



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER TRUST IN ALLIANCE FRANCAISE MEDAN THROUGH CONSUMER SATISFACTION AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Trust at Alliance Française (AF) Medan with Consumer Satisfaction as an intervening variable. The background of the study is based on pre-survey findings that indicate a gap between AF Medan's social media activities, which were considered quite good by students, and the reality of the decreasing number of students from 2023 to 2025. This study uses a quantitative explanatory approach with a saturated sample of 30 active AF Medan students. Data were collected through a Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using SEM-PLS and Baron and Kenny mediation tests to examine direct and indirect effects. The results show that Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction, and Consumer Satisfaction has a significant effect on Consumer Trust. Social Media Marketing was also found to have a direct effect on Consumer Trust. In addition, Consumer Satisfaction was proven to mediate the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Consumer Trust, indicating that an effective digital marketing strategy increases student satisfaction and ultimately strengthens their trust in AF Medan. These findings provide important implications for cultural institutions to strengthen the consistency of digital content, increase interactivity, and ensure the match between digital image and actual service quality to build long-term trust.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Satisfaction, Consumer Trust, Digital Marketing, Alliance Française Medan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped how institutions communicate, build relationships, and construct brand identity in contemporary society. Among digital platforms, social media has emerged as a crucial instrument in modern marketing strategies across sectors such as business, culture, and higher education. In the context of educational organizations, social media plays a strategic role in five core areas: student

engagement, institutional branding, enrollment decision-making, relationship management, and strategic marketing (Alalwan, 2022). The ability of institutions to utilize social media effectively enables them to strengthen public trust, expand access to information, and enhance brand credibility within increasingly competitive environments.

Global trends demonstrate a rapid increase in digital media usage. According to Statista (2025), social media users worldwide have reached 5.17 billion, with an average daily usage time of 2 hours and 23 minutes. Indonesia is among the top ten countries with the largest number of active users, reaching over 191 million individuals, with TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube dominating engagement among young people (We Are Social, 2025). These trends align with UNESCO (2023), which highlights the strategic role of digital media in supporting institutions that promote language and culture through outreach to digital-native audiences. The integration of social media within educational and cultural institutions reflects a shift in consumer behavior, where young audiences increasingly rely on digital platforms for information, evaluation, and decision-making. In this context, social media marketing (SMM) is not merely informative, but also emotional, experiential, and relational, shaping perceptions and influencing decision-making processes (Arabella et al., 2025). Consequently, the effectiveness of institutional marketing strategies depends heavily on how digital engagement translates into positive user experience, satisfaction, and trust.

In Indonesia, digital adoption continues to grow, with more than 212 million internet users and over 170 million users active on social media (We Are Social, 2025). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are particularly dominant among younger demographics, who often serve as the target audience of language and cultural education institutions. Consumer evaluations increasingly consider not only the quality of the direct service, but also the institution's digital presence, consistency, tone of communication, and responsiveness (Databoks, 2024). This reflects a shift from transactional interactions to emotional engagement and digital trust-building. To understand how digital interactions influence consumer behavior, a theoretical framework is required. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides an appropriate conceptual foundation, arguing that behavior is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Studies show that SMM significantly influences attitudes, social norms, and ultimately, behavioral intentions and purchase decisions (Rusti et al., 2024). Furthermore, in digital contexts, consumer satisfaction and perceived value serve as mediating variables between social media exposure and trust formation (Wahyudi & Parahiyanti, 2021). Thus, SMM can drive trust through mechanisms of positive perception, emotional engagement, and value expectancy.

Despite the documented importance of SMM, many institutions face challenges in aligning digital representation with the actual service experience. Misalignment between online image and offline reality can undermine trust, reduce satisfaction, and weaken consumer loyalty (Uthman & Marie, 2025). This is particularly relevant for language and cultural institutions, where experiential quality forms an essential component of service delivery. Medan, as one of Indonesia's major urban centers, demonstrates increasingly dynamic patterns of digital interaction and youth engagement. Taib et al. (2024) highlight the significant influence of social media on youth social behavior in Medan, suggesting opportunities for digital engagement within educational and cultural spaces. Within this context, Alliance Française (AF) Medan plays a unique role as a cultural institution

promoting French language and culture. While AF Medan has developed a distinctive learning environment that integrates linguistic and cultural immersion, preliminary observations indicate that this experiential value may not be adequately reflected in its social media marketing.

Initial quantitative data reveal a contradiction: despite high levels of student trust, satisfaction, and loyalty toward AF Medan's digital content, student enrollment numbers have declined significantly from 2023 to 2025. This discrepancy highlights a research gap: existing digital engagement strategies appear insufficient to maintain or enhance participation, despite positive digital perception. Prior studies confirm that SMM improves customer loyalty when mediated by satisfaction and trust (Putra & Setiawan, 2024; Carlianti et al., 2024), but such findings have been predominantly situated in commercial sectors. Research in non-commercial cultural education institutions remains limited.

Recent empirical research also supports the role of SMM in developing brand trust, satisfaction, and purchase intention in higher education environments (Sriyanto et al., 2024; Kuniawati & Ariyanti, 2024). However, this body of knowledge rarely examines cultural institutions, particularly those offering language education, which operate under different organizational logic and audience expectations. Thus, there is a pressing need to evaluate how SMM influences satisfaction and trust in such contexts, especially when declining participation contradicts positive digital indicators. Furthermore, institutions like Goethe-Institut, British Council, and Institut Français d'Indonésie (IFI) have demonstrated successful digital strategies by combining visual storytelling, cultural identity, and interactive engagement. Benchmarking against these institutions can provide valuable insights into best practices, particularly regarding emotional value creation and digital trust-building.

Given these dynamics, understanding the relationship between social media marketing, consumer satisfaction, and trust within AF Medan becomes critical. This study aims to analyze how SMM influences consumer trust, with satisfaction functioning as a mediating variable. Findings are expected to contribute theoretically to digital marketing and consumer psychology literature, and practically to the strategic development of digital communication within cultural education institutions. In the digital era, institutional success is determined not only by service quality, but also by the capacity to build meaningful, credible, and emotionally resonant relationships through social media. Thus, examining this phenomenon in the context of AF Medan offers timely and significant academic and practical value.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design because the data collected are numerical and analysed using statistical techniques, while the explanatory approach allows the researcher to examine causal relationships among variables, including the indirect effect through a mediating variable. The variables examined in this study consist of Social Media Marketing (X) as the independent variable, Customer Satisfaction (Z) as the mediating variable, and Customer Trust (Y) as the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2019). The research was conducted at Alliance Française (AF) Medan, an educational and cultural institution promoting French language and culture in Medan,

Indonesia, located at Jl. Hasanuddin No. 5B, Petisah Hulu, Medan Baru, Medan, from August to October 2025.

Operational definitions were constructed to clarify the dimensions of each variable. Social Media Marketing refers to marketing strategies that utilise social media platforms to build brand awareness, reach audiences, interact with consumers, and influence conversions through content creation, content sharing, customer relation, interaction, and promotional activities. Customer Satisfaction is defined as a post-purchase evaluation of pleasure or disappointment resulting from the comparison between expectations and actual performance of a service, measured through dimensions of product quality, service quality, emotional experience, price, and additional cost. Meanwhile, Customer Trust refers to the willingness of consumers to rely on an institution perceived to have reliability, integrity, competence, benevolence, and security. All indicators were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The population of the study consisted of all active students of AF Medan, and due to the relatively small population size, the research applied a saturated sampling technique, in which all members of the population were selected as samples. As a result, 30 students were included as respondents, ensuring representativeness and comprehensive coverage of the research population. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed to all respondents. The questionnaire items were constructed based on the operational definitions and indicators of each variable and measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Instrument testing was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Validity testing was performed by examining the outer loading values of each indicator, with a loading value greater than 0.70 considered valid (Hair et al., 2020). Reliability testing evaluated the internal consistency of the instruments using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.70 considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2021). Indicators that did not meet validity or reliability thresholds were excluded from further analysis to ensure measurement accuracy.

Data analysis consisted of descriptive analysis and mediation testing. Descriptive statistics were used to describe respondent characteristics and distribution of responses for each indicator of the variables. The results were presented in the form of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to provide a comprehensive understanding of respondents' perceptions of AF Medan's social media marketing strategies, their satisfaction, and their trust (Ghozali, 2018).

To test the mediating role of customer satisfaction, the research applied the Baron and Kenny (1986) causal steps method using multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS software. The procedure began by examining the direct effect of Social Media Marketing on Customer Trust. Subsequently, the effect of Social Media Marketing on Customer Satisfaction was tested. The third step involved examining the effect of both Social Media Marketing and Customer Satisfaction on Customer Trust simultaneously. Mediation was confirmed when customer satisfaction significantly predicted customer trust while controlling for social media marketing, and when the regression coefficient of the direct relationship between social media marketing and customer trust decreased compared to the initial model. Full mediation was indicated if the direct relationship became non-significant after the mediator was included, whereas partial mediation occurred when the direct relationship remained significant but with a reduced coefficient.

To confirm the significance of the indirect effect, the Sobel test was applied, which calculates whether the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator is statistically significant. The Sobel test statistic was obtained using a formula that incorporates the regression coefficients and standard errors of the two pathways. When the Sobel test value reached statistical significance at $\alpha = 0.05$, the mediating effect was considered significant. Overall, the combination of the Baron and Kenny approach and the Sobel test provided a structured, rigorous, and empirically grounded procedure for identifying mediation effects among the variables, thereby enabling a thorough examination of the mechanisms through which social media marketing influences customer trust via customer satisfaction in the context of AF Medan.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Trust

The results of the hypothesis test indicate that Social Media Marketing does not significantly influence Consumer Trust at Alliance Française (AF) Medan. This is evident from the path coefficient of 0.127 with a p-value of 0.367, which is above the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that "Social Media Marketing has a positive influence on Consumer Trust" is rejected. This finding demonstrates that the social media marketing strategy implemented by AF Medan has not been able to directly build consumer trust, although its existence still plays a role in building digital interactions with the audience.

Theoretically, consumer trust is a psychological construct that is not formed instantly, but rather through a process of evaluating experiences, information consistency, and perceived brand reliability (Dalimunthe et al., 2025).. Morgan and Hunt (1994) in their Commitment Trust Theory assert that trust only emerges when consumers believe that a party (brand/organization) acts with honesty, integrity, and predictability over the long term. Therefore, even an intensive social media presence doesn't necessarily generate trust if it's not accompanied by concrete evidence of brand credibility and transparency.

This research finding aligns with a study by Ardiyansyah and Sarwoko (2020), which found that social media marketing activities don't always have a significant impact on consumer trust if the quality of the digital relationships built is still one-way and focuses on promotion, rather than interaction (Kurniawati et al., 2025; Purba et al., 2025). Similarly, research by Wahyudi and Parahiyanti (2021) shows that consumers tend not to trust a brand solely because of its social media presence, but rather because of quality assurance, positive reviews, and consistent service. In other words, social media can increase visibility, but it doesn't necessarily increase trust.

In the context of AF Medan, these results can be explained by several possibilities. First, published social media content still focuses on conveying information about activities, promoting language courses, and cultural activities, but doesn't fully emphasize service quality, testimonials, or two-way engagement with potential participants. Second, most consumers may not have direct experience using AF Medan's services, so trust hasn't been built through social experiences or recommendations. Third, AF Medan's social media platforms have not fully utilized features that build emotional connection, such as live

interaction, user-generated content, or story-based branding, which have been shown in numerous studies to trigger trust.

This non-significant effect also indicates that today's consumers have increasingly critical information selection patterns. They no longer readily trust digital content without social proof. Sohail and Hasan (2020) found that consumer trust only increases if a brand's social media account displays genuine reviews, responsive interactions, and evidence of competence. This means that simply posting regularly or promoting visuals is not enough to build trust.

Another factor worth considering is audience characteristics. Based on the study's demographic data, the majority are students aged 15–25, a digitally savvy group with high expectations for content quality and brand transparency. This group tends not to trust simply because of visual advertisements or regular posts, but rather requires evidence of authentic engagement. This aligns with the findings of Apriyanto (2025), who explained that Generation Z has been shown to place greater trust in brands that involve consumers as part of the communication process, rather than simply as promotional targets.

From a digital marketing theory perspective, social media marketing essentially has five main elements, as proposed by Kim & Ko (2012): entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. These elements are designed to create a more personalized and engaging messaging experience for the audience (Ohorella et al., 2024; Harianto et al., 2023). However, this study shows that these five indicators do not fully function as a trust builder at AF Medan. This reinforces the view that consumer trust is the result of a deeper evaluation process, not simply digital exposure.

In the context of AF Medan, although Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok accounts are routinely used to promote courses, cultural seminars, and international events, the intensity of interaction between admins and followers remains relatively low. User comments are rarely responded to, participant testimonials are rarely published consistently, and the humanized branding strategy commonly used to build emotional closeness is not yet apparent.

Research by Alalwan (2022) states that social media marketing only has a strong influence on trust if consumers have gone through the brand evaluation stage and found a match with the credibility of the information. Another study by Niu (2025) shows that trust is more easily formed when the content displayed is user-generated content (UGC) such as reviews, video testimonials, or real-life experiences, rather than institutional promotional content (Ritonga et al., 2024).

The results of this study do not imply that social media marketing is unimportant, but rather that it is not strong enough as a direct determinant of trust in the context of AF Medan. This is further strengthened by a mediation test (hypothesis H4), in which the influence of social media marketing becomes significant after being mediated by consumer satisfaction. This means that consumers trust AF Medan not because they see its promotional content, but when they feel satisfied with the information, learning experience, credibility of the teachers, or academic services provided.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Satisfaction

Statistical test results indicate that Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Consumer Satisfaction at Alliance Française (AF) Medan, with a coefficient of 0.901 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis that "Social

Media Marketing has a positive influence on Consumer Satisfaction" is accepted. This finding demonstrates that AF Medan's social media marketing activities have been shown to increase consumer satisfaction, both in terms of information, visual content, digital interactions, and perceptions of the quality of services communicated online.

Theoretically, customer satisfaction is a form of affective evaluation that arises after consumers compare their expectations with the experience received through specific touchpoints. In the context of social media, satisfaction can arise when consumers perceive the information provided by the brand to be relevant, easily accessible, visually appealing, and provide value-added content.

The success of social media marketing in influencing customer satisfaction is also supported by the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) theory, where social media plays a crucial role in the Attention, Interest, and Desire stages before consumers decide to engage further with a brand. At AF Medan, content containing information about classes, cultural events, international activities, and visualizations of the learning environment serves as a stimulus that reinforces positive perceptions, resulting in satisfaction with the quality of the institution's digital communications.

International research by Chen & Lin (2019) also demonstrates that social media based on visual interaction and education has a strong correlation with customer satisfaction, particularly in the education and training sector. Thus, consumers feel more than just "seeing a promotion" but also as a source of information.

In the context of AF Medan, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are used not only to publicize activities but also as touchpoints for information services. Content such as class schedules, short learning videos, documentation of French events, student testimonials, and the use of Instagram story highlights provide a consistent digital experience, creating a sense of satisfaction even though consumers have not yet directly participated as course participants. This demonstrates that social media functions not only as a promotional channel but also as a service experience channel. The success of social media marketing in driving consumer satisfaction can also be explained through the indicators that make up the variable. In this study, SMM was measured using five dimensions adopted from the Kim & Ko (2012) model: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. Each dimension plays a different role in shaping the consumer experience, and the results indicate that most indicators are effective in creating satisfaction with AF Medan.

First, the entertainment indicator proved strong in generating positive responses. Visually engaging content, such as photos of French cultural activities, language class videos, and an aesthetically designed Instagram feed, provided a pleasant emotional experience for the audience.

Second, the interaction indicator played a crucial role in creating the perception of responsive service. Although AF Medan's engagement rate was not yet optimal, the Q&A feature in the comments section, prompt direct message responses, and interactions through Instagram stories created a sense of the brand's presence and presence.

Third, the trendiness indicator played a role in maintaining brand relevance. AF Medan regularly published content themed around international events (e.g., Bastille Day, the European Film Festival, French Language Week), thus enabling consumers to perceive the brand as keeping up with global cultural developments.

Fourth, customization indicators create satisfaction because consumers feel they are receiving content tailored to their needs. For example, AF Medan provides class information for children, teenagers, and professionals, allowing audiences to find the right choice. Sohail and Hasan (2020) found that content personalization increases satisfaction because consumers feel the brand understands their needs. This also aligns with the principles of customer-centric marketing.

Fifth, word of mouth (WOM) indicators involving user testimonials, class reviews, or alumni experiences significantly influence satisfaction. Consumers tend to trust others' experiences before deciding to enroll. Niu's (2025) study showed that e-WOM appearing on social media has an emotional effect that increases satisfaction because consumers perceive they have received "social proof" before making a decision.

All SMM indicators in this study play a strong role in influencing consumer satisfaction. This contrasts with H1, where the same variables were unable to directly shape trust. This difference suggests that satisfaction is more easily shaped through social media than trust, as satisfaction is a short-term evaluation, while trust requires consistent, long-term experiences. Methodologically, this aligns with the SEM results, which show that the path coefficient for H2 (0.901) is significantly greater than H1 (0.127).

This finding is supported by research by Sari & Nugroho (2021), which shows that social media marketing has a significant influence on satisfaction in the context of digital educational services. International research by Alalwan (2022) also states that social media is an effective medium for building pre-purchase satisfaction, namely consumer satisfaction that arises before a transaction, based on expectations established from digital content. This means that even if consumers have not yet taken a course at AF Medan, they can still be satisfied with the information and communication style provided.

These results support the concept of preliminary satisfaction in digital consumer behavior. Consumers can feel satisfied even before purchasing if they have already gained value through content, access to information, or interaction with the brand. This is what happened at AF Medan: many consumers felt satisfied because they received information they deemed valuable, even though they had not yet directly participated in the service.

The results of this study can be said to be consistent with previous theory and research that social media marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumer satisfaction, especially in intangible service-based industries such as language and cultural education. Social media is not only a promotional space, but also an "experiential space" that creates perceptions of quality and value.

The Effect of Consumer Satisfaction on Consumer Trust

The statistical analysis results indicate that the variable Consumer Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on Consumer Trust at Alliance Française Medan. The path coefficient was recorded at 0.826 with a p-value of 0.023 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the higher the level of satisfaction consumers feel with the service or experience provided by the institution, the greater their level of trust in the institution. Therefore, the hypothesis "Consumer Satisfaction has a positive influence on Consumer Trust" is accepted.

From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between satisfaction and trust is an important element in the relationship marketing literature. According to Morgan and Shelby's (1994) Commitment Trust theory, trust arises from repeated positive

experiences and the feeling that the brand or organization acts with a reliable level of integrity and consistency. Thus, the satisfaction created when consumer expectations are met or exceeded becomes the emotional and cognitive foundation that then develops into trust. In the context of digital services such as education or language courses, consumers do not solely form trust based on advertising or social media exposure, but rather on experiences that include perceived value, responsiveness, satisfaction with the process, and the institution's reputation.

More recent research by Yum and Kim (2024) in the online entertainment platform industry concluded that consumer satisfaction serves as a bridge connecting perceived value and consumer trust (customer satisfaction builds trust) in the digital environment. Thus, this research strengthens satisfaction's position as a crucial element in shaping trust in the context of digital services and online interactions.

In the context of Alliance Française Medan, these results indicate that consumers, whether registered or simply following social media content, build trust after experiencing initial satisfaction with the information content, digital interactions, and perceptions of the quality of the service displayed. The satisfaction that emerges here is pre-service satisfaction, that is, satisfaction that forms before full service consumption (e.g., before or upon initial joining). This suggests that consumers do not need to have completed the entire learning process to feel satisfied and subsequently trust; a positive initial experience through social media, communication, and the institution's reputation is sufficient.

The significant relationship between satisfaction and trust illustrates one of the fundamental differences between the variables in the research model: satisfaction is a short-term, affective evaluation immediately following an interaction, whereas trust is a long-term construct that develops from satisfaction, experienced consistency, and tangible evidence of service quality. With a high coefficient (0.826) compared to the previous influencing variables (as in H1), it can be emphasized that satisfaction is a major direct contributor to trust in the context of this study.

In terms of indicators underlying satisfaction, several relevant aspects in this study include: the quality of information provided through social media (claims, program updates, testimonials), digital responsiveness (comments, DMs, admin responses), perceived value (program suitability to learning needs), and perceived institutional reliability (status clarity, accreditation, reputation). Research by Anum et al. (2023) shows that factors such as brand credibility and popularity significantly influence consumer satisfaction and indirectly influence loyalty through satisfaction.

In this study, AF Medan's success in providing consistent, up-to-date, and relevant content has resulted in strong customer satisfaction, which then becomes the foundation for trust.

From a management perspective, timing and consistency are crucial. A single customer satisfaction can indeed build initial trust, but strengthening that trust requires consistent evidence of real service. Therefore, practical recommendations for AF Medan include: strengthening alumni testimonials, showcasing student achievement data, clarifying accreditation, and providing follow-up engagement channels so that initial satisfaction translates into real trust.

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Trust through Consumer Satisfaction

The results of the research analysis indicate that Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Consumer Trust when mediated by Consumer Satisfaction, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.744 with a p-value of 0.000. This finding demonstrates that although social media marketing strategies are unable to build trust directly, as demonstrated in the first hypothesis, they still have a strong influence in shaping trust if they first generate consumer satisfaction. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis in this study is accepted.

From a consumer behavior theory perspective, these results can be explained through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, where Social Media Marketing acts as the initial stimulus, consumer satisfaction functions as an internal psychological reaction, and trust emerges as the final response. This means that consumers do not immediately trust a brand simply because they see social media content; rather, trust is formed after consumers are satisfied with the experience, information, or value obtained from the digital interaction.

Previous research also supports these results. A study by Kurniadi and Rana (2023) confirms a similar conclusion, namely that consumers do not immediately trust digital promotions, but rather develop trust after experiencing satisfaction with the quality of information, product visualization, or service responsiveness. These research findings confirm that satisfaction serves as a psychological bridge between digital promotions and trust.

In relation to the research object, Alliance Française Medan, this mediation pathway occurs because consumers first perceive value and benefits through educational content, consistent information, the institution's reputation displayed digitally, and responsive administrative interactions via social media. Consumers who are satisfied with this initial experience then assess the institution as trustworthy, even though they have not yet directly engaged with face-to-face service. This explains why the direct relationship between social media marketing and consumer trust is insignificant, but the indirect relationship through satisfaction is significant.

These findings suggest that in the context of digital marketing, trust is not the result of promotions, but rather the satisfaction generated by the promotions themselves. In other words, social media does not automatically create trust, but social media that is able to create satisfying experiences will pave the way for the formation of consumer trust. Implicitly, this also emphasizes that digital marketing strategies that are merely informative and promotional are not enough to build trust; consumers must first be given emotional and rational reasons to feel satisfied. Thus, the results of the fourth hypothesis not only confirm the relationships between the variables in the research model but also provide empirical evidence that satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping trust in service-based marketing environments, particularly in the education and cultural sectors like AF Medan.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Social Media Marketing significantly influences Customer Satisfaction, but does not directly build Customer Trust among learners at Alliance Française Medan. Customer Trust emerges primarily from positive service experiences, rather than from exposure to promotional content alone. The findings further reveal that Customer Satisfaction has a strong and significant effect on Customer Trust, confirming that trust is shaped through evaluations of service quality, information accuracy, and alignment between expectations and actual experiences. Moreover, the mediation analysis indicates full mediation, whereby Social Media Marketing influences Customer Trust only when channelled through Customer Satisfaction. These results reinforce the notion that digital marketing activities are effective not merely when visible, but when capable of generating meaningful consumer satisfaction. From a managerial perspective, the findings underscore the importance of designing content that fosters satisfaction, responsiveness, service reliability, and organisational credibility. Brands need to move beyond persuasive messaging toward developing authentic value that positively shapes customer perception and behaviour. The study also highlights several practical pathways for strengthening marketing strategies, including consistency between promises and actual service delivery, improved responsiveness, and systematic monitoring of customer satisfaction. Future research may extend this model by incorporating variables such as brand image, engagement, or electronic word-of-mouth, applying mixed-method approaches, and examining outcomes across various digital platforms or organisational settings to deepen theoretical and practical insights.

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