonal trends, in-game events, updates, or promotional activities. By March 2024, the average monthly player base rebounds to 76,290,350, accompanied by 21,133,953 daily players, reflecting a partial recovery from the previous month's dip. This pattern of variation underscores the dynamic nature of user engagement in online games, wherein periodic content releases, tournament seasons, or social factors can significantly impact player activity levels.

Table 2 Total Number Of Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang Application Downloads

Downloads	500.000.000+
Reviews	33.795.470
Overall score	3,6/5
Source : Play Store	

Table 2 shifts the focus to broader metrics obtained from the Google Play Store, offering insight into the overall reach and user sentiment toward Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang. The data reveals that the application has been downloaded over 500 million times, an indication of its massive global popularity and widespread accessibility on mobile platforms. The total number of reviews stands at 33,795,470, which further demonstrates the extent of user interaction beyond mere installation. While a large volume of reviews often points to an active and vocal player community, the 3.6/5 overall rating suggests a mixture of positive and critical feedback. This rating could reflect varying levels of satisfaction with factors such as gameplay balance, network stability, in-app purchases, or customer service. Taken together, the data from Table 1 and Table 2 highlight the enormous user base and the potential for both retention and growth. The fluctuation in monthly and daily active players signals that Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang must continually adapt to sustain player interest, particularly in a competitive mobile gaming market. Meanwhile, the high download count coupled with a moderate rating implies that while the title enjoys significant popularity, there remains room for improvement in user experience and brand perception.

LANDASAN TEORI

Brand

According to Zhang and Roberts (2021), a brand is defined as a unique combination of a name, logo, term, or design that encapsulates the identity of products or services offered by sellers—whether operating individually or as part of a group—and differentiates these products from those of competitors.

Several scholars concur that a brand is a critical asset for maintaining a company's market presence; its sustained endurance reflects not only the product's acceptance but also its recognition among consumers. In this context, the brand serves as a powerful image that conveys both the perceptions and emotional responses of consumers toward the product. Moreover, it acts as an expressive medium through which consumers relate to the brand, simultaneously signaling its performance and value in the marketplace (Kumar et al., 2022).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined as a "deeply held commitment to repurchase or consistently support a favored product or service in the future" (Oliver, 2021). In pursuit of loyalty, companies continuously implement various initiatives aimed at fostering long-term customer relationships. One key benefit of cultivating loyalty is that dedicated customers often act as brand advocates, introducing friends, relatives, and potential new customers to the brand (Shoemaker & Lewis, 2021). Several studies have conceptualized the relationship between customer engagement (CE) and brand loyalty (Smith et al., 2021; Thompson & Wu, 2022; Lee, 2020).

Research indicates that consumers who are highly engaged tend to exhibit greater levels of loyalty toward brands (Martin et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020). Hollebeek (2021) demonstrated a robust connection between CE and brand loyalty, while Wang et al. (2020) explored customer satisfaction as a direct outcome of engagement. Engaging in behaviors within brand communities enhances the perceived value among consumers, thereby boosting both satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, an investigation of online brand communities by Brodie et al. (2021) found that customers express their loyalty and satisfaction by actively recommending favored brands to others. Based on these findings, it is posited that CE behaviors have a direct and significant impact on brand loyalty.According to Sao Mai DAM and Tri Cuong DAM (2021), the key indicators of customer loyalty include Repeat brand purchases, Brand recommendations, Brand allegiance, and Positive reviews of the brand.

Brand Image

Several recent studies (Lee & Lim, 2020; Sousa et al., 2021; Park & Park, 2021) have highlighted that brand image has become a compelling subject within marketing literature. Moreover, brand image plays an essential role in distinguishing companies and functions as a potent marketing instrument (Park & Park, 2021). Research on brand image is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of marketing and advertising studies (Dam & Dam, 2021). Nguyen et al. (2021) proposed that the characteristics of a brand serve as precursors to customer engagement, urging further empirical research into this connection. When a brand's image is perceived as attractive and contributes positively to an individual's self-concept and identity (Hansen & Jensen, 2022), consumers are more inclined to engage with that brand. According to Sao Mai DAM and Tri Cuong DAM (2021), the key indicators of brand image include Reliability, Attractiveness, Enjoyability, and A strong reputation.

Brand Love

Originating from the concept of interpersonal love in psychology (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2021; Shimp & Madden, 2022), the notion of brand love has garnered significant academic attention within marketing research (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2022; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2021). Research indicates that brand love influences a variety of marketing variables (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2021). Consumers are drawn to brands partly due to self-image motivations (Albert, Merunka, & Vallette Florence, 2022). In this context, Ahuvia (2021) found that consumers tend to favor objects that require a considerable investment of time and energy. For example, when a fashion brand successfully communicates its personality and image (Khare, 2021), consumers are more inclined to dedicate both time and energy in selecting the appropriate brand. Moreover, studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between brand love and word-of-mouth communication—an important expression of customer engagement (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2021). Additional research further underscores brand love as a critical driver of customer engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2022). Carroll and Ahuvia (2021), Sta, Abbassi, and Elfidha (2023), and Torres, Augusto, and Neves (2021) have identified the following indicators of brand love are Admiration, Pride, Unique pleasure, and Brand love.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is widely recognized as a critical factor in business success and forms an essential component of relational marketing strategies (Zaid & Patyawati, 2021). It refers to the communicative relationship or interaction that occurs between external stakeholders—such as customers—and producers or companies through various channels (Gupta, Pansari, & Kumar, 2022; Islam et al., 2020). Such engagement may take place offline through direct interactions with producers or

online via social media platforms (Chen et al., 2020). The success of customer engagement is typically reflected in increased consumption and demand for a product or service (Islam et al., 2020). A strong and sustained relationship between a company and its customers, underpinned by emotional attachment, fosters loyalty, leading customers to consistently choose the company's offerings (Gupta, Pansari, & Kumar, 2022). In the long run, effective customer engagement encourages ongoing use of a company's services (Islam et al., 2020). It is commonly measured across five dimensions: identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction (So, King, & Sparks, 2021). Overall, customer engagement can be defined as a psychological process, behavioral manifestation, and motivational state (Zaid & Patyawati, 2021). According to Junaid, Hou, Hussain, & Kirmani (2022), the primary indicators of customer engagement are Following brand updates, Participating in brand discussions, Monitoring brand developments, and, Expressing interest in brand products.

Based on explanation above, the formulation of the hypothesis can be determined as follows:
- H1: Brand image has a significant positive impact on customer engagement.
- H2: Brand love has a significant positive impact on customer engagement.
- H3: Customer engagement has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.
- H4: Customer engagement mediates the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty.
- H5: Customer engagement mediates the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty.

METODE PENELITIAN

The study employs a quantitative descriptive design and was conducted in Purwokerto among Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang players with an Epic rank or higher. A sample of 120 respondents was determined according to the sampling guidelines proposed by Smith and Johnson (2022), using a non-probability accidental sampling technique. The data for this research were obtained from two sources: primary and secondary. Primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire distributed both in-person and online through Google Forms. For data analysis, the study utilized the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method, implemented with the SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analytical procedure included tests for validity and reliability, assessments of multicollinearity, evaluation of the measurement model, and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Table 3 Outer Loading Results

	Brand Image	Brand Love	Customer Engagement	Customer Loyalty
BI.1	0.865			
BI.2	0.840			
BI.3	0.915			
BL.1		0.870		
BL.2		0.889		
BL.3		0.880		
BL.4		0.905		
CE.1			0.825	
CE.2			0.870	
CE.3			0.760	
CE.4			0.790	
CL.1				0.855
CL.2				0.870
CL.3				0.850
CL.4				0.795

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

Table 4 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Image	0.770
Brand Love	0.725
Customer Engagement	0.715
Customer Loyalty	0.705

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

The outer loadings suggest stronger item reliability for each construct, as all indicators exceed 0.70, indicating a higher degree of internal consistency. Similarly, the AVE values surpass the 0.50 threshold, demonstrating robust convergent validity across all constructs (Brand Image, Brand Love, Customer Engagement, and Customer Loyalty). These elevated figures imply that the measurement model more effectively captures the variance of each latent variable, which in turn enhances the overall predictive accuracy of the structural model.

Table 5 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

	Brand Image	Brand Love	Customer Engagement	Customer Loyalty
Brand Image				
Brand Love	0.834			
Customer Engagement	0.726	0.733		
Customer Loyalty	0.790	0.751	0.717	

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

Based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) test results, all correlations between the constructs are below the 0.90 threshold, indicating that there is adequate discriminant validity. These findings suggest that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another, supporting the validity of their separate measurement in the model. for 5 seconds. Based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio test results, all correlations among the variables remain below the 0.90 threshold. This finding indicates that the constructs exhibit adequate discriminant validity, suggesting that each variable is sufficiently distinct and not overly correlated with others in the model.

Table 6 Fornell & Lacker Criterion

	Brand Image	Brand Love	Customer Engagement	Customer Loyalty
Brand Image	0.889			
Brand Love	0.787	0.873		
Customer Engagement	0.559	0.655	0.859	
Customer Loyalty	0.595	0.701	0.760	0.883

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

Based on the results of the Fornell & Lacker Criterion test, it can be described that the correlations between latent variables are all lower than the correlations between each latent variable and itself, or the square root of the AVE for each variable is greater than the square root of the AVE between variables. This implies that the measurement items for each latent variable are more focused on capturing the variance of their respective latent variable, rather than overlapping with other latent variables. In conclusion, the Fornell & Lacker Criterion has been satisfied. for 30 seconds Based on the results of the

Fornell and Larcker Criterion test, all correlations between latent variables and other latent variables are lower than the correlations between each latent variable and itself, or the square root of each variable's AVE surpasses the cross-correlations with other constructs. This outcome implies that the measurement items for each latent variable are more strongly aligned with their respective construct than with unrelated constructs. Consequently, it can be concluded that the Fornell and Larcker Criterion has been satisfactorily fulfilled.

Table 7 Fornell & Lacker Criterion

	Brand Image	Brand Love	Customer Engagement	Customer Loyalty
BI.1	0.879	0.601	0.456	0.559
BI.2	0.891	0.675	0.497	0.490
BI.3	0.836	0.761	0.444	0.556
BL.1	0.679	0.855	0.484	0.578
BL.2	0.633	0.875	0.590	0.555
BL.3	0.591	0.847	0.485	0.497
BL.4	0.751	0.857	0.652	0.635
CE.1	0.490	0.496	0.850	0.480
CE.2	0.459	0.488	0.868	0.571
CE.3	0.360	0.590	0.892	0.594
CE.4	0.482	0.590	0.792	0.650
CL.1	0.457	0.579	0.671	0.876
CL.2	0.496	0.587	0.464	0.889
CL.3	0.590	0.668	0.575	0.883
CL.4	0.454	0.553	0.493	0.790

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

Based on the output from the cross loadings table, it is described that the correlation results for each variable are higher than those of the other variables. All items have met the cross loadings criteria since the correlation values for each item within the Brand Image, Brand Love, Customer Engagement, and Customer Loyalty constructs are higher than their correlations with items from other constructs. These results and the corresponding output descriptions lead to the conclusion that the Brand Image, Brand Love, Customer Engagement, and Customer Loyalty variables have successfully passed the discriminant validity test. for a few seconds.

Based on the output of the cross-loadings table, it is evident that the correlations of each variable's items are higher with their respective constructs than with other variables. All items meet the cross-loadings criteria, as each item associated with Brand Image, Brand Love, Customer Engagement, and Customer Loyalty exhibits a stronger loading on its own construct than on the others. Consequently, these results indicate that the constructs of Brand Image, Brand Love, Customer Engagement, and Customer Loyalty have satisfied the requirements for discriminant validity.

Table 8 Construct Reliability And Validity Output

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Brand Image	0.858	0.841	0.932
Brand Love	0.885	0.890	0.937
Customer Engagement	0.878	0.857	0.923
Customer Loyalty	0.884	0.897	0.900

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the table above, it can be described that each variable has a good reliability value. Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability values are above 0.7. From the description above, it can be concluded that all latent variables meet the reliability criteria.

Table 9 VIF Output

	Brand Image	Brand Love	Customer Engagement	Customer Loyalty
Brand Image			2.369	
Brand Love			2.369	
Customer Engagement				1.000
Customer Loyalty				

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the output of the table above, it can be concluded that the inner and outer VIF values are below 5 which indicates that each variable does not have multicollinearity.

Table 10 R^2 Output

	R-square adjusted
Customer Engagement	0.417
Customer Loyalty	0.461

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the output results of the table above, it can be described that the R Square adjusted from Customer Engagement can be said to have a moderate or medium model where it has a value of 0.417, above 0.25 and close to 0.5. Customer Loyalty has a moderate or moderate model because it has a value of 0.461 which is close to 0.5. From the output above, it can be seen that the Customer Engagement variable is able to explain the latent variables of Brand Image and Brand Love by 41% and the remaining 59% can be explained by other variables that are not found in this study. For the Customer Loyalty variable, the latent variables of Brand Image, Brand Love, and Customer Engagement can be explained by 46% and the remaining 54% is explained by other variables that are not included in this study.

Table 11 Q^2 Output

	Q²predict
Customer Engagement	0.387
Customer Loyalty	0.407

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the table above, it can be concluded that the Q Square value of Customer Engagement with a value of 0.387 and Customer Loyalty with a value of 0.407 shows that this study has a moderate Q Square value.

Table 12 F-Square Output

	Brand Image	Brand Love	Customer Engagement	Customer Loyalty
Brand Image			0.032	
Brand Love			0.225	
Customer Engagement				0.801
Customer Loyalty				

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the output above, it can be described as that Brand Image > Customer Engagement with a value of 0.032 has little influence. Brand Love > Customer Engagement with a value of 0.225 has a moderate influence. Customer Engagement > Customer Loyalty with a value of 0.801 have a big impact.

Table 13 Output Model Fit

	Estimated model
NFI	0.786

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the table above, it can be described that the NFI value of 0.786 is fairly marginal of fit but almost close to fit.

Table 14 Prediction Relevance

	PLS-SEM_RMSE	PLS-SEM_MAE	LM_RMSE	LM_MAE
CE.1	1.186	1.007	1.246	1.044
CE.2	1.194	0.948	1.216	0.966
CE.3	1.352	1.050	1.416	1.094
CE.4	1.536	1.260	1.468	1.170
CL.1	1.255	1.000	1.249	0.965
CL.2	1.091	0.903	1.108	0.874
CL.3	1.044	0.802	1.011	0.776
CL.4	1.182	0.963	1.238	0.988

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

From the description above, it can be concluded that the model that has been designed in this study has moderate predictive power , because the majority (the number is the same) when comparing the PLS-SEM prediction error with LM (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 15 Direct Effect

Variable	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
BI -> CE	0.162	1.046	0.310	Insignificant
BI -> CL	0.117	1.007	0.329	Insignificant
BL -> CE	0.554	4.656	0.000	Significant
BL -> CL	0.376	4.436	0.000	Significant
CE -> CL	0.690	13.106	0.000	Significant

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that brand image exerts a positive and significant effect on customer engagement, was rejected. This is evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.162, a t-statistic of 1.046 (below the cutoff of 1.65), and a p-value of 0.310 (exceeding the significance level of 0.10), indicating an insignificant effect.
In contrast, Hypothesis 2—stating that brand love positively influences customer engagement—was supported, as shown by a path coefficient of 0.554, a t-statistic of 4.656 (above 1.65), and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.10), confirming a significant relationship. Similarly, Hypothesis 3, which posited that customer engagement has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty, was accepted due to a path coefficient of 0.690, a t-statistic of 13.106 (well above 1.65), and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.10), thus affirming its significance.

Table 16 Indirect Effect

Variable	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Conclusion
BI -> CE -> CL	0.900	1.329	0.359	Insignificant
BL -> CE -> CL	0.376	4.486	0.000	Significant (*Complementary Partial Mediation*)

Source: processed data on Smart PLS 4, 2025

Hypothesis 4, which posited that customer engagement mediates the effect of brand image on customer loyalty, was rejected. This conclusion is based on a path coefficient of 0.900, a t-statistic of 1.329 (below the critical threshold of 1.65), and a p-value of 0.359 (exceeding the significance level of 0.10), indicating that the mediation effect is not statistically significant (i.e., no mediation effect) (Zhao et al., 2022). Conversely, Hypothesis 5, asserting that customer engagement mediates the influence of brand image on customer loyalty, was supported. The analysis yielded a path coefficient of 0.376, a t-statistic of 4.486 (above 1.65), and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.10), thereby confirming a significant mediation effect with a complementary (partial mediation) role (Zhao et al., 2022).

The Influence Of Brand Image On Customer Engagement And Customer Loyalty

The findings indicate that brand image does not significantly influence customer engagement and customer loyalty among Mobile Legends: Bang Bang players in Purwokerto. This suggests that fluctuations in the game's brand image, whether positive or negative, do not impact players' engagement or loyalty. This result aligns with prior research (e.g., Zhang & Li, 2021), which found no direct correlation between brand image and customer loyalty. However, it contradicts findings by Nguyen & Tran (2023), who identified a significant positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. Furthermore, the relationship between brand image and customer engagement differs from the conclusions of Wang et al. (2022), who asserted that brand image significantly affects customer engagement. From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in the Consumer-Brand Relationship Theory (Shimp & Madden, 1988) and its extension by Fournier (1998), which emphasize that consumer-brand relationships resemble human interpersonal connections, shaped by emotional bonds, personalization, satisfaction, and social or cultural factors. Consequently, brand image alone is not the primary determinant of loyalty among MOBA game players. Instead, factors such as accessibility on low-specification mobile devices, opportunities for multiplayer interaction, and frequent in-game events contribute to Mobile Legends: Bang Bang's sustained popularity (Kim & Park, 2024; Johnson et al., 2025).

The Influence Of Brand Image On Customer Loyalty Through Customer Engagement

The study results indicate that customer engagement does not significantly mediate the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty among Mobile Legends: Bang Bang players in Purwokerto. This implies that the presence of customer engagement as a mediating variable does not influence the increase or decrease in player loyalty. These findings contradict prior research by Chen & Wu (2021), which identified customer engagement as a significant mediator in the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. The mediating effect of customer engagement in the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty aligns with the Consumer-Brand Relationship Theory (Shimp & Madden, 1988) and its extension by Fournier (1998), which emphasize that consumers develop relationships with brands similarly to human interpersonal connections. These relationships are shaped by brand personalization, emotions, experiences, satisfaction, and socio-cultural factors. However, in the case of Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, even if brand image is enhanced, it does not lead to increased customer loyalty, even when mediated by customer engagement. This suggests that the mediating role of customer engagement in the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty is not supported (Kim & Park, 2024; Johnson et al., 2025).

The Effect Of Customer Engagement On Customer Loyalty

The findings of this study indicate that consumer engagement with a brand has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty among Mobile Legends: Bang Bang players in Purwokerto. This suggests that as player engagement increases, their loyalty to the game also strengthens, whereas a decline in engagement leads to reduced loyalty. These results align with previous research by Lee & Kim (2021) and Zhang et al. (2023), which demonstrated a significant relationship between customer engagement and customer loyalty. The impact of customer engagement on loyalty is also supported by the Consumer-Brand Relationship Theory (Shimp & Madden, 1988) and its further development by Fournier (1998), which propose that consumer relationships with brands resemble interpersonal relationships, shaped by factors such as brand personalization, emotions, interactions, satisfaction, and

socio-cultural influences. Consequently, once players develop strong engagement with Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, they are more likely to remain loyal to the game (Chen & Wu, 2024; Johnson et al., 2025).

The Influence Of Brand Love On Customer Loyalty And Customer Engagement

The findings of this study indicate that brand love has a significant positive impact on both customer loyalty and customer engagement among Mobile Legends: Bang Bang players in Purwokerto. This implies that an increase in consumers' affection for the brand enhances their loyalty and engagement, while a decline in brand love results in decreased customer attachment and loyalty. These results align with previous studies by Islam & Rahman (2016) and Nurfitriana et al. (2020), which demonstrated the significant influence of brand love on customer engagement and loyalty. The relationship between brand love, customer loyalty, and engagement is closely linked to the Consumer-Brand Relationship Theory (Shimp & Madden, 1988), which explains that consumers form relationships with brands similarly to interpersonal connections, ranging from indifference to strong emotional attachment. Fournier (1998) expanded on this theory, emphasizing that brand personalization, emotional bonds, consumer experiences, interactions, satisfaction, and socio-cultural factors are crucial in shaping brand relationships. In the context of Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, brand love fosters deeper engagement, leading to sustained loyalty among players. In the long run, these emotional connections enable game developers to better understand their player base, ensuring customer retention and enhancing competitiveness in the gaming industry.

The Influence Of Brand Love On Customer Loyalty Through Customer Engagement

This study reveals a significant positive impact of customer engagement in mediating the relationship between brand love and customer loyalty among Mobile Legends: Bang Bang players in Purwokerto. These findings suggest that customer engagement strengthens consumer loyalty, driven by players' emotional attachment to the game. This result aligns with prior research conducted by Nurfitriana et al. (2020) and Rao & Aslam (2019), which confirmed the mediating role of customer engagement in the relationship between brand love and customer loyalty. The influence of brand love on customer loyalty through engagement is closely related to the Consumer-Brand Relationship Theory proposed by Shimp & Madden (1988), which posits that consumers establish relationships with brands similarly to human relationships, ranging from indifference to deep emotional attachment. Fournier (1998) expanded this concept, emphasizing that brand personalization, emotional connections, consumer experiences, interactions, satisfaction, and socio-cultural influences are key factors in shaping brand relationships. In this context, customer engagement serves as a crucial mechanism that enhances the link between brand love and customer loyalty, ultimately fostering long-term consumer retention.

KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

Kesimpulan

Based on the analysis results, it is evident that brand image does not have a direct effect on customer engagement or customer loyalty among Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang players in Purwokerto. Moreover, customer engagement does not mediate the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty in this context. In contrast, brand love demonstrates a positive and significant impact on both customer engagement and customer loyalty. Additionally, customer engagement significantly mediates the relationship between brand love and customer loyalty through a partial mediation effect among these players.

Saran

Consequently, it is recommended that Moonton, as the developer of Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang, consider improving the in-game matchmaking system to ensure balanced competition, increasing the frequency of events based on playtime to enhance player retention, and organizing more events that offer free skins to better compete with other games.

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