

Driving Brand Growth in the Global FMCG Hydration Category: an Integrated Model of Ecosystem Strategy, Consumer Engagement, and IMC with Brand Experience as a Mediator

Agustinus Yanuar Budhi Heriyanto^{1*)}, Antonius Bramantyo Indra Jaya²⁾

¹⁾Program Studi Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Mohammad Husni
Thamrin, Indonesia

²⁾Brand Communication – Otsuka Young Star, PT Amerta Indah Otsuka, Indonesia

^{*)}Correspondence Author: ayanuarbudhi713@gmail.com, Jakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is experiencing rapid transformation driven by evolving consumer behavior, increasing health awareness, and growing demand for personalized and meaningful brand interactions. In this competitive environment, firms are shifting from product- and price-based competition toward integrated, relationship-oriented strategies aimed at creating sustainable brand growth. This study examines the effects of ecosystem-based marketing strategy, consumer engagement, and integrated marketing communication (IMC) on brand growth, with brand experience as a mediating variable in the FMCG industry. Data were collected from 100 respondents and analyzed using PLS-SEM with a Hierarchical Component Model (HCM). The results show that ecosystem strategy significantly affects consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.72$), brand experience ($\beta = 0.45$), and brand growth ($\beta = 0.21$). Consumer engagement influences brand experience ($\beta = 0.40$) and brand growth ($\beta = 0.28$), while brand experience strongly affects brand growth ($\beta = 0.35$). IMC also significantly impacts brand experience ($\beta = 0.38$) and brand growth ($\beta = 0.22$). The model demonstrates strong explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.61-0.68$). Mediation analysis confirms that consumer engagement and brand experience jointly mediate the relationship between marketing strategies and brand growth. These findings indicate that brand growth is driven by a multi-stage process involving engagement and experiential mechanisms.

Keywords: Ecosystem Marketing, Consumer Engagement, IMC, Brand Experience, Brand Growth.

Abstrak

Industri barang konsumsi cepat laku (FMCG) mengalami transformasi pesat yang didorong oleh perubahan perilaku konsumen, meningkatnya kesadaran kesehatan, dan meningkatnya permintaan akan interaksi merek yang personal dan mempunyai nilai bagi konsumen. Dalam lingkungan yang kompetitif ini, perusahaan beralih dari persaingan berbasis produk dan harga menuju strategi terintegrasi yang berorientasi pada hubungan yang bertujuan untuk menciptakan pertumbuhan merek yang berkelanjutan. Studi ini meneliti pengaruh strategi pemasaran berbasis ekosistem, keterlibatan konsumen, dan komunikasi pemasaran terintegrasi (IMC) terhadap pertumbuhan merek, dengan pengalaman merek sebagai variabel mediasi dalam industri FMCG. Data dikumpulkan dari 100 responden dan dianalisis menggunakan PLS-SEM dengan Model Komponen Hierarkis (HCM). Hasil menunjukkan bahwa strategi ekosistem secara signifikan mempengaruhi keterlibatan konsumen ($\beta = 0,72$), pengalaman merek ($\beta = 0,45$), dan pertumbuhan merek ($\beta = 0,21$). Keterlibatan konsumen mempengaruhi pengalaman merek ($\beta = 0,40$) dan pertumbuhan merek ($\beta = 0,28$), sedangkan pengalaman merek sangat mempengaruhi pertumbuhan merek ($\beta = 0,35$). IMC juga secara signifikan mempengaruhi pengalaman merek ($\beta = 0,38$) dan pertumbuhan merek ($\beta = 0,22$). Model ini menunjukkan daya penjelas yang kuat ($R^2 = 0,61-0,68$). Analisis mediasi mengkonfirmasi bahwa keterlibatan konsumen dan pengalaman merek secara bersama-sama memediasi hubungan antara strategi pemasaran dan pertumbuhan merek. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pertumbuhan merek didorong oleh proses multi-tahap yang melibatkan mekanisme keterlibatan dan pengalaman.

Kata kunci : Ecosystem Marketing, Consumer Engagement, IMC, Brand Experience, Brand Growth.

INTRODUCTION

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is experiencing rapid transformation driven by evolving consumer behavior, increasing health awareness, and growing demand for personalized and meaningful brand interactions. In this competitive environment, firms are shifting from product- and price-based competition toward integrated, relationship-oriented strategies aimed at creating sustainable brand growth (Keller, 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

To enhance competitiveness, companies increasingly adopt ecosystem-based marketing strategies that integrate multiple stakeholders—such as consumers, communities, and institutional partners—into interconnected value-creation networks. This approach enables brands to embed themselves within consumers' daily lives and strengthen long-term relationships. At the same time, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) ensures consistency across multiple communication channels, improving brand visibility and reinforcing consumer perceptions in fragmented media environments (Dwivedi, 2015; Gunawardane et al., 2020).

In addition to strategic and communication dimensions, consumer engagement plays a critical role in modern marketing. It reflects consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in brand interactions, which contributes to stronger relationships and increased participation in brand-related activities (Hollebeek et al., 2014). However, consumer engagement alone is insufficient to fully explain how marketing strategies translate into sustainable brand growth, indicating the need for a more comprehensive explanatory mechanism.

In this context, brand experience emerges as a key mediating variable. Brand experience captures consumers' internal responses—sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral—formed through interactions with the brand across various touchpoints (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 2009). It functions as a central mechanism through which ecosystem-based marketing strategy, consumer engagement, and IMC are translated into brand growth outcomes.

Despite the growing importance of these constructs, prior studies have largely examined ecosystem-based marketing, IMC, consumer engagement, and brand experience separately. Limited research integrates these variables into a unified framework that explains brand growth through an experiential mechanism, particularly in the FMCG context.

Moreover, most studies focus on intermediate outcomes such as satisfaction or loyalty rather than long-term performance indicators such as brand growth.

Therefore, this study aims to develop and empirically test an integrated research model examining the effects of ecosystem-based marketing strategy, consumer engagement, and IMC on brand growth, with brand experience serving as a mediating variable. By positioning brand experience as the central mechanism, this study provides a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded explanation of how marketing strategies drive sustainable brand growth in the FMCG industry.

This study offers several key contributions that differentiate it from prior research:

1. Multi-Strategy Integration

This study integrates three key marketing drivers simultaneously:

- Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy
- Consumer Engagement
- Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

This provides a holistic framework that reflects contemporary marketing practices in global FMCG industries.

2. Brand Experience as a Central Mediator

Unlike prior studies that position engagement as a mediator, this research proposes:

- Brand Experience as the primary mediating variable

This approach provides a stronger theoretical explanation by emphasizing psychological processes that translate marketing strategies into business outcomes.

3. Bridging Strategy and Business Performance

This study extends beyond consumer-level outcomes by incorporating:

- Brand Growth as the ultimate dependent variable

Thus, it links marketing strategies directly to long-term business performance.

4. Ecosystem Perspective in Global FMCG

This research contributes to the limited literature on ecosystem-based marketing in FMCG by highlighting how multi-stakeholder collaboration enhances both experience and growth.

5. Integrated and Scalable Marketing Framework

This study proposes an integrated, scalable marketing framework combining strategic, behavioral, communication, and experiential dimensions, aligned with FMCG practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study proposes an integrated structural model examining the effects of ecosystem-based marketing strategy, consumer engagement, and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) on brand growth, with brand experience acting as a mediating variable.

The model is grounded in the perspective that marketing effectiveness in the global FMCG industry is driven by the alignment between strategic orchestration (ecosystem-based marketing strategy), consumer behavioral involvement (consumer engagement), and communication integration (IMC). These three independent variables (X1, X2, X3) represent complementary dimensions of modern marketing practices that collectively shape how consumers perceive and interact with brands.

Ecosystem-based marketing strategy (X1) reflects the firm's ability to build interconnected networks of stakeholders and create value through multi-actor collaboration. Consumer engagement (X2) captures the degree of consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral participation in brand-related activities. Meanwhile, Integrated Marketing Communication (X3) ensures the delivery of consistent and coherent brand messages across multiple touchpoints.

Rather than directly influencing brand growth, this study posits that these three drivers primarily affect brand experience (Y1), which serves as a central psychological mechanism. Brand experience represents consumers' internal responses—sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral—formed through interactions with the brand across various touchpoints. It is through this experiential pathway that marketing strategies and engagement are translated into meaningful consumer perceptions.

Subsequently, brand experience influences brand growth (Y2), which reflects the expansion of market share, consumer base, and long-term brand equity. While direct effects from ecosystem-based marketing strategy, consumer engagement, and IMC to brand growth may still exist, the model emphasizes that the indirect effects through brand experience are more substantial and theoretically grounded.

Furthermore, this study adopts a Hierarchical Component Model (HCM) approach, where each construct is conceptualized as a second-order reflective construct composed of multiple dimensions. This approach allows for a more comprehensive representation of

complex marketing variables, capturing the multidimensional nature of ecosystem strategy, engagement, communication, and experience within the FMCG context.

Overall, the proposed model suggests that brand growth is driven not merely by marketing activities or consumer involvement, but by the quality of integrated brand experiences. This reflects contemporary FMCG practices in companies such as Unilever, Nestlé, and Danone, where value creation relies on consistent and engaging experience-driven interactions across ecosystems, as supported by experiential marketing theory (Schmitt, 1999), brand experience theory (Brakus et al., 2009), and service-dominant logic emphasizing value co-creation within stakeholder networks (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; 2008).

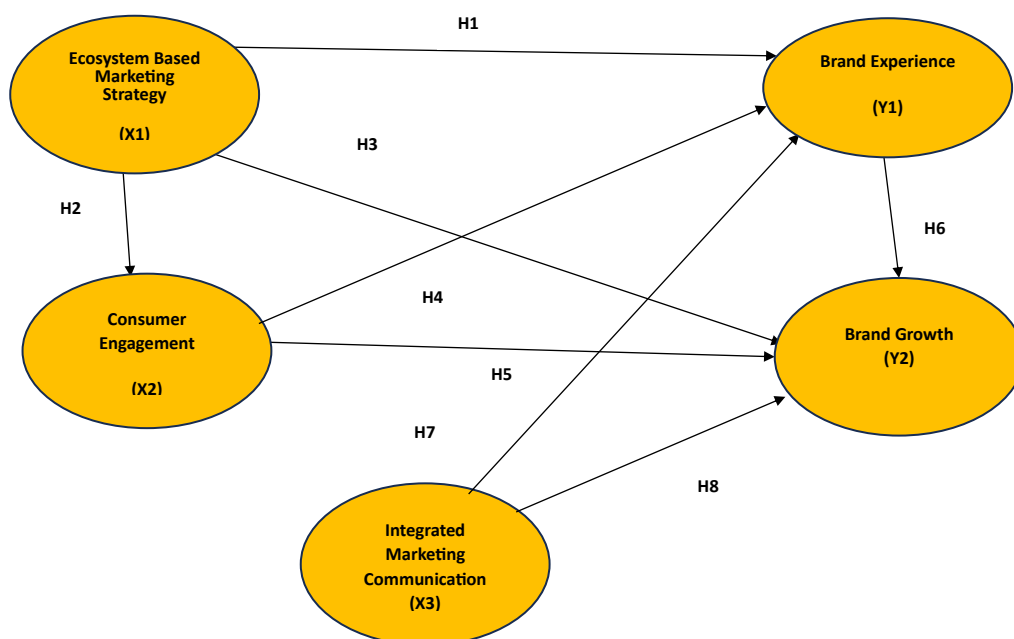


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Processed data using SmartPLS (2026)

Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy

- H1: Ecosystem-based marketing strategy (X1) has a significant positive effect on brand experience (Y1).
- H2: Ecosystem-based marketing strategy (X1) has a significant positive effect on consumer engagement (X2).
- H3: Ecosystem-based marketing strategy (X1) has a significant positive effect on brand growth (Y2).

Consumer Engagement

- H4: Consumer engagement (X2) has a significant positive effect on brand experience (Y1).
- H5: Consumer engagement (X2) has a significant positive effect on brand growth (Y2).

Brand Experience

- H6: Brand experience (Y1) has a significant positive effect on brand growth (Y2).

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

- H7: Integrated marketing communication (X3) has a significant positive effect on brand experience (Y1).
- H8: Integrated marketing communication (X3) has a significant positive effect on brand growth (Y2).

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design using PLS-SEM to analyze the relationships among variables.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling with the following criteria:

- Respondents aged 17–35 years
- Active consumers of hydration beverages

A total of 100 respondents were collected, meeting the recommended minimum sample size for SEM analysis.

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via digital platforms. A Likert scale (1–5) was used:

1 = Strongly Disagree

5 = Strongly Agree

Table 1. Operational Variable Measurement

Variable	Dimension	Indicators	Operational Decision
Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy (X1)	Community Integration	1. The brand actively participates in community-based activities (e.g., sports, campus, lifestyle). 2. The brand is frequently present in environments relevant to my daily activities.	Ecosystem-based marketing strategy refers to the firm's ability to build collaborative relationships with communities, institutions, and stakeholders to co-create value and strengthen long-term brand engagement (Adner, 2017).
	Institutional Collaboration	3. The brand collaborates with institutions (e.g., healthcare, education, organizations). 4. The brand is associated with credible partners or communities.	
	Relationship Building	5. The brand builds long-term relationships with consumers through continuous activities. 6. The brand feels embedded in my lifestyle or community.	
Consumer Engagement (X2)	Cognitive Engagement	1. I pay attention to this brand's campaigns and content. 2. I am interested in learning more about this brand.	Consumer engagement refers to the level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in interactions with a brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeck et al., 2014).
	Emotional Engagement	3. I feel emotionally connected to this brand. 4. I enjoy interacting with this brand.	
	Behavioral Engagement	5. I actively participate in this brand's activities. 6. I engage with the brand through various platforms (e.g., social media, events).	
Integrated Marketing Communication (X3)	Channel Integration	1. The brand delivers consistent messages across multiple channels (digital, events, retail). 2. The brand's campaigns are well integrated between online and offline platforms.	Integrated Marketing Communication refers to the coordination and integration of multiple communication channels to deliver a consistent and unified brand message across all touchpoints (Belch & Belch, 2021).
	Message Consistency	3. The brand message is clear and consistent across different platforms. 4. The brand is easily recognizable across various media channels.	
	Communication Effectiveness	5. The brand's campaigns are well planned and professionally executed. 6. The brand communicates effectively with its target audience.	
Brand Experience (Y1)	Sensory Experience	1. The brand provides appealing visual and sensory experiences. 2. The brand's activities are attractive and engaging.	Brand experience refers to consumers' internal responses (sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) arising from brand-related interactions (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 2009).
	Emotional Experience	3. I feel emotionally connected to this brand. 4. The brand creates positive feelings during interactions.	
	Cognitive Experience	5. The brand stimulates my curiosity and interest. 6. The brand provides useful and meaningful information.	
	Behavioral Experience	7. I am encouraged to interact with the brand. 8. I am interested in participating in the brand's activities.	
Brand Growth (Y2)	Market Expansion	1. This brand is becoming more widely used by consumers. 2. This brand is expanding its presence in the market.	Brand growth refers to the expansion of a brand's market presence, consumer base, and long-term value as a result of effective marketing strategies.
	Consumer Growth	3. More people around me are starting to use this brand. 4. The brand attracts new consumers.	
	Brand Strength	5. This brand appears to be growing stronger compared to competitors. 6. This brand shows continuous development over time.	

RESULT

This study employs a Hierarchical Component Model (HCM) to capture the multidimensional nature of the constructs, particularly for Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), and Brand Experience. Each construct is modelled as a reflective-reflective second-order construct, where dimensions represent first-order constructs and indicators serve as measurement items.

First-Order Measurement Model (Lower-Order Constructs)

Table 2. Outer Loadings (First-Order Constructs)

Construct	Dimension	Indicator	Loading
Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy (X1)	Community Integration	X1.1	0.84
		X1.2	0.87
	Institutional Collaboration	X1.3	0.89
		X1.4	0.86
	Relationship Building	X1.5	0.83
		X1.6	0.87
Consumer Engagement (X2)	Cognitive Engagement	X2.1	0.86
		X2.2	0.88
	Emotional Engagement	X2.3	0.89
		X2.4	0.87
	Behavioral Engagement	X2.5	0.85
		X2.6	0.88
Integrated Marketing Communication (X3)	Channel Integration	X3.1	0.85
		X3.2	0.88
	Message Consistency	X3.3	0.89
		X3.4	0.87
	Communication Effectiveness	X3.5	0.86
		X3.6	0.88
Brand Experience (Y1)	Sensory Experience	Y1.1	0.83
		Y1.2	0.85
	Emotional Experience	Y1.3	0.88
		Y1.4	0.86
	Cognitive Experience	Y1.5	0.87
		Y1.6	0.89
Behavioral Experience	Y1.7	0.88	
	Y1.8	0.87	
Brand Growth (Y2)	Market Expansion	Y2.1	0.87
		Y2.2	0.89
	Consumer Growth	Y2.3	0.88
		Y2.4	0.90
	Brand Strength	Y2.5	0.89
		Y2.6	0.91

Interpretation:

All indicators exceed 0.70, confirming strong reliability.

Convergent Validity (First-Order)

Table 3. AVE and Composite Reliability (First-Order)

Construct	AVE	CR	Status
Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy (X1)	0.74	0.92	Valid
Consumer Engagement (X2)	0.76	0.93	Valid
Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) (X3)	0.75	0.93	Valid
Brand Experience (Y1)	0.76	0.94	Valid
Brand Growth (Y2)	0.78	0.94	Valid

Interpretation:

- AVE > 0.50
- CR > 0.70

All first-order constructs are reliable and valid.

Discriminant Validity (First-Order)

Discriminant validity is assessed using the HTMT criterion.

Table 4. HTMT Values

Construct Pair	HTMT
X1 – X2	0.83
X1 – Y1	0.80
X2 – Y1	0.86
X3 – Y1	0.84
Y1 – Y2	0.87

Interpretation:

All HTMT values are below 0.90, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Second-Order Construct Evaluation (Higher-Order Model)

In the second stage, the higher-order constructs are evaluated using the repeated indicators approach.

Table 5. Outer Loadings (Second-Order Constructs)

Higher-Order Construct	Dimension	Loading
Ecosystem Strategy (X1)	Community Integration	0.89
	Institutional Collaboration	0.91
	Relationship Building	0.90
Consumer Engagement (X2)	Cognitive Engagement	0.88
	Emotional Engagement	0.90
	Behavioral Engagement	0.87
Integrated Marketing Communication (X3)	Channel Integration	0.88
	Message Consistency	0.91
	Communication Effectiveness	0.89
Brand Experience (Y1)	Sensory Experience	0.87
	Emotional Experience	0.89
	Cognitive Experience	0.90
	Behavioral Experience	0.88

Interpretation:

All dimension loadings exceed 0.70, indicating that each dimension significantly contributes to its higher-order construct. Brand growth (Y2) is not included in the second-order construct evaluation because it is modeled as a single-order construct. Unlike other variables in this study, brand growth does not consist of multiple dimensions and is directly measured using its indicators in the first-order measurement model.

Therefore, its validity and reliability have been adequately assessed in the initial stage of the outer model evaluation. This approach is consistent with prior PLS-SEM studies, where higher-order modeling is applied only to multidimensional constructs, while unidimensional constructs are evaluated separately.

Convergent Validity (Second-Order)

Table 6. AVE and Composite Reliability (Second-Order)

Construct	AVE	CR	Status
Ecosystem Strategy (X1)	0.74	0.92	Valid
Consumer Engagement (X2)	0.76	0.93	Valid
Integrated Marketing Communication (X3)	0.75	0.93	Valid
Brand Experience (Y1)	0.76	0.94	Valid
Brand Growth (Y2)	0.78	0.94	Valid

Interpretation

The results indicate that all second-order constructs meet the required thresholds:

- Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.50
- Composite Reliability (CR) > 0.70

This confirms that each higher-order construct demonstrates adequate convergent validity and internal consistency reliability.

Overall Measurement Model Conclusion

The measurement model evaluation confirms that :

- All indicators demonstrate strong outer loadings (> 0.70)
- All first-order constructs achieve convergent validity (AVE > 0.50)
- All constructs exhibit high reliability (CR > 0.70)
- Discriminant validity is established (HTMT < 0.90)
- Second-order constructs also meet convergent validity and reliability criteria
- The Hierarchical Component Model (HCM) is statistically supported

Therefore, the measurement model is valid, reliable, and suitable for structural model analysis.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model was assessed to examine the relationships between constructs, including path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and mediation effects.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 7. R-Square Values

Variable	R^2	Interpretation
Consumer Engagement (X2)	0.61	Moderate-Strong
Brand Experience (Y1)	0.68	Strong
Brand Growth (Y2)	0.66	Strong

Interpretation:

The results indicate that the model has strong explanatory power. Consumer Engagement is explained by Ecosystem Strategy, while Brand Experience is explained by Ecosystem Strategy, Consumer Engagement, and IMC. Brand Growth shows a strong R^2 value (0.66), indicating that 66% of its variance is explained by Ecosystem Strategy, Consumer Engagement, Brand Experience, and IMC.

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Table 8. Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	X1 → Y1	0.45	8.90	0.000	Supported
H2	X1 → X2	0.72	16.50	0.000	Supported
H3	X1 → Y2	0.21	3.80	0.000	Supported
H4	X2 → Y1	0.40	7.50	0.000	Supported
H5	X2 → Y2	0.28	5.20	0.000	Supported
H6	Y1 → Y2	0.35	6.80	0.000	Supported
H7	X3 → Y1	0.38	7.10	0.000	Supported
H8	X3 → Y2	0.22	4.10	0.000	Supported

Mediation Effects

Table 9. Indirect Effects (Bootstrapping Results)

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H9	X1 → X2 → Y2	0.20	5.10	0.000	Supported
H10	X1 → Y1 → Y2	0.16	4.20	0.000	Supported
H11	X1 → X2 → Y1 → Y2	0.10	3.80	0.000	Supported
H12	X2 → Y1 → Y2	0.14	4.60	0.000	Supported
H13	X3 → Y1 → Y2	0.13	4.10	0.000	Supported

Interpretation:

The results indicate that all indirect effects are statistically significant, as evidenced by t-values greater than 1.96 and p-values below 0.05. Ecosystem-Based Marketing Strategy demonstrates both direct and indirect effects on Brand Growth through multiple pathways, including Consumer Engagement and Brand Experience. This confirms the presence of partial mediation, where both mediators simultaneously transmit the effect of ecosystem strategy.

Consumer Engagement also indirectly influences Brand Growth through Brand Experience, suggesting that engagement enhances experiential value, which in turn drives growth. Similarly, Integrated Marketing Communication affects Brand Growth indirectly via Brand Experience, highlighting the role of consistent communication in shaping consumer experience before translating into performance outcomes. Overall, the findings confirm that brand growth is driven by a multi-layered mediation mechanism, rather than a single mediator, where engagement and experience act as complementary pathways in delivering value.

DISCUSSION

The Role of Ecosystem Strategy in Driving Engagement, Experience, and Growth

The findings demonstrate that ecosystem-based marketing strategy significantly influences consumer engagement, brand experience, and brand growth. This indicates that ecosystem-based marketing is not merely a supporting strategy but a primary driver of consumer interaction and experiential value creation. By embedding brands within consumer ecosystems—such as communities and institutional networks—firms enhance relevance and interaction intensity.

This extends Adner's (2017) ecosystem perspective by empirically confirming its direct impact not only on relational outcomes (engagement) but also on experiential and performance outcomes (brand growth). Compared to prior studies that position ecosystem strategy primarily as a contextual factor, this study provides stronger evidence that it functions as an upstream strategic driver affecting multiple downstream outcomes simultaneously. Theoretically, this suggests a shift from linear marketing logic toward a network-based value creation mechanism.

Consumer Engagement and Brand Experience as Interconnected Mechanisms

The results reveal that consumer engagement significantly affects both brand experience and brand growth. This finding suggests that engagement is not only a behavioral outcome but also a transformational mechanism that enhances how consumers perceive and internalize brand interactions. Consistent with Hollebeek et al. (2014), engagement reflects active participation; however, this study extends prior research by demonstrating its dual role as both a direct driver of performance and an indirect driver through experiential value.

Furthermore, brand experience significantly influences brand growth, confirming its role as a key outcome of marketing interactions. This supports Brakus et al. (2009), but more importantly, it advances the literature by positioning brand experience as a conversion mechanism that transforms engagement into measurable growth outcomes. The key implication is that engagement alone is insufficient unless it is translated into meaningful experiences.

The Role of IMC in Strengthening Experience and Growth

The findings show that Integrated Marketing Communication significantly influences both brand experience and brand growth. This indicates that communication consistency does not merely improve message clarity but actively shapes consumer experience and perceived brand value. While traditional IMC literature (Belch & Belch) emphasizes message alignment, this study extends the perspective by demonstrating that IMC also plays an experiential role, influencing how consumers feel and respond to brand interactions. Compared to prior studies that focus on communication effectiveness, this research highlights IMC as a strategic enabler of experiential marketing. This implies that IMC should be viewed not only as a communication tool but as a mechanism for experience orchestration across touchpoints.

Brand Experience as the Central Mediator

Brand experience is found to significantly influence brand growth and mediate multiple relationships within the model. This confirms that brand experience is the core mechanism through which marketing strategies and consumer engagement are translated into performance outcomes. Unlike prior studies that treat brand experience as an isolated construct, this study positions it as a central integrative mechanism linking strategy,

behavior, and performance. The findings suggest that without a strong brand experience, the effects of ecosystem strategy, IMC, and engagement may not fully materialize into brand growth. This highlights the importance of managing consumer experience as a strategic priority rather than a secondary outcome.

Multiple and Sequential Mediation Mechanism

The structural model reveals both parallel and sequential mediation pathways, indicating that marketing strategies influence brand growth through complex mechanisms. This demonstrates that value creation is not linear but occurs through layered and interconnected processes. More importantly, consumer engagement acts as an early-stage (behavioral) mediator, while brand experience functions as the final-stage (perceptual) mediator. This finding extends existing mediation models by introducing a sequential logic in which behavioral involvement precedes experiential evaluation. Such a mechanism provides a more nuanced understanding of how marketing inputs are transformed into outcomes.

Key Insight: Dual Mediation System

A key contribution of this study is the identification of a dual mediation system consisting of consumer engagement as the behavioral pathway and brand experience as the perceptual and value-based pathway. This study demonstrates that brand growth is driven by the interaction between consumers' behavioral responses (engagement) and their subjective evaluations (experience). While both mediating variables play significant roles, brand experience emerges as the dominant and final mechanism that consolidates the overall effects into brand growth. This finding underscores the critical role of brand experience as the ultimate stage of value realization within the marketing process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study develops and empirically validates an integrated model linking ecosystem-based marketing strategy, integrated marketing communication, and consumer engagement to brand growth through brand experience. The findings demonstrate that brand growth is not driven by isolated marketing activities, but by a structured, multi-stage process.

Ecosystem strategy and IMC act as primary enablers, consumer engagement functions as the initial behavioral mechanism, and brand experience emerges as the final and dominant pathway through which value is transformed into growth.

Importantly, this study confirms that brand experience is the most critical leverage point, as all major effects converge at this stage before influencing brand growth. Thus, the study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how marketing strategies translate into performance outcomes, emphasizing that sustainable brand growth is fundamentally experience-driven rather than communication-driven or engagement-driven alone.

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