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The Role of Influencer Marketing in Building Brand Trust and Consumer Loyalty of Local Halal Products

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ABSTRACT

Background: The growth of the halal economy and widespread social media use have encouraged local halal brands to adopt influencer marketing; however, whether this strategy builds long-term loyalty, rather than only purchase intention, remains underexplored. **Objective:** This study analyzes the effect of influencer marketing on brand trust and consumer loyalty toward local halal products and examines the mediating role of brand trust. **Methods:** A quantitative survey was conducted from July to September 2026 among 250 Indonesian Muslim consumers who follow at least one influencer and have purchased a local halal product endorsed by that influencer. Data from these purposively sampled respondents were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). **Results:** Influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand trust ($\beta = 0.64$; $p < 0.001$) and consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.21$; $p = 0.002$). Brand trust significantly affects loyalty ($\beta = 0.55$; $p < 0.001$) and acts as a complementary partial mediator. The model explains 41.0% and 49.4% of the variance in brand trust and loyalty, respectively. **Conclusion:** Influencer marketing does not automatically generate loyalty; its effect must first be converted into brand trust. Local halal businesses should therefore collaborate with credible influencers who are aligned with Islamic values and transparent about product halal information.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has changed the way brands communicate with their consumers. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are no longer just social interaction spaces, but have become the main marketing channels that allow brands to reach consumers personally and massively. In this landscape, influencer marketing has emerged as one of the fastest growing strategies. Lou & Yuan, (2019) define influencer marketing as a marketing strategy that leverages the influence of individuals or opinion figures to drive consumer awareness and purchasing decisions. A systematic study by Vrontis et al., (2021) shows that

research on social media influencers has grown rapidly in the past decade, along with the increasing allocation of brand marketing budgets for collaborations with influencers.

The economic scale of this phenomenon is substantial. The global influencer marketing industry was estimated to grow from US$24 billion in 2024 to approximately US$32.55 billion in 2025 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). Indonesia is one of the largest arenas of this development: as of January 2025, the country had 212 million internet users and 143 million social media user identities, equivalent to 50.2% of its population (Kemp, 2025). These conditions make social media influencers an increasingly important source of product information and a determinant of consumer choice in the Indonesian market. On the other hand, the halal industry has experienced significant development, especially in countries with large Muslim populations such as Indonesia.

Halal products are no longer seen solely as fulfilling religious obligations, but also as a symbol of quality, safety, and consumption ethics (Wilson & Liu, 2010). This growth has given rise to many local halal brands in the Muslim cosmetics, skincare, food, and fashion categories that compete closely with global brands. For local brands with limited promotional budgets, influencers are an effective bridge to build closeness with consumers, especially the younger generation of Muslims who make social media the main source of product information (Rokhmah et al., 2025).

At the global level, the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2024/25 records that more than two billion Muslims spent US$2.43 trillion in 2023 on halal food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, modest fashion, travel, and media and recreation, and this spending is projected to reach US$3.36 trillion by 2028. In the same report, Indonesia ranks third on the Global Islamic Economy Indicator, behind Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. In the national context, Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance makes halal certification mandatory for products that enter, circulate, and are traded in Indonesia, and its implementation is carried out by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH).

The implementing regulations set 17 October 2024 as the certification deadline for food and beverage products of medium and large enterprises, while food and beverage products of micro and small enterprises, as well as cosmetic products, must be certified by 17 October 2026. This regulatory context gives the present study its urgency. As mandatory certification is gradually extended to micro and small enterprises, most local halal brands will hold the same formal halal status, so that the halal label alone is no longer a sufficient point of differentiation.

Competition is shifting toward the ability of brands to build trust and maintain long-term relationships with consumers, and influencers have become one of the main channels through which local brands communicate their halal credentials. Understanding whether influencer marketing actually produces loyalty, and through what mechanism, is therefore necessary so that local halal businesses do not allocate their limited promotional budgets to strategies that only generate short-term sales. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing does not lie in popularity alone.

The theory of source credibility explains that the persuasiveness of a message is largely determined by the credibility of its conveyor. Lou & Yuan, (2019) then added a dimension of similarity between influencers and their followers, and proved that influencers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity increase followers' trust in the branded content

they upload. Similar findings were reported by Djafarova & Rushworth, (2017) which showed that the credibility of online celebrities on Instagram influences young consumers' purchasing decisions.

In the context of halal products, the role of trust becomes increasingly crucial because the halal attribute is a credence attribute, which is an attribute that cannot be directly verified by consumers even after the product is consumed (Wibowo et al., 2021). This definition emphasizes that brand trust is the willingness of consumers to rely on the ability of the brand to fulfill its promises, including halal promises. A number of empirical studies have confirmed the relationship between brand trust and loyalty. Atulkar, (2020) found that brand trust has a significant effect on brand loyalty in shopping center consumers, while Ebrahim, (2020) shows that trust mediates the influence of social media marketing on brand equity and loyalty. In halal products, Nandita & Setyawan, (2025) prove that brand trust has a positive effect on the loyalty of local halal skincare brands, while Soedibyo & Dan, (2026) found that celebrity connection with brands increases trust and loyalty in halal skincare among Generation Z.

Influencers who are perceived to be honest, expert, attractive, and have similar values with their followers will transfer their credibility to the brand they are promoting. De V et al., (2017) show that the characteristics of influencers influence consumers' attitudes towards brands, while Leite & Baptista, (2022) prove that the credibility of the source and the parasocial relationship with influencers increases brand trust. Similarly, Kim & Kim, (2021) found that influencers' expertise, authenticity, and homophily build followers' trust, which in turn strengthens their loyalty. In the context of halal, Muslim influencers who demonstrate an authentic understanding of halal can reduce consumers' doubts about a brand's halal claims. Thus, the first hypothesis is formulated: **H1:** Influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on the brand trust of local halal products.

Trust is the main antecedent of commitment and loyalty. This finding is strengthened by Sohaib & Han, (2023) who show the role of brand trust in forming loyalty in the context of social media marketing, and Nandita & Setyawan, (2025) on halal skincare products. Therefore: **H2:** Brand trust has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty of local halal products. In addition to trust, influencers can also form loyalty directly through emotional attachment and follower identification with influencers. Schouten et al., (2020) found that consumers' identification with influencers is stronger than with traditional celebrities, thus having an impact on the effectiveness of endorsements. Consumers who feel close to influencers tend to continue to use recommended products. So: **H3:** Influencer marketing has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty of local halal products.

Referring to the social media influencer value model, trust in branded content is a mechanism that bridges influencer credibility with consumer behavioral responses (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Ebrahim, (2020) also proves that trust mediates the influence of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty. Thus: **H4:** Brand trust mediates the influence of influencer marketing on consumer loyalty of local halal products. However, previous studies have left several research gaps. First, most influencer research on halal products focuses on purchase intention as a dependent variable, not on long-term loyalty (Rokhmah et al., 2025; Supriani et al., 2025).

In fact, for local brands, retaining customers is much more strategic than just encouraging the first purchase. Second, the results of research on the direct influence of influencer credibility are still mixed; Supriani et al., (2025), for example, found that perceived credibility had no significant effect on consumer attitudes towards halal cosmetics influencers. This inconsistency indicates the existence of intermediary mechanisms that have not been widely tested. Third, the meta-analytical study of Leung et al., (2022) emphasizes the need for research that explains the psychological processes behind influencer effectiveness, including the role of trust in the brand being promoted.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in testing brand trust as the mechanism that converts influencer marketing into long-term loyalty toward local halal products, rather than into purchase intention alone, in the context of Indonesia's mandatory halal certification. Unlike previous studies that examined influencer credibility and purchase intention in a single product category, this study integrates source credibility theory, the commitment–trust theory, and the social media influencer value model into one mediation model and tests it on Muslim consumers across several local halal product categories, namely cosmetics and skincare, food and beverages, and Muslim fashion.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of influencer marketing on brand trust of local halal products, analyze the influence of brand trust on consumer loyalty, analyze the direct influence of influencer marketing on consumer loyalty, and examine the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer loyalty. Theoretically, this study extends the social media influencer value model Lou & Yuan, (2019) to the context of halal product loyalty. Practically, the results are expected to be a reference for local halal business actors in designing long-term oriented influencer collaboration strategies.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between variables. Data were collected cross-sectionally through an online questionnaire created using Google Forms and distributed from July to September 2026. The study population consisted of Muslim consumers in Indonesia who actively used social media and had purchased local halal products. As the exact population size was unknown, the sample was selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) being Muslim and at least 17 years old; (2) following at least one influencer on Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube; and (3) having purchased local halal-branded products in the cosmetics, skincare, food, or Muslim fashion categories that had been promoted by an influencer within the preceding six months.

The study targeted 250 respondents to support estimation of the proposed PLS-SEM model. Sample adequacy should be evaluated through an appropriate statistical power analysis rather than the indicator-multiplier rule; the necessary power-analysis assumptions were not documented in the source manuscript. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement instruments were adapted from previous studies, as presented in Table 1.The questionnaire contained 18 items across three constructs (eight influencer marketing items, five brand trust items, and five consumer loyalty items). The operational dimensions and literature sources

are presented in Table 1. The original item-level wording was not included in the supplied manuscript and should be provided by the authors as an appendix before publication.

Table 1. Variable Operational Definitions

Variable	Dimensions / Indicators	Number of Items	Source
Influencer Marketing (X)	Trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity with followers	8 (IM1–IM8)	Lou & Yuan, (2019)
Brand Trust (Z)	Brand reliability, halal claim honesty, integrity, brand goodwill, sense of security	5 (BT1–BT5)	Chaudhuri & Holbrook, (2001)
Consumer Loyalty (Y)	Rebuys, brand preferences, recommendations, resistance to competitors, commitment	5 (BL1–BL5)	Chaudhuri & Holbrook, (2001)

Source: Adapted from various sources (2026).

Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software. PLS-SEM was selected because it is suitable for predictive models involving mediating variables and does not require the data to follow a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved evaluating the measurement model (outer model), including convergent validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity.

Convergent validity was assessed using outer loadings of at least 0.70 and an average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.50. Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values of at least 0.70 considered acceptable. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), with a threshold of less than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015).

The second stage involved evaluating the structural model (inner model) using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples at a significance level of 5%. Mediation was assessed by examining specific indirect effects and the variance accounted for (VAF).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 263 questionnaires were collected, and after the screening process for responses that did not meet the criteria, 250 data that were worth analyzing were obtained. The respondent profiles are presented in Table 2. Of 263 submitted questionnaires, 250 were retained and 13 were excluded. The manuscript does not specify the exclusion reasons or their frequencies; therefore, the screening process cannot be reconstructed reliably. The authors should document eligibility checks, missing-data handling, duplicate-response checks, and any quality-control exclusions using the original response records.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents (n = 250)

Features	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Women	170	68.0%
	Male	80	32.0%
Age	17–25 years old	135	54.0%
	26–35 years old	78	31.2%
	> 35 years old	37	14.8%
Main platforms	Instagram	115	46.0%
	TikTok	98	39.2%
	YouTube	37	14.8%
Product category	Cosmetics & skincare	142	56.8%
	Food & beverage	61	24.4%
	Muslim fashion	47	18.8%

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4 (2026).

Most respondents are women aged 17–25 who access influencers through Instagram and TikTok, with the most product categories in the form of halal cosmetics and skincare. This profile is in line with the characteristics of the digital halal market dominated by Generation Z Muslims (Rokhmah et al., 2025).

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The results of the evaluation of convergent validity and reliability are presented in Table 3. All indicators have an outer loading value above 0.70, an AVE value above 0.50, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70. Thus, all constructs meet the criteria of convergent validity and reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Construct	Loading Range	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Influencer Marketing (X)	0.72 – 0.86	0.912	0.929	0.620
Brand Trust (Z)	0.78 – 0.87	0.883	0.914	0.680
Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.74 – 0.85	0.865	0.903	0.650

Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4 (2026).

The validity of the discriminant was tested using the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria (Table 4). The square root of each construct (diagonal) is greater than its correlation with the other constructs, and the overall value of HTMT is below 0.85. This shows that each construct measures a different concept (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker and HTMT)

Construct	X	Z	Y	HTMT
Influencer Marketing (X)	0.787			–
Brand Trust (Z)	0.640	0.825		X–Z = 0.712
Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.562	0.684	0.806	X–Y = 0.628; Z–Y = 0.781

Remarks: the diagonal number is the square root of the AVE. Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4 (2026).

Evaluation of Structural Models

The R^2 value of brand trust of 0.410 indicates that 41.0% of the variation in brand trust is explained by influencer marketing, while the R^2 of consumer loyalty of 0.494 indicates that 49.4% of the variation in loyalty is explained by influencer marketing and brand trust. These R^2 values indicate the explained variance in this sample; their substantive strength should be interpreted in relation to the research context rather than assigned an unsupported universal category. The Q^2 values for brand trust (0.272) and loyalty (0.318) were greater than zero, so the model had predictive relevance. The effect size value (f^2) showed a large influence of influencer marketing on brand trust (0.695), a moderate influence of brand trust on loyalty (0.342), and a small influence of influencer marketing on loyalty (0.050).

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	T-Statistics	p-value	Verdict
H1	X → Z	0.640	14.215	< 0.001	Accepted
H2	Z → Y	0.550	9.812	< 0.001	Accepted
H3	X → Y	0.210	3.104	0.002	Accepted
H4	X → Z → Y	0.352	7.936	< 0.001	Accepted (partial mediation)

Remarks: bootstrapping 5,000 subsamples; significant at $p < 0.05$. Source: Primary data processed with SmartPLS 4 (2026).

Note: Bootstrap 95% confidence intervals were not reported in the source manuscript. The authors should insert the lower and upper bounds for H1–H4 from the original 5,000-subsample SmartPLS output; no intervals have been estimated or fabricated here.

The total effect of influencer marketing on loyalty was 0.562, consisting of a direct effect of 0.210 and an indirect effect through brand trust of 0.352. The VAF is 62.6% (0.352/0.562). Because both the direct and indirect effects are positive and statistically significant, the result is consistent with complementary mediation. The bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect was not supplied and must be verified from the original SmartPLS output.

Discussion

The influence of influencer marketing on brand trust (H1). The results show that influencer marketing is the strongest predictor of brand trust in the model. These findings are consistent with Lou & Yuan, (2019) who prove that influencers' trust, attractiveness, and similarity increase followers' trust in branded content, and Leite & Baptista, (2022) who found that source credibility has an impact on brand trust. In the context of halal products, influencer credibility serves as a signal that reduces uncertainty over halal claims, especially for local brands that do not yet have a strong reputation. When a trusted Muslim influencer authentically conveys his or her halal certification information, composition, and personal experience, consumers are more likely to transfer that trust to the brand.

The effect of brand trust on loyalty (H2). Brand trust has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty. These results support the theory of commitment

and trust and the findings of Chaudhuri & Holbrook, (2001) that brand trust drives purchase loyalty and attitude loyalty. These findings are also in line with Atulkar, (2020); Nandita & Setyawan, (2025), on halal skincare products. For Muslim consumers, trust in halalness and brand quality creates a sense of spiritual and functional security so that they are reluctant to switch to other brands that have not been tested.

Direct influence of influencer marketing on loyalty (H3). Influencer marketing has a direct effect on loyalty, albeit with a relatively small coefficient. This shows that some consumers remain loyal to brands because of proximity or identification with influencers, as stated by Schouten et al., (2020). However, the small direct effect indicates that loyalty that relies solely on influencer figures is vulnerable, for example when influencers stop working with brands or get involved in controversy. The mediating role of brand trust (H4). The most important finding of this study is that most of influencer marketing's influence on loyalty is channeled through brand trust.

These results are in line with Ebrahim, (2020) who placed trust as a mediator between social media marketing and loyalty, and expanded the social media influencer value model Lou & Yuan, (2019) from short-term outputs (purchase intent) to long-term outputs (loyalty). These findings also provide an explanation for the mixed results of previous research: when an influencer's credibility is not successfully converted into trust in a brand, its impact on consumer behavior becomes weak (Supriani et al., 2025). In other words, influencers act as a "gateway", but it is the brand itself that must maintain trust through halal consistency of quality and transparency.

Local halal business actors are advised to: (1) choose influencers based on credibility and value suitability, not just the number of followers; (2) equip influencers with accurate halal information, such as halal certificate numbers and raw materials, so that the message conveyed is transparent; (3) ensure the product experience is in accordance with the promises communicated by influencers so that trust does not collapse on the first purchase; and (4) develop loyalty programs that shift consumer attachment from influencer figures to brands.

The respondent composition also places limits on interpretation. Women constituted 68.0% of the sample, respondents aged 17–25 represented 54.0%, and cosmetics and skincare accounted for 56.8% of the product category distribution. Consequently, the observed associations may be especially relevant to younger, digitally engaged halal beauty consumers and should not be generalized automatically to all Indonesian consumers or halal product categories. Future studies could use probability-based or stratified sampling and longitudinal measures of repeat purchasing to test whether the associations persist over time.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that influencer marketing positively and significantly relates to brand trust and consumer loyalty toward local halal products. Brand trust also has a positive association with loyalty and mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and loyalty. The significant direct and indirect paths support complementary mediation, indicating that influencer credibility contributes to loyalty both independently and through trust. These findings underscore the practical importance of selecting credible influencers, communicating halal claims transparently, and ensuring that product experiences match promotional promises.

Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation, while purposive sampling and online data collection restrict generalizability. The model also excludes potentially relevant factors such as religiosity, halal awareness, satisfaction, and parasocial relationships. Future studies should examine longitudinal loyalty, compare product categories, and investigate differences between micro-influencers and macro-influencers internationally.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Hanipah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Novalia Azka: Data curation, Investigation, Formal analysis, Software, Visualization. Siti Kholifah: Literature review, Validation, Resources, Writing – review & editing. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT

The authors declare that generative AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript solely to improve language clarity and grammatical structure. Generative AI was not used to generate research ideas, collect or analyze data, interpret results, or draw conclusions. Its use followed established ethical guidelines on the use and disclosure of generative AI in scholarly publishing. All content was reviewed and verified by the authors, who made substantial intellectual contributions to the work and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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