

# Effect of Influencer Marketing and Green Marketing on Brand Awareness of Traditional Culinary SMEs in West Java

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## ABSTRACT

The brand awareness of traditional culinary Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in West Java can arise from green marketing initiatives triggered by influencer marketing and company commitment. In this article, we explore the effect of influencer marketing and green marketing moderated by consumer trust in influencers on SMEs' brand awareness. The population framework in this study is more than 26,000 traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. The representative sample is 380 based on the calculation. Inferential analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results find that influencer marketing positively affects both green marketing initiatives and brand awareness. Green marketing initiatives positively influence brand awareness, and consumer trust in influencers enhances brand awareness. Consumer trust in influencers also moderates the effects of both influencer marketing and green marketing initiatives on brand awareness. Additionally, green marketing initiatives mediate the relationship between influencer marketing and brand awareness, serving as a channel through which influencer marketing impacts brand awareness. These findings highlight the importance of influencer marketing, green marketing initiatives, and consumer trust in shaping brand awareness in a sustainable context.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on Brand Awareness have been conducted by many previous researchers in the last 5 years in various industries, such as in the fashion industry (Renchen, 2020) the automotive industry (ErickSetiadi, 2018), the cosmetics industry (Ulfa Maharani, 2019), the electronics industry (Arvin, 2022), and the sports industry (Mohamad hasan Khoram, 2021). Those studies on Brand Awareness are still very interesting, but there are no studies on Brand awareness in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) even though their existences play important roles in the economic growth.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are essential to the country's economy. They contribute significantly to the GDP, provide employment to many of the workforce, and are resilient to financial crises. The main contributors to the GDP and development agendas are the culinary, craft, and fashion sectors (Erlanitasari et al., 2020). Despite the economic crisis that saw many large companies collapse, the SME sector has remained afloat, serving as a crucial industry for Indonesia's struggling economy (Rüland, 2016). The culinary industry faces several challenges, including declining contribution to the economy compared to the fashion sector and the need to increase exports. Employment and funding are persistent issues for this creative sector, and the younger generation's interest in entrepreneurship is relatively low, focusing on finding jobs rather than creating them (Ramdhany et al., 2022). However, the traditional culinary business has proven remarkably resilient among various SMEs and will likely be around for a while. Nevertheless, mobility restrictions and efforts to reduce crowds due to the pandemic have impacted the culinary industry, resulting in the temporary closure of food outlets. The traditional culinary business is starting to crawl up from its slump in the post-pandemic period. It is important to study the effect of influencer marketing and green marketing on brand awareness that moderated by consumer trust in influencer in the traditional Culinary SMEs in West Java.

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According to the West Java Provincial Government's Cooperatives and SMEs Agency (2023), over 1.5 million SMEs are in the culinary sector in West Java, Indonesia. It makes up a significant portion of the province's total SME population of over 3 million. The culinary sector is a significant driver of economic growth in West Java, and it is expected to continue to grow in the coming years (Putra et al., 2022). The growth of the culinary SME sector in West Java is attributed to several factors. With a population of over 48 million people, West Java is the most populous province in Indonesia, providing a vast market for culinary businesses. The region boasts diverse culinary traditions, including Sundanese, Betawi, and Cirebonese cuisine, resulting in a lively and vibrant culinary scene (Jaelani et al., 2016). West Java Provincial Government has implemented favorable policies to support SMEs, such as providing access to credit, training, and marketing assistance. These policies have simplified the process of starting and growing culinary SMEs. There are still many research gaps regarding the effect of influencer marketing on brand awareness that mediated by green marketing and moderated by consumer trust in influencer in the traditional Culinary SMEs in West Java. This research tries to bridge the gaps.

Marketing plays a critical role in the success of any business as it directly impacts sales, including in the culinary sector. Marketing efforts directly increase brand awareness by creating exposure and generating recognition among the target customers. Brand awareness can be raised through brand exposure, as the act of getting a brand in front of potential customers. It can be done through various channels, including advertising, public relations, social media, events, and sponsorships (Kushwaha et al., 2020). Visual cues (logos, colors, and packaging) serve as triggers for consumers to identify and recognize a brand in culinary sector (Simmonds & Spence, 2017). When consumers encounter these visual cues, they can associate them with the brand and quickly identify the brand name or product. Brand recognition relies on consumers' ability to recall and connect visual cues with a particular brand. This recognition helps consumers differentiate the brand from competitors and influences their perception and consideration of it during purchase decisions (Coelho et al., 2018).

Brand awareness encompasses not only brand recognition but also brand recall and brand association (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). Brand recall indicates the depth of consumer knowledge and familiarity with the brand. Meanwhile, brand association contributes to brand awareness by shaping how consumers think and feel about the brand. They reflect consumers' ability to remember the brand and their mental connections with it (Shariq, 2018). Building a potent brand awareness strategy involves creating positive brand associations. It ensures that consumers can recall the brand when prompted or when making relevant purchase decisions. Green marketing has transformed the culinary industry, making it easier for consumers to identify and consume traditional organic food. A recent study investigated the impact of green marketing on organic food brand awareness (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2019). Nevertheless, green brand equity in green marketing initiatives has a low association with brand awareness (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2021). Recent research has shown mixed results regarding the relationship between green marketing initiatives and brand awareness. While some studies have found a positive impact, others suggest a low association between green marketing initiatives and brand awareness. Further exploration is needed to understand the factors and conditions influencing the relationship between green marketing initiatives and brand awareness in traditional culinary businesses.

Sustainable sourcing within green marketing initiatives focuses on procuring ingredients, products, and food items that adhere to environmental and social sustainability principles (Nguyen et al., 2019). Traditional culinary SMEs can promote environmental sustainability and foster a connection with their local community by prioritizing locally sourced ingredients. Sustainable sourcing also involves incorporating organic products into the culinary offerings of SMEs. It will align with consumer preferences for healthier, more sustainable food options, especially for Generation Z (Su et al., 2019). The SMEs can show their dedication to ethical and responsible sourcing by choosing sustainably produced food items. It aligns with the values of environmentally conscious consumers.

Incorporating influencer marketing into their green marketing initiatives, traditional culinary SMEs in West Java can leverage influencers' reach, credibility, and authenticity to raise awareness about their eco-friendly practices and enhance brand visibility. Influencer marketing provides a unique opportunity to connect with a targeted audience interested in sustainability, thereby contributing to brand awareness and the overall success of green marketing initiatives (Pittman & Abell, 2021). In this context, the business must consider influencer selection, content creation, and reach and engagement. Choosing the right influencers is vital to making influencer marketing work (Haenlein et al., 2020). SMEs can boost the impact of their campaigns by selecting influencers who share their values, appeal to their target audience, and fit their niche. Collaborating with influencers to create compelling and authentic content is essential for engaging the audience and effectively conveying the brand's message. Influencers with larger follower bases and high engagement rates have the potential to reach more individuals interested in sustainable practices and culinary experiences.

The consumer trust in influencers may and may not boost the effect of influencer marketing and green marketing on brand awareness of the traditional culinary. The consumer trust in influencers, such as celebrities, can moderate the preferences of influencer marketing on brand trust and awareness (Nadia et al., 2023). Thus, the consumer trust in influencers in this study poses as moderator variable. This study explores the effect of influencer marketing and green marketing, moderated by consumer trust in influencers, on brand awareness of traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. The aim of this study is to analyze the effect of influencer marketing on brand awareness that mediated by green marketing and moderated by consumer trust in influencer in the traditional Culinary SMEs in West Java.

## 2. METHODS

The objects in this study are influencer marketing, green marketing, consumer trust in influencers, and brand awareness, of traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. The research subjects or units of analysis in this research are traditional culinary SMEs. The units of observation (respondents) are the owners, managers, or employees of the SMEs. The population framework in this study is more than 26,000 traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. The representative sample is 380 based on the calculation, using random sample (Isaac & Michael, 1981).

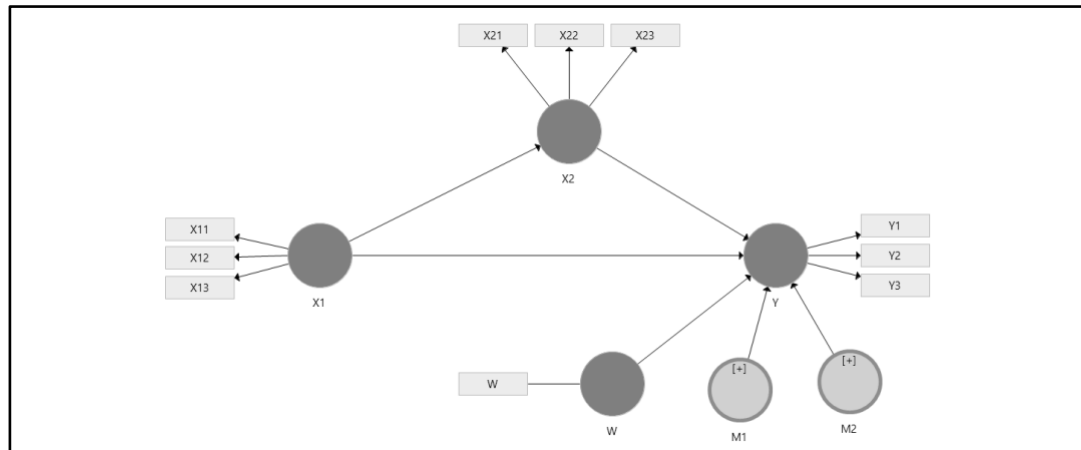
This study uses qualitative research to collect and analyze numerical data involving statistical analysis to see trends, patterns, and relationships between variables. This research was also conducted using a survey research approach (online using Google Forms) using a questionnaire as the main research instrument. The operationalization of variables in this study can be mapped in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Operationalization of Variables

Latent Variables	Manifests (Dimensions)	Indicators	Item Number
Influencer Marketing (X1)	Influencer Selection	1.01. relevance to the culinary sector	1-3
		1.02. audience reaches	
		1.03. alignment with the brand's values	
	Content Creation	1.04. quality of content	4-6
		1.05. creativity	
		1.06. authenticity	
	Reach and Engagement	1.07. ability to reach a wide audience	7-9
		1.08. ability to drive engagement level	
		1.09. forms of interaction	
Green Marketing Initiatives (X2)	Sustainable Sourcing	2.01. locally sourced ingredients	1-3
		2.02. organic products	
		2.03. sustainably produced food items	
	Waste Reduction	2.04. reduce food waste	4-6
		2.05. promote recycling	
		2.06. implement waste management practices	
	Eco-friendly Packaging	2.07. use of environmentally friendly materials	7-9
		2.08. use of biodegradable	
		2.09. use of compostable packaging	
Brand Awareness (Y)	Brand Recognition	3.01. consumers' ability to identify the brand	1-3
		3.02. consumers' ability to recognize the brand	
		3.03. visual cues	
	Brand Recall	3.04. consumers' ability to remember the brand	4-6
		3.05. top of mind brand	
		3.06. familiarity with the brand	
	Brand Association	3.07. brand reputation	7-9
		3.08. unique selling propositions	
		3.09. emotional connections with brand	
Consumer Trust in Influencers (W)	Trustworthiness Perception	4.01. credible and honest influencer	1-3
		4.02. reliable sources of information	
		4.03. trust the recommendations	
	Relational Trust	4.04. personal connection with influencers	4-6
		4.05. feel related with influencers	
		4.06. care about their audience's interests	
	Consistency and Transparency	4.07. align content with values	7-9
		4.08. transparent about paid sponsorships	
		4.09. authenticity in content and endorsements	

Scale: Interval

The study employed a questionnaire with a 5-point interval scale, containing appropriate statements. Before distributing the questionnaire, a validity test was conducted using construct validity, employing the item-total correlation with the Pearson correlation formula and either the r-test or t-test. The reliability test utilized Cronbach's Alpha formula. The data analysis involved descriptive and inferential techniques. Descriptive analysis categorized the mean scores into four groups: very low, low, high, and very high. Inferential analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the impact of one variable on other variables. The research paradigm, as depicted in Figure 1, aligned with the aforementioned framework.



**Figure 1.** Research Framework

Based on this framework, the study's primary hypotheses are as follows: (1) Influencer Marketing positively affects Green Marketing Initiatives, (2) Influencer Marketing positively affects Brand Awareness, (3) Green Marketing Initiatives positively affects Brand Awareness, (4) Consumer Trust in Influencers positively affects Brand Awareness, (5) Consumer Trust in Influencers moderates the effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Awareness, and (6) Consumer Trust in Influencers moderates the effect of Green Marketing Initiatives on Brand Awareness.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the research are divided into three sections: respondent profiles, measurement models, and structural models. The respondent profiles section provides information on the distribution of respondents based on their gender, age, education level, and work experience, as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Respondent Profiles

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	230	60.5
Female	150	39.5
Total	380	100.0
<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
< 31 years	51	13.4
31-40 years	107	28.2
41-50 years	113	29.7
51-60 years	101	26.6
> 60 years	8	2.1
Total	380	100.0
<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High School	219	57.6
Bachelor	152	40.0
Master/Doctoral	9	2.4
Total	380	100.0
<b>Work</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
< 3 years	84	22.1
4 - 6 years	90	23.7
7 - 9 years	112	29.5
> 9 years	94	24.7
Total	380	100.0

Based on the provided data, we have information about gender, age, education, and work experience of a group consisting of 380 respondents. The interpretations of the key findings are: (1) The group is predominantly male, with males comprising a higher percentage compared to females; (2) The majority of individuals fall within the age groups of 31-50 years, with the highest representation in the 41-50 years category. The number of individuals decreases in the younger and older age brackets; (3) The majority of individuals in the group have a high school education, followed by those with a bachelor's degree. Only a small percentage of individuals have advanced degrees such as a master's or doctoral degree; and (4) The distribution of work experience is fairly evenly spread across the different categories. The largest percentage of individuals falls within the 7-9 (in years) work experience range.

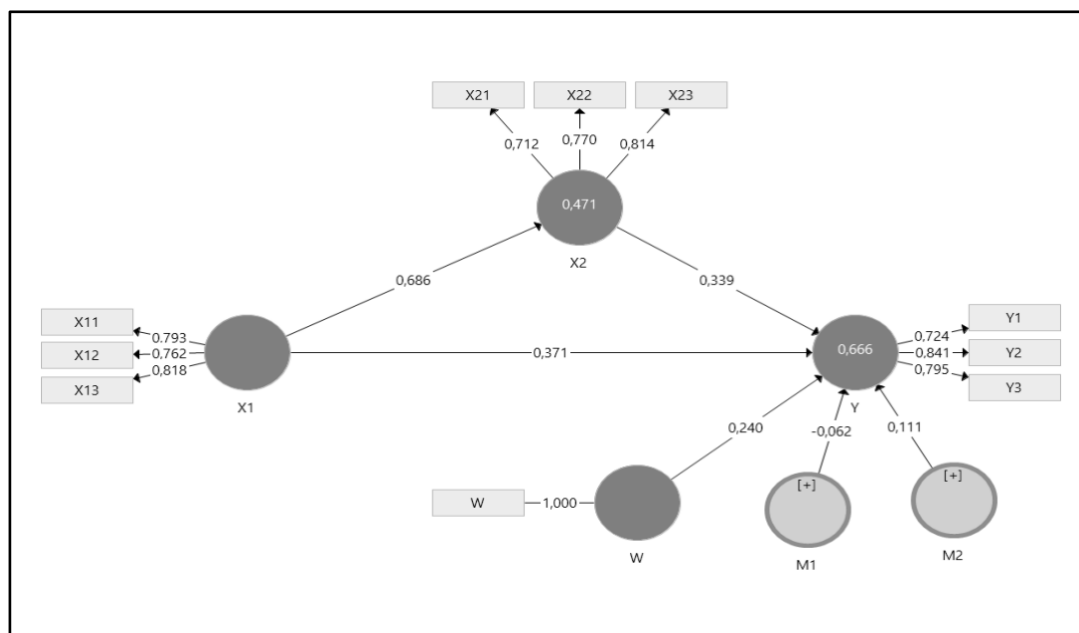
Within the measurement models, the obtained results display the mean, loading, and weight values of the constructs, along with the coefficients for Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable in the model. These findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Measurement Model

Model	Construct	Mean	Loading	Weight	CA	CR	AVE
Influencer Marketing (X1)	X11	4.059	0.793	0.450	0.763	0.834	0.627
	X12	3.939	0.762	0.396			
	X13	3.994	0.818	0.417			
Green Marketing Initiatives (X2)	X21	3.931	0.712	0.406	0.708	0.810	0.587
	X22	4.091	0.770	0.438			
	X23	4.016	0.814	0.460			
Brand Awareness (Y)	Y1	3.961	0.724	0.396	0.754	0.831	0.621
	Y2	4.012	0.841	0.429			
	Y3	4.091	0.795	0.443			
Consumer Trust in Influencers (W)	W	11.579	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Source: SmartPLS Output (2023)

From Table 3, in comparison to the ideal mean value of 5.000, the obtained means for each construct of all model indicate that the respondents' perceptions, on average, the respondents' average ratings for these constructs are generally above the satisfactory threshold. This suggests that, the respondents have favorable perceptions or ratings for the variables represented by each construct. For the CA, the reliability coefficient for each model indicates a moderate to good level of internal consistency among the variables, and also in the composite reliability (CA). The AVE values indicate a relatively strong convergent validity, implying that the construct captures a substantial portion of the variability in the measured variables. Within the structural models, the full path model can be depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Full Path Model

The complete path model illustrates the outer loadings and path coefficients for each construct and latent variable. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the full path model. Within this model, the R-squared values demonstrate the proportion of variance explained by the predictor variables in each respective model. These R-squared values serve as indicators of the predictive power of the models, representing the percentage of variance that can be attributed to the independent variable(s), namely 0,471 for X2 and 0,666 for Y. Moreover, each path in the model is accompanied by the coefficient value, standard deviation, t-statistic, p-value, and the evaluation of the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) through the bootstrapping procedure. The hypotheses testing is specifically presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Hypotheses Testing

Path	Coefficients	StDev	t-statistics	p-values	H0
X1 -> X2	0.686	0.036	18.824	0.000	rejected
X1 -> Y	0.371	0.045	8.193	0.000	rejected
X2 -> Y	0.339	0.045	7.469	0.000	rejected
W -> Y	0.240	0.044	5.420	0.000	rejected
M1 -> Y	-0.062	0.045	1.392	0.164	not rejected
M2 -> Y	0.111	0.046	2.425	0.016	rejected
X1 -> X2 -> Y	0.233	0.033	7.078	0.000	rejected

Source: SmartPLS Output (2023)

Each path in the model was evaluated, and the results explain that all null hypotheses are rejected based on the statistically significant p-value, except for M1 on Y. It means that almost all alternatives of each premise in the overall model can be **accepted** (or not rejected). The hypotheses' acceptances confirm several previous studies regarding the topics.

Based on hypothesis testing, the coefficient value of Influencer Marketing (X1) on Green Marketing Initiatives (X2) is statistically significant. The use of influencer marketing has a notable impact on the adoption of green marketing initiatives of traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. This finding suggests that when organizations employ influencer marketing strategies, it positively influences their efforts towards implementing and promoting green marketing practices (Wilis & Faik, 2022). The SMEs can leverage influencer marketing as an effective tool to drive and support their green marketing initiatives. can guide organizations in making informed decisions when identifying influencers who align with their sustainability goals, ultimately influencing the effectiveness of green marketing initiatives (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). These results are similar with the findings of the previous researches.

Analyzing the results concerning content creation can shed light on how the type, quality, and messaging of authentic content of the produced via several channel of social media by influencers contribute to the success of green marketing initiatives (Groening et al., 2018). Examining the results regarding reach and engagement focuses on understanding how the size of an influencer's audience, as well as the level of engagement generated by their content, influence the outcomes of green marketing initiatives. It could investigate whether higher reach (measured by the number of followers or views) or increased engagement metrics (such as likes, comments, or shares) lead to more positive consumer perceptions, attitudes, or behavioral intentions towards the green marketing (Lee et al., 2018).

The output results show that Influencer Marketing (X1) significantly affect Brand Awareness (Y) of traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. Implementing influencer marketing strategies can effectively enhance the visibility and awareness of traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. These SMEs can leverage influencer marketing to increase their brand exposure and reach a larger customer base. The significant impact of influencer marketing on Brand Awareness opens up opportunities for traditional culinary SMEs to collaborate with influencers further. SMEs can consider establishing long-term partnerships with influencers to consistently promote their brand and products, driving continuous brand awareness (Y. Wang et al., 2016). Effective influencer marketing can be a powerful tool for improving brand recognition, as it combines the influence and credibility of influencers with targeted exposure to a large and engaged audience. The SMEs can enhance brand recognition, that leading to increased brand awareness (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016).

Effective influencer marketing can indeed have a significant influence on brand recall in brand awareness for traditional culinary SMEs. Through memorable content, repeated exposure, contextual relevance, storytelling, and word-of-mouth amplification, influencers can significantly contribute to strengthening the recall of the brand among their engaged audience (Babić Rosario et al., 2020). Moreover, effective influencer marketing can play a significant role in shaping brand associations and enhancing brand awareness for traditional culinary SMEs. Influencer marketing allows SMEs to curate content and collaborate with influencers who align with their brand values and messaging (Bonus et al., 2022). Effective influencer marketing ensures that the brand's key attributes and values are effectively communicated and

associated with positive experiences. By incorporating the brand into their personal stories, influencers can create emotional connections with their audience, leading to stronger brand associations. These associations can be based on factors such as quality, sustainability, cultural heritage, unique taste, or local sourcing (R. Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2022).

The Brand Awareness (Y) is significantly influenced by Green Marketing Initiatives (X2) in traditional culinary SMEs. The significant influence of green marketing initiatives on brand awareness indicates the importance of prioritizing sustainability efforts and effectively communicating them to consumers. It presents an opportunity for businesses to differentiate themselves, enhance their brand image, and attract environmentally conscious consumers.

Sometimes, the customers of the traditional culinary care about sustainable sourcing, such as locally sourced ingredients, organic product, and sustainably produced food item. This growing trend reflects consumers' increasing concerns about the environmental impact of their food choices and a desire to support sustainable and ethical practices in the culinary industry. The traditional culinary establishments can align themselves with the values and expectations of their customers, especially in micro and small street food vendors (Gaffar et al., 2022).

The issues of reduce food waste, promote recycling, and implementation of waste management are also being the customers and industry concerns. These issues reflect a growing awareness of the environmental impact of food waste and a collective desire to address sustainability challenges (Martin-Rios et al., 2018). Several traditional culinary SMEs in West Java also consider the eco-friendly packaging. They use environmentally friendly materials, biodegradable, and compostable packaging, such as bamboo boxes, wood, rattan, or at least the paper boxes (Basumatary et al., 2015; Suherlan & Widiyanti, 2021), and try to avoid plastic stuffs.

The Consumer Trust in Influencers (W) also significantly affects the Brand Awareness (Y). The level of trust consumers place in influencers has a substantial influence on brand awareness of traditional culinary SMEs in West Java. This trust significantly impacts brand awareness, as consumers are more likely to pay attention to and remember brands that are positively associated with trusted influencers. It could make customers loyal (Jun & Yi, 2020). This finding highlights the significance of influencers who maintain authenticity in their content and are transparent about their collaborations with brands. Establishing and maintaining a high level of trust with influencers contributes to improved brand awareness (Cartwright et al., 2022).

Trusted influencers have a greater impact on spreading brand messages and increasing brand awareness. When influencers enjoy high levels of consumer trust, their recommendations and endorsements can reach a wider audience. One of the examples is popular Mochi from Sukabumi that has trademark nationally. The level of trust consumers has in influencers influences their perception of the brands associated with them. Consumers are more receptive to brands promoted by influencers they trust, leading to increased brand awareness. The result emphasizes the value of strategic influencer partnerships. Businesses can benefit from collaborating with influencers who have established trust with their audience (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Nevertheless, Consumer Trust in Influencers (W) does not moderate the effect of Influencer Marketing (X1) on Brand Awareness (Y). This result may have several causes and implications. It is possible that the level of trust in influencers is already high among the target audience. In this case, Consumer Trust in Influencers may not act as a significant moderator because it is already widespread and uniformly high across the consumer base. Consumer trust might have different moderating effects in various industries, target markets, or cultural contexts. The specific characteristics and dynamics of the traditional culinary industry may not lend themselves to a significant moderation effect in this case.

In other hand, Consumer Trust in Influencers (W) do moderate the effect of Green Marketing Initiatives (X2) on Brand Awareness (Y). The level of trust in influencers plays a significant role in influencing the relationship between green marketing initiatives and brand awareness. This finding can be supported by the fact that the consumers trust influencers. They are more likely to pay attention to the influencers' endorsements and recommendations related to environmentally friendly practices. The trust established with influencers helps consumers perceive green marketing initiatives as more relevant and credible, leading to increased brand awareness. Consumer trust in influencers signals authenticity and transparency in the endorsement of green marketing initiatives and increased brand awareness.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several conclusions drawn from the results and discussion can be engraved here. Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Green Marketing Initiatives. This implies that when businesses implement influencer marketing strategies, it positively influences their adoption and

implementation of green marketing initiatives. Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness. This indicates that influencer marketing efforts contribute to increased brand awareness among the target audience. Green Marketing Initiatives have a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness. This suggests that implementing environmentally friendly practices and promoting sustainability positively impacts brand awareness. Consumer Trust in Influencers has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness. This implies that when consumers trust influencers, it enhances their perception and awareness of the brand. Consumer Trust in Influencers moderates the effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Awareness. This suggests that the level of trust consumers have in influencers influences the strength of the relationship between influencer marketing and brand awareness. Higher levels of trust in influencers strengthen the impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness. Consumer Trust in Influencers moderates the effect of Green Marketing Initiatives on Brand Awareness. This implies that the level of trust consumers has in influencers influences the strength of the relationship between green marketing initiatives and brand awareness. Higher levels of trust in influencers enhance the impact of green marketing initiatives on brand awareness. Green Marketing Initiatives mediate the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Brand Awareness. This means that part of the effect of influencer marketing on brand awareness is mediated through the implementation of green marketing initiatives. Green marketing initiatives act as a mechanism through which influencer marketing influences brand awareness. These findings highlight the importance of influencer marketing, green marketing initiatives, and consumer trust in shaping brand awareness in a sustainable context. Traditional culinary SMEs should consider some collaborative actions with influencers to market the product and promote traditional experiences to maintain the green initiative and sustainable brand awareness. The future research may include the wider range of samples and different sectors, such as fashion and handicraft as the dominant creative economic sectors in Indonesia.

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