

# Ethical Branding and Consumer Trust in Emerging Markets: A Comparative Systematic Review of Local and Global Brands in Indonesia

Dina Rosari

Medan Tourism Polytechnic

\*Corresponding author email address: [dinarosari@poltekparmedan.ac.id](mailto:dinarosari@poltekparmedan.ac.id)

**Abstract** : This study aims to systematically examine how ethical branding measured through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement affects consumer trust in the Indonesian market, using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, 51 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 - 2025 were analyzed, the review reveals that all four variables positively influence consumer trust, albeit to varying degrees, CSR rooted in local values significantly fosters emotional connection and social legitimacy, green marketing is effective only when coupled with transparency and verifiable action, helping to avoid greenwashing skepticism, brand transparency emerges as a foundational element for brand credibility, particularly among critical digital consumers, digital engagement enhances trust by facilitating two-way ethical communication and community interaction. The study also finds that local brands leverage culture-based trust and community narratives, while global brands emphasize international certifications and reputational consistency. From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the contextualization of attachment theory in branding by showing how emotional bonds to ethically aligned brands drive long-term trust and loyalty. This research proposes a contextual ethical branding model for emerging markets, integrating localized CSR, transparent green communication, and trust-based digital interaction. The model highlights the importance of aligning universal ethics with cultural relevance and digital strategies in building sustainable consumer trust.

**Keywords** : Ethical branding, consumer trust, CSR

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## 1. Introduction

Ethical branding has become a strategic part of modern marketing, playing an important role in building consumer trust as well as brand differentiation in an increasingly competitive market, ethical branding practices combine the moral values of the company with transparent communication to consumers, forming a positive image and sustainable loyalty, the implementation of ethical branding is not only a marketing instrument, but also a means to demonstrate the company's commitment to the principle of responsibility social responsibility and sustainability, as well as in response to the increasingly critical dynamics of consumers choosing products based on the ethical values held by brands, are in line with global trends that emphasize the importance of ethics and integrity in building long-term relationships between companies and consumers as key stakeholders (Khan & Fatma, 2023).

The application of ethical branding in the Indonesian market is not only used as a marketing strategy to attract consumers' attention, but also as a form of corporate adaptation to increasing consumer awareness of environmental and social issues, Indonesian consumers are increasingly showing a preference for brands that support environmental sustainability, supply chain transparency, and measurable social responsibility, companies need to develop ethical branding strategies that are relevant to values and local norms in its business practices to maintain brand relevance and build consumer trust in the long term, considering that consumer loyalty is increasingly influenced by the assessment of brand compliance with ethical principles in each of its operational activities (Riharjo et al., 2025).

Consumer trust is a crucial aspect in supporting the sustainability of the company, especially when consumers have a preference for brands that show concern for the environment and society, this trust is not formed instantly, but through the accumulation of consumer experience in assessing the alignment between the ethical values claimed by the company and the business practices carried out, in the digital era when consumers have wide access to information, Brand credibility will be built if the company is able to show commitment to the principles of sustainability, social responsibility, and alignment with environmental issues that are of concern to consumers, consumer trust is an important foundation for the company in building long-term relationships, while maintaining brand competitiveness in a competitive market that increasingly demands sustainability values (Tian et al., 2020).

Attachment Theory is used as a theoretical framework to understand how consumers' emotional attachment to brands is formed through ethical values that are communicated consistently, this theory explains that individuals tend to form an emotional attachment to figures that provide a sense of security, responsiveness, and consistency, in the context of branding, brands that show a real commitment to social values such as sustainability, honesty, and social responsibility can Functioning as an attachment figure for consumers, this becomes very relevant in ethical branding strategies, because when consumers feel that their personal values are aligned with the values carried by the brand, then a strong emotional bond is formed, this attachment then affects consumer trust, loyalty, and advocacy for the brand, therefore, the use of Attachment Theory in this study not only explains the psychological dimension of consumer trust, but also supports the conceptual framework of ethical branding as a means of building sustainable relationships between brands and consumers, especially in the context of local cultures that uphold the value of social and collective engagement (Riharjo et al., 2025).

CSR, green innovation, and green marketing play an important role as pillars in building ethical perceptions and increasing consumer loyalty, all three are indicators for consumers in assessing the seriousness of companies in sustainability practices, in Indonesia local brands prioritize cultural narratives and authenticity as part of ethical branding to attract consumers' emotional closeness and show their commitment to local values maintained in business processes, While global brands rely on international reputation and consistency in ethical practices, with an emphasis on the implementation of global standards of sustainability, environmental certification, and integrated cross-border ethical communication, these different approaches show the existence of unique ethical branding dynamics between local and global brands in building consumer trust in Indonesia (Sari & Sundjoto, 2025; Anwar 2025).

Consumer trust cannot be built only through ethical claims, but also requires real transparency in the company's communication to consumers, it is increasingly critical in evaluating the alignment between ethical claims and the actual actions taken by the

company, the disclosure of accurate and verifiable information is an important element in maintaining brand credibility, transparency gives consumers the opportunity to make an objective assessment of the suitability between ethical values claimed by the company's practices and helping the company build a positive reputation in the eyes of the public, in competitive market conditions, transparency not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a means of mitigating reputational risks in the event of a mismatch between promises and realities in the field (Sansome et al., 2024; Castro-González et al., 2021).

Digitalization strengthens the role of transparency in ethical branding by making it easier for consumers to access information related to the company's ethical practices and policies, consumers can quickly obtain information through online platforms, which opens up space for their active involvement in discussing and monitoring the company's ethical claims collectively, the use of social media and other digital channels makes companies build two-way communication with consumers in real time, Providing space for clarification and quick response to emerging ethical issues, digitalization is a reinforcement of ethical branding strategies as well as a social monitoring tool for consumers, companies need to ensure the accuracy and consistency of ethical communication delivered through digital channels to build and maintain consumer trust (Sameen, 2025; Joshi 2025).

Ethical branding is not only a marketing tool to increase sales, but also an important means in meeting consumer demands related to social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and transparency of business practices carried out by companies, an increasingly fierce market competition environment, ethical branding is a differentiating factor that can provide a competitive advantage for a local and global brand to maintain consumer loyalty, This suggests that companies need to consider ethical aspects in their business strategies to build trust and long-term relationships with consumers who are increasingly selective and aware of sustainability issues (Zahira et al., 2023).

The difference in green innovation approaches between local and global brands in Indonesia shows the diversity of strategies in realizing sustainability values, local brands tend to emphasize community-based approaches, such as the use of local raw materials, eco-friendly packaging, and the involvement of MSMEs in the supply chain, while global brands adopt a more systematic approach based on high technology and international certification in ensuring the sustainability of their products (Arasyi & Kusumawati 2023; Azhar et al., 2025).

Although green innovation is mentioned in many articles as an important element in ethical branding strategies, most of the literature has not uncovered in depth how differences in cultural values and resource capacity affect its implementation on a local and global scale, in the Indonesian context, this is important considering that most micro and small business actors still face cost and technology access challenges in developing green products (Agustini et al., 2024; Fatemi et al., 2023). Research on consumer trust in Indonesia focuses more on the aspect of trust in halal labels or product authenticity, but has not discussed in detail the relationship between the perception of sustainability in green innovation and consumer loyalty to local brands compared to global brands, this limitation opens up an important opportunity to explore how consumers assess the sustainability efforts of the two types of brand entities (Alnamira et al., 2024; Adinda, (2024).

Azhar et al., (2025) and Anggraeni et al., (2024) revealed that Indonesian consumers have a high sensitivity to the social impact of company activities, especially in the issue of global brand boycotts, this reflects the existence of local values and geopolitical contexts that affect acceptance of green innovation and CSR practices, as well as how this affects

consumer preferences for local brands that are considered more empathetic to societal issues, Dhingra & Rani (2024); Liu et al. (2020) also emphasized the importance of cross-cultural comparative perspectives in developing adaptive approaches to social and ecological diversity, especially in the midst of globalization challenges.

Previous research by Hochstein et al., (2023) and Jati et al., (2024) emphasized the importance of digital trust in strengthening consumer relationships with brands, especially in the online context, green innovations communicated through digital media also play a crucial role, but few studies distinguish the effectiveness of this strategy between local and global brands in Indonesia. Some sources also highlight that brand integrity is a major factor in determining legitimacy in the eyes of Indonesian Muslim consumers, green innovations that are considered to be in line with religious values and locality, providing strategic opportunities for local brands to excel in building consumer trust compared to the universal approach applied by global brands (Kartasmita & Kurniawati, 2024; Kusuma & Anandya, 2023).

Previous research has shown that CSR and green marketing have a significant effect in mediating the relationship between ethical perception and consumer loyalty (Riharjo et al., 2025), as well as clear transparency that can strengthen brand credibility in the eyes of consumers (Sansome et al., 2024), but digital engagement and online interaction have not been widely studied in ethical branding research that measures its measurable influence on consumer trust. particularly in the Indonesian market with the characteristics of active digital consumers, this study will fill the literature gap by exploring how the dynamics of green innovation are implemented differently by local and global brands in the Indonesian market, as well as their impact on the formation of consumer trust and loyalty. The formulation of the problem in this study is: "How do the variables of Corporate Social Responsibility, green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement influence the formation of consumer trust, and how do the strategic approaches between local and global brands in Indonesia differ in applying the principles of ethical branding?"

The gap in the literature on ethical branding studies shows the need for a more holistic and contextual approach, most previous studies tend to focus partially on one aspect of ethical branding, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), without integrating other important elements such as green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement simultaneously, the available literature is still dominated by perspectives from Global North countries such as The United States and Europe, so that it is underrepresented in the socio-cultural complexity of the Global South region, including Southeast Asia, the aspect of digital engagement as an important dimension in building consumer trust in brands has also not been widely raised as a main pillar in the construction of ethical branding, research comparing ethical branding strategies between local and global brands is still limited and has not been formulated in a systematic theoretical framework, This condition opens up important opportunities for further research that seeks to integrate these four key variables into a contextual ethical branding model relevant to emerging market dynamics.

This research is expected to contribute to the development of ethical marketing literature in the context of emerging markets, especially in Indonesia, by integrating the variables of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement, this study aims to evaluate the influence of ethical branding on the level of consumer trust by comparing local brands and global brands operating in the Indonesian market, Through the application of the SLR qualitative approach, this study also seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the main determinants in building consumer trust through ethical branding strategies implemented by companies, thereby

enriching theoretical and practical understanding of ethical marketing practices in the business ecosystem in Indonesia.

Unlike previous studies that generally discuss one or two brand ethics variables separately, this study comprehensively integrates four key variables: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement into a single conceptual model of brand ethics contextualized for emerging markets, particularly Indonesia. This model not only compares strategies between local and global brands but also positions trust-based digital engagement as a key pillar that has rarely been addressed in brand ethics literature in the Global South. This approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how the combination of these four variables shapes consumer trust, while also offering a new theoretical framework relevant to markets with high cultural complexity and digital dynamics.

## 2. Method

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) variables, green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement on consumer trust in the context of comparison between local and global brands in Indonesia, the SLR approach was chosen because it is able to systematically synthesize findings from various previous studies and build a comprehensive conceptual understanding in the field of ethical marketing

### a. Identification and Exploration

The article search process is carried out through five main databases: Google Scholar, Garuda, Scopus, DOAJ, and SINTA, to ensure the coverage of literature on a national and international scale, the specified publication range is 2020 to 2025, to ensure the relevance and up-to-date of the data, the keywords used are bilingual (Indonesian and English), including: ethical branding, brand trust, green marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility, Transparency, and Digital Engagement.

### b. Selection and Inclusion Criteria

The selected articles meet several inclusion criteria, namely: (1) contain discussions about ethical branding and its derivative variables such as CSR, green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement (2) have a geographical context relevant to the Indonesian market within the scope of local and global brands and (3) be published in nationally or internationally reputable journals in Indonesian and English.

### c. Data Synthesis and Classification

After going through the selection process, a total of 51 scientific articles were obtained that were declared valid for analysis, these articles were then grouped based on the main variables that were the focus of the research, the classification of the number of articles based on the following variables:

**Table 1 Number of Articles per Variable**

No	Variable	Number of Articles
1	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	16
2	Green Marketing	13
3	Brand Transparency	12
4	Digital Engagement	10

### d. Local and Global Article Classification

**Table 2. The Classification Based on The Origin of the Publication**

Article Type	Total	Percentage
International Journal (Global)	29	56.9%

National Journal (Local)	22	43.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>

e. Analysis Method

To analyze the literature data that has been collected, this study uses the thematic coding approach as the main analysis technique, each article is studied in depth to identify the central themes related to the four main variables and their relationship to the formation of consumer trust, the coding technique is carried out manually by recording the conceptual narrative and empirical findings of each article, the data that has been coded is then synthesized qualitatively descriptive to find common patterns, contextual differences between local and global brands, and relevant theoretical models.

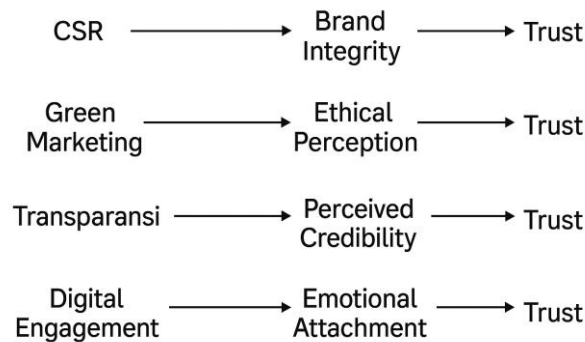


**Figure 1. Prism Flowchart**

The diagram provides a systematic overview of the SLR process carried out in the research, this flow shows the methodological validity and accountability of the literature selection, the final result is 51 selected articles which are the basis for developing a contextual conceptual model of ethical branding in Indonesia.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The figure below is a visualization of a conceptual model developed based on a systematic review of 51 relevant scientific articles, this model integrates four variables in ethical branding: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Marketing, Brand Transparency, and Digital Engagement, each of which influences the formation of trust (consumer confidence) through specific conceptual mediators.



**Figure 2. Visualization of A Conceptual Model Developed Based on A Systematic Review**

The image illustrates the flow of causal relationships between four main independent variables, namely Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Green Marketing, Brand Transparency, and Digital Engagement, each of which affects the formation of consumer trust through certain conceptual mediators, CSR contributes to building brand integrity, which then strengthens trust, green marketing increases consumer ethical perception, thereby encouraging trust in the brand, transparency Brands create perceived credibility, an important element in the formation of trust, digital engagement strengthens emotional attachment, which becomes the relational foundation in long-term loyalty, the image makes it clear that the four ethical branding strategies do not only work separately, but complement each other in creating and maintaining consumer trust holistically.

#### 3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

These findings support a contextual ethical branding model based on the roots of local Indonesian culture, the conceptual contribution of these findings is the formulation of a localized ethical CSR approach, which combines local values with social responsibility practices, as an effective model for emerging markets, the application of corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a crucial role as a strong foundation in forming and maintaining consumer trust in companies that come from within domestic and foreign countries, especially in the Indonesian market which is increasingly aware of the values of sustainability and business ethics, when the company consistently shows concern for social issues such as community empowerment, education, and the environment such as nature conservation and waste management, this creates a corporate image that is not only profit-oriented, but also has high moral values and collective responsibility. public perception of corporate integrity is increasing, as consumers consider that companies that act ethically and care about their social-environmental impact deserve support in the form of loyalty and positive advocacy, the success of CSR in establishing emotional and trusting relationships with consumers is becoming an increasingly important differentiating factor in the midst of competitive business competition and increasingly critical consumer awareness, A typical model of approach for developing countries is the integration of local values, such as the

involvement of MSMEs and indigenous communities in CSR programs (Rahmansyah et al., 2025; Permana & Ekowati, 2024).

Widad and Said (2024) underline that ethically-based brand equity in the Islamic banking environment in Morocco has a flexible structure and has the potential to be aligned with cultural values and social norms that apply in Indonesia, this adaptation is not solely oriented to the achievement of consumers' emotional superiority, but also builds a strong psychological attachment, a deep sense of belonging to the brand. Often less visible in consumer dynamics in developed countries, in this context, ethical approaches are not only a symbolic added value, but also a strategic foundation in differentiating brand identity culturally. Meanwhile, the findings of Putri et al. (2024) confirm that brand image strengthened through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs has a direct and tangible influence in shaping consumer trust, CSR mediation in forming a positive perception of brands shows that the integration between social values and marketing practices is able to create more meaningful relationships between consumers and brands. especially in markets that are sensitive to ethical issues.

CSR based on local values has proven to be a strategic instrument in creating long-term relationships between brands and consumers, Fatma and Khan (2023) affirm that CSR not only serves as a symbol of social commitment, but also serves as a catalyst in building brand advocacy that is sourced from consumer trust, trust formed through CSR initiatives being the foundation for deeper emotional consumer engagement and loyalty. sustainable, this shows the importance of authentic and integrated CSR in branding strategies, not just symbolic activities, when consumers feel the consistency between CSR claims and real actions of the company, positive perception of brand image increases significantly, this influence is strengthened in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, sensitivity to social justice and local empowerment is quite high, therefore, companies that involve local MSMEs, indigenous communities, or the education sector in CSR activities not only create social impact, but also gain recognition as ethical brands.

Castro-González et al. (2021) state that a company's credibility in the implementation of CSR contributes directly to the level of consumer trust, especially when consumers have high integrity as an individual characteristic, in this case, CSR becomes more than just a moral obligation, CSR develops into an element of strategic differentiation capable of navigating the increasingly complex and critical dynamics of consumer preferences to corporate ethics.

### **3.2 Green Marketing**

Environmental value-based marketing increasingly plays an important role in shaping Indonesian consumer preferences, especially in the millennial and Gen Z segments who show high sensitivity to sustainability issues and brand social responsibility, in the midst of the rapid flow of digitalization, the risk of greenwashing appears as a serious threat to the integrity of brand communication, this phenomenon can be seen from the practice of a number of global brands that utilize green rhetoric without being accompanied by concrete evidence, which ultimately leads to an erosion of consumer confidence in sustainability claims (Tan et al., 2022; Verrus et al., 2025).

Research conducted by Tanveer et al. (2021) and Sabbar et al. (2023) highlights how consumers' perception of green values is very easily shaped by manipulative ethical narratives and not based on verifiable data, thus creating the illusion of sustainability that is not in line with the company's real practices, in this context, local brands show their own advantages when they openly display the production process and demonstrate a real commitment to environmental conservation, which has a positive impact on increasing consumer confidence.

This is reinforced by the findings of Zahira et al. (2023) who emphasize that the perception of a company's ethical integrity can be a powerful mediator in strengthening the relationship between purchase intent and trust in the brand. Furthermore, Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos (2025) emphasize that credibility is a crucial aspect in shaping the decision of the younger generation to switch to more sustainable products, therefore, green marketing strategies built on the basis of honesty, transparency, and can be proven through public reporting have great potential to build sustainable consumer loyalty in developing countries, the conceptual contribution in this study lies in The development of a transparent green communication approach which is positioned as a fundamental pillar in shaping consumer loyalty through strengthening brand integrity and verification mechanisms that are open to the public.

The implementation of ethical green marketing not only impacts short-term loyalty, but also forms long-term brand awareness rooted in trust, Arasyi and Kusumawati (2023) affirm that a real commitment to sustainability contributes to the formation of green loyalty, which is characterized by consumers' willingness to continue to choose brands that are consistent with ethical and environmental values, green marketing strategies must avoid the trap of greenwashing, which can create cognitive dissonance in consumers and destroy brand credibility.

Cardoso et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of trust as a key prerequisite in building consumer loyalty to sustainability claims, without trust, sustainability messages will be perceived as manipulative and fail to create emotional resonance, therefore, the delivery of green messages must be accompanied by concrete evidence that can be verified by the public, this mechanism is important especially in developing countries, sustainability literacy is still in the growth stage and the public is very sensitive to the form of inconsistency between claims and actual actions.

Jung et al. (2020) said that sustainable marketing activities that are integrated with traditional market practices actually create a strong and authentic emotional connection between brands and consumers, in the Indonesian context, the combination of local cultural elements with green marketing strategies is an important differentiator that increases the perception of brand integrity, thus, a green marketing communication model based on transparency, Community involvement, and authenticity are the main pillars in strengthening trust.

### **3.3 Brand Transparency**

This study confirms that transparency realized through honest narratives and the ability of companies to be publicly audited not only strengthens the credibility of local brands, but also significantly increases consumer trust, information disclosure has become a fundamental element in shaping consumer trust, especially in the digital era that demands accountability and clarity from every business entity, consumer assessment of a brand is now not solely comes from the advertising strategy that is campaigned, but is increasingly influenced by the company's involvement in publicly conveying operational data, internal policies, and commitments to social responsibility (Sansome et al., 2024; Sameen, 2025).

The presentation from Manansala et al. (2022) in the banking realm underlines that consumer perception of corporate ethics, especially as reflected through transparency practices, plays a role in shaping the perception of brand image and the overall value of the brand (brand equity, this shows that corporate ethics is not only an internal moral issue, but also a strategic instrument in strengthening the brand position in the minds of consumers. Widad & Said (2024) and Nura et al. (2024) enrich this viewpoint by emphasizing that ethics-based credibility has a long-term contribution to the formation of consumer preferences, their findings confirm that trust in brand integrity can influence repeat choices and consumer loyalty, even in the context of highly competitive and image-sensitive

sectors, such as the fast-food consumer goods industry and the fashion sector in the United States. Indonesia is growing rapidly and is driven by dynamic trends and public perceptions.

Zhou & Nisa (2023) explain that perceptions of data security and ethical practices act as mediators in encouraging consumers to become active brand evangelists, with the main foundation being trust, when companies are able to provide clear and verifiable access to the sustainability claims they make, consumers will tend to show higher loyalty to the brand. Transparency in this context can no longer be seen as just an open communication practice, but as an integral part of a managerial strategy that is integrated with the company's values, therefore, the conceptual model in this study leads to strengthening the dimension of transparent green communication as a means of risk mitigation as well as a strategic mechanism in strengthening sustainable public trust.

Transparency is a crucial aspect in building sustainable trust in brands, especially in the digital context that accelerates the dissemination of information and opens up space for public supervision, Briliana and Fialim (2023) show that information disclosure regarding the production process and distribution of products can increase buyers' trust in health products during the pandemic, this can be adopted more widely in other industries as a strategy to strengthen credibility and brand trust.

Cardoso et al. (2022) reaffirmed that transparency has a long-term effect on customer loyalty, especially when brand communication is able to communicate ethical and sustainability values openly, the conformity between company values and consumer expectations becomes increasingly important in building long-term relationships, in this case, an honest and publicly auditable narrative becomes a distinguishing element between trusted brands and those that only perform well in a positive way. surface.

### **3.4 Digital Engagement**

The results in this study show that ethical digital engagement practices, such as the use of social media platforms to build two-way conversations, provide educational content for consumers, and provide quick responses to evolving public issues, have great potential in strengthening the emotional connection between brands and consumers, digital transformation plays a role as a trigger for acceleration in spreading ethical values and transparency principles that are widely and rapidly embraced the public, but along with technological advancements, new challenges arise in the form of increased exposure to misinformation and increasingly complex disinformation, one of the most glaring forms of information distortion is greenwashing, which is a manipulative strategy that seeks to form an inaccurate image of the environment and can weaken public trust in brands (Joshi, 2025; Sameen, 2025).

Research conducted by Shah & Salim (2024) reveals that digital elements such as online reviews and viral marketing campaigns through applications such as TikTok play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions, especially when accompanied by an element of trust as the main mediator, Sun et al. (2024) emphasize that exclusively designed digital engagement is able to add high emotional value, especially in the context of luxury brands that rely on the perception of exclusivity.

Yasri et al. (2024) show that the enforcement of brand identity that is adjusted to social norms and ethics in the digital space is better accepted by the millennial generation in Indonesia, who are very sensitive to the values of the online community, in this context, organizations are required to develop digital communication systems that are adaptive to the dynamics of the platform, responsible for managing public narratives, As well as being consistent in conveying brand messages across channels, this study enriches the conceptual framework by adding a third pillar in the contextual ethical branding model, namely Interactive Digital Trust, which makes digital communication not only a tool for delivering

commercial messages, but also as a relational medium and a means of verifying the authenticity of identity and the values carried by brands.

Digitalization presents a great opportunity in disseminating ethical values to a wide audience through various online communication channels that reach across demographics and geographies, however, behind these benefits, there are complex threats, such as the practice of greenwashing misleading consumers with false sustainability claims, as well as the spread of inauthentic testimonials that blur the line between real experience and marketing engineering, this phenomenon is exacerbated by engagement influencers who do not have a deep understanding of the philosophy and values of the brand they promote, so that brand communication becomes superficial and easy to manipulate, Taquette & Da Matta Souza (2022) emphasized that the ethical aspect must be the main foundation in the management of digital communication to prevent value deviation in online interactions between brands and consumers.

Nordin et al. (2023) and Nur et al. (2024) highlight the importance of monitoring digital messages so that they do not lead to perception bias or misleading information delivery, therefore consumer digital literacy needs to be strengthened as a preventive measure against information manipulation, as well as accompanied by the application of strict ethical regulations for every brand entity operating in the digital realm, so that communication integrity is maintained and consumer trust can be maintained.

Trust-based digital engagement is a key pillar in shaping meaningful interactions between brands and consumers, Haris (2024) emphasizes that shifting consumer behavior in the digital era requires companies to be more responsive, ethical, and transparent in managing online platforms, two-way engagement through social media provides opportunities to build strong emotional connections, as long as it is accompanied by clear ethics and social responsibility values.

Hochstein et al. (2023) state that digital trust is a mediating factor that strengthens the effectiveness of user-generated content, when consumers trust platforms and brands, they will be more open to participate in building a positive narrative towards brands, in this context, strengthening digital trust includes not only data security, but also openness to consumer feedback and quick responses to criticism or question.

Jain (2024) explains that the influence of influencers on Gen Z is largely determined by the credibility and value compatibility between influencers and brands, therefore, companies must ensure that digital collaborations with third parties must be based on an understanding of the ethical values of the brand, otherwise the brand will lose legitimacy, consumers will be increasingly critical of inauthentic endorsements, digital interactivity based on ethics and transparency are important elements in strengthening loyalty in a dynamic digital era.

Based on the results of a systematic review, this study makes a theoretical contribution by proposing a contextual ethical branding model for emerging markets, this model integrates the localized ethical CSR approach, publicly auditable brand transparency (transparent green communication), and trust-based digital interaction (interactive digital trust), this approach not only explains the dynamics of consumer behavior in the context of local culture, but also offers a new framework for understanding the differentiation of ethical strategies between local and global brands in Indonesia, this model can be used as a theoretical foundation in further research on ethical marketing in the Global South.

### **3.5 Theoretical Contribution**

This study offers significant theoretical contributions to the development of ethical branding literature and attachment theory in the context of emerging markets, particularly Indonesia. First, it integrates four core variables Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement into a single contextual

framework, which has rarely been addressed in ethical branding literature within the Global South. This integration extends ethical branding theory by positioning trust-based digital engagement as a strategic pillar, alongside CSR and green marketing, in fostering long-term consumer loyalty.

Second, the findings reaffirm the relevance of Attachment Theory in ethical branding for emerging markets. The study demonstrates that consumers' emotional attachment to brands is not solely driven by value congruence but is further reinforced by interactive and transparent digital engagement. This extends Attachment Theory from interpersonal relationships to brand consumer relationships rooted in ethical values, local cultural alignment, and sustained online interaction. Third, the research proposes a Contextual Ethical Branding Model for Emerging Markets, emphasizing the synchronization of universal ethical principles with local cultural relevance. This model bridges the gap in prior research largely dominated by perspectives from developed countries by showing that the effectiveness of ethical branding strategies in emerging markets is highly contingent upon integrating cultural narratives, adapting to social norms, and ensuring public verification of sustainability claims.

**Table 3. Top Five CSR Articles Based on Relevance and Key Findings**

No	Author(s) & Year	Study Context	Key Findings
1	Rahmansyah et al. (2025)	Retail, Indonesia	Local value-based CSR in ethical supply chains enhances brand legitimacy.
2	Fatma & Khan (2023)	Multi-industry	CSR mediates the link between brand ethics and brand advocacy through trust.
3	Widad & Said (2024)	Islamic banking	Culturally aligned CSR fosters long-term emotional brand attachment.
4	Putri et al. (2024)	FMCG	CSR-driven brand image directly shapes consumer trust.
5	Castro-González et al. (2021)	Food products	CSR credibility interacts with consumer integrity to influence loyalty.

**Table 4. Top Five Green Marketing Articles Based on Relevance and Key Findings**

No	Author(s) & Year	Study Context	Key Findings
1	Arasyi & Kusumawati (2023)	Sustainable brands in Indonesia	Genuine sustainability commitment builds <i>green loyalty</i> .
2	Tan et al. (2022)	FMCG	Green marketing is effective only with transparency and tangible evidence.
3	Tanveer et al. (2021)	Multi-industry	Manipulative green marketing creates <i>greenwashing dissonance</i> .
4	Zahira et al. (2023)	FMCG	Perceived ethicality mediates purchase intention and trust.
5	Cardoso et al. (2022)	Retail	Trust is a prerequisite for loyalty toward sustainability claims.

**Table 5. Summary Table: Local vs. Global Brand Strategies per Variable**

Variable	Local Brand Strategy in Indonesia	Global Brand Strategy in Indonesia
<b>Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)</b>	Emphasizes integration of local cultural values, community empowerment programs, involvement of MSMEs, and environmental initiatives tailored to regional needs. Builds emotional and cultural attachment through visible grassroots impact.	Focuses on compliance with international CSR standards, large-scale environmental initiatives, and global reporting frameworks. Highlights global best practices and international certifications to signal credibility.
<b>Green Marketing</b>	Showcases authenticity through transparent production processes, eco-friendly packaging, and community-based environmental programs. Relies on	Employs systematic green marketing campaigns with global eco-labels, advanced sustainable technology, and high-profile advertising. Leverages

<p><b>Brand Transparency</b></p>	<p>storytelling rooted in local sustainability narratives. Uses open communication channels to disclose local sourcing, production, and community partnerships. Provides verifiable data relevant to local market concerns, including halal compliance.</p>	<p>global sustainability benchmarks to gain trust. Implements standardized global transparency protocols, publishes sustainability and CSR reports, and emphasizes compliance with international auditing and verification systems.</p>
<p><b>Digital Engagement</b></p>	<p>Prioritizes culturally relevant content, interactive social media campaigns, and quick responses tailored to local online communities. Engages in storytelling that resonates with local values and traditions.</p>	<p>Utilizes advanced digital platforms, influencer partnerships, and AI-powered engagement tools to maintain consistent brand messaging worldwide. Focuses on maintaining global brand identity across markets.</p>

The findings of this study offer actionable guidance for both local and global brand owners operating in the Indonesian market. For local brands, embedding CSR programs into community values, leveraging cultural narratives, and demonstrating authenticity in green marketing can strengthen emotional attachment and social legitimacy. Transparent communication about local sourcing, halal compliance, and eco-friendly practices fosters trust, especially when supported by verifiable evidence. In terms of digital engagement, creating culturally resonant content, collaborating with trusted local influencers, and maintaining two-way communication on social media platforms can enhance consumer loyalty. For global brands, adapting international ethical standards to the Indonesian cultural context is essential. This entails customizing CSR initiatives to address local societal issues, ensuring transparency in sustainability claims, and incorporating localized storytelling into digital campaigns while preserving global brand consistency. For both brand types, balancing universal ethical principles with local cultural relevance is crucial to building sustainable consumer trust. Integrating transparent communication, verifiable sustainability efforts, and interactive digital engagement not only mitigates the risk of greenwashing but also positions brands as credible and culturally aligned actors in Indonesia's evolving market landscape.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that ethical branding is a critical determinant in building consumer trust for both local and global brands operating in the Indonesian market. Based on a systematic review of 51 scholarly articles, the findings reveal that the four variables Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), green marketing, brand transparency, and digital engagement positively and complementarily influence consumer loyalty and brand trust. CSR implemented contextually by integrating local cultural values effectively fosters social legitimacy and strengthens consumers' emotional bonds, while green marketing accompanied by transparency and tangible evidence is more trusted by consumers who are increasingly critical of greenwashing practices, and brand transparency serves as a fundamental foundation for credibility. Digital engagement, in turn, facilitates ethical and responsive interactions, reinforcing two-way relationships between consumers and brands.

The results also confirm differences in strategic approaches between local brands, which emphasize cultural and community values, and global brands, which focus on international standards and global reputation, highlighting that an effective ethical branding strategy in developing countries must integrate universal ethics, cultural locality, and an inclusive digital approach. This study reinforces the application of Attachment Theory within the context of ethical branding in Southeast Asia and contributes to the development of a Contextual Ethical Branding Model relevant for the Global South. Although the proposed model offers a robust conceptual foundation, it has not yet been quantitatively

tested; therefore, future research should empirically validate it, for example, through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS), by examining the direct effects of each variable on consumer trust, testing the mediating roles of brand transparency and digital engagement, assessing the moderating effects of local cultural values, comparing the model's impacts on local versus global brands, and conducting multi-group analyses across demographic segments such as Generation Z and Millennials. Such quantitative testing would provide strong empirical support for the proposed model while delivering data-driven strategic recommendations for marketing practitioners aiming to implement effective ethical branding strategies in emerging markets.

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