



# Emotional storytelling in building global brand loyalty: a cb-sem model approach

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## ABSTRACT

In the digital era, emotional storytelling has emerged as a strategic tool for global brands to foster deeper consumer relationships and long-term loyalty. This study investigates the effects of Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA), Brand Love (BL), Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), and Psychological Brand Ownership (PBO) on Brand Identity (BI) and Consumer Loyalty (CL). Using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM), data from 395 Indonesian respondents were analyzed. Results indicate that EBA and PBO significantly influence both BI and CL, while BL and eWOM primarily drive CL. BI is also shown to mediate these relationships, reinforcing its role in sustaining consumer loyalty. The model demonstrates strong fit (RMSEA = 0.035, CFI = 0.970, TLI = 0.981) and explanatory power ( $R^2 = 96.5\%$  for BI;  $R^2 = 98.1\%$  for CL). These findings highlight the critical role of emotionally rich, digital brand narratives in shaping consumer-brand relationships, offering practical insights for marketers to design emotionally resonant strategies that build identity, ownership, and loyalty in competitive global markets.

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## INTRODUCTION

As digital platforms grow, establishing brand identity through digital marketing has become increasingly complicated. To stand out and encourage consumer loyalty, brands must implement differentiation strategies that create long-lasting emotional connections with consumers (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021; Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021). Modern consumers are no longer satisfied with traditional branding, which has led to brands utilizing social media and emotional storytelling approaches. Emotional storytelling allows brands to resonate with their consumers on an emotional level, building deeper engagement and attachment (Torres et al., 2020).

The strategy of emotional storytelling emerges as a groundbreaking tool that shapes a brand's identity and builds customer loyalty by fostering a sense of psychological ownership. Research shows that emotional brand attachment significantly influences long-term customer loyalty (Boateng et al., 2020). Moreover, positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and brand

love further amplify the effects of a brand's emotional storytelling, enhancing consumer engagement and promoting community-building (Valette-Florence & Valette-Florence, 2020). Additionally, consumer participation on social media solidifies BI through shared experiences. Thus, this study aims to explore the evolving role of emotional storytelling in shaping BI and driving CL within digital marketing.

The main challenge lies in developing emotionally compelling narratives that establish a distinct brand identity and foster lasting customer loyalty. This is necessary to transition from one-time transactions to lasting customer engagement (Alfakihuddin et al., 2025; Peco-Torres et al., 2020). While previous studies have investigated emotional brand attachment (EBA), brand love, and eWOM separately, emotional storytelling lacks a clear framework for creating emotionally engaging brand narratives (Chieng et al., 2022; Guèvremont, 2020). Additionally, the constantly evolving landscape of consumer behaviors and digital platforms introduces complexities that require ongoing evaluation of their interaction and impact on brand perception (Poa et al., 2025). Ultimately, understanding how to craft emotionally compelling brand narratives is essential for brand managers and digital strategists to drive consumer engagement and loyalty in the digital era (Hajjid et al., 2022). Indonesia's digital consumer landscape is characterized by high social media engagement, mobile-first interactions, and collectivist cultural values, which differ significantly from Western contexts (Lady et al., 2024). These unique dynamics create an urgent need to investigate emotional storytelling in Indonesia, as global branding strategies developed in Western settings may not fully capture the behaviors and preferences of Indonesian consumers (Malika, 2024).

This study examines the roles of different factors influencing brand identity and customer loyalty, which are emotional brand attachment, positive eWOM, psychological brand ownership (PBO), brand love, and (Malahayatie et al., 2023). These findings will enable digital marketers to strengthen brand identity and foster an enduring sense of consumer loyalty (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020). Furthermore, the study seeks to serve as the foundation for the creation of strategic frameworks for emotional brand storytelling, contributing to the development of both strong brand identity and long-lasting customer loyalty (Hajjid et al., 2022).

Brand love reflects consumers' deep emotional connections with brands, leading to repeat purchases and positive eWOM (Mahlke et al., 2020). Research highlights that brand love mediates the relationship between brand experience and consumer loyalty (Bae & Kim, 2023; Wijekoon & Fernando, 2020). Consumers are more attracted to brands that resonate with their identity (Shimul & Phau, 2023). Especially for loyal consumers, brand identity is amplified by increasing positive engagement (K. Kim et al., 2020). Brand love also mediates the relationship between consumer satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing its importance in accepting consumer behavior. Brand love is closely measured with consumer loyalty as it shows the intense emotional attachments consumers develop towards a brand. This emotional commitment nurtures positive behaviors, including brand advocacy and a strong willingness to pay premium prices for branded items (Rahman et al., 2021). H1: Brand love has a positive effect on Brand Identity, H2: Brand love has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty

Emotional brand attachment directly influences consumer loyalty. Digital storytelling strategies, such as personalized content and emotional advertising, deepen this attachment. It can lead to repeat purchases and advocacy behaviors. The connection between brand identity and EBA is also essential. An overlapping self-concept brand mark can increase the emotional connection to the brand (Shahid et al., 2022). This has been implemented especially in luxury branding through self-brand pictures, which are taken to foster brand identity and consumer loyalty (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021). The emotional value will foster the bond and lead to brand advocacy (Ko & Jeon, 2024). Branding that elicits emotion is demonstrably critical for strengthening EBA. This is particularly important in social media as emotionally appealing content helps create communities and interactive participation, enhancing consumer-brand relationships (Manggarani et al., 2021).

H3: Emotional Brand Attachment has a positive effect on Brand Identity, H4: Emotional Brand Attachment has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to consumer-driven online conversations about brands, products, or services, shaping brand perception and influencing purchasing behavior (Q. Jiang et al., 2021). eWOM also enhances the brand identity by strengthening emotional connections between consumers and brands, leading to more profound attachment and long-term consumer relationships. The emotional dimensions of brand identity provide deeper insight into the influence of eWOM on consumer loyalty (Hemonnet-Goujot & Valette-Florence, 2022). Additionally, eWOM helps to strengthen brand communities. This fosters the feeling of inclusion, which deepens attachment and loyalty from the consumers (Choudhary & Sahu, 2023). Apart from improving brand identity and loyalty, positive eWOM functions as a strategic tool for brand differentiation. Leveraging positive eWOM through oppositional loyalty, the act of consumers supporting brands that oppose the brands they do not like, is beneficial (Liao et al., 2020). Effectively managing eWOM is crucial to establishing a brand identity that cultivates distinctiveness in consumers' eyes. H5: Electronic Word-of-Mouth has a positive effect on Brand Identity. H6: Electronic Word-of-Mouth has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty.

Psychological brand ownership (PBO) is defined as the emotional and intellectual relation that consumers have towards a particular brand, to the extent that they regard it as part of their identity (Chen et al., 2023). This emotional involvement shifts brands from only focusing on products to also understanding fundamental elements of the consumers' self-concept, which is necessary for a strong brand identity (Wijaya, 2022). When a consumer's identity is aligned with the brand, it can enhance consumer loyalty significantly. Especially those associated with personal or social identity, highly attached consumers of brands develop psychological ownership. Emotional identification toward brands can weaken or strengthen the brand identity in crises, directly affecting brand loyalty (Ruppel & Einwiller, 2020). These aspects of PBO impact consumers' behavior towards brands. Psychological brand ownership (PBO) acts as the mechanism that converts emotionally rich brand narratives into durable self-brand linkages: storytelling supplies symbolic meaning, while PBO is the felt sense that "this brand is mine." Grounded in psychological ownership and self-congruity theory, PBO highlights consumer agency – co-creation, customization, and public performance of brand meanings on digital platforms – distinguishing it from purely affective (brand love) or communicative (eWOM) constructs (S. Kim et al., 2024). H7: Psychological brand ownership has a positive effect on Brand Identity, H8: Psychological brand ownership has a positive effect on Consumer Loyalty

Brand Loyalty is further reinforced through brand identity. Brand identity in a community creates a sense of belonging, leading to loyal consumers (Kumar, 2021). Within these communities, shared brand experiences reinforce BL as consumers collectively identify with the brand. Additionally, brand storytelling contributes immensely to enhancing BL. A practical storytelling framework connects consumers emotionally with the brand, which improves loyalty (Zhang, 2023). Consumers ascribe ownership to brands they identify with through storytelling, resulting in commitment and loyalty to the brand in the long term. H9: Brand Identity has a positive effect on Brand Loyalty

## RESEARCH METHOD

Based on an extensive literature review and the context of Global Brand Emotional Storytelling in the Digital Age to Brand Identity and Consumer Loyalty, this questionnaire was developed by adapting established measurement scale items. It comprised 21 measurement items and organized into seven distinct constructs (see Table 1 for items in the annexure). The questionnaire employed a uniform five-point Likert scale for all constructions. Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated strong disagreement, and 5 signified

strong agreement. The questionnaire was divided into three distinct sections to enhance clarity and organization. Initially, participants were required to respond to a screening question to determine their awareness of global brands. After that, participants were asked to provide demographic information. Finally, the main section of the questionnaire consisted of items designed to measure EBA, eWOM, brand love, PBO, brand identity, and consumer loyalty.

### Sample Size

The sample was collected from Indonesian residents using a Google Forms questionnaire. The online survey platform was chosen due to its efficiency and cost-effectiveness in large-scale recruitment (Sena et al., 2024). To increase the response rate, the respondents were marked anonymous. One hundred eighty-three questionnaires were selected for final consideration, whereas incomplete questionnaires were omitted, equating to a response rate of 5.8%.

### Data Analysis

The collected data is regressed using CB SEM SmartPLS to conduct an in-depth analysis. The data will provide the outer loading results that suggest the construct's rate of acceptable reliability and validity. It will proceed to construct reliability and validity to indicate the data's consistency and legitimacy through Cronbach's alpha and average variance extracted (AVE). This method regresses all the variables according to a common variable. Single-source data has no deviation if the VIF value is less than or equal to 3.3. Lastly, bootstrapping is implemented as suggested that a minimum of 2,000 bootstrap samples might be necessary for robust analysis. Hence, we employed 5,000 bootstrap resamples to test the hypotheses in this study. Path analysis determines the intensity and direction of the relationship between the variables studied. The significance of the path coefficient is tested to verify the reliability of the hypothesis correlation. According to the significance level, the statistical significance of the correlation between variables is evaluated.

**Table 1. Questionnaire**

Variables	Questions	Source
BL	This brand has a strong and inspiring story on the digital platform. I highly trust this brand's services and products because of its emotional storytelling.	(Anim-Wright & Amartey, 2024).
EBA	This brand is one of my favorite brands because it can build emotional connections through its digital content. I feel a strong emotional connection with this brand because of the stories it shares in digital media. The brand's storytelling makes me feel personally attached to its values and identity. When I see content from this brand, I experience emotions that deepen my sense of attachment to it.	(Choi et al., 2024)
eWOM	I frequently mention this brand or its related products on social media because of its compelling storytelling. I talk about this brand more often on social media than other brands because of the emotional story it tells. Other people's comments about this brand's products and services on social media are credible.	(Hua et al., 2024)
PBO	I own the products of this brand because of the emotional storytelling built into digital media. I feel a strong psychological attachment to this brand's products because of my emotional bond with its digital narrative. I feel like this brand's products are a part of me because of my involvement with the stories and values they convey	(Kumar, 2021)
BI	This brand is known as a high-end brand with high quality, which is strengthened by its digital storytelling. This brand uniquely tells stories and builds emotional attachments with its consumers.	(Samarah et al., 2021)

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CL	This brand stands out from its competitors because of its effective storytelling strategy on digital media. I will continue to purchase and use this brand’s products/services because of the narrative and values it consistently conveys on digital platforms. I’m loyal to this brand because its digital storytelling creates a deep emotional connection with me. I prefer this brand over competitors because the stories and values it conveys are relevant to my experiences and emotions.	(Thanh et al., 2020)
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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Respondents Demography

Of the 395 respondents, 45% are males, 55% are females, 7% are civil servants, 9% are university students, 24% work for state-owned companies, and 60% for public companies. 7% have a high school diploma, 41% have a bachelor’s degree, 39% have a master’s degree, and above the master’s degree for the rest 13%. The age distribution is 11% for those aged 17 to 19, 25% for those aged over 20 to 25, 35% for those aged 26 to 30, 17% for those aged 31 to 35, and the rest for those above 36 years old.

### Outer Loading Results

A commonly accepted benchmark is when items exceed the 0.7 threshold. This will indicate the reliability of the confirmatory factor analysis. The results of this study are above 0.7, suggesting that 50% of the variance in the underlying construction has a strong construct reliability. Hence, the measurement model is confirmed to meet the required standards for acceptable reliability and validity for this study. No further refinement is necessary for reliability as all items in the construction have met the loading value threshold.

### Construct Reliability and Validity Results

The data collected showed well-constructed reliability and validity results. Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability have passed the 0.7 threshold, which indicates that the construction has intense internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) has a threshold of 0.5 to have an acceptable level of convergent validity. The results show values higher than 0.5, outperforming the required threshold. The robust construct reliability and validity results suggest that the construction requires no refinement.

**Table 2.** Construct Reliability and Validity Results

Variables	Cronbach's alpha (standardized)	Cronbach's alpha (unstandardized)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BI-Q	0.823	0.822	0.828	0.616
BL-Q	0.860	0.857	0.849	0.657
CL-Q	0.833	0.833	0.838	0.630
EBA-Q	0.904	0.900	0.903	0.750
PBO-Q	0.846	0.844	0.847	0.649
eWOM-Q	0.821	0.817	0.817	0.602

### Table 3. Model Fit

The model fit indices indicate an excellent overall model fit. The chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 45.87$ , df not specified) is statistically non-significant, suggesting a perfect fit, while the ratio  $\chi^2/df = 1.44$  is well below the ideal threshold of 2. Both RMSEA (0.035) and SRMR (0.024) are below 0.05, indicating a very good fit. Incremental fit indices including CFI (0.970), TLI (0.981), and GFI (0.939)

are all close to or exceed the ideal criteria of  $\geq 0.95$ , further supporting the model's robustness and strong alignment with the observed data.

Index	Mark	Ideal Criteria	Match Description
$\chi^2$ (df)	45.87	Preferably non-significant	Statistically perfect fit.
$\chi^2/df$	1.44	$< 2$	Very good
RMSEA	0.035	$< 0.05$	Very good
CFI	0.970	$\geq 0.95$	Very good
TLI	0.981	$\geq 0.95$	Very good
GFI	0.939	$\geq 0.95$	Very good
SRMR	0.024	$\leq 0.05$	Very good

### Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Results

The results are made into SEM using the SmartPLS software to be analyzed. Most of the items show a high level of reliability, signified by the alpha value for all the constructs above the 0.7 cutoff criteria of Sekaran and Bougie (2016). However, several items, such as EBA-Q2, -Q3, and BI-Q2, were removed as the loading factors were below 0.7. The model indicates the relationship between emotional brand attachment (EBA), electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), brand love (BL), and psychological brand ownership (PBO) towards brand identity (BI) and customer loyalty (CS) through the path coefficients. The figure shows that the most impactful for BI is PBO (0.410), while the lowest negatively impacted would be from eWOM (-0.113). CL is highly impacted by EBA (0.710), and BL affects it negatively and weakly.

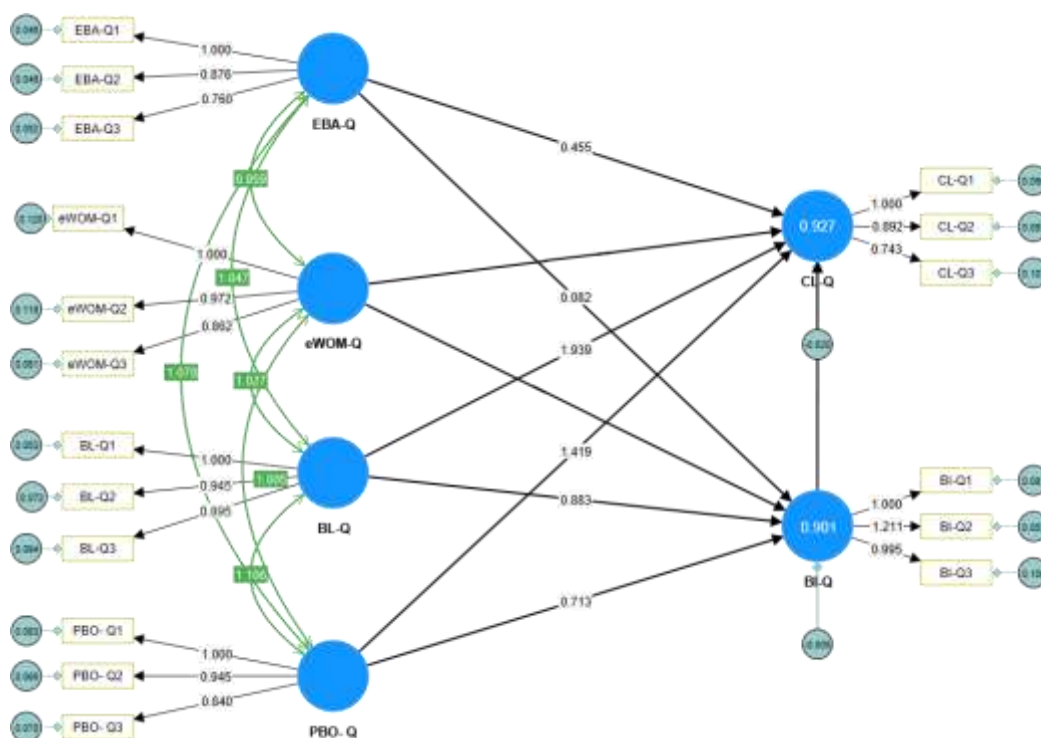


Fig. 1. CB SEM Results

### R-Square Results

The results in Table 5 show that the model is effective, explaining 90.1% of the variance in BI and 92.7% in CL. These indicate the strong predictive power of both constructs. The adjusted R-square for both BI (0.901) and CL (0.927) proves that the data is well-fitted to the model.

**Table 4.** R-Square Results

Variables	R-square
BI-Q	0.901
CL-Q	0.927

### Hypothesis Test

The strength and significance of relationships between the variables are observed using statistical methods, including path coefficients, standard deviations, T-statistics, and P-values. The results revealed that EBA and PBO significantly affect BI and CL positively as the coefficients are positive and the p-values remain under 5%.

**Table 5.** Path Coefficients: Mean, STDEV, T-values, P-values

Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Conclusion
H1: BL-Q -> BI-Q	0.883	0.621	0.285	3.102	0.002	Supported
H2: BL-Q -> CL-Q	1.939	0.920	0.501	3.870	0.000	Supported
H3: EBA-Q -> BI-Q	0.082	0.106	0.299	3.274	0.004	Supported
H4: EBA-Q -> CL-Q	0.455	0.015	0.396	2.148	0.025	Supported
H5: eWOM-Q -> BI-Q	0.769	0.061	0.370	2.080	0.038	Supported
H6: eWOM-Q -> CL-Q	-1.795	-0.011	0.572	3.140	0.002	Supported
H7: PBO-Q -> BI-Q	0.713	0.434	0.193	3.692	0.000	Supported
H8: PBO-Q -> CL-Q	1.419	0.427	0.404	3.509	0.000	Supported
H9: BI-Q -> CL-Q	0.956	0.252	0.655	2.461	0.045	Supported

### Discussion

Results from Table 6 show that BL significantly affects BI, with a p-value of 0.002. This supports H1. This data suggests that the brand's unique personality and image are influenced by the level of satisfaction and strong emotional ties of their customers. While brand personality plays a role in building emotional relationships with customers. The data from Table 6 further clarifies the significant positive relationship between BL and CL with a p-value of 0.000. This supports H2 and indicates that the more customers feel a deep connection with a brand, the more likely they are to make repeat purchases from the same store. This is evident in previous research highlighting the importance of BL in influencing CL by fostering emotional bonds critical for sustainable customer engagement (Burhanudin & Febryanti, 2023). The bond transforms satisfaction into a deeper sense of identification and belonging that customers feel toward a brand (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021).

With a p-value of 0.004, EBA significantly impacts BI, supporting H3. EBA includes a self-focused emotional connection to a brand. The more frequently a brand tailors its storytelling marketing to align with its target audience's values and experiences, the stronger the attachments are created. The significant role of EBA in shaping emerging perceptions of the brand's identity and trust (Harjanto et al., 2021). This supports H4, which is also validated. EBA has been shown to greatly affect CL, with a p-value of 0.025, indicating the highest level of significance. When customers have a deep attachment to a brand, they are likely to engage with the brand's emotional storytelling journey over the long term (Y. Jiang et al., 2023).

Table 6 indicates that H5 is valid. eWOM's relationship with BI yields a p-value of 0.038; thus, their relationship is insignificant. This finding is based on the literary discussions provided in earlier papers that describe eWOM as a reinforcer of BI. Arguments regarding the positive impact of eWOM, particularly in online discourse, brand association, and perception, on BI and its purchasing power. Similar to H5, CL will be influenced by increasing positive eWOM, marked by a p-value of 0.002. This concludes that H6 is supported. Through online presence and market

discourse, eWOM can significantly enhance a brand's image, fostering affection for the company and subsequently creating a sense of bond and loyalty among consumers (Wijaya, 2022).

Through data collection and analysis, PBO has been shown to increase BI significantly. This is substantiated with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that H7 is supported. PBO is another level of attachment that aligns the customer's identity with the companies. Their image is heavily correlated with the brand's storytelling and presentation. With this, H8 also stands supported by PBO having a prominent, significant effect on CL (p-value of 0.000). These findings suggest that PBO builds the overall brand's identity into a self-expressive brand that enables buyers to validate their identity (Ruppel & Einwiller, 2020). Furthermore, customers are more likely to connect with communities within their areas of interest and identity due to these attachments to psychological ownership. This drives engagement and, ultimately, affects CL (W. Jiang & Song, 2022). Brand Identity presence holds a significant role in the adaptation of CL. It was revealed by H9, which stands supported with a p-value of 0.045. BI is sought to be the bridge to storytelling strategies. Consistence in crafting these stories will result in an online identity presence that directly impacts customers' loyalty (Ali & Shaiq, 2023).

Practically, firms should actively monitor eWOM using sentiment analysis and quickly surface high-quality user content that reinforces core brand narratives, while responding to posts that fragment the brand message. Brands can harness loyal advocates by formalizing ambassador programs and embedding UGC that aligns with agreed storytelling pillars into official channels, turning dispersed praise into a consistent public narrative. At the same time, marketing teams must invest in clear brand guidelines for influencers and community managers, and use eWOM feedback to inform product and message refinements so that authenticity and consistency grow together. Finally, integrate eWOM signals into CRM and loyalty programs to convert online buzz into measurable customer lifetime value without abandoning deliberate identity management.

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings play a part in theoretical discussions on BI and CL through the lens of the digital landscape by presenting multiple significant variables such as EBA, SMA, and PBO. These variables support amplified BI and CL in digital emotional storytelling marketing. This paper utilizes and stretches past theories by solidifying emotional storytelling activities in fostering customers' profound psychological bonds and long-term commitment. Focusing on managerial context, brands need to emphasize EBA through personalized digital storytelling with target analysis beforehand. Generally, brand strategists and digital marketers are advised to operate frameworks that reinforce emotional bonds with entrancing and emotionally demanding storytelling. This study is limited to only quantitative data reports, which hinders the detailed and concrete explanation of the different effects of the variables on BI. Further qualitative studies using a similar framework are expected to extend the findings of this research and nourish profound outcomes. Global marketing practitioners should pair a consistent, universal brand narrative with locally tailored storylines that draw on Indonesian cultural values, language, and platform habits, ensuring emotional relevance while maintaining overall brand coherence across paid, owned, and earned channels. This study offers a practical roadmap for translating emotionally driven brand storytelling into culturally smart global campaigns.

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