



# **Understanding the Concept of Social Media Marketing: The Role of Marketing Dimensions Influencing Consumer Brand Loyalty**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Marketing through social media has become one of the largest platforms for human interaction in the past decade. The total number of social media users in Pakistan has crossed 35 million, which is 16% of the population. This research focuses on empirically testing a theoretical model having social networking, community engagement, and brand use as main antecedents impacting brand loyalty with brand trust as mediator. This research used a comprehensive model of brand loyalty for the development of social media strategy to influence consumer's brand perceptions along with brand trust. The population of the study consists of those 500 consumers belonging from public sector platforms who use social media channels to purchase the products. Moreover, a non-probability convenience sampling technique is applied to gather the data via the electronic survey method. Furthermore, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique, Reliability analysis, Confirmatory factor analysis techniques are applied to test the proposed hypothesis as proposed by Heir et al., (2013). The results show a significantly affirmative and direct effect of social networking on consumer brand loyalty. Community Engagement and Brand usage also substantially affects consumer loyalty with the mediating role of brand trust. The findings validate a significant role of community engagement and social networking in developing brand loyalty. Thus, the research findings are expected to be helpful for marketing firms in managing their social media communication tools.

**Keywords:** *Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Social Networking, Community Engagement, Brand Use.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The concept of Social media (SM) and Social Networking (SN) has been the top most headline for many business executives, companies as well as researchers these days. They try their level best to find out various ways by which the firms make profitable business using the various online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia etc. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Conventionally, the consumers used to search on internet, read about the stuff, watch the reviews and use to buy the product and service later on. This form of phenomena is termed as social media phenomena which has become a significant element for business to flourish these days, impact a firm's status, its sales and even its survival in the growing world of competition. Social media practices have in many ways

affected the way consumers communicate with each other in today's digital world. However, few firms still follow the conventional mode and doesn't recognize its importance in today's developed and socially engaged world (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Since its proliferation, internet has been used as a dominant medium of communication across the globe. In modern business world, advertisers are extensively using internet based techniques for sharing information, knowledge and product/brand awareness with consumers. (Culnan et al., 2010). Ba and Walden (2001) suggested that social networking platforms provide a channel for consumers to engage, connect and share information which develops trust leading to brand loyalty. Social media communities and channels provide a platform for consumers to engage, interact within a simulated space to collaborate and share the information and content (Ritcher, 2007). Some of the well-known internet based applications used nowadays are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram etc. (Harris, 2009).

A brand's information, reputation and feedback is shared more frequently and easily within social networking websites (Kim, 2010). Brand community is considered as an alliance or clan of people admiring any particular brand using their social relations which are not boundary based and geographically defined. The outcomes of such brand communities are information sharing, giving birth to brand culture and customer interactions leading to brand loyalty (Muniz, 2001). Brand trust can only be achieved once the consumer is fully satisfied with the product performance, which it claims to be within brand communities circles developed online. Brand loyalty among consumers is considered as the underlying reason of lifelong relationship between the users and brands (Mc Alexander, 2002). As supported in the literature, community engagement practices reinforce consumers by escalating their brand community engagement (Schau, 2009). Lifelong relationships are the outcome whenever consumers engage within social media communities for any brand and share its information, usage and feedback (Webster, 1992). Such channels facilitate close linkages among consumers and companies (Kang, 2007).

The brand users comments and responses posted online on various channels spread positive word of mouth for the brand and can attract a substantial number of new customers towards any brand, making it difficult for businesses relying on conventional approach (Schau, 2009). Brand use is considered as an image or picture of any brand from consumer's perspective which is developed at the time of buying a product or doing any comparison with other similar brands in the market (Faircloth, 2005). Moreover, brand trust is observed as the willingness of the average consumers to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function. Also it is considered as a long term commitment to continue repurchasing a desired product or service in future irrespective of any other marketing attractions or condition to switch brand (Chaudhuri, 2001). Trust is one of the major components along brand loyalty in the context of customer brand relationship (Fournier, 1998). Internet based buying and selling surveys has pointed out trust is one of the most important factors (Armitage & Conner, 1999). Experts in marketing agree that in any brand community, the loyalty of customers to any particular brand is crucial for developing a long term relationship. Moreover, enhancing the culture of any brand community to facilitate consumers in sharing experiences stories with each

other improves brand loyalty (McAlexander, 1998; Muniz, 2001; Schau, 2009 & Zhou, 2011).

Hence social media platforms that enable customers to share their information, stories related to any brand or product or service can play a vital role in successful marketing efforts (Laroche, 2012). This research aims to fill the gap and examine the consumer purchase intentions on electronic social media forums influenced by activities like social media, community engagement, impression management and brand usage. Brand trust has been used as mediating variable which completes the process of value creation practices on consumer's brand loyalty. As this domain is relatively new therefore, this study aims to identify such social media activities which can lead to brand loyalty of consumers providing a deep insight to marketers, theory builders and practitioners etc. (Zhou, 2011). In this study social media based brand communities are further explored. Such communities endorse the brand loyalty factor by taking into account the brand consumption and imprinting those practices.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is a term which explains the existence of relationships between networks of people (O'Doherty et al., 2011). Laroche et al. (2013) found that social communities developed online have statistically significant positive impact on new customers and products and enhances long term customer brand relationship.

Godey (2016) proved in his research that social media marketing strategies affect the brand equity and in this process various other measures such as interaction, entertainment, word of mouth, tiredness/fatigue and customization of the brand have significant effect on consumers. Hudson (2016) carried out 3 studies in UK, France and US to investigate the individual and national level impact of social media practices on consumers bonding with well-known brands. The findings of these studies show that social networking significantly positively impacts the consumer brand relationship with the maximum level of anthropomorphism perceptions, which are associated with human physical appearances with any particular brand. Alalwan et al. (2017) investigated individual's attachment with web 2.0 worldwide largely. The study by Karpinski et al., (2013) found Facebook and other engaging social networking websites such as Twitter and Instagram helpful in allowing people to search their peer friends and family easily (Hajli, 2014). As suggested by Razmerita et al., (2014) social media can be taken as the consumer's new voice of this new digital era. As per statistics of 2017, there are more than 44 million social media users in Pakistan. Various behavioral theories such as Cognitive Behavior Theory (Hayes, 2004), Theory of Reasoned Action (Jiang, 2009), 'Utility Theory' (Schiffman and Kanuk 2007, Stern, Zinkhan & Jaju 2001), Technology Acceptance Model-TAM (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1992), Theory of Planned Behavior-TPB (Schifter & Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991) and Model of PC Utilization-MPCU (Thompson et al., 1991) have explained the patterns of human psychology and behavior. This study has adopted Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). This theory incorporated the consumers' intentions to use social media leading to behavioral changes among them. UTAUT is selected in the study as this theory uses both technology and behavioral aspect of the consumers to the best extent. The constructs used for measurement include brand trust, brand loyalty, community engagement and social networking.

## 2.1. DISCUSSION ON STUDY DIMENSIONS

### 2.1.1. Social Networking

Ellison et al. (2011) has considered social networking as an online service, platform, or website that assists in the development of network building as well as social bonding among people with common approach, interests and activities and some way related to each other. Gitau et al. (2017) further expanded that social networking platforms targets various people using channels like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, WhatsApp etc. to allow them sharing their interests, text messaging, photo sharing, wikis, blogs and discussion platforms. Muniz et al. (2001) and Bolotaeva & Cata (2010) also argued that social community is basically a network of people having certain liking towards any brand through social channels beyond any geographical and community boundaries. According to studies in the literature, organizations are approaching social networks in a similar manner the way they approach search engines optimization, survey destination points, and value correlation locales, with the end goal of raising mark mindedness (Worldwide, 2008).

### 2.1.2 Community Engagement

Communities are acting as a hub for connection among various firms and consumers (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). According to Habibi, Laroche & Richard (2014) the community engagement practices used via social media channels have a statistically significant impact on the community development by spreading awareness and building brand loyalty among consumers (Tandoc Jr. et al., 2015). Through these social media platforms people share information, discuss various topics of common interests and likings (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan, 2015).

Durndell, Alan & Zsolt (2000) and Turkle (1996) are of the opinion that community engagement practices are modern ways to work with people who are; connected beyond boundary limitation, promote consumer self-efficacy, exhibit favorable attitude towards internet and share common interests and goals. However, Apenes (2016) argues that community engagement practices boost customer participation and engagement of customers on social media improves individual's social prosperity. Moreover, Kang, Shin & Gong (2016) explained how personalization, consumer engagement, and brand trust in online communities plays an important role in shaping favorable brand loyalty (Islam, Rahman & Hollebeek, 2018).

### 2.1.3 Brand Use

Hanna et al. (2008) is of the view that brand use is an idea in which an individual plans to make a purchase of any good or service somewhere in future, but this idea is not time bounded and totally up to that individual's liking. Also, brand use is considered as the plan within any social circle or community to find new brands or better choices for each other (Wellman et al., 2003). Brand use becomes easier for the consumers if sufficient brand knowledge is provided through marketing campaigns and market appearance creates consciousness (Tynan et al., 2010). In addition, social media facilitation has made communication and information sharing easier and made networking a value creation activity (Laroche et al., 2012).

#### 2.1.4. Brand Trust

Brand trust is considered as the dependency of an individual on the brand to perform its pre-defined functions (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). According to Zang et al. (2012) brand trust is just a state of satisfaction and trustworthiness by consumers while communicating with other similar firms commonly facilitated by social media. Hence, brand trust is explained in association with customer loyalty and behavioral component (Matzler et al., 2006). Without having a trust on brand, consumers cannot achieve brand loyalty. Therefore, in order to develop brand trust, it is of utmost importance to take consumers' feedback on use of products or services (Chinomona et al., 2016).

#### 2.1.5. Brand Loyalty

Hidayanti et al., (2018) studied brand loyalty among products and explained it having an impact of brand experience and trust in developing long term commitment of the consumer. However, brand experience is supported by brand commitment and lifetime bondage. A highly developed bond among consumers to re-purchase/ re-use a favored product in results in repetitive same-brand/same-product buying pattern, no matter what marketing strategies are applied to change the behavior or liking of consumers' towards their favorite brand (Oliver, 1999). Purchase intention is an outcome of brand loyalty which can be defined as the acceptance of consumers to purchase any product/service (Shah et al., 2012). Loyalty of clients can be further simplified as the repurchase decision for a specific brand by considering it as a mental duty towards that brand (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2005).

### 3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Studies in the literature have proved that social networking platforms play a pivotal role in building consumers' brand loyalty through internet based applications (Gitau et al., 2017). According to Laroche et al., (2012) social media practices play a significant role in community development by adding value to the process of creating brand loyalty. Habib (2014) studied the impact of customer dependence on community elements in any social media circle to explain the process of brand loyalty. The results of this study showed that all the above mentioned variables have a statistically significant positive impact on the dependent variable which is brand loyalty. Used and Gratification Theory (UGT) is used by Phua et al., (2017) to explain the effect of brand community on consumers. They used 4 major channels such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter to analyze the impact of social media drivers. People who use Twitter possessed the maximum level of brand likeliness and community building and Instagram users possessed the maximum level of brand commitment. These findings showed consumers active participation and attention towards using social media, besides endorsing the trustworthiness of social networking sites in measuring consumption behaviors

Kim et al., (2018) targeted a South Korean market using various personality traits including extraversion in nature, warmth and openness towards brands, agreeableness, desirability and conscientiousness to analyze the brand personality among users using Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The findings of the study showed that brands without SNS get relatively poor response by consumers in comparison to those brands who had existence on SNS.

Rapid improvements in social media channels and network systems has transformed marketing and promotion practices and encouraged switching to

"client driven advances" (Ansari et al., 2013; Cheung et al., 2011). As mentioned above some of the well-known online networking platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have allowed the best utilization of marketing expenses (Krasnova et al., 2010; Nisar et al., 2016, Camil, 2017, Mozas-Moral et al., 2016). According to study by Choudhery et al. (2017), social network marketing is studied as the rush without bounds. In 2011, US based firms earned up to \$2.5 billion just by utilizing online web-based social networking marketing practices. Sajid (2016) studied social media and confirmed that six out of ten US clients are using online social networking platforms to extend their brand relationship with other companies. Further, Hensel & Deis (2010) found that social interaction and networking allows marketers to gather updated customer information. Peng et al. (2008) suggest that if utilized properly, social network marketing can be advantageous to business as it results in gaining brand loyalty. Schlaile et al. (2018) also recommended firms to first fuse online advertisements into their action plan, set measurable business objectives, and then begin experimenting in order to attain consumer brand loyalty,. In addition, Hård Af Segerstad & Kasperowski (2015) suggested that social networking promises solid customer engagement system and valuable customer benefits with a brand. Similarly, Sinclair et al. (2017) showed that brands can consolidate social media networking into their endeavors to retain customers and keep a progressive association with them for better shopper engagement.

As found in literature reviewed, social networking practices are most important determinants of having a strong impact on consumers' brand loyalty, therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** A positive relationship exists between social networking practices and brand loyalty.

Social networking practices play a significant role in developing brand trust. For instant, the study by Liu et al., (2018) explained that consumers' brand loyalty is a result of their trust in marketers selling on social media platforms. The results further showed that self-branding and value impression has a direct impact on the customer involvement.

Akrout et al., (2018) collected data from 210 respondents using Facebook branding fan page as a criteria and found the antecedents of brand loyalty and commitment towards by employing SEM for data analysis. The results showed positive effects of hedonic and economic benefits. In addition, brand loyalty and commitment was found to be high for fans who received "positive word of mouth" and brand quality of the products. Also the young females showed highest degree of engagement level. The study suggested to craft a stronger consumer bondage by developing relational governance within firm-developed virtual brand community.

As demonstrated in the above mentioned literature, community engagement is one of the most important determinants of estimating a strong impact on consumer's brand loyalty, therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** A positive relationship exists between community engagement and brand loyalty.

Highton-Williamson et al., (2015) examined the effect of brand usage on brand loyalty, whereas Bhandari & Rodgers (2018) investigated the impact of brand feedback on brand loyalty by using moderating effect of problem attribution defined in the negative eWOM(electronic word of mouth) message. The results revealed that brand feedback had a concurrent positive and negative effect on purchase intentions; however, brand loyalty mediated the



positive effect. Wen et al., (2019) hypothesized a theoretical model measuring the effect of Nostalgic Emotion (NE) on brand loyalty and brand attachment. Nostalgia-themed restaurants located within the vicinity of China were selected for choosing respondents to fill questionnaires following survey method. The findings showed that NE-measured with 4 dimensions including atmosphere, interpersonal nostalgia, family and personal nostalgia-had high impact on brand loyalty and brand attachment. Huang (2017) examined the mediating effect of brand love and brand trust on the experience and loyalty of brand. A total of 237 respondents with ages between 18 to 30 years were selected in sample and questionnaires were distributed. The study results proved that brand love (sensory experience) and brand trust mediates the level of brand experience and loyalty. Considering the above mentioned studies and other studies from the literature, it can be inferred that brand use is one of the vital construct in developing brand loyalty, therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

**H3:** A positive relationship exists between brand use practices and brand loyalty.

Alhaddad (2015) developed a research model indicating that variables like brand image, brand trust and brand loyalty are crucial marketing concepts. A sample of 286 students from business domain was selected to gather data and statistical analysis was done using SEM. The findings revealed that all determinants highly and positively impact brand loyalty and brand trust. Similarly, Chinomona (2016) collected data from 151 South Africa Gauteng Province residents to determine the relationship between communication, image and trust of brand as important antecedents of brand loyalty. The result showed that magnitude of effect of brand communication on the brand image high as compared to trust of brand, although, brand image had a high level of effect on brand trust.

Veloutsou (2015) selected a sample of 189 women in Glasgow, Scotland, to investigate the role of trust, attitude and level of satisfaction towards any brand in building brand loyalty. The users were asked the questions keeping lipsticks well-known brands in mind. The result showed high impact of customer brand relationship on brand loyalty for female population.

Molinillo et al. (2017) worked on consumer-brand relationships (CBRs) topic by collecting data from 339 respondents through an electronic survey. The results showed that active personality types are expected to show high level of brand awareness. The findings concluded that those brands who are active in personality and responsibility lead to higher brand awareness.

Considering the above mentioned studies and the results drawn from the literature, it has been proposed that brand trust is one of the vital construct in developing brand loyalty, therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

**H4:** A positive relationship exists between brand trust and brand loyalty.

Menidjel et al., (2017) studied the moderating effect of personality traits on brand trust and loyalty. The aim of the research was to verify the bond between brand trust, satisfaction of the consumers and brand loyalty with the moderating role of various personality traits such as customer innovation, variety seeking behavior and relationship proneness targeting fast moving consumer goods. Survey data was collected from 443 consumers and SEM and OLS methods were used for statistical analysis. The results showed that brand loyalty has statistically significant positive effect on customer satisfaction variable and brand trust played mediation role in all the studied patterns.

Mabkhot et al., (2017) studies local automobile brand category in the Malaysian market. The results proved a significant positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand image, whereas, brand loyalty and personality was found to show no relationship. Moreover, brand trust mediates the personality and loyalty factors but results show no relation among image of brand and loyalty.

Considering the above arguments and collective findings in the current literature, it has been demonstrated that brand trust acts as a mediator therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

**H5:** Brand trust mediates the relationship between social networking practices and brand loyalty

**H6:** Brand trust mediates the relationship between community engagement and brand loyalty

**H7:** Brand trust mediates the relationship between brand use practices and brand loyalty

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study the role of social media tactics and marketing practices has been explored using a positivist approach. Kreuger and Neuman (2006) stated that deductive approach is more near to the approach followed by natural scientist, therefore, a deductive approach is incorporated to formulate hypotheses from the existing theory by using numerical techniques, which further allows formulation of a particular research design methodology for testing (Silverman, 2013).

According to Islam & Rahman (2016) among the various research methods, survey method proved to be the most suitable for positivist approach. Saunders et al. (2009) argued that survey research technique is commonly linked to the deductive research approach for better results. This explanatory research contributes in explanation of the constructs by using a correlation type of investigation in combination with quantitative approach. The individual consumers are unit of analysis and data is gathered in non-contrived setting from Pakistani consumers within the age bracket of 18 to 40 years. . The reason of taking youngsters under 40 is the inclination of young consumer group having age <40 years towards social media platform services as compared to group of old age consumers (Islam et al., 2018). In many other past studies in the literature, researchers have drawn samples of young consumers based and their statistical inferences are considered more appropriate to explore behavioral intentions in the field of technology adoption research (e.g., Miladinovic & Hong, 2016; Knežević, Stefańska, & Stojković, 2017)

The reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) at two steps i.e. after pilot test and after complete data collection from sample. The 200 responses were obtained on a questionnaire having 122 items during the pilot testing phase and reliability statistics showed Cronbach's alpha value to be 0.770. Due to the factor loading classification, total items in questionnaire were reduced to 67 in the final survey which resulted in an increase in the overall reliability ( $\alpha = .919$ ). The resulted Cronbach alpha supported the explanation of George and Mallery (2003) that measurement tool is said to be excellent (i.e., reliable) and considered to be highly consistent if coefficient value of Cronbach's alpha is 1 or near to that. According to Yang (2005) convenience sampling is the best way to collect data from a large sample in the short period of time. For the study,



researchers used 'item response theory' and followed an assumption based on (20:1) ratio proposed by Kline (2013). The constructs are measured on a five point Likert scale and coding strongly agree as 1 to strongly disagree as 5. The sample size is 500 ( $25 \times 20 = 500$ ), therefore, 550 questionnaires were distributed from which 300 were circulated through e-link on social media channels and 250 were distributed in hard form. Out of 550 questionnaires, 500 dully filled responses were received showing a response rate of 96%.

## 5. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

To testify the model SPSS software is used in this study. SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) is applied using STATA to verify the variables inter-dependency and to explore the relationships in a better way. SEM is most suitable technique for any research with number of variables more than one i.e. dependent, independent, mediating or moderating variable. Anderson and Gerbing (1982) suggested two ways of SEM representation, the first with measurement model and second via structural model. The basic assumptions of SEM are: 1-normality, 2-linearity, 3-multicollinearity and 4-homoscedasticity. These assumptions are tested and proved at pilot testing stage. The results of basic assumptions confirmed the appropriateness of SEM for estimation of the model.

### 5.2 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

The biographical summary of the population is shown through frequency distribution of gender distribution, age groups and education background of the respondents. There are 47.2% male respondents and 52.8% females, 54.5 % respondents have undergraduate qualification, 32.9% have graduate level, 9.6 % Masters Level and 2.9% MPhil level. The reliability of questionnaire is checked through Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The instrument has overall reliability of 0.919. Malhotra (2010) explains that acceptable range for the value of the composite reliability of all items of questionnaire is value above 0.6. The AVEs of all variables are above 0.5 as well. Discriminant validity is also proved with the results (Kline, 2005; Hair et al., 2010). Descriptive analysis is closer to the mean values as explained in Table 3. Pearson correlation for all the independent variables and dependent variable are significant at 0.01 level of confidence (2 tailed). One sample t-test verified perfectly significant values of all the study variables. All the basic tests in SPSS allowed the researcher to proceed ahead.

**Table 1:** Reliability Analysis, Composite reliability of the Variables

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Social Networking (SN)	6	0.796	0.802
Community Engagement (CE)	5	0.752	0.759
Brand Use (BU)	5	0.790	0.759
Brand Trust (BT)	5	0.733	0.740
Brand Loyalty (BL)	4	0.714	0.727

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics, Standard deviation, Regression analysis and One sample t-test

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	One-sample t-test (t value=3) t Sig	
Social Networking (SN)	3.6114	.70987	19.622	0.000
Community Engagement (CE)	3.5773	.70740	18.591	0.000
Brand Use (BU)	3.7083	.77264	20.884	0.000
Brand Trust (BT)	3.6439	.69521	21.101	0.000
Brand Loyalty (BL)	3.5313	.79929	15.144	0.000

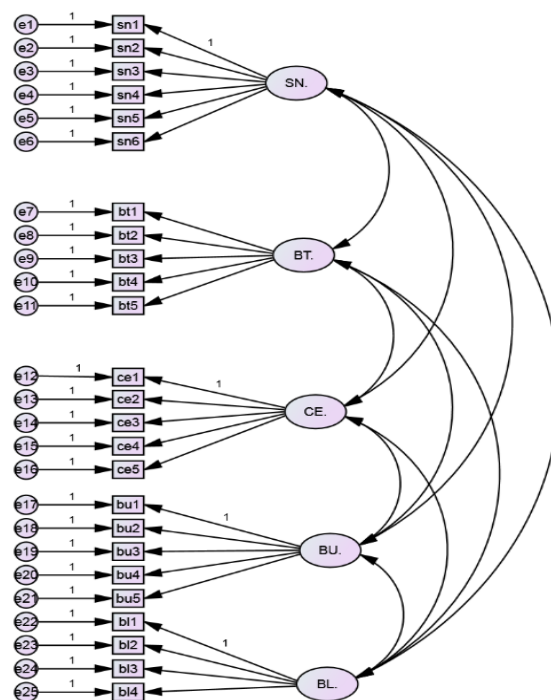
**Table 3:** Pearson Correlation: (Magnitude and Direction of Correlation among Study Variables)**\*\* Significant level 0.01 level (2 tailed)**

	1	2	3	4	5
Social Networking	1				
Community Engagement	0.620**	1			
Brand Use	0.613**	0.613**	1		
Brand Trust	0.580**	0.576**	0.665**	1	
Brand Loyalty	0.442**	0.455**	0.556**	0.634	1

In this study, a five-point Likert scale has been used, thus Pearson correlation coefficient is recommended for such sort of scales to investigate the relationships between study constructs. Moreover, it is the pre-requisite of regression and SEM approaches to test linearity in the study variables, so Pearson correlation is applied and all the variables show significant values at (p=0.01\*\*level) 2 tailed.

### 5.3 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING

#### 5.3.1 Measurement model

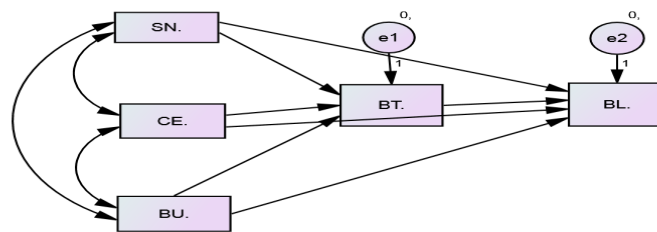


All the values of fit indexes fall within the acceptable range. The value of  $\chi^2/df$  is acceptable to the maximum level of 5 and it is 1.978 for the current study. The value of GFI = 0.920 (> 0.90), the value of AGFI = 0.901 (> 0.80), the values of RMSEA= 0.043 (< 0.08), the value of RMR, NFI, CFI, PCLOSE are 0.047 (< 0.08), 0.886 (> 0.90), 0.940 (> 0.80) and 0.977 (> 0.05) respectively. Hence, all the values of fit indexes are statistically significant and falling within the recommended range, therefore, the model is fit.

**Table 4:** Model Fit Summary for Measurement Model

Fit indices	Recommended values	Results
$\chi^2/df$ .	< 3	1.978
GFI	> 0.9	0.920
AGFI	> 0.80	0.901
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.043
RMR	< 0.08	0.047
NFI	> 0.90	0.886
CFI	> 0.80	0.940
PCLOSE	> 0.05	0.977

### 5.3.2(a) Structural Equation Model



Social Networking (SN), Community Engagement (CE), Brand Use(BU), Brand Trust (BT), Brand Loyalty(BL)

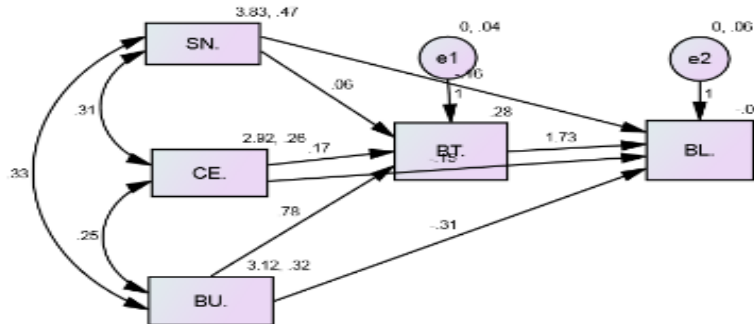
**Table 5:** Standardized Regression Weights for Structural Equation Model

Path of Variables	Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
BT. <--- SN.	.070	.029	2.071	0.038
BT. <--- CE.	.147	.042	3.977	****
BT. <--- BU.	.745	.035	22.247	Sig
BL. <--- SN.	-.149	.035	-4.691	****
BL. <--- CE.	-.103	.051	-2.938	Sig
BL. <--- BU.	-.236	.059	-5.367	****
BL. <--- BT.	1.358	.053	32.905	Sig

The CMIN/DF is having null value which shows that model is totally fit. The value of NFI normed fit index, CFI-comparative fit index and PCLOSE are 1(> 0.90), 1 (> 0.80) and 0.000 (> 0.05), respectively. Hence, all the values of fit indexes are statistically significant and falling within the suggested range, proving the model to be fit. Table 5 shows that all the standardized regression estimated values and all the factor loadings are

significant at  $p < 0.001$  and all the values are within the acceptable range. It can be concluded that the paths defined by variables in SEM are significant for the theoretical relationships.

### 5.3.2 (b) Path analysis



Social Networking (SN), Community Engagement (CE), Brand Use (BU), Brand Trust (BT), Brand Loyalty (BL)

**Table 6:** Mediation Analysis

Mediation Path	Direct Effect W/O Mediation	Direct Effect With Mediation	Indirect Effects	Mediation Results
SN → BT → BL	B = -.162 p = .000	B = -.149 p = .003	B = .094, p = .164	No mediation
CE → BT → BL	B = -.151 p = .003	B = -.103, p = .014	B = .199, p = .009	Partial Mediation
BU → BT → BL	B = -.314 p = .000	B = -.236, p = .018	B = 1.011, p = .009	Partial Mediation

Mediation 1 analysis is explained in Table 6, showing that the direct effect without mediation is significant at ( $p=0.000$ ) and the direct effect with mediator is significant at ( $p=0.003$ ). However mediator's indirect effect is not significant between SN and BL as  $p=0.164$ ). Hence SN doesn't support mediation effect with BL resulting in "No Mediation" for path 1.

Mediation 2 analysis is explained in Table 6, which shows that the direct effect without mediation is significant at ( $p=0.003$ ) and the direct effect with mediator is significant at ( $p=0.014$ ), whereas mediator's indirect effect is also significant between CE and BL at ( $p=0.009$ ). Hence, CE supports mediation effect with BL resulting in "Partial Mediation" for Path 2

Mediation 3 analysis is also explained in Table 6. It shows that the direct effect without mediator is significant at ( $p=0.000$ ) and the direct effect with mediator is significant at ( $p=0.018$ ), however, mediator's indirect is also significant between BU and BL at ( $p=0.009$ ). Hence, BU supports mediation effect with BL resulting in "Partial Mediation" for Path 3.

## 6. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS:

First hypothesis (H1) suggested that a positive relationship exists between social networking practices (SN) and brand loyalty (BL). The statistical

value of  $r=0.442$ ,  $p<0.01$  confirmed a positive relationship between SN and BL. Statistical value of standardized regression weights ( $\beta = -0.162$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) from the structural equation modeling shows a significant relationship between SN and BL, besides SEM analysis also confirmed the adequacy of the hypothesized model. The findings of the current study match those from the past researches including Choudhery et al. (2017) and Segerstad et al. (2015) who suggested that social networking positively affects the brand loyalty of consumers. The results of study by Camil (2017) also match with our findings and endorse positive effect of social networking on brand loyalty. Hence, the first hypothesis (H1) is fully supported and proved that social networking practices are helpful in developing brand loyalty among consumers.

Second hypothesis (H2) suggested that a positive relationship exists between Community engagement (CE) and brand loyalty (BL). The statistical value of  $r=0.455$   $p<0.01$  confirmed a positive relationship between CE and BL. Statistical value of standardized regression weights ( $\beta = -0.151$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) from the structural equation modeling shows a significant relationship between CE and BL, whereas SEM analysis also confirmed the adequacy of the hypothesized model. Islam et al., (2017) and Liu et al., (2018) both in their respective studies showed a positive impact of community engagement on developing brand loyalty among consumers. Similarly, Akrouit et al., (2018) showed a positive impact of community building on brand loyalty, which enhances our research findings and gives support to the study. Hence, the second hypothesis (H2) that community engagement develops brand loyalty among consumers in its best possible way, is proven to be true.

In third hypothesis (H3) a positive relationship between brand use (BU) and brand loyalty (BL) was proposed. The statistical value of  $r=0.556$   $p<0.01$  confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between BU and BL. Statistical value of standardized regression weights ( $\beta = -0.314$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) from the structural equation modeling shows existence of a significant relationship between BU and BL, and SEM analysis also confirmed the adequacy of the hypothesized model. Bhandari & Rodgers (2018) and Wen et al., (2019) explored the significance of brand usage and consumer feedback with respect to their influence on outcomes. Huang (2017) investigated brand relationships and found that brand loyalty enhances with brand usage and its positive experience. Hence, it can be concluded that brand usage practices have a significant impact on the consumers in developing long term brand loyalty.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) proposed a relationship between brand trust (BT) (a mediating variable) and brand loyalty (BL) (a dependent variable). The statistical value of  $r=0.634$  with  $p<0.01$  confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between BT and BL. Studies in the literature by Allahdad (2015) and Chinomona (2016) have also proved that brand trust plays a vital role in developing brand loyalty. Similarly, Veloutsou (2015) and Molinillo et al., (2017) also found a significant positive effect of brand trust and brand loyalty and brand trust is a very strong determinant of brand loyalty.

For H5 the estimated values of regression weights for SN, BT, and BL, are  $\beta=-0.162$  at  $p=0.000$ ,  $\beta=-0.149$  at  $p=0.003$  and  $\beta=0.094$  at  $p=0.164$ , respectively. The results of H5 show that there is no mediation. Therefore, empirical evidence does not support the claim made in fifth hypothesis doesn't that social networking have a positive impact on brand loyalty with

brand trust as mediator. The results of estimates to verify H6 show that regression weights for CE, BT and BL are  $\beta=-0.151$  at  $p=0.003$ ,  $\beta=-0.103$  at  $p=0.014$  and  $\beta=0.199$  at  $p=0.009$ , respectively. It can be inferred from the result of H6 that there exists a partial mediation. Therefore, sixth hypothesis is supported by data. Thus, community engagement has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty with brand trust as mediator. The estimates for H7 show statistically significant values of regression weights for BU, BT and BL with  $\beta=-0.314$  at  $p=0.000$ ,  $\beta=-0.236$  at  $p=0.018$  and  $\beta=1.199$  at  $p=0.009$ , respectively. Similarly, results of H7 also indicate the existence of a partial mediation. Hence, the seventh hypothesis fully supports the proposition that brand use have a positive impact on brand loyalty with brand trust as mediator. Previous studies by Menidjel et al., (2017), Mabkhot, et al., (2017) and Kim et al., (2015) have proved the fact that brand trust acts as a mediating variable with brand loyalty as dependent variable. However, in this study, brand trust has not mediated the relationship between social networking and brand loyalty. Yet, for two other independent variables, community engagement (CE) and brand use (BU), the mediating effect of brand trust (BT) is very clearly seen and measured with brand loyalty (BL) being the dependent variable.

## 6.2 MANAGERIAL & THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study provides an empirical data based evidence to the corporate sector of Pakistan, giving businesses an understanding of the prevailing consumers' trends. In the modern business world, different factors like social networking, brand usage and community engagement should be given due importance by the marketing channels while making strategies to achieve brand loyalty and trust of the consumers. These factors not only help businesses to launch products with the best approach but also facilitate in developing long-term bonding with the users. The theoretical impact to the study lies in its novelty and it is a valuable addition to the existing body of knowledge

## 6.3 LIMITATIONS AND ASSOCIATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study has few limitations in the way it is conducted. These limitations can be overcome with future researcher directions. The data is analyzed in a specific period of time being cross sectional in nature. The research work is targeted upon measuring the direct and mediating effect of the independent and dependent variables, however, the results can be modified by analyzing moderating effect in the model. Moderated mediation can also be checked in some future studies by incorporating different individual traits as moderators in the model. Moreover, this study is analyzed using quantitative analysis, for future researchers' qualitative aspect can also be considered for maximum validity and reliability of the data

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

Considering the current scenario of brands and their effects on the life styles of consumers, it is observed that brands not only gain the monetary benefits for owners but also develop customer's lifetime relationship with them. Therefore, firms should strive to find innovative ways to adopt these modern trends for brand development which is yet in a growing phase. In

this regard, social networking websites focusing on the young Pakistani consumers have a significant effect on developing long-term brand loyalty. The current study elaborated the impact of social media channels, community engagement and brand usage for buying online to enhance brand trust and brand loyalty. The findings of this research are supportive for the original theories of online brand marketing and e-commerce, and experiential marketing to further improve the understanding of consumer loyalty. The study provides brand managers a holistic model to enhance the brand loyalty. Therefore, the research finding can be used by corporate world to devise strategies for enhancing brand image, brand trust and brand loyalty.

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