



Transforming the Four Pillars of Holistic Marketing in the Social Media Ecosystem: Systematic Literature Review 2020-2026

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ABSTRAK

The development of social media as a business ecosystem has driven a paradigm shift in marketing from a partial approach to an integrated holistic approach. The concept of holistic marketing introduced by Kotler and Keller, with its four pillars including relationship, internal, integrated, and societal marketing, offers a relevant framework for understanding this transformation. However, there is no systematic synthesis that links the framework to social media marketing practices, especially in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia. This study aims to map the development of research on the application of holistic marketing through social media in the period 2020-2026 using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with the PRISMA protocol. Of the 60 articles identified through Google Scholar, Garuda, and OpenAlex, as many as 20 articles met the inclusion criteria for thematic analysis. The results of the synthesis identified four main themes the dominance of relationship marketing that transformed into community-driven engagement; the transition of integrated marketing from traditional IMC to data-based omnichannel; (3) the shift of societal marketing from CSR as an add-on to a core strategy; and internal marketing as the least underrepresented pillar, creating asymmetry in the implementation of holistic marketing. The conceptual contribution of this article is the first synthesis to connect Kotler's four-pillar framework to the social media ecosystem, while providing a future research roadmap for the development of holistic marketing in the digital age.

Introduction

The development of digital technology in the past decade has fundamentally transformed the marketing landscape. Social media, which was initially positioned as an additional communication channel, has now evolved into a complete business ecosystem, encompassing all aspects of interaction between companies and stakeholders (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). In Indonesia alone, the penetration of social media users will reach 167 million people by 2024, making it one of the largest digital markets in Southeast Asia. This acceleration was further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, which forced business people, from multinational corporations to MSMEs, to adopt digital-based marketing strategies on a massive scale. In the context of this transformation, traditional marketing approaches that are partial and fragmented are no longer adequate. Kotler and Keller (2016) introduced the concept of *holistic marketing* as a marketing paradigm that integrates four main pillars: *relationship marketing* (building long-term relationships with customers), *internal marketing* (empowering employees as marketing partners), *integrated marketing* (coordinating all marketing activities and channels), and *societal marketing* (paying attention to social responsibility and ethics). These four pillars are designed to work synergistically, creating greater value than approaches that separate each dimension.

Indonesia, as a country with the number of MSMEs reaching 64.2 million units which contribute 61% to the national GDP, is a relevant natural laboratory to study this phenomenon. As of July 2024, it is recorded that 25.5 million MSMEs have entered the digital ecosystem, and around 63% of MSMEs are now actively utilizing digital tools, including social media, in their operations. More than just statistics, Indonesia's context offers unique characteristics that distinguish it from developed markets: a collectivist culture that is aligned with the relationship marketing pillar and manifested in the high engagement rate on community-based platforms, the dominance of conversational platforms such as WhatsApp Business that transforms the customer engagement paradigm from transactional to relational, the informal and family-based MSME organizational structure that presents challenges as well as opportunities for the implementation of internal marketing, as well as increasing awareness of Indonesian digital consumers on social and sustainability issues that encourage the relevance of the societal marketing pillar. This characteristic makes Indonesia a rich but still under-researched context in the literature on the application of holistic marketing through social media.

The existing literature shows that the study of social media marketing (SMM) has developed rapidly. Li, Larimo, and Leonidou (2023) in their systematic review of 396 articles identified 15 main theories underlying SMM research, but did not find *holistic marketing theories* in the mapping. Bartoloni and Ancillai (2024) managed to build an integrative framework of SMM based on 169 articles, but Kotler's four-pillar framework was not explicitly used. Rowley and Keegan (2020) in a meta-review of 45 previous SLRs

also confirmed that none of the SLRs used a holistic marketing perspective to synthesize findings in the field of SMM. Meanwhile, individual studies such as El Hassani and Azdimousa (2023) and Oiku and Adeyeye (2023) have provided empirical evidence on the effectiveness of holistic marketing, but it is still partial and limited to specific sectors or geographical contexts. The *research gap* identified from the above mapping is: the lack of a literature synthesis that systematically analyzes how the four pillars of Kotler's holistic marketing are adapted and transformed in the social media ecosystem, especially in the 2020-2026 digital acceleration period and in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia. This fragmentation of the study per pillar leads to an incomplete understanding of the synergy between the pillars which is actually the core of the concept of holistic marketing itself. Based on this gap, this article aims to map the development of research on the application of holistic marketing through social media in the 2020-2026 period, analyze how the four pillars of holistic marketing are implemented in social media marketing strategies; and identify themes, trends, and research gaps that can be on the agenda for future research. Conceptually, this article contributes by offering the first synthesis that connects Kotler's holistic marketing framework with the social media ecosystem using the systematic literature review method.

Method

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method which refers to the PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) protocol as recommended by Page et al. (2021). SLRs were chosen for their ability to identify, evaluate, and synthesize research evidence in a transparent, systematic, and replicable manner (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Snyder, 2019). Literature searches were conducted on three main databases: Google Scholar (as a primary database that includes international and national publications), Garuda/Garba Digital Reference (as a database of SINTA-indexed journals), and OpenAlex (as a complementary database for open-access international articles). The combination of these three databases was chosen to ensure adequate coverage both at the international and national levels, in accordance with the Sinta 5/6 publication standards. The search strategy uses *tiered Boolean search strings*. Tier 1 (broad scope) searches use a combination of ("holistic marketing" OR "holistic marketing") AND ("social media" OR "social media"). Tier 2 (four-pillar deep dive) searches add specific keywords per pillar such as "relationship marketing", "internal marketing", "integrated marketing", and "societal marketing". Tier 3 (Indonesia-specific) searches using ("holistic marketing") AND ("social media") AND ("Indonesia" OR "MSMEs"). The year range of publication is limited to 2020 to 2026.

The inclusion criteria set include: (a) peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, or academic books; (b) published in the range 2020-2026; (c) available in Indonesian or English; (d) discuss at least one pillar of holistic marketing in the context

of social media or digital marketing; and (e) available in *full-text accessible*. Exclusion criteria include: non-academic publications (blogs, opinions, news), theses/theses that are not published in journals, and articles that are not relevant to the holistic marketing framework. The article selection process follows four stages of PRISMA: identification, deduplication, screening, and eligibility. At the identification stage, as many as 60 articles were successfully netted from the three databases. After the deduplication process, there are 48 unique articles left. The title and abstract filtering stage eliminated 18 irrelevant articles, resulting in 30 articles for full-text assessment. At the eligibility stage, 10 articles were excluded because they did not meet methodological criteria, did not have a full text available, or were non-academic reports. A total of 20 articles were eventually included in the final synthesis analysis. Details of the selection flow are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. PRISMA Flow Article Selection

Stages	Description	Quantity
Identification	Articles from Google Scholar, Garuda, OpenAlex	60
After Deduplication	Unique articles after deduplication	48
Screening (Title & Abstract)	Article excluded: irrelevant topic	-18
Full-text Assessed	Articles assessed for eligibility	30
Excluded (Full-text)	Without a holistic, non-peer-reviewed, full-text framework is not available	-10
Included	Final article for synthesis	20

Data Source: Author, 2026

The synthesis technique used is thematic *analysis* with a deductive-inductive approach. Deductively, the data is encoded based on Kotler's four pillars of holistic marketing (relationship, internal, integrated, societal). Inductively, sub-themes and patterns of findings are identified from the data that emerged during the analysis process. The validity of the synthesis is maintained through triangulation of sources (articles from various databases and geographical contexts) as well as systematic recording of all inclusion and exclusion decisions.

Results and Discussion

Of the 20 articles analyzed, the distribution of publications showed the highest concentration in 2021-2022 (41% of the total articles), coinciding with the period of digital acceleration due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of articles come from the context of developing countries (Indonesia, India, Nigeria, Serbia) and emerging markets in Southeast Asia, reflecting the relevance of this topic to the context of digital economy

development. Methodologically, quantitative approaches dominate (39%), followed by qualitative (33%), mixed method (11%), and systematic review (11%). The most studied sectors are MSMEs/small businesses (28%), retail and F&B (17%), and technology and digital platforms (11%).

Theme 1: Relationship Marketing as the Most Dominant Pillar

The results of the synthesis showed that relationship marketing was the most dominant pillar applied through social media, appearing in 94% of the articles analyzed (17 out of 18 empirical articles). These findings confirm that social media is inherently designed to facilitate a two-way relationship between brands and consumers (Dubbelink et al., 2021; Herawati et al., 2025). Three main mechanisms of relationship marketing through social media have been successfully identified. First, *customer engagement* is at the heart of digital interaction: features such as *likes*, comments, shares, live streaming, and story interaction create a continuous cycle of engagement (Bryła et al., 2022). Devi and Uniyal (2025) found that AI-based personalization of social media content increased purchase intent by 28%, indicating that technology strengthens the effectiveness of relationship marketing. Second, community building through platforms such as Facebook Groups and WhatsApp Communities: Lomo (2022) documents how housewives in Indonesia build community-based online businesses in Facebook Groups, where trust and social capital are the foundation of transactions. Third, two-way communication facilitated by direct message and broadcast features: Hudha et al. (2025) reported that WhatsApp Business combined with Instagram was able to increase repeat purchases through consistent personal interactions. In the Indonesian context, Wibawa et al. (2022) proved quantitatively that the use of social media increased MSME marketing performance by 24%, with relationship marketing playing a significant partial mediator. These findings are reinforced by Kurnianingrum et al. (2021) who show how Gojek Indonesia builds customer loyalty through the integration of GoPay in its application ecosystem.

Theme 2: Integrated Marketing and the Transition to Omnichannel

The *integrated* marketing pillar appeared in 83% of articles (15 out of 18), reflecting a high awareness of the importance of consistency of messages and experiences across various marketing communication channels. However, the synthesis findings reveal a paradigm shift from *traditional integrated marketing communication* (IMC) to more *data-driven and seamless customer experience-oriented omnichannel marketing*. El Hassani and Azdimousa (2023) conceptualize this transformation in the context of Industry 4.0, where AI, IoT, and *big data analytics* allow for deeper integration between marketing channels. Social media in the omnichannel paradigm is no longer a separate channel, but rather serves as a *hub* that connects customer *touchpoints*, both online and offline. The main challenge identified is *message consistency* across platforms that have different audience characteristics. Fisun and Borisenko (2026) emphasize that consistency of messaging

across marketing *touchpoints* significantly increases *brand trust*. Kuncoro (2022) found that F&B companies in Southeast Asia that successfully integrate marketing messages across various social media platforms achieved higher levels of customer trust than companies with fragmented strategies. In the context of non-business institutions, Susanto and Makruf (2026) demonstrate how Islamic universities in Indonesia use Instagram and TikTok in an integrated manner to build institutional *branding* through *unified messaging* involving lecturers and students as *brand ambassadors*. Janičić (2022) adds a unique perspective through arts-based holistic marketing, where art-based visual content on Instagram and TikTok has been shown to increase brand recall threefold.

Theme 3: Societal Marketing and the Digital Consumer Value Shift

Societal marketing appeared in 61% of articles (11 out of 18), signaling a significant increase in awareness of corporate social responsibility in the digital age. The synthesis findings indicate a fundamental shift from CSR as an *add-on* to societal marketing as a core strategy, mainly driven by changing expectations of digital consumers who are increasingly critical of the values carried by brands. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major catalyst for this shift. Negm and Talat (2024) document how brands that show social responsibility during the pandemic crisis through social media gain an increase in *brand trust* by 10-15%. The most effective strategies are those that integrate societal marketing with relationship marketing and internal marketing simultaneously, for example through content that shows how companies protect employees while still serving the needs of society. *Sustainable consumption* is the most dominant sub-theme in this pillar. Bryła et al. (2022) through a meta-analysis of the SMM literature and sustainable consumption found that *visual storytelling* and *influencer marketing* are the most effective techniques to encourage *consumer engagement* on sustainability issues. Devi and Uniyal (2025) reinforce these findings with experimental evidence that AI-driven personalization of organic product content on social media significantly increases *purchase intent*. In Indonesia, Faerrosa et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of holistic marketing for the promotion of people's digital literacy, where Instagram and WhatsApp function simultaneously as relationship marketing and societal marketing platforms. Kurnianingrum et al. (2021) noted the GoGreener initiative by Gojek as an example of successful digital platform-based societal marketing in Indonesia.

Theme 4: Internal Marketing as "The Forgotten Pillar"

The most significant finding of this synthesis is the identification of internal marketing as the least underrepresented pillar in the literature. Only 39% of articles (7 out of 18) substantially addressed internal marketing in the context of social media, making it *the forgotten pillar* in social media-based holistic marketing research. From the article that discusses this pillar, *employee advocacy* emerges as the most dominant sub-

theme. Kurnianingrum et al. (2021) document Gojek Indonesia's *employee advocacy* model that transforms driver-partners into *brand ambassadors* through training, incentives, and internal communication platforms. Susanto and Makruf (2026) show how lecturers and students function as *brand ambassadors* of educational institutions through social media, creating an *authentic voice* that is more trusted than formal corporate communication. Oiku and Adeyeye (2023) provide quantitative evidence that internal marketing is the second strongest predictor (after relationship marketing) for organizational performance, with a statistically significant contribution. Siddaraju et al. (2025) emphasized in their conceptual framework that internal marketing is the foundation that allows the other three pillars to function optimally, because engaged employees will consistently convey brand promises to external customers. The limitations of research on this pillar open up substantial research gaps. How does *employee advocacy* work in the context of Indonesian MSMEs which generally have an informal organizational structure? How does *organizational culture* affect the effectiveness of social media marketing? How can *knowledge sharing* between employees through internal platforms strengthen the consistency of marketing messages? These questions remain unanswered in the existing literature.

Table 2. Distribution of Holistic Marketing Pillars in the Literature 2020-2026

Pillar	Number of Articles	Percentage	Dominant Sub-Dimensions	Research Gap
Relationship Marketing	17	94%	Customer Engagement, Community Building	Real-time two-way communication
Integrated Marketing	15	83%	IMC, Omnichannel	Platform-specific content strategy
Societal Marketing	11	61%	CSR Communication, Sustainable Consumption	Brand activism in a socio-political context
Internal Marketing	7	39%	Employee Advocacy	Organizational culture, Knowledge sharing

Discussion

A synthesis of 20 articles in the 2020-2026 range confirms that the four pillars of Kotler holistic marketing undergo significant transformations when applied in the social media ecosystem, but with an uneven level of depth and maturity. The most radical transformation has occurred in relationship marketing, which has evolved from a one-way transactional model to a *participatory and sustainable community-driven engagement*. Meanwhile, internal marketing is left behind, creating asymmetry that has the potential

to weaken the foundation of holistic marketing as a whole. Comparisons with previous studies show consistency as well as shifts. Bartoloni and Ancillai (2024) in their SLR identified the three dimensions of SMM (strategic, tactical, operational), and the findings of this synthesis expand the framework by adding the dimension of "holistic integration" as a fourth layer that connects all dimensions synergistically Li et al. (2023) mapped 15 *grand theories* in SMM without finding a holistic marketing theory, and the findings of this synthesis support the argument that holistic marketing theory needs to be included as the 16th theoretical framework in SMM research mapping.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings confirm that holistic marketing is not just a managerial concept, but can function as an *integrative theoretical lens* to understand marketing phenomena in the digital era. Kotler's four-pillar synergy concept finds empirical validation in the context of social media: brands that rely solely on relationship marketing without strong internal marketing support tend to experience brand voice inconsistencies; brands that focus on societal marketing without adequate integrated marketing often fail to communicate their CSR initiatives effectively to the right audience. Practically, this synthesis offers implications for marketers, especially MSMEs in Indonesia. First, MSME actors need to adopt a more balanced approach to the four pillars. Most Indonesian MSMEs still focus exclusively on relationship marketing (through WhatsApp Business and Instagram), while ignoring internal marketing (empowering employees as *brand advocates*) and societal marketing (communicating social values). Second, the findings on the transition to omnichannel imply that MSMEs need to start integrating customer data from various platforms to create a coherent customer experience. Third, emerging trends such as AI-driven personalization and new platforms (TikTok, Threads) need to be anticipated through increasing the digital literacy of marketers.

The identified research gaps open up several future research directions. First, empirical research on internal marketing in the context of social media-based MSMEs is urgently needed, considering that this pillar is the least represented in the literature. Second, a study that measures the interaction of the four pillars simultaneously using a quantitative approach (e.g. SEM) is needed to validate the holistic marketing + social media model empirically. Third, Indonesia's unique context (collectivist culture, mobile-first penetration, dominance of chat platforms such as WhatsApp) offers rich research opportunities to explore how cultural and technological factors moderate the effectiveness of each pillar.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review succeeded in synthesizing 20 articles that discuss the application of holistic marketing through social media in the range of 2020-2026. Four main themes were identified the dominance of relationship marketing which transforms

into *community-driven engagement*, the transition of integrated marketing from traditional IMC to data-based omnichannel, societal marketing shift from CSR as an add-onto *a core strategy driven by digital consumer expectations*; and internal marketing as the forgotten pillar that requires further research attention. The main conceptual contribution of this article is the first synthesis that connects Kotler's four-pillar framework of holistic marketing with the social media ecosystem, filling in a gap that has been identified by previous meta-reviews (Rowley & Keegan, 2020; Li et al., 2023; Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). Practically, this article offers a roadmap for marketers, especially MSMEs in Indonesia, to adopt a more balanced and integrated holistic marketing approach. The limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. First, the databases used (Google Scholar, Garuda, OpenAlex), while adequate for the Sinta 5/6 standard, do not include premium databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, so some high-quality articles may be missed. Second, the number of articles analyzed (n=20) is still relatively limited, which is partly due to the scarcity of literature that explicitly uses the holistic marketing framework in the context of social media. Third, the coding process and thematic analysis, even though it has been done by triangulation, still contains elements of the researcher's subjectivity.

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