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## Enhancing customer brand love: The role of genuine personal branding and e-customer engagement

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### Abstract

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in supporting Indonesia's economic growth. Enhancing customer satisfaction alone is not sufficient to maintain a competitive advantage due to the increasing level of competition in the Muslim fashion sector. Companies need to increase customer brand love to win the hearts of consumers. Therefore, this study investigates the related factors like Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI), Self-Brand Distinctiveness (SBD), Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) and E-Customer Engagement (ECE) to accommodate this intention. This study aims to determine the effect of SMAI and SBD on GPB simultaneously and partially. This research also aims to determine the influence of GPB on ECE, ECE on CBL, and GPB on CBL through ECE. Sampling was carried out using the purposive sampling method with 300 respondents. The research employed Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) for statistical analysis with hypothesis testing conducted using the AMOS software to evaluate causal relationships within the proposed structural model. After processing the data, the hypotheses were tested and discussed. This research indicated that SMAI and SBD had a significant combined influence on GPB. However, when considered individually, SBD did not have a significant effect on GPB. The results also showed that GPB significantly affected ECE, and ECE affected CBL. Furthermore, GPB mediated by ECE significantly affected CBL. Genuine personal branding is essential for MSMEs to increase e-customer engagement which ultimately also increases customer's love for their brand as a practical implication.

**Keywords:** Customer brand love, Customer engagement, Personal branding, Self-brand distinctiveness, Social media, MSME.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The Research Ethics Committee Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, in an effort to protect the basic rights and welfare of the subject of the research and to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with Nesh guidelines, and other applicable laws and regulations, has thoroughly reviewed and approved this study on No. 30/UN40.K/PT. 01.01/2024

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## 1. Introduction

The majority of people in Indonesia are Muslims making it the country with the highest Muslim population in the world. The Muslim community is naturally positioned as a major target market for many enterprises due to their demographic dominance [1]. Indonesia is a significant market for the demand for Muslim-oriented items from domestic and foreign consumers [2]. Additionally, Indonesian Muslim communities' consumption levels have consistently increased annually [3]. The important role that Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play in propelling Indonesia's economic growth is an issue that merits more investigation [4]. MSMEs play a significant role in the national economy as demonstrated by their noteworthy accomplishments and financial contributions [5]. The Muslim fashion industry which has been growing significantly every year is one of the major subsectors in West Java, the province with the highest number of MSMEs. Despite their significance, MSMEs continue to confront obstacles such as a lack of professionalism, a lack of resources, and a lack of acceptance of new technologies [6]. Additionally, the fashion industry's explosive growth especially in West Java has made competition among companies in this sector more fierce [7]. Customer happiness alone is no longer enough to get a competitive edge in the Muslim fashion sector due to the growing level of competition [8]. Consequently, a lot of companies are using personal branding to improve consumer brand loyalty and fortify their position in the market [9]. Personal branding entails presenting people and their careers as brands that are subsequently connected to the business they represent to establish brand equity and assets connected to a particular person [10]. The digital age gives people easy and affordable ways to market themselves as brands, especially through social media platforms and their own ideological and technological frameworks [11, 12].

Previous research in the global sports industry has demonstrated a significant relationship between personal branding and customer brand love [9]. However, previous studies did not focus solely on online consumer subjects, nor did they completely analyse the aspects of personal branding that could increase these variables. Therefore, this study aims to explore how genuine personal branding in the Muslim fashion business might increase customer brand love. It emphasises authenticity as a crucial component of personal branding and focuses on online consumers as its subject. Sincerity is essential to personal branding because it builds credibility, trust, and deep relationships with the target market or audience [13]. Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) is suggested as a strategy to improve e-customer engagement and boost brand loyalty for Muslim fashion MSME items [14, 15]. Strong personal branding can increase brand loyalty among consumers [16] ultimately influencing purchasing decisions [17]. Active involvement in social media plays an essential role in this process [18]. One strategy that is thought to take few resources but has a big impact on customer brand love is the rise and active involvement of personal brands who can foster brand love [19]. Furthermore, a personal brand created by personal brand appears more prominently on social media due to its uniqueness [20].

The approach used in this research is to develop a conceptual model within the marketing field focused on genuine personal branding. This model is supported by quantitative research and a comprehensive literature review of theories and empirical findings which serve to strengthen the proposed conceptual framework. This foundation is used to develop empirical hypotheses for testing. This research is based on the grand theory of marketing management along with the middle-range theories of relationship marketing, digital marketing and strategic brand management. This research introduces the Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) variable as a new construct to address the inconclusive findings in previous research. The GPB framework explains the authenticity of personal brand image which contributes to strengthening the company's overall branding. Genuine personal branding is defined as a strategic approach aimed at increasing customer brand love. Additionally, this research aims to develop and empirically test the genuine personal branding model, synthesized from strategic brand management theory.

Customer brand love is a critical component of marketing strategy and brand management [21]. Although consumer satisfaction is a central objective in various brand strategies, satisfaction alone does not guarantee continuous brand loyalty. To remain competitive, brands must cultivate more than just satisfaction [22]. A strong emotional attachment to a brand develops when consumers engage with the brand over an extended period [23, 24]. This emotional connection generates a powerful effect often leading consumers to become highly enthusiastic about the brand [25]. Previous research has explored different constructs to explain customer brand love [26-28]. However, there is considerable diversity in the dimensions used to measure customer brand love and inconsistency in their application across studies. This variability in measurement approaches persists in recent research indicating a lack of consensus on the operationalization of the customer brand love construct. A bibliometric analysis of 1,000 sources shows that studies on the relationship between customer brand love and personal branding are rare. Network visualization reveals six clusters, yet none of these clusters explicitly depict a network linking brand love with personal branding. This suggests that research examining the intersection of personal branding and brand love particularly within the Muslim fashion industry remains scarce.

This research introduces a novel construct, Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) as a potential solution. Genuine personal branding is expected to help MSME business owners address common challenges in developing their enterprises, especially Muslim fashion MSMEs in West Java. This research also proposes a comprehensive model to examine the effect of social media active involvement, self-brand distinctiveness, genuine personal branding, e-customer engagement, and e-brand trust on customer brand love within the Muslim fashion MSME sector in West Java.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Social Media Active Involvement**

Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI) refers to the extent of engagement and interaction that individuals or organizations exhibit on social media platforms [29]. Posting, sharing, like, commenting, texting, and taking part in groups and discussions on these platforms are all examples of this involvement. Building and sustaining relationships, creating a presence, and cultivating connections with others all depend on active participation on social media [30]. According to Solis and Webber [31], social media is based on Web 2.0's technology underpinnings and guiding principles which allow people to produce and distribute content. This suggests that social media material is actively created and co-produced by individuals rather than passively received [32].

According to this study, social media active involvement refers to how people or organisations use social media platforms for a variety of purposes such as creating and sharing content, interacting with others through messages and comments, joining communities and groups, and taking part in discussions. Maintaining a strong online presence, interacting with target audiences and building deep relationships with followers or customers all depend on active social media participation [33]. For this research, social media active involvement is measured through five dimensions: content, context, connect, community and continuity.

### **2.2. Self-Brand Distinctiveness**

The process of recognizing oneself as unique and distinct from others based on one's values, skills, and sense of self is known as self-brand distinctiveness [34]. SBD stands for the unique and identifiable characteristics that set one person's brand apart from another [35]. People aim to set themselves apart from peers or rivals in the context of personal branding by developing a distinctive and memorable image or reputation. This idea closely resembles the ideas of personal branding, in which people consciously create and sell a distinctive brand identity just like a company markets its goods or services.

SBD is made up of several components such as character, values, abilities, knowledge, and general appearance. [36]. It entails developing a personal brand that accurately captures one's identity while also being recognizable and appealing to others. This could entail creating a unique personal style, establishing a robust online presence on professional networking sites and social media, and persistently communicating a special value proposition to one's target market [31]. The distinctive and recognizable characteristics that set one's brand apart from others are referred to as self-brand uniqueness. These attributes that help one stand out in a competitive job market or social setting can include a person's values, personality, skills, experiences and general identity. The cornerstone of self-brand distinctiveness is creating a powerful and genuine personal brand that connects with the target market and makes an impression. This can be accomplished by continuously demonstrating one's special qualities, principles, and abilities in a variety of settings and exchanges. For this research, the dimensions used to measure self-brand distinctiveness are visibility, uniqueness, and consistency.

### **2.3. Genuine Personal Branding**

Personal branding is the process of identifying, comprehending and promoting a person's distinctive qualities [37]. The goal of personal branding is to position people and their careers as brands in contrast to reputation management and image management. It is intended to increase brand equity and assets associated with a single individual [10]. People can effectively and economically sell themselves as brands by utilising the ideological and technological frameworks of social media because personal branding aims to establish a distinctive brand identity for each individual, it differs from reputation or image management [29]. Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) describes how a person presents and expresses their values, ideas, and personality in a genuine and sincere manner. This entails assuring consistency between one's public persona and personal identity, being open and honest about one's strengths and shortcomings, and matching one's brand with one's actual self [9]. Sincerity builds credibility, trust, and deep connections with the audience or target market making it a crucial component of personal branding [13]. In this research, the dimensions used to measure genuine personal branding include personal brand identity, personal brand authenticity, personal brand positioning, and personal brand identification. These dimensions aim to capture the degree to which individuals present a consistent, authentic, and strategically positioned brand that resonates with their target audience.

### **2.4. E-Customer Engagement**

Customer engagement refers to efforts to understand consumer attitudes and behaviors beyond mere purchasing actions [38]. Unlike traditional views of consumers as passive recipients of company initiatives, customer engagement conceptualizes consumers as active, involved, and co-creative participants in brand-related activities [39]. Numerous definitions and approaches to customer engagement exist in the literature [40]. It is often described as a psychological state that arises from interactive, co-creative experiences between the customer and a focal agent or object (e.g., brand) within specific service relationships [38]. Customer engagement is primarily associated with non-transactional interactions and specific activities between customers and brands [41]. Examples of these interactions include engaging with employees at a retail store, conversing with a brand representative in an online marketplace or providing feedback on social media [42].

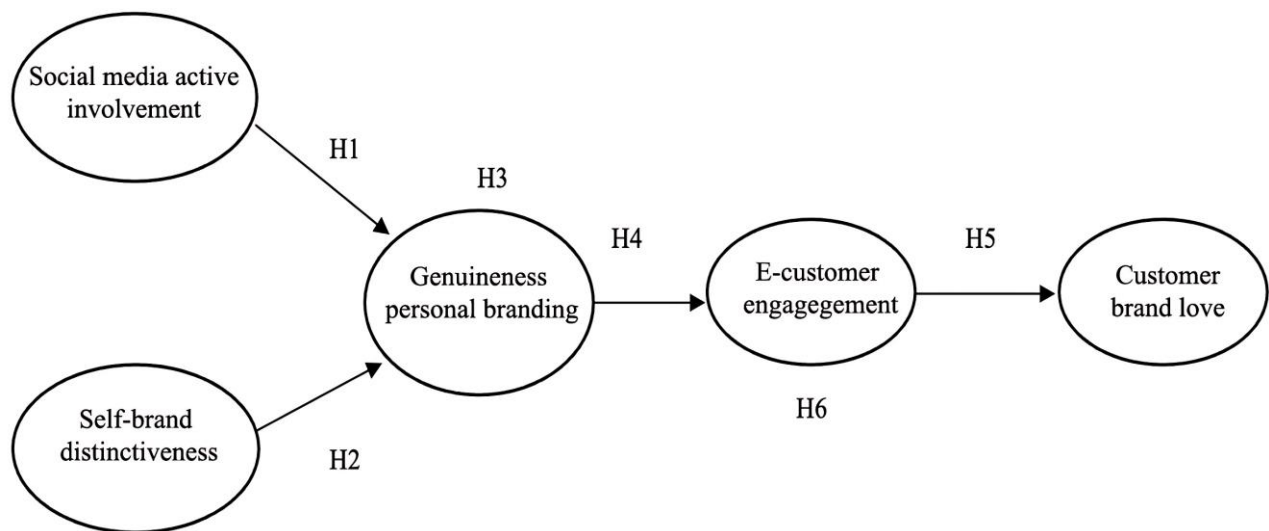
E-customer engagement as defined in this research refers to the interactions and relationships between customers and businesses in the digital environment based on the established concept of customer engagement. It encompasses the various ways businesses can connect with their customers through digital channels such as websites, social media, email, and mobile applications. E-customer engagement involves creating interactive and engaging online experiences that foster user participation, feedback, and loyalty. For this research, e-customer engagement is measured across five dimensions: emotional, cognitive, behavioral, social connections and satisfaction.

### 2.5. Customer Brand Love

Consumer satisfaction is a key objective in various brand strategies. However, satisfaction alone does not guarantee continuous consumer loyalty. For brands to remain competitive, additional strategies beyond customer satisfaction are necessary [43]. Brands must establish and fulfill reciprocal promises in their relationships with consumers to maintain customer loyalty. This involves implementing strategies that ensure brand promises are consistently met within consumer-brand relationships.

Consumer attachment and strong emotional connections to brands are often formed when consumers use a brand over an extended period [27]. Such emotional connections can lead consumers to develop a deep passion for a brand to the extent that no other brand can serve as a substitute, even if the preferred brand is unavailable [21]. This level of attachment goes beyond customer satisfaction or loyalty and is referred to as Coelho et al. [28]. Customer brand love encompasses more than simple liking. It represents a profound enduring emotion. It is regarded as a genuine emotional connection rather than a superficial sentiment [16].

In this research, the dimensions used to measure customer brand love include the need for the brand, sense of compatibility with the brand, passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, feelings of love for the brand, attitudes, and commitment to the brand. These dimensions capture the depth and intensity of the consumer's emotional bond with the brand.



**Figure 1.**  
Research model.

### 3. Hypothesis Development

Figure 1 presents the six hypotheses formulated for this research. Hypothesis 1 (H1) posits that active engagement on social media impacts authentic personal branding. Hypothesis 2 (H2) suggests that self-brand distinctiveness influences authentic personal branding. Hypothesis 3 (H3) investigates the combined effect of social media engagement and self-brand distinctiveness on authentic personal branding. Hypothesis 4 (H4) proposes that authentic personal branding affects e-customer engagement. Hypothesis 5 (H5) asserts that e-customer engagement impacts customer brand love. Lastly, hypothesis 6 (H6) explores the mediating role of authentic personal branding through e-customer engagement on customer brand love.

### 4. Research Methods

In this research, the subjects were customers of micro, small, and medium enterprise in Muslim fashion sector, West Java, Indonesia. The primary focus of the research represented by the dependent variable is customer brand love (Y), while the mediator variables are e-customer engagement (X4) and genuineness in personal branding (X3). The independent variables investigated are self-brand distinctiveness (X2) and social media active involvement (X1). The study employed a cross-sectional design with a one-shot or single-time-point approach. Sampling was conducted using non-probability and purposive sampling targeting a population of 300 participants. For statistical analysis, the study utilized covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) with hypothesis testing conducted through the AMOS software to evaluate causal relationships within the proposed structural model.

**Table 1.**

Measurement of social media active involvement, self-brand distinctiveness, personal branding genuineness, e-customer engagement, and customer brand love.

No.	Research variable	Question Items	Source
1.	Social media active involvement (SMAI)	Consistency of content displayed on social media (SMAI1).	Kang [30] and Solis and Webber [31]
		The quality of content displayed on social media (SMAI2).	
		Timeliness in posting content (SMAI3).	
		Frequency in posting content (SMAI4).	
		Interaction between audience and influencer on social media (SMAI5).	
		Involvement in relevant conversations between influencer with their audience (SMAI6).	
		Influencer activity in a brand community on social media (SMAI7).	
		Influencer involvement in a brand community on social media (SMAI8).	
		Desire to continue to actively participate in a brand's social media platforms (SMAI9).	
		Desire to continuously maintain and strengthen relationships with brands and communities (SMAI10).	
2.	Self- brand distinctiveness (SBD)	Influencer consistency in posting and interacting on social media platforms to increase personal brand presence (SBD1).	Kucharska [34] and Fadzline, et al. [35]
		The quality of content shared to attract attention and influence the audience (SBD2).	
		Visual uniqueness of influencer (SBD3).	
		The uniqueness of the content displayed by Influencer (SBD4).	
		Consistency of influencer in their presence on social media platforms (SBD5).	
		Influencer consistency in the style of content displayed on social media platforms (SBD6).	
3.	Genuineness personal branding (GPB)	The skills and competencies mastered and offered by influencer to others (GPB1).	Zhang, et al. [37] and Kucharska and Mikołajczak [19]
		A liking for the appearance of influencer (GPB2).	
		Alignment between the actions and communications of influencer in accordance with their personal values and beliefs (GPB3).	
		The honesty of Influencer in communicating thoughts, feelings and opinions (GPB4).	
		The uniqueness that differentiates influencer from competitors in the same field (GPB5).	
		Influencer's reputation is good in the eyes of the audience (GPB6).	
		Consistent use of logos, designs and visual elements that make influencer easily recognizable (GPB7).	
		Interactions carried out by Influencer to build meaningful relationships with audiences through genuine and authentic interactions (GPB8).	
4.	E-customer engagement (ECE)	Feeling happy when interacting with a brand (ECE1).	Modified from Brodie et al. [40]; Gálvez-Ruiz et al. [38] and Pansari and Kumar [41]
		Feeling proud to interact with the brand (ECE2).	
		Knowledge possessed about the brand, including product features, benefits, and how to use it (ECE3).	
		The ability to critically evaluate information provided by brands (ECE4).	
		Activeness in liking, sharing and commenting on content posted by brands on social media (ECE5).	
		Activeness in reading articles, blogs, or educational content published by the brand (ECE6).	
		The intensity of interacting with each other through	

		comments, discussions or forums provided by the brand (ECE7).	
		Participation in social media groups, discussion forums, or online communities related to the brand (ECE8).	
		The ability of a product or service to meet or exceed consumer expectations (ECE9).	
		Ease of accessing websites or applications (ECE10).	
5.	Customer BRAND LOVE (CBL)	Love for the brand because of good credibility (CBL1).	Modified from Dam [44], Wang and Lee [14] and Zhou et al. [9]
		Love for a brand based on the uniqueness of the brand (CBL2).	
		Brand compatibility based on values held (CBL3).	
		Compatibility with the brand based on the personal identity owned (CBL4).	
		Brand compatibility based on lifestyle (CBL5).	
		Emotional involvement with the brand (CBL6).	
		Involvement in recommending a brand (CBL7).	
		Convenience in using the brand (CBL8).	
		Desire to use the brand for a long time (CBL9).	
		A deep liking for a brand (CBL10).	
		Experiencing valuable memories with a brand (CBL11).	
		Give a positive evaluation to a brand (CBL12).	
		Display positive emotions towards a brand (CBL13).	
		Express love for a brand (CBL14).	
		Loyal to a brand (CBL15).	
		Feeling satisfied when using a brand (CBL16).	
		The desire to repurchase products from a brand (CBL17).	

Table 1 presents the measurement items of social media active involvement, self-brand distinctiveness, genuineness personal branding, e- customer engagement, and customer brand love. Furthermore, validity and reliability analysis of the existing measurement items are conducted.

#### 4.1. Reliability and Validity Test

Each construct or measurement model (i.e., the relationship between latent variables and observed variables) was tested individually to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model. In this research, the validity of the SEM model was evaluated using first order confirmatory factor analysis (first order CFA). A variable was considered to demonstrate good validity concerning its construct or latent variable, if its standardized loading factor was equal to or greater than the critical threshold of 0.50 or if the t-value of its standardized loading factor met or exceeded the critical value of 1.96 [45]. Reliability was assessed using the construct reliability (CR) measure and average variance extracted (AVE) calculated with the following formula:

$$\text{Construct Reliability} = \frac{(\sum \text{Standardized Loading})^2}{(\sum \text{Standardized Loading})^2 + \sum \varepsilon_j}$$

$$\varepsilon_j = 1 - (\text{Standardized Loading})^2$$

The standardized loading values were obtained directly from the output of the AMOS software with  $\varepsilon_j$  representing the measurement error for each indicator or observed variable. A construct reliability coefficient is considered acceptable if it exceeds the cut-off level of 0.60. Based on the AMOS output, the standardized factor loading values were used to calculate the construct reliability coefficients which are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

Standard factor loadings and construct reliability.

Latent constructs	Observed variables	Standardized loading factor (SLF)	Sum of SLF	Measurement error (ME)	Sum of ME	Construct reliability
<i>Social media active involvement (SMAI)</i>	SMAI1	0.783	8.110	0.387	3.394	0.951
	SMAI2	0.786		0.382		
	SMAI3	0.797		0.365		
	SMAI4	0.792		0.373		
	SMAI5	0.79		0.376		
	SMAI6	0.782		0.388		
	SMAI7	0.855		0.269		
	SMAI8	0.937		0.122		
	SMAI9	0.735		0.460		
	SMAI10	0.853		0.272		
<i>Self- brand distinctiveness (SBD)</i>	SBD1	0.882	4.806	0.222	2.137	0.915
	SBD2	0.814		0.337		
	SBD3	0.83		0.311		
	SBD4	0.748		0.440		
	SBD5	0.781		0.390		
	SBD6	0.751		0.436		
<i>Genuine personal branding (GPB)</i>	GPB1	0.751	6.614	0.436	2.512	0.946
	GPB2	0.812		0.341		
	GPB3	0.837		0.299		
	GPB4	0.894		0.201		
	GPB5	0.816		0.334		
	GPB6	0.905		0.181		
	GPB7	0.825		0.319		
	GPB8	0.774		0.401		
<i>E-customer engagement (ECE)</i>	ECE1	0.926	8.694	0.143	2.404	0.969
	ECE2	0.881		0.224		
	ECE3	0.902		0.186		
	ECE4	0.947		0.103		
	ECE5	0.912		0.168		
	ECE6	0.846		0.284		
	ECE7	0.854		0.271		
	ECE8	0.886		0.215		
	ECE9	0.818		0.331		
	ECE10	0.722		0.479		
<i>Customer brand love (CBL)</i>	CBL1	0.762	13.177	0.419	6.751	0.963
	CBL2	0.765		0.415		
	CBL3	0.765		0.415		
	CBL4	0.728		0.470		
	CBL5	0.731		0.466		
	CBL6	0.729		0.469		
	CBL7	0.835		0.303		
	CBL8	0.851		0.276		
	CBL9	0.854		0.271		
	CBL10	0.765		0.415		
	CBL11	0.841		0.293		
	CBL12	0.742		0.449		
	CBL13	0.759		0.424		
	CBL14	0.798		0.363		
	CBL15	0.742		0.449		
	CBL16	0.802		0.357		
	CBL17	0.708		0.499		

The estimation results of the standardized loading factor values presented in Table 2 indicate that all observed variables have standardized factor loading values exceeding 0.50. Therefore, all observed variables were deemed valid and suitable for inclusion in the structural model. Additionally, Table 2 shows that all latent variables have construct reliability

(CR) coefficient values greater than or equal to the critical threshold of 0.60 demonstrating that all latent constructs exhibit good reliability.

#### 4.2. Goodness of Fit Test

At this stage, the goodness of fit between the data and the model was tested. Unlike other multivariate techniques, the overall assessment of goodness of fit in SEM cannot be conducted directly. SEM lacks a single, definitive statistical test to evaluate the "strength" of model prediction. Instead, researchers have developed a variety of goodness of fit measures, known as goodness of fit indices (GOFI) which is typically used in combination. This has made the overall fit assessment process a subject of considerable debate and controversy. Table 3 presents the evaluation of the goodness of fit criteria after model modifications.

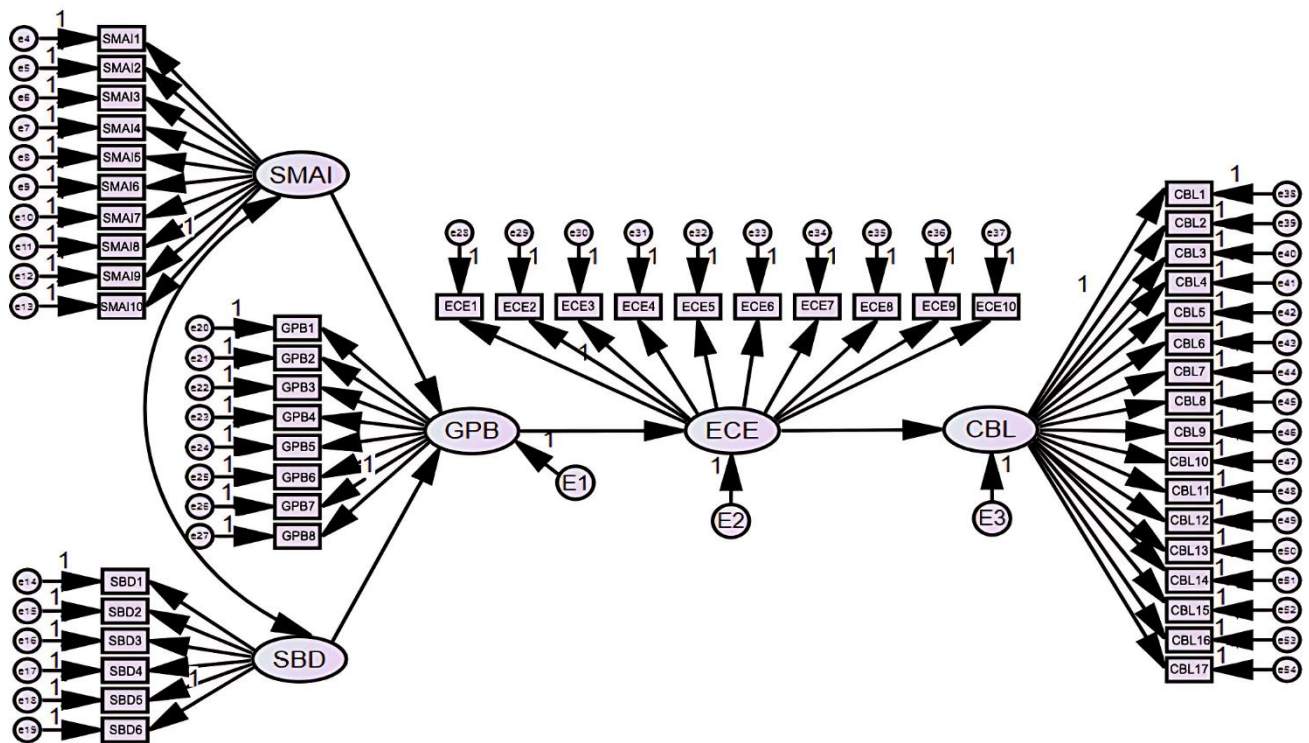
**Table 3**

Evaluation of goodness of fit criteria after modification.

<b>Goodness of fit</b>		<b>Match rate target</b>	<b>Estimation results</b>	<b>Match level</b>
1	<i>Chi-square statistic</i>	$p \geq 0.05$ atau $p \geq 0,10$	0.000	<i>Bad fit</i>
2	The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	RMSEA < 0.08	0.056	<i>Good fit</i>
3	Expected cross validation index (ECVI)	ECVI	8.662	<i>Good fit</i>
		ECVI saturated	8.870	
		ECVI independence	66.336	
4	Akaike information criterion (AIC)	AIC	2589.973	<i>Good fit</i>
		AIC saturated	2589.973	
		AIC independence	19834.527	
5	Consistent akaike information criterion (CAIC)	CAIC	3789.438	<i>Good fit</i>
		CAIC saturated	8889.216	
		CAIC independence	20074.420	
6	Normed fit index (NFI)	NFI $\geq 0.90$	0.895	<i>Medium fit</i>
7	Comparative fit index (CFI)	CFI $\geq 0.90$	0.945	<i>Good fit</i>
8	Incremental fit index (IFI)	IFI $\geq 0.90$	0.946	<i>Good fit</i>
9	Relative fit index (RFI)	RFI $\geq 0.90$	0.875	<i>Medium fit</i>
10	Goodness of fit index (GFI)	GFI $\geq 0.90$	0.801	<i>Medium fit</i>
11	Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	AGFI $\geq 0.90$	0.754	<i>Bad fit</i>
12	Parsimonious goodness of fit index (PGFI)	PGFI $\geq 0.60$	0.647	<i>Good fit</i>
13	Parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI)	PNFI > 0.09	0.751	<i>Good fit</i>
14	The minimum sample discrepancy function/Degree of freedom (CMIN/DF)	$\leq 2$	1.942	<i>Good fit</i>

The overall analysis of model fit after modification as presented in Table 2 indicates that three goodness of fit measures did not meet the desired standards, 3 measures demonstrated acceptable results, and nine measures showed a good fit. Therefore, the overall model fit can be considered quite good.





**Figure 2.**  
Structural model.

#### 4.3. Hypotheses Testing

Figure 2 presents the structural model of this research. This section focuses on evaluating the coefficients or parameters that represent the hypothesized causal relationships between latent variables. A causal relationship is considered insignificant if the 1-tailed critical ratio (CR) value is less than 1.64 at a 0.05 significance level [46]. To assess the significance of indirect effects, the Sobel test is used. Using the AMOS 16 software, the estimated critical ratio values for the structural model were obtained, as summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4.**  
Direct effect path coefficient value.

Variables	Effect	Variables	Estimate
GPB	<---	SBD	0.022
GPB	<---	SMAI	0.544
ECE	<---	GPB	0.725
CBL	<---	ECE	0.793

**Table 5.**  
Path coefficient and t-count SMAI → GPB.

Influence	Path coefficient	T-count	T-table	Conclusion
SMAI → GPB	0.544	8.533	1.96	Reject H0

##### 4.3.1. The Effect of Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI) on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB)

According to Table 5, a path coefficient value of 0.544 was obtained indicating a positive relationship between social media Active Involvement (SMAI) and Genuine Personal Branding (GPB). This result suggested that an increase in SMAI would lead to an increase in GPB and vice versa. The relationship was statistically significant in the 2-tailed test with a t-count value of 8.533 which exceeded the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) was accepted indicating that Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI) had a significant effect on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB).

**Table 6.**  
Path coefficient and t-count SBD → GPB.

Influence	Path coefficient	T-count	T-table	Conclusion
SBD → GPB	0.022	0.400	1.96	Accept H0

##### 4.3.2. The Effect of Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB)

According to Table 6, a path coefficient value of 0.022 was obtained indicating a positive relationship between Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) and Genuine Personal Branding (GPB). This suggested that an increase in SBD would lead to an increase in GPB and vice versa. However, the relationship was not statistically significant in the 2-tailed test, as the t-

count value of 0.400 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) was rejected, indicating that Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) did not have a significant effect on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB).

**Table 7.**

R square and F-count SMAI & SBD -> GPB.

Influence	R square	F-count	F-table	Conclusion
SMAI & SBD -> GPB	0.301	63.946	3.026	Reject H0

#### 4.3.3. The Effect of Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI) and Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB)

Based on the calculations in Table 7, the R-squared value of the squared multiple correlations was 0.301. This indicates that the variables social media Active Involvement (SMAI) and Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) collectively accounted for 30.1% of the variance in Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) while the remaining 69.9% was affected by other variables not investigated in this study. The calculated F value was 63.946. Since this F value (63.946) was greater than the critical F value of 3.026. Hypothesis 1 (H1) was accepted indicating that social media Active Involvement (SMAI) and Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) had a significant simultaneous effect on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB).

**Table 8.**

Path coefficient and t-count GPB -> ECE.

Influence	Path coefficient	T-count	T-table	Conclusion
GPB -> ECE	0.725	12.651	1.96	Reject H0

#### 4.3.4. The Effect of Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) on E-Customer Engagement (ECE)

According to Table 8, a path coefficient value of 0.725 was obtained indicating a positive relationship between Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) and E-Customer Engagement (ECE). This suggests that an increase in GPB would lead to an increase in ECE, and vice versa. The relationship was statistically significant in the 2-tailed test with a t-count value of 12.651 which exceeded the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) was accepted indicating that Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) had a significant effect on E-Customer Engagement (ECE).

**Table 9.**

Path coefficient and t-count ECE -> CBL.

Influence	Path coefficient	T-count	T-table	Conclusion
ECE -> CBL	0.793	13.800	1.96	Reject H0

#### 4.3.5. The Effect of E-Customer Engagement (ECE) on Customer Brand Love (CBL)

According to Table 9, a path coefficient value of 0.793 was obtained indicating a positive relationship between E-Customer Engagement (ECE) and Customer Brand Love (CBL). This suggests that an increase in ECE would lead to an increase in CBL, and vice versa. The relationship was statistically significant in the 2-tailed test with a t-count value of 13.800 which exceeded the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) was accepted, indicating that E-Customer Engagement (ECE) had a significant effect on Customer Brand Love (CBL).

**Table 10.**

Path coefficient and t-count GPB ->ECE -> CBL.

Influence	Path coefficient	T-count	T-table	Conclusion
GPB -> ECE -> CBL	0.575	9.625	1.96	Reject H0

#### 4.3.6. The Effect of Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) on Customer Brand Love (CBL) through E-Customer Engagement (ECE)

According to Table 10, the path coefficient value of 0.575 indicated that the direction of the relationship between Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) and Customer Brand Love (CBL) through E-Customer Engagement (ECE) was positive or unidirectional. This means that if GPB increased, CBL through ECE would also increase, and vice versa. The relationship was statistically significant in the 2-tailed test with a t-count value of 9.625 which exceeded the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) was accepted indicating that Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) had a significant effect on Customer Brand Love (CBL) through E-Customer Engagement (ECE).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The Effect of Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI) on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB)

The research results showed that social media active involvement (SMAI) had a significant effect on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB). Building personal branding on social media requires consistency and interactive communication with the audience. According to Elhachadi and Karaduman [29] the success of personal branding on social media depends on several key factors including a strong presence and active engagement with followers. This engagement ultimately increases the level of customer or audience participation in the company's offerings or activities [37]. Active involvement on social media provides individuals with an opportunity to consistently showcase their identity. Posts, comments, and regular interactions reflect their values, personality, and beliefs, helping to build an authentic image. Social media also

enables direct interaction with the audience allowing individuals to respond to questions, feedback or criticism in a sincere and personal manner. This responsiveness strengthens the audience's perception of authenticity and sincerity. By being actively engaged, individuals can shape and control their narratives, sharing unique stories, experiences, and insights that contribute to a genuine and well-rounded personal branding image.

#### *5.2. The Effect of Self-Brand Distinctiveness (SBD) on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB)*

According to earlier studies, self-brand distinctiveness is self-identification based on self-worth, individual strengths, and innate values that is anchored in a sense of superiority and uniqueness. Self-promotion distinctiveness is the term used to describe the distinctive and recognizable qualities that distinguish one person's brand from another. In personal branding, people try to establish a unique and lasting reputation or image that sets them apart from competitors or peers. This idea is closely related to personal branding which is the deliberate creation and promotion of one's own brand identity.

The research findings indicated that Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) did not have a significant effect on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) which contrasts with previous studies. For instance, in research conducted by Kucharska and Mikołajczak [19] self-brand distinctiveness was found to have a positive and significant effect on personal branding. Self-brand distinctiveness is thought to affect a person's brand's authenticity within the context of genuine personal branding. However, for a number of reasons, being unique or different in personal branding does not always translate into being sincere or honest. Even while a person may have a distinctive or differentiating brand, this could be the result of a calculated marketing campaign or the creation of an image that is not true to whom they are. In many situations, even the brand is distinctive, it might not accurately represent the individual's identity or values. It is possible to intentionally create self-brand distinctiveness to differentiate oneself from competitors or the marketplace but if this distinctiveness is founded more on what is deemed "trendy" or appealing than on the person's actual qualities, it could compromise the impression of authenticity.

#### *5.3. The Effect of Social Media Active Involvement (SMAI) and Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB)*

The research results showed that social media Active Involvement (SMAI) and Self-brand Distinctiveness (SBD) had a significant combined effect on Genuine Personal Branding (GPB). These two factors were found to be critical in shaping and strengthening the audience's perception of a person's authenticity and uniqueness. Active involvement on social media provides individuals with opportunities to present themselves consistently and transparently. Regularly shared content, interactions with followers and responses to comments or criticism reveal the authentic aspects of their personality, helping the audience feel closer to them and trust in their sincerity. Through active, personal interactions, the audience can form an emotional connection with the individual, a relationship that often feels more authentic due to its basis in genuine two-way communication rather than a carefully curated image.

Self-brand distinctiveness highlights a person's unique qualities helping them stand out during the vast array of content and personalities on social media. When this distinctiveness is rooted in traits that genuinely reflect the individual, it strengthens the perception that the personal brand is not only unique but also authentic and uncontrived. A strong sense of self-brand distinctiveness allows individuals to fully express their identity, helping the audience perceive the brand as a true reflection of the person rather than a marketing strategy.

Simultaneously, these factors contribute to a personal brand that is not only distinctive but also perceived as genuine by the audience. Social media active involvement facilitates connection and transparency while self-brand distinctiveness ensures that the individual's uniqueness is maintained and recognized. When both elements are present, personal branding is more likely to be perceived as authentic as it demonstrates a balance between genuine engagement and true individuality.

#### *5.4. The Effect of Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) on E-Customer Engagement (ECE)*

According to the study's findings, E-Customer Engagement (ECE) was significantly impacted by Genuine Personal Branding (GPB). This result is consistent with earlier research that indicated e-customer engagement is significantly impacted by personal branding created on social media platforms. Customers are more inclined to believe in brands that seem genuine and aligned with their declared principles. Customers are more assured that the offerings whether goods, services, or information are truthful and trustworthy when personal branding is seen as authentic. This trust is the cornerstone of online consumer interaction. Authenticity becomes a rare and important quality in the digital world where a lot of content is well polished or possibly deceptive. Genuine personal branding reduces consumer skepticism making them more receptive to the messages or content shared which in turn fosters greater engagement.

Sincere emotional emotions, real stories, and personal narratives are often incorporated into genuine personal branding. Customers can develop an emotional bond with the company due to this strategy which not only increases brand loyalty but also promotes active participation through likes, comments, shares and even purchases. Since it builds trust, emotional ties, encourages word-of-mouth and favourably affects consumer choices, authenticity in personal branding is a major factor in e-customer engagement. Customers are more interested in, supportive of, and engaged with brands that are seen as genuine and honest which results in longer and more intense interactions online.

#### *5.5. The Effect of E-Customer Engagement (ECE) on Customer Brand Love (CBL)*

The study's findings showed that Customer Brand Love (CBL) was significantly impacted by E-Customer Engagement (ECE). This result is in line with earlier research that demonstrated how e-customer engagement builds strong bonds with the brand, great experiences and emotional connections, all of which have a substantial impact on customer brand love.

Customers begin to sense a brand's presence in their everyday lives when they regularly engage with it online through social media, email or other digital channels. The emotional bond is strengthened by this continuous engagement which is a crucial building block for creating customer brand love.

Brands may respond to consumer demands, enquiries, or problems in a fast and customized manner due to e-customer engagement. Customers feel more appreciated as a result of this responsiveness which further solidifies their loyalty to the business. Additionally, firms may continuously provide customers with interesting and relevant material through e-customer engagement giving them a satisfying experience. Positive sentiments and brand affection are fostered when consumers find value and delight in their encounters with a brand.

Consumers, who take part in interactive online campaigns or activities including loyalty programs, quizzes or freebies, frequently link the brand to these pleasurable experiences. These satisfying encounters strengthen the emotional connection and foster brand loyalty. By fostering good experiences, reaffirming emotional bonds, and fortifying the bond between companies and consumers, e-customer engagement influences customer brand love. Strong sentiments of passion and loyalty are more likely to develop in consumers when they perceive that a brand actively engages and values them. This phenomenon is known as "brand love". Building a love relationship between a brand and its customers requires consistent and meaningful involvement in the digital sphere.

#### *5.6. The Effect of Genuine Personal Branding (GPB) on Customer Brand Love (CBL) through E-Customer Engagement (ECE)*

The study's findings showed that through e-customer engagement, genuine personal branding significantly impacted customer brand love. This connection arises because genuineness strengthens emotional bonds, increases customer and produces a profoundly satisfying brand experience. Customers are more inclined to trust a brand when they believe it or the person behind it to be authentic. Customer involvement is critically dependent on this trust. Consumers are more likely to actively engage with a brand's online content, campaigns or products if they think it is legitimate. Since consumers perceive that a company is not just interested in making sales but also shares their beliefs and visions, genuine personal branding promotes more genuine and intimate relationships. Customers are more engaged when they feel heard and appreciated because of this honesty. In addition to increasing engagement levels, genuine personal branding fosters loyalty among e-customers. Customers are more likely to experience intense emotions of attachment and enduring loyalty which eventually turns into brand love when they are actively involved and believe that the brand is truly authentic.

Engaging e-customers is made possible by genuine personal branding. Positive customer interactions and increased engagement levels inevitably lead to the development of brand love. Strong brand love and customer loyalty are more likely to be attained by companies that are seen as genuine and involved with their audience. Customer brand love is the result of genuine e-customer involvement which is mostly dependent on authenticity in personal branding. Authenticity inspires consumers to interact with a brand more fully by fostering emotional bonds and trust. Positive experiences resulting from this engagement strengthen and expand brand loyalty. Therefore, intensive and meaningful e-customer involvement acts as the crucial link in this relationship mediating the journey from genuine personal branding to customer brand love.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research investigated the effects of social media active involvement and self-brand distinctiveness on genuine personal branding, both individually and collectively. Additionally, it investigated the impact of genuine personal branding on e-customer engagement and customer brand love. The findings indicated that social media active involvement and self-brand distinctiveness had a significant combined influence on genuine personal branding. However, when considered individually, self-brand distinctiveness did not have a significant effect on genuine personal branding. The results also showed that genuine personal branding significantly affected e-customer engagement, and the customer engagement variable significantly affected customer brand love. Furthermore, genuine personal branding mediated by customer engagement significantly affected customer brand love.

### *6.1. Theoretical Implications*

In previous studies, the variable self-brand distinctiveness significantly affected genuine personal branding. However, in this research, self-brand distinctiveness did not have a significant effect on genuine personal branding. Several factors may explain this finding. For instance, an individual may have a unique or distinctive brand but this distinctiveness could result from a marketing strategy or deliberate image construction rather than an authentic reflection of their true identity and personal values. In such cases, even though the brand appears unique, it may not serve as a sincere representation of the individual. Self-brand distinctiveness can be strategically crafted to stand out in the market or among competitors. However, if this uniqueness is based on external trends or perceived appeal rather than inherent personal traits, it may diminish the audience's perception of authenticity.

### *6.2. Managerial Implications*

The results of this research provided several managerial implications, particularly for Muslim fashion SMEs. Specifically, the research highlighted three key conclusions: (1) social media active involvement had a significant effect on genuine personal branding. Building genuine personal branding on social media requires consistency and interactive communication with the audience. (2) The findings indicated that genuine personal branding significantly affects e-customer engagement which ultimately impacts customer brand love. Managers should ensure that personal branding and

overall brand communication consistently reflect authenticity. Honesty and consistency in conveying brand values, mission, and identity are essential for strengthening customer trust and engagement. Transparent communication with customers whether in promotions, campaigns, or crisis management helps maintain trust and deepen customer loyalty. (3) Customers who develop strong affection for a brand become valuable assets for market expansion. Managers can leverage this brand advocacy to introduce the brand to new markets or segments. In a competitive environment, customer brand love serves as a powerful differentiator. Managers should focus on marketing strategies that build a deep emotional connection between the brand and its customers, creating a bond that is difficult for competitors to replicate. By effectively managing and nurturing customer brand love, managers can enhance loyalty, boost customer engagement, and support sustainable business growth. Implementing strategies based on these insights can lead to long-term profitability and a stronger competitive position in the market.

### 6.3. Limitations and Future Directions

This research has certain limitations. Future research could expand the scope by examining a broader range of industries beyond just the Muslim fashion sector. Additionally, future studies could explore other variables that were not included in this research. For example, incorporating moderating or mediating variables could provide further insights into their effects on the results. Expanding this research by using a larger sample size or a different population would also enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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