

## LEVERAGING EVENT MARKETING TO ENHANCE BRAND CREDIBILITY THROUGH CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF PT. UBA UHUD INTERNATIONAL

Kanendra Almahi Keenan<sup>1\*</sup>, Chandra Suparno<sup>2</sup>, Larisa Pradisti<sup>3</sup>, Noor Fahmi<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1-4</sup> Faculty of Economics and Business, Jenderal Soedirman University, Indonesia  
Email corresponding author: [kanendra.keenan@mhs.unsoed.ac.id](mailto:kanendra.keenan@mhs.unsoed.ac.id)

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### Abstract

This research investigates the role of event marketing in enhancing brand credibility through the mediating effect of customer engagement. Conducted between February and July 2025, the study employs a quantitative approach targeting individuals who have participated in event marketing activities organized by PT. UBA UHUD INTERNATIONAL, such as exhibitions and trade show booths. The research examines four key hypotheses: (H1) Event Marketing Has a Positive Effect on Brand Credibility, (H2) Event Marketing Has a Positive Effect on Customer Engagement, (H3) Customer Engagement has a positive impact on Brand Credibility, and (H4) Customer Engagement Mediates the relationship between Event Marketing and Brand Credibility. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and using structural equation model to determine both direct and indirect effects. The findings reveal that all proposed hypotheses (H1–H4) are supported. Event marketing significantly influences both customer engagement and brand credibility (supporting H1 and H2), while customer engagement positively affects brand credibility (supporting H3). Furthermore, customer engagement is found to partially mediate the relationship between event marketing and brand credibility (supporting H4). Additionally, descriptive analysis indicates that Entertainment is the most dominant aspect of event marketing, Activation is the strongest form of customer engagement, and Expertise is the most prominent dimension of brand credibility. These insights underscore the strategic value of designing event marketing programs that emphasize engaging entertainment, activate customer involvement, and build perceptions of brand expertise—ultimately enhancing brand credibility in competitive markets.

**Keywords:** event marketing, customer engagement, brand credibility

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Indonesia is a prominent agricultural hub, with coconut derivatives being a key export commodity. In 2024, the country exported over one million tons of coconut products to global markets, reflecting its strong competitive edge as evidenced by a Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) average of 41.55 (2017-2021). Despite these strengths, brand credibility remains a critical factor for sustained performance in global markets. Studies show that customer perceptions of trust and expertise significantly influence purchasing decisions. Event marketing has emerged as an effective strategy to enhance brand credibility by fostering direct interactions and customer engagement.

Founded in 2020, PT. Uba Uhud International (UUI) specializes in high-quality coconut products. Although UUI actively participates in trade shows and exhibitions, challenges persist in effectively utilizing these platforms to build brand credibility and customer engagement amid fierce competition from established exporters like the Philippines and Sri Lanka. This study seeks to address

these challenges by exploring how event marketing impacts brand credibility through customer engagement.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

This study aims to analyze how event marketing impacts brand credibility via customer engagement, with the following objectives:

- a. Evaluate the influence of event marketing on brand credibility.
- b. Assess the role of event marketing in driving customer engagement.
- c. Examine the impact of customer engagement on brand credibility.
- d. Investigate the mediating role of customer engagement.

### **1.3 Scope of Discussion**

The research focuses on UUI's event marketing initiatives over seven months, encompassing local and international exhibitions. Data collection targets attendees of these events. This scope provides a comprehensive understanding of how UUI's event marketing strategies contribute to brand credibility.

### **1.4 Contributions and Novelty**

The study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it addresses a research gap by integrating event marketing, customer engagement, and brand credibility within the agricultural export context, enriching experiential marketing literature. Practically, it provides actionable insights for UUI and similar companies to optimize their event marketing strategies, enhancing brand credibility and customer engagement.

The novelty lies in focusing on the agricultural export sector, specifically coconut-derived products, where little empirical evidence exists on the causal relationship between event marketing, customer engagement, and brand credibility. This study is among the first to empirically evaluate these dynamics in this sector.

### **1.5 Research Results and Implications**

The findings demonstrate that well-executed event marketing significantly impacts brand credibility by enhancing customer engagement. Practical implications include:

- a. Designing event marketing initiatives that integrate emotional and rational experiences to enhance customer engagement.
- b. Leveraging trade shows and exhibitions to foster direct customer interactions.
- c. Utilizing customer feedback from events to refine brand communication strategies.

By addressing these elements, UUI can strengthen its global market position and improve the effectiveness of its marketing investments.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION**

### **2.1 Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory**

First introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), the S-O-R model explains the interaction between external stimuli (S), internal organism responses (O), and resulting behavior (R). In this research, event marketing acts as the stimulus, customer engagement represents the organism, and brand credibility is the response. This framework provides a foundation for examining how experiential marketing events influence brand outcomes through consumer engagement mechanisms.

### **2.2 Brand Credibility**

According to Erdem and Swait (2004), brand credibility is defined as the extent to which a brand is perceived to be trustworthy and to possess expertise. Trustworthiness, expertise, and signal consistency are key indicators. Other supporting studies (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2017; Chan et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2024) further affirm the relevance of brand credibility in shaping consumer preferences, loyalty, and trust. Event marketing influences brand credibility indirectly through its effect on engagement. This mediation is supported by the S-O-R model and empirical work by Vivek et al. (2012) and Schmitt (1999).

### 2.3 Event Marketing

Event marketing is defined as the use of planned public occasions (e.g., exhibitions, trade shows) to directly engage target audiences with the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Sneath and Finney (2005) identify enterprise, entertainment, and excitement as the core dimensions of event marketing. Studies by Setiawan et al. (2022), Ihnatenko (2022), and Nacharova (2024) have shown how strategic event experiences drive consumer involvement and loyalty. Based on Schmitt's (1999) experiential marketing theory, direct experiences can shape consumer perceptions. Event marketing enhances brand visibility and demonstrates competence, leading to stronger credibility (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Events provide immersive interactions that foster emotional and cognitive responses. According to Setiawan et al. (2022), well-designed events significantly drive engagement.

### 2.4 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement (CE) is a multidimensional concept involving emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connections between customers and brands (Brodie et al., 2011; So et al., 2012). CE is considered a critical intermediary variable that links experiential events to long-term brand outcomes. Hollebeek (2011) and Vivek et al. (2014) define CE through indicators such as conscious attention, activation, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. High engagement leads to increased trust and brand attachment. Research by Kumar & Pansari (2016) and Brodie et al. (2011) supports the link between CE and stronger brand perceptions.

### 2.5 Hypothesis Development

**H1: Event marketing has a positive effect on brand credibility.**

**H2: Event marketing has a positive effect on customer engagement.**

**H3: Customer engagement has a positive effect on brand credibility.**

**H4: Customer engagement mediates the relationship between event marketing and brand credibility.**

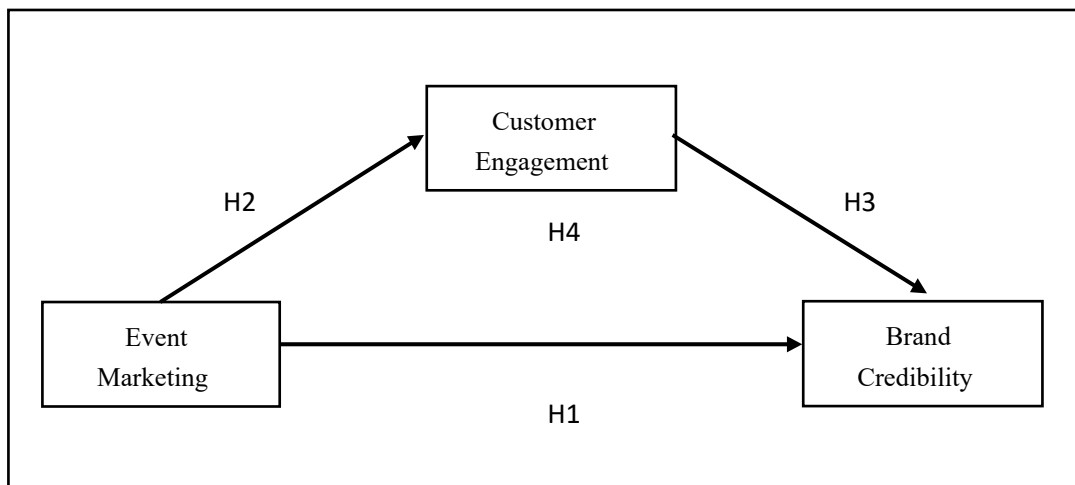


Figure 1. Research Model

## RESEARCH METHODS

### 3.1 Research Design

The research adopts an explanatory quantitative design aimed at testing causal relationships between variables. The study employs Structural Equation Model (SEM) using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with SmartPLS software. This method is considered appropriate due to the complexity of the model, which includes multiple constructs and mediating effects. SEM-PLS also allows for analysis with relatively small to medium sample sizes and supports reflective measurement models.

### 3.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study includes individuals who have attended PT. Uba Uhud International's local and international event marketing activities—specifically exhibitions and trade shows in cities such as Jakarta, Chengdu, Tangerang, and Istanbul. Due to the lack of available records on the total number of event attendees, the research adopts a non-probability sampling method, particularly purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on their attendance at one or more of UUI's events.

To determine the appropriate sample size, the formula from Hair et al. (2017) was used: with 10 indicators and 3 structural paths, a minimum sample of 65 is required.

$$5n = 5 \times (10 + 3) = 5 \times 13 = 65$$

To account for potential non-response or incomplete data, an adjustment was made based on an estimated response rate of 70%. The adjusted sample size is:

$$\frac{100}{70} \times 65 = 92.86$$

Rounded up, a total of 93 respondents is required to ensure adequate data for analysis. Researcher aims to collect 110 respondents to prevent any mistaken or error data. This approach helps ensure that the sample is sufficient to support the SEM-PLS model estimation and maintain the stability of parameter estimates, as recommended by Hair et al. (2017).

### 3.3 Data Collection and Instrument Development

Primary data were gathered using questionnaires distributed online and offline during UUI's exhibition events. Respondents completed forms via QR codes available at UUI's exhibition booths. The survey consisted of close-ended items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The questionnaire was developed based on the following operational definitions and indicators:

- a. **Event Marketing:** Measured using three dimensions—Enterprise (knowledge transfer and professional interaction), Entertainment (fun and engaging elements), and Excitement (novelty and uniqueness) based on Sneath & Finney (2005).
- b. **Customer Engagement:** Defined and measured using indicators from Vivek et al. (2014) and Hollebeek (2011): Conscious Attention, Activation, Enthusiasm, and Enjoyment. These represent the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions of engagement.
- c. **Brand Credibility:** Indicators include Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Signal Consistency, derived from Erdem & Swait (2004) and supported by related literature such as Wang & Scheinbaum (2017) and Nguyen et al. (2006).

Secondary data were obtained through review of literature, company reports, and academic journals related to event marketing, customer engagement, and brand credibility. The design of the instruments was aligned with theoretical constructs to ensure content validity.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4. The analytical procedure involved two main components: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and structural model (inner model).

#### a. Measurement Model (Outer Model):

- 1) **Convergent Validity:** Assessed through outer loadings of each indicator. Indicators with loadings greater than 0.70 are considered acceptable. In this study, loadings were reviewed for each construct: Event Marketing, Customer Engagement, and Brand Credibility. An Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.50 was also required for each construct to confirm that the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators.
- 2) **Discriminant Validity:** Tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations to other constructs. A construct is considered distinct if its AVE square root exceeds its highest correlation with any other construct. Additionally, cross-loadings were examined to ensure that items load more strongly on their intended constructs than on others.
- 3) **Reliability:** Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). A minimum threshold of 0.70 was used for both indicators. Composite Reliability is preferred in SEM-PLS as it accounts for different outer loadings, thus providing a more accurate assessment of reliability.

#### b. Structural Model (Inner Model):

- 1) **R<sup>2</sup> (Coefficient of Determination):** Reflects the model's explanatory power. Values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicate substantial, moderate, and weak levels respectively. In this study, R<sup>2</sup> was calculated for Customer Engagement and Brand Credibility to determine the proportion of variance explained by their respective predictors.
- 2) **f<sup>2</sup> (Effect Size):** Evaluated the relative impact of each exogenous construct on the endogenous constructs. The values are interpreted as small (0.02), medium (0.15), or large (0.35). These provide insight into how much a predictor contributes to the R<sup>2</sup> of a target construct.
- 3) **Q<sup>2</sup> (Predictive Relevance):** Using the blindfolding procedure, the Q<sup>2</sup> statistic was calculated to assess the model's predictive accuracy. Q<sup>2</sup> values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a particular endogenous construct.
- 4) **Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing:** Each hypothesized relationship was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples to determine significance. The output provided t-statistics and p-values. A hypothesis was accepted if the t-value was greater than 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05, indicating significance at the 5% level.

- c. **Mediation Analysis:** The mediating role of Customer Engagement in the relationship between Event Marketing and Brand Credibility was assessed using the Specific Indirect Effects output in SmartPLS. The analysis identified whether the mediation was full (direct effect not significant, indirect significant) or partial (both direct and indirect effects

significant). Bootstrapping provided the necessary t-statistics and p-values to confirm the mediation effect.

**Tool and Material Specifications:**

- a. **Software Tools:** SmartPLS 4 for SEM-PLS statistical modeling and Microsoft Excel for coding and data cleaning.
- b. **Research Materials:** Structured questionnaires, both printed and digital, developed based on literature-supported constructs; QR code forms distributed at UUI’s exhibition booths

**3.5 Structural Equation Model (SEM) Diagram**

To illustrate the conceptual framework tested in this study, the following SEM model was constructed using SmartPLS 4. The model includes the exogenous variable (Event Marketing), the mediating variable (Customer Engagement), and the endogenous variable (Brand Credibility). All paths reflect the proposed hypotheses.

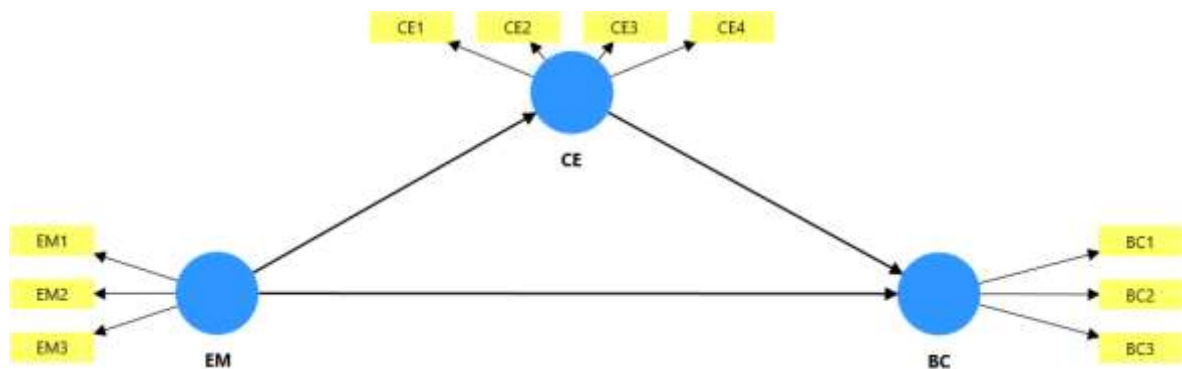


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the data analysis indicate that all proposed hypotheses in this study are supported. As shown in Table 1, event marketing significantly influences both customer engagement and brand credibility. Likewise, customer engagement is found to have a significant direct effect on brand credibility. Furthermore, the mediation analysis confirms that customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between event marketing and brand credibility, strengthening the indirect pathway between the two.

Hypothesis	Relationship Tested	Result
H1	Event Marketing → Brand Credibility	Supported
H2	Event Marketing → Customer Engagement	Supported
H3	Customer Engagement → Brand Credibility	Supported
H4	Event Marketing → Customer Engagement → Brand Credibility	Supported (Partial Mediation)

Table 4.1. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

The sample consisted of 154 valid respondents out of 168 distributed questionnaires, with 53.90% male and 46.10% female participants. All respondents had prior experience attending PT.

UBA UHUD INTERNATIONAL's event marketing activities, such as trade show booths and promotional exhibitions. This demographic data affirms the relevance of their insights regarding engagement and brand perception.

The findings directly answer the research questions by empirically demonstrating that event marketing is a strategic tool to enhance brand credibility, both directly and indirectly through the engagement it fosters. This aligns with previous theoretical assertions that customer engagement acts as a psychological mechanism linking marketing activities to brand trust and perceived reliability. The significant influence of event marketing on customer engagement highlights the importance of experiential components—such as enterprise value, entertainment quality, and emotional excitement—in building consumer-brand relationships. Furthermore, the confirmation of the mediating role supports the evolving understanding of customer engagement as not only an outcome but also a transmitter of brand value perception.

These results contribute to the expanding literature on event marketing by validating its dual impact—both affective and cognitive—on consumer judgment of brand credibility. The findings support existing frameworks, such as Hollebeek's and Vivek et al.'s engagement theories, while also emphasizing the contextual relevance in a business-to-business (B2B) and export-driven firm like PT. UBA UHUD INTERNATIONAL. This study may also suggest a need to adapt or expand brand credibility models by integrating situational factors derived from event-based interactions. Thus, while the study affirms existing theory, it also points to the opportunity to explore how engagement is formed in more immersive, face-to-face environments.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted on PT. Uba Uhud International, it can be concluded that event marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand credibility. This finding indicates that event-based marketing activities are able to strengthen the audience's perception of brand credibility, especially in the context of direct interaction with consumers in promotional or educational events. In addition, event marketing has also been proven to have a positive influence on customer engagement. Further findings reveal that customer engagement has a positive effect on brand credibility. This means that customer engagement is an important element in forming and strengthening the credibility of a brand. When customers feel actively involved with a brand, they tend to build a more positive perception and believe in the integrity and capabilities of the brand. Overall, the results of the mediation test indicate that customer engagement acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between event marketing and brand credibility. This means that some of the influence of event marketing on brand credibility is channeled through increasing customer engagement, although event marketing also has a direct influence on brand credibility. Thus, it can be concluded that strengthening brand credibility through event marketing strategies will be more optimal when combined with efforts to increase customer engagement

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