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Abstract

The emergence of social media applications has opened up new avenues for firms to establish digital connections with their consumers, with a particular emphasis on creating personalized advertising on social media platforms. It is crucial to ensure proper synchronization of content used for advertising on these platforms. The current study focuses on the theoretical model that elucidates how social media advertising contributes to the development of robust brand-related images on social media platforms. Prior research shows that advertising has a significant impact on brand image. Hence, it is essential to discover how this relationship works in terms of social media advertising and how the attitude toward advertising mediates the relationship. This study employed a quantitative research approach. Data were obtained using the convenience sampling method from a sample of 325 respondents. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 and Smart PLS 4.0 were used for the data analysis. The study concluded that social media advertising has a direct effect on brand image and attitude towards advertising acts as a mediating role between advertising and brand image. Also, brand image has a direct effect on brand equity. The results provided several practical implications in understanding the underlying process of creating an effective social media advertising campaign that will impact the formation of consumers' attitudes toward advertising and brand image, eventually leading to brand equity.

Keywords: Social media advertising, Brand Image, Brand Equity, Attitude towards ad, Mobile phone industry

1. Introduction

This study is conducted in detail on how Social Media Advertising (SMA) influences Brand Image (BI) and how Attitude (ATT) toward advertising mediates this relationship. Several studies have measured the impact of advertising on BI but lack evidence of ATT as a mediating variable in the relationship. The only thing permanent is change and concerning the state of internet technology Web 2.0 has emerged as one of the most important tools for marketers to establish a consistent and wide consumer network for their brands. The growth of Social Media (SM) platforms has created a whole new era for organizations and brands, driving them to look for new instinctual methods to approach customers, furthermore, captivate their clients (Jasin, 2022; Savitri et al., 2022). According to Belch and Belch (2019) this rapidly growing marketing channel, which as of now achieves more than 66% of all Web clients, gives unparalleled chances for brands. New doors and advantages have been created for brand promotion by the advent of SM (Arya et al., 2022). One of the obstinate challenges despite developing interest there exists a gap in measuring the effect of SMA on key brand success measures (Arya et al., 2018). This research aims to highlight the proximal and distal effects of SMA on BI.

In early 2000 Web 2.0 was launched as an online application that encouraged online content sharing and Web 2.0 quickly advanced into a wonder raising web communication to another level. It started initially as various platforms for online interaction with a focus on entertainment, but immediately it evolved as a worldwide marvel where connectivity to the online systems is everything and the ability to 'follow' 'like' or 'share' implies control. SM is a web-based instrument for discussing and sharing information among people. SM is more about networking in a way that upholds trust among people and societies involved. To ensure an effective participation via SM the organizations need to think about various promotion techniques so that they can promote their brands differently (Lee & Hsieh, 2022).

SMA is considered a type of online advertisement that stresses social networking and utilizes SM platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as advertising tools (Koay et al., 2020). The objective is to deliver content that the audience will impart to their social network to enable the firm to increase their brand exposure and widen their customer reach. Social networking sites enable advertisers to promote content (Alhabash et al., 2017). Consumer needs for collaborative, interactive, and customized communications have been firmly impacted by the quick multiplication of online networking, which provides another method of correspondence and interaction, not just among customers, but also among, brands and customers (Hemsley-Brown, 2023). Online networking includes a group of web construct applications working concerning the idea of Web 2.0 that energizes client association, support, cooperation, and the sharing of content. Cases of SM incorporate informal communities like (Facebook), (micro) blogs (Twitter), shared ventures (Wikipedia), content groups (YouTube), and virtual universes (Arya et al., 2022).

This research aims to highlight the proximal and distal effects of SMA on BI. Previous researchers have studied the impact of SMA on BI but lack evidence of the mediating role of ATT. In addition to exploring the impact of SMA on BI, this study investigates the impact of BI on Brand Equity (BE). Furthermore, previous literature also lacks evidence of the impact of BI on BE. It is believed that advertising is valuable in building BE (Keller, 2007). Also, advertising creates a favorable attitude toward a brand (McManus et al., 2022). Companies allocate a substantial part of their resources to advertising activities. To evaluate whether or not advertising investments are receiving the best return, it is significant to know how efficiently advertisements capture and maintain the attention of customers to shape the BI. One of the most challenging problems faced by advertising firms, and advertisers remains the concern of measuring the effectiveness of the advertising on BE. As per the reviewed literature, there seems to be a lot of research done in the field of SMA and its impact on BE. Different studies have observed the impact of SMA

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on key brand success elements. However, even though SMA has proven to be the ultimate marketing strategy for firms to approach their target audiences with personalized messages, there has been a lack of studies that focus on understanding the importance of cognitive factors that could play a significant role in this relationship, especially in the context of Pakistan's mobile phone industry.

Specifically talking about the telecommunication sector, in terms of innovation and growth, Pakistan's telecom sector is one of the most prominent sectors in the country. The telecommunications sector consists of three basic sub-sectors: telecom equipment, telecom services, and wireless communication. The major industry segments within these sub-sectors include the following: wireless communications, communications equipment, processing systems, and products. Currently, there are four cellular mobile operators in Pakistan i.e. Telenor Pakistan, Pakistan Mobile Communication Limited (PMCL/Jazz), PTML (Ufone), and China Mobile Pakistan (CMPak/Zong) are providing services using GSM, WCDMA, and LTE, etc. The market size is estimated at US\$ 4.52 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach USD 5.32 billion by 2029. The growth can be attributable to the development of Pakistan's 3G, 4G, and 5G services. Till now, 26 companies have been issued MDM authorization enabling them to manufacture mobile devices in Pakistan. The companies include renowned brands e.g. Samsung, Nokia, Oppo, TECNO, Infinix, Vgotel, and Q-mobile, etc. Pakistan's mobile phone manufacturing industry has grown significantly in recent years as local manufacturing plants produced 10.87 million handsets in the first 8 months of 2023.

As per the reviewed literature, there seems to be a lot of research done in the field of SMA and its impact on different variables. Different studies have observed the impact of SMA on key brand success elements (Donvito et al., 2020). However, even though SMA has proven to be the ultimate marketing strategy for firms to approach their target audiences with personalized messages, there has been a lack of studies that focus on understanding the importance of cognitive factors that could play a significant role in this relationship (Fathima et al., 2022). We have posed three questions to answer through this research i.e. does SMA positively and significantly affect BI? Does ATT towards advertising mediate between SMA and BI? And does BI affect BE? Based on the above three questions our objectives are to measure the impact of SMA on BI, to establish the mediating role of ATT towards advertising between SMA and BI, and to measure the impact of BI on BE.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media Advertising

Advertising plays a vital role in the present competitive era. It helps organizations to communicate with their customers, both potential and current. A considerable part of the organization's sources i.e. budget is allocated to advertising activities. To determine whether or not advertising expenses are earning a good return on investment, it is necessary to know the effectiveness of advertisement and how it captures and maintains the attention of its target audience. SMA is a kind of online advertising that emphasizes social networking services that use social networking platforms i.e. FACEBOOK and Twitter as an advertising tool (Chyrak et al., 2023; Audi et al., 2021; Srivastava et al., 2017). The objective is to create content that SM users will eventually share with their social network to increase the exposure of the brand and further expand the client reach. SMA is the business of proclaiming that a product or service is for sale or of trying to influence customers to purchase a product or service by using the SM platform (Savitri et al., 2022). Advertising incorporates all activities that are required to present any service, idea, or product by a manufacturer, producer, or service provider to a prospective customer. Advertising causes some cost and it is borne by the producer, a service provider called an advertiser. The intended message regarding the product, service, or idea is known as an advertisement. The prime purpose behind advertising is to create awareness and educate the target audience regarding the utility, benefits, availability, and location of the product and induce the target audience to buy the product (Susilo, 2023a). Apart from creating awareness advertising also creates a demand for new products and improves or maintains the existing demand for any product. The objective of SMS is to deliver content that the audience will impart to their SN to enable the firm to increase their brand exposure and widen their customer reach. Social networking sites enable advertisers to utilize a novel way of implementing strategies to promote the content (Jung et al., 2016). Various SM websites enable customers to share details like demographic, geographical, and personal information, which enables advertisers to tailor their message to what is more likely to relate to the customer. In comparison to traditional media, SM audiences can be segmented more conveniently hence companies can ensure that they are allocating their resources to their target audience (Ustik et al., 2023; Audi et al. 2022).

As per the prior literature on SMA advertising has been studied as both, an independent and dependent variable based on the context of the study. Tajvidi and Karami (2017) studied the direct impact of SMA on a firm's performance; and suggested that bringing on SMA as a communication channel helps the firms to achieve their sales objectives. Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been applied to the concept of SM. SET posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives, in other words, consumers interact with others when they perceive such relationships to be rewarding. According to Simon et al. (2016), consumers engage with brand communities to attain benefits such as enhancement of their self-image and self-esteem and therefore seek to identify with well-known brands. SM in comparison to traditional marketing communication media is known to be more widespread due to its capacity to cater to the masses beyond geographical and demographic limitations (Nofal et al., 2020). Internet users are moving away from traditional communication media and are more frequently using SM to seek opinions and brand-related information (Duffett, 2017; Fajri, n.d.). Customers require immediate access to the desired information at their convenience. The evolution of the internet and the interactivity of SM facilitate the development of strong emotional bonds in long-lasting relational exchanges between buyers and sellers and have resulted in strengthening customer BE. Such customers become co-creators in the value-adding process; therefore marketers have recognized the need to understand how to develop strong relationships with their consumers through advertising on online platforms (Susilo, 2023b).

2.2. Attitude towards Advertisement

Earlier, Wahid and Ahmed (2011) defined ATT advertisement as a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure situation. These researchers suggest that consumers' brand choice or behavior is probably going to be influenced by their ATT advertising stimulus. While the two researchers contended the point that ATT advertising ought to be seen as a distinct component, each recognized elective clarifications of what attitude toward the advertising may represent. Afterward, Andrews and Shimp (2017) argued that ATT advertising could be seen as a component of brand attitude. Likewise, other researchers noted that ATT advertising may speak to a surrogate pointer of unmeasured notable convictions about item traits excluded in an experiment. The perceived relevance of advertising messages has a vital role in terms of generating a positive impact on the effectiveness of affective, cognitive, and behavioral areas of advertising (Jiménez Sánchez et al., 2023). For instance, higher importance draws in more consideration (Jung, 2017). Correspondingly, individuals will probably demonstrate an uplifting state of mind toward advertising when it incorporates related items contrasted with less related items.

Beliefs are conceptualized as descriptive thoughts that individuals hold about other individuals, occasions, and things. Consumer's beliefs about advertising are classified into two categories: Socioeconomic beliefs and personal utility. The personal utility beliefs of advertising are divided into three dimensions i.e. entertaining, informative, social role, and image (Jainani, 2023). Socioeconomic beliefs consist of four dimensions spreading materialism, deception, good for the economy, and value corruption. Likewise, consumer concerns about advertising are further classified into two dimensions, i.e. irritation and intrusiveness.

2.3. Brand Image

BI depicts the emotional factors that distinguish the particular brand or its products and significantly impact the customer's BE. The BI can be elaborated based on how the customers perceive the overall brand. It is the key to how customers make decisions after searching and gathering all the product-related information and alternatives (Handoko et al., 2023). Julianawati et al. (2023) characterize BI as a consumer's general impression and perception of a brand. Furthermore, Hengboriboon et al. (2023) state that 'A brand picture is comprised of consumer's attitude, opinion and emotions toward a particular brand, which depicts the psychological or cognitive components of the brand'. The extensive study of previous literature regarding BI suggests that it has been studied under various factors such as purchase intention, customer loyalty, and service quality. Wang and Lin (2022) stated that BI is an emotional and subjective concept and the consumer's perception of the brand has substantial importance regarding BI. Harmon (n.d.) explains that BI is of utmost importance because it contains an important role in the minds of the customers. Harmon emphasizes that the prime purpose of brand research is to recognize or build up the most powerful BI and strengthen that with the help of brand communication i.e. advertising. While studying service quality BI is considered as a prime construct (Hengboriboon et al., 2023). Consumers tend to be influenced by the BI while developing their feelings toward service quality.

2.4. Brand Equity

BE is the basic concept of marketing. Despite the intensive research regarding this concept, still, its literature is still widely inconclusive and fragmented. Various definitions of the BE have been proposed by the researchers. Most of the definitions are discussed concerning the consumer perspective and are based on the logic that the power of a brand lies in the mind of the consumer (Aghaei et al., 2021). Researchers define BE as the monetary value of the brand to the firm. Aaker and Keller laid the foundations of BE research. Aaker (2013) defined the BE in terms of cognitive psychology as 'a set of brand assets and liabilities associated to a brand, its symbol, and name that adds to and subtracts from the provided value by a product or service to a firm or the firm's customer'. In the above definition 'assets' represents brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and other proprietary assets. Kotler et al. (2014) stated a different perspective and came up with the concept of consumer-based BE which he defined as 'a differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer's response to the marketing of the brand'. Keller (2016) conceptualized BE in terms of the brand awareness, favorability, and brand association uniqueness that consumers hold in their memory. The author also explained that the principal advantage that has been derived from BE is being an instrument for gauging the differential effect of consumer behavior on marketing activities.

As per the modern age marketing practice and theory, BE has been recognized as a key strategic asset for firms. Christodoulides et al. (2015) and Khrais and Gabori (2023) have contended that a brand is persuasive or shows its significance at three key levels which are aligned with three distinct but interconnected market dimensions: product, customer, and financial markets: value captured by these markets could be designated as BE. The paradigm of BE has been broadly discussed in the marketing literature and various marketing scholars have offered a broad array of BE conceptualizations and various perspectives on the basic factors that impact BE.

Firms are more concerned with the financial ramifications of the BE, while customers only focus on the perspective of its strategic worth and its capability for application. BE has been studied from three distinct perspectives. The first perspective is regarding cognitive psychology, which characterizes BE as the differential customer response to the brand's marketing activities that originates from customers' associations with the brand (Aaker, 2013; Keller, 2016). This point of view considers the fact that brands having high BE or the brands for which customers have relatively more brand associations tend to create relatively more favorable marketing mix responses from their customers in comparison to the brands having relatively less positive brand associations. Hence as per the cognitive perspective, BE is generated as a result of the consumer's responses to the marketing efforts, and it is influenced by consumers' brand associations (Banuara et al., n.d.).

There have been a few models that present the multilayer stages of BE and the various scopes to study the concept. One of the prominent theoretical models is Consumer-based BE propounded by (Keller, 2016). This point of view is viewed as the most suitable model among all BE models to describe and study the role of advertising in terms of relationship creation with BE. Furthermore, Keller (2016) examined the impact of these aspects of BE and uncovered that both are directly or indirectly linked to the source, influence, and effect of the information regarding the brand.

3. Logic for Research Model

3.1. Consumer-based BE

There have been a few models that present the multilayer stages of BE and the various scopes to study it. One of the prominent theoretical models is Consumer-based BE propounded by (Keller, 2016). This point of view is viewed as the most suitable model among all BE models to describe and study the role of advertising in terms of relationship creation with BE. Based on the perceptual idea of Aaker's notion of brand awareness, Keller (2016) states that the power of a brand rests in customers' minds; based on what they have seen, heard, and learned, about the brand through time. The author, therefore, characterizes consumer-based BE as 'the differential impact of brand knowledge on customer reaction towards the brand marketing'. The author explains brand knowledge in terms of two segments: brand awareness and BI. Brand awareness can easily be measured in terms of recall and recognition. Recall is the customer's capability to retrieve the brand when provided with the product category. BI is comprised of the perceptions regarding a brand as reflected in terms of its brand associations which are held in customer memory and linked to the benefits, attitudes, and attributes. Hence, the goal is to make strong, unique, and positive associations in customers' mindsets that eventually lead to a stronger BI.

3.2. Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) Model

The current study has adopted AIDA to measure the value of SMA. Attention is to attract before selling anything, interest is to demonstrate product features and merits, desire is to create enthusiasm and action is the last step of the process to end at the sale. Attention was underpinned by the cognitive stage, interest, and desire in the affective stage, and action with the conative stage. Similarly, our study has examined the route of the AIDA model and underpinned the value of SMA and ATT as cognitive (attention), BI as affective (interest and desire), and finally BE as conative stage (action).

3.3. Integration of Hypotheses

Although, there have been numerous theoretical models that offer the multilayer stages of BE and the perspectives and dimensions to study it. However, the most renowned theoretical model is the consumer-based BE propounded by Keller (1993). This is considered the most appropriate theoretical model of all the BE models to examine and explain the role of advertising in the BI. This is because advertising itself is a form of communicating and creating awareness.

H₁: *SMA has a significant impact on BI.*

The concept of BI is considered to be a basic concept in the field of advertising for multiple reasons. BI serves as a primary foundation for advertising as by definition it describes the consumer-oriented construct, focusing on the role played by consumers to create a meaningful response toward marketing stimulus. Arya et al. (2022) have studied the impact of a firm's social media marketing efforts on BI. Due to the significant impact of marketing communication, the process of BI formation in the mind of the customer is greatly influenced. The marketing message which particularly corresponds to the consumption experience of the customer has a major impact. Based on theoretical foundations we proposed that:

H_{2a}: *SMA has a significant impact on ATT advertising.*

ATT advertising ought to be considered distinctive from brand attitude and beliefs. Concerning the theoretical grounds of classical conditioning Wahid and Ahmed (2011), contemplated that associating an unknown brand name with a profound valence visual stimulus likely makes the effect transfer from the advertisement to the brand, Kaushal and Kumar (2016) explain that consumers' ATT advertising is one of the most significant indicators of advertising viability since consumer's cognitive capacity towards the advertising are reflected in their feelings and thoughts and consequently will impact their attitude.

H_{2b}: *ATT advertising has a significant impact on BI.*

ATT advertising has been defined as a predisposition to respond in a particular manner towards the advertisement stimulus during the exposure to that particular stimulus. Attitude towards ad influences the customer's cognitive thought and it shapes up the subjective mental picture of the brand in the mind of the customer. Snyder and Cistulli (n.d.) stated that BI is equivalent to brand associations and further stated that there is significant evidence that ATT advertising has a mediating impact on BI. Henderson et al. (2023) further conceptualize that the consumer-based BE model also entails the impact of advertisement on the consumer's perception of brand associations. The willingness of consumers to participate in SM activities to pass product-related information increases more when their ATT advertising remains favorable. Therefore it is of great importance to examine the impact of ATT advertising concerning the usage of SM to explore its new dimensions.

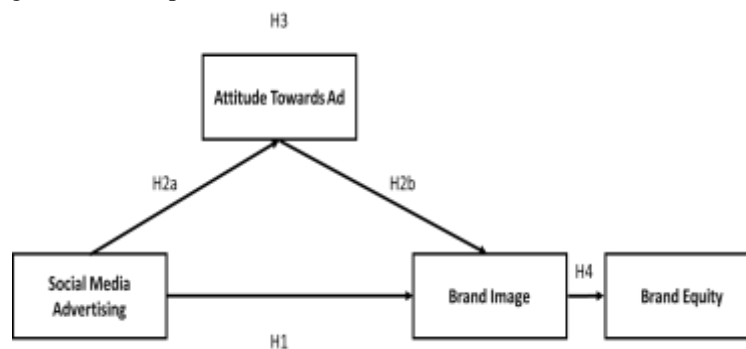


Figure-1: Conceptual Model

The mediation of ATT advertising is also conceptualized by Huang et al. (2013) by using the cognitive response model. This model suggests that exposure to particular information helps to induce a cognitive response, which eventually impacts attitude

formation, and that attitude in turn will influence the formation of BI. Based on the chain of reaction of ‘cognitive response impacting attitude and attitude further impacting BI arises after exposure to SMA. Hence, we propose that:

H₃: *ATT advertising has a mediating impact on the relationship between SMA and BI.*

The significance of BI has motivated marketing researchers to frame the concept of BE. BI has been perceived as a vital concept in marketing literature. Brand awareness is an essential element, yet alone it is not enough to create BE. Other elements such as BI often show their significance. Kotler et al. (2014) have characterized in their CBBE model that BE is the differential effect of brand knowledge on the consumer’s response to the marketing efforts of the firm. Brand knowledge was further decomposed into two broader components i.e. brand awareness and BI and also characterizes that BE is driven by BI. Based on the logic we proposed that

H₄: *BI has a significant impact on BE.*

4. Research Methodology

The current study is quantitative and tests four hypotheses investigating the impact of SMA on BI (proximal impact) eventually leading towards BE (distal impact) by gauging the mediating role of ATT advertising. There are two types of sampling techniques. One is probability sampling, which is further characterized into random, stratified, cluster, and multistage. The second type is the convenience sampling technique which has been used in this study to collect the data from SM users. The sample size in this research has been taken as 325. The exact population within the region was not known therefore the most suitable form of sampling was found to be convenience sampling as suggested by Sekaran and Bougie (2016).

The unit of analysis under study is individuals who are members of the social networking site. Data was collected from social media users. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised two parts. The first part consisted of demographic questions including, age, gender, and social media membership. A questionnaire was used to measure four variables, by adopting items from previously established and tested scales. The questionnaire consisted of 7 demographic variables e.g. (age, gender social media usage, and others) and 23 items measuring the study variables (9 items measuring SMA, 5 items measuring ATT advertising, 5 items measuring BI, 4 items measuring BE).

The scale provided by Saxena and Khanna (2013) to measure the impact of SMA has been used. The 9 items were developed by authors to capture the effectiveness of SMA in composite terms. The responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 i.e. strongly disagree, disagree and neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree on 5. ATT advertising was measured using a scale developed by Ling et al. (2010). BI was measured using a scale developed by Awad Alhaddad (2015). It includes 5 items to measure aspects of BI. The items possess good psychometric qualities and can measure the BI. BE was measured using a scale developed by Awad Alhaddad (2015).

The 23 items were coded using the actual number circled by respondents. None of the items required reversal and were therefore directly categorized. The responses to the demographic variables were coded from 1-6 for age, 1-2 for gender, and 1-2 for social media membership. The 23 items were coded using the actual number circled by respondents. None of the items required reversal and were therefore directly categorized.

Table 1: Preliminary Coding and Scoring Schema of Survey Responses

Research variable	Survey questions			Final Scale	Initial data calculation
	Section	Code	Items		
Social Media Advertising	B	SMA		Interval	Variable Computed
Attitude towards ad	B	AAD			Variable Computed
Brand Image	B	BRI			Variable Computed
Brand Equity	B	BRE		Interval	Variable Computed
Gender	A	1-Male 2-Female		Nominal	None-as is
Social Media Membership	A	1-Yes 2- No		Nominal	None-as is
Age	A	1- 15 to 20 2- 21 to 25 3- 26 to 30 4- 31 to 35 5- 36 to 40 6- 41 & above		Nominal	Converted in range

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1. Outer Model Measure Validation

5.1.1. Initial Run

We used Smart (Partial Least Square Model) Smart (PLS) 4.0 to analyze the model. PLS is a multivariate data analysis technique that is more effective as compared to other techniques. Data diagnostics, descriptive statistics, and correlation were estimated with SPSS 22. Whereas Factor Analysis of latent variables and nested model, direct effects model, and indirect effects models have been calculated using Smart PLS 4.0. The first step of to check the reliability and validity of the constructs the outer loadings of the indicators are analyzed. A value below 0.70 was considered to be insignificant.

Table 2: Outer Model Loadings before Dimension Reduction (N=290)

Constructs	Items	Discriminant Validity	Convergent Validity		Reliability	
			FL [min-max]	AVE	α	CR
SMA	9	0.71	[0.71-0.81]	0.50	0.87	0.90
ATT	5	0.77	[0.70-0.84]	0.59	0.83	0.88
BI	5	0.76	[0.66-0.81]	0.58	0.82	0.87
BE	4	0.81	[0.73-0.89]	0.66	0.83	0.88

Notes: SMA=Social Media Advertising; ATT= Attitude towards advertising; BI=Brand Image; BE=Brand Equity

In the first run, SMA has α value of 0.87 with a CR value of 0.90. ATT has α value of 0.83 with a CR value of 0.88. BI with 5 items α value of 0.82 with a CR value of 0.87 and lastly BE has α value of 0.83 with a CR value of 0.88. Some outer loadings were below the cutoff value of 0.70, based on this we proceeded with the final run.

5.1.2. Final Run

After running the first run, factors to be deleted are identified. Factors including SMA7, SMA8, SMA9, and BI5 were removed because their outer loading values were below 0.70.

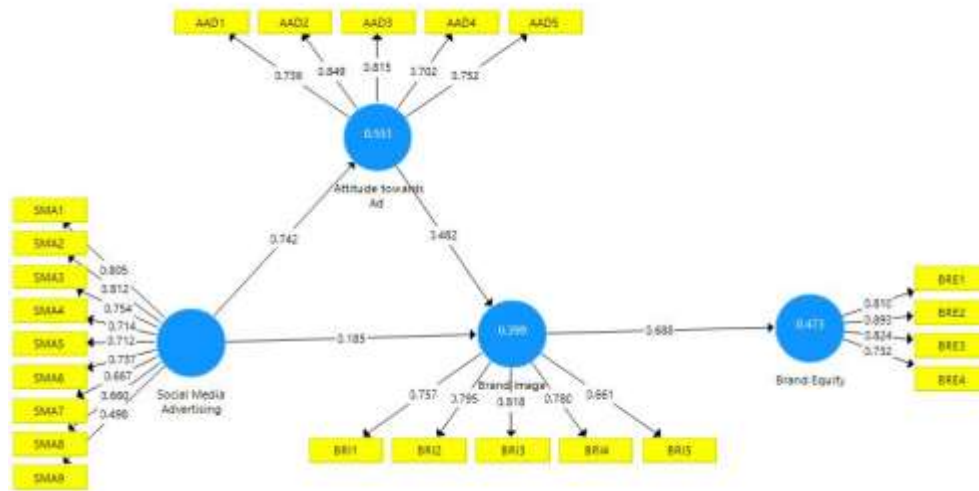


Figure-2: Outer Model Loadings

Table 3: Outer Model Loadings after Dimension Reduction (N=290)

Constructs	Items	Discriminant Validity	Convergent Validity		Reliability	
			FL [min-max]	AVE	α	CR
SMA	6	0.78	[0.73-0.85]	0.61	0.87	0.90
ATT	5	0.77	[0.72-0.85]	0.59	0.83	0.88
BI	4	0.79	[0.77-0.81]	0.63	0.80	0.87
BE	4	0.81	[0.72-0.89]	0.66	0.83	0.88

Notes: SMA=Social Media Advertising; ATT= Attitude towards advertising; BI=Brand Image; BE=Brand Equity

Table 4: Discriminant Validity Checks (N=290) First Run

Constructs	Fornell and Larcker Criterion				HTMT Ratio		
	SMA	ATT	BI	BE	SMA	ATT	BI
SMA	0.82†						
ATT	0.49**	0.77†			0.49		
BI	0.76**	0.41**	0.76†		0.75	0.41	
BE	0.49**	0.33**	0.51**	0.83†	0.49	0.32	0.51

Notes: SMA=Social Media Advertising; ATT= Attitude towards advertising; BI=Brand Image; BE=Brand Equity; ** Correlation significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed); †√ (AVE) Values in the Diagonal

The Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.70, and composite reliability results are also within the range above 0.70. The AVE's values have also enhanced in the second run. The Cronbach's Alpha value of all indicators showed that the indicators are reliable at a value greater than 0.70. The composite reliability of all the indicators showed values above 0.70. The AVE value of all variables is significant at values above 0.50.

We used the Fornell and Larcker criterion to establish discriminant validity. Table 4 shows the values square root of AVE's in the diagonal.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity Checks (N=290) Second Run

Constructs	Fornell and Larcker Criterion				HTMT Ratio		
	SMA	ATT	BI	BE	SMA	ATT	BI
SMA	0.82†						
ATT	0.52**	0.79†			0.50		
BI	0.61**	0.42**	0.76†		0.78	0.42	
BE	0.49**	0.33**	0.52**	0.83†	0.49	0.32	0.52

Notes: SMA=Social Media Advertising; ATT= Attitude towards advertising; BI=Brand Image; BE=Brand Equity; ** Correlation significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed); †√ (AVE) Values in the Diagonal

Table 5 shows the values of the square root of AVE’s values for the final run, as can be seen, all the values are greater than the respective correlation values, and the values satisfy the condition for discriminant validity. Table 5 also shows the HTMT ratios which are less than 0.85, another condition to fulfill for checking discriminant validity.

6. Descriptive Demographics

Of a total sample of 290, 34.5% are within the 15-20 years age bracket, 43.1% are within the 21-25 years 14.8% are within the age bracket of 26-30 years and 7.6% are among 31-35 years. The majority of the respondents were females (57.6%) and 42.4% were male. Furthermore, the years of using mobile was segregated such as 9% of the respondents were within less than 1 year, 12.4 % were in 1-2 years, 35.5% were in 2-5 years, and 32.1% were in 5-10 years while 11% were in 10 and above. The natural fallout of the sample for mobile brands depicts that Samsung is the most used mobile brand with 36.6% of mobile users while Apple is in second position with 17.9% of users.

7. Hypotheses’ Testing (Structural Model)

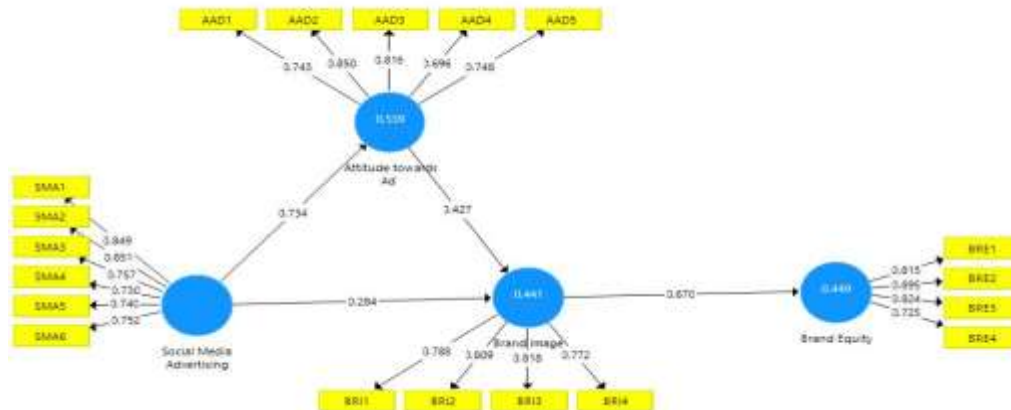


Figure-3: Inner Model Loadings

Table 6: Path Analysis Results (N=290)

Path	Path Coefficient	t-Values	p-Values	95% Confidence Intervals (LL-UL)	Significance (p < 0.05)
Direct Relationships					
SMA → BI (H ₁)	0.28	5.42	0.000	[0.20-0.43]	Yes
SMA → ATT (H _{2a})	0.73	8.87	0.000	[0.30-0.51]	Yes
ATT → BI (H _{2b})	3.42	1.44	0.150	[-0.06-0.37]	No
BI → BE (H ₄)	0.67	5.45	0.000	[0.30-0.52]	Yes
Indirect Relationships					
SMA → ATT → BI (H ₃)	0.39	7.34	0.001	[0.20-0.43]	Yes
R ² (ATT)			0.53		
R ² (BI)			0.44		
R ² (BE)			0.44		

Notes: SMA=Social Media Advertising; ATT= Attitude towards advertising; BI=Brand Image; BE=Brand Equity

The values of the R square of BI explained 44.4%, ATT explained 53.9% and BE explained 44.4%.

8. Discussion on Results

This study was conducted to explore the impact of SMA on BI along with the mediating role of ATT. The hypotheses were developed based on the consumer-based BE and AIDA model. To test the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses the path model was run. Table 6 shows that R²=0.539 (ATT), 0.44 (BI), and 0.44 (BE) significant mediating relationship of ATT for an outcome

of BE. The beta values or path coefficients depicted in Table 6 accept the relationship of SMA, BI, and BE as all the p values were above the 0.1 benchmark. The mediating effect of ATT is also evidenced in Figure 3. Therefore H3 is also accepted. Keeping in view the direct relationship, findings suggest that SMA has a direct positive impact on BI. The second hypothesis of this study shows that SMA also has a positive impact on ATT advertising; findings also suggest that the SMA has a high positive impact on ATT; similarly, findings also suggest that ATT has an insignificant relationship with BI. The findings of this study proved the mediating role of ATT advertising in the relationship between SMA and BI.

The results of the study provide interesting conclusions regarding the impact of SMA on BI and the mediating role of ATT advertising. The research study has established that SMA is playing an efficient and effective role in establishing BI and eventually attaining BE. In addition, the mediating mechanism studied in this research where ATT advertising was mediating between SMA and BI, it is confirmed that ATT advertising has been mediating SMA and BI. Overall, this study concludes that Samsung's SMA has a significant impact on BE and there is a significant mediating relation of ATT advertising between SMA and BI. This study defined, conceptualized and empirically measured the impact of SMA on BI by the indirect path of ATT advertisement. Therefore the results of this study will enable marketers who aim to enhance BI and BE to focus their efforts on SMA.

9. Implications and Significance

For managers, it is quite evident from the previous literature and the results of this study that in today's modern world where human interactions have been digitalized, integrating SM with the firm's marketing strategy is necessary. Samsung has gained a strong user base and its BE by using SMA. SMA not only helps consumers find relevant information but is also very helpful for firms to create their image in the mind of the customer and eventually attain the BE of their brand. Marketing managers shall consider the ATT advertisement as a key element while approaching their customers through SMA as the present study has shown that ATT advertising has a mediating role when it comes to creating a strong BI to attain the ultimate goal of BE.

This study attempted to add to the existing body of literature in the context of theoretical lenses. Our study added that customers build BI due to the effect of the value of SMA. Secondly, the consumer-based BE theory helped to understand the ripple effects of stimuli. SMA and ATT created the ripple effect. However, our results explain that SMA can help develop positive ATT when the company is facing problems in providing a better experience. We can also draw that the effect of one construct on another can break the hierarchy of effects. The effect of SMA was previously developed by researchers but the inclusion of BI has advanced the understanding to the next level that BI has also positively affected BE. Thirdly AIDA model also provided the conceptual background to manifest the theoretical model the way it has been designed for the study. Attention, interest, desire, and action are the main sequences in which AIDA suggests nesting the constructs. We can add that the ATT of a customer was mainly because of the SMA value (company action) which increased the desire to recommend and make recommendations regarding the product's SMA.

10. Limitations and Future Directions

Convenient sampling was used in the present study. The study's primary focus is on mobile brands within the context of Pakistan, potentially limiting the broader applicability of its findings to other industries or countries. To enhance the cross-cultural and cross-industry relevance of the proposed model, future research could consider expanding the scope to include a wider range of geographical locations and product categories. This would enable a more comprehensive assessment of the model's applicability and provide valuable insights into potential variations across different cultural contexts and industries. The study's findings may be subject to limitations due to a potentially small sample size or lack of representativeness, which could affect the generalizability and validity of the results. To enhance the strength and reliability of the findings, future research could strive for larger and more diverse samples. By expanding the sample size and including participants from a broader range of backgrounds, the study's results would be more robust and applicable to a wider population. Although this study has found encouraging results and interesting implications, certain avenues are still open for future research. Firstly by restricting the product category to mobile phone brands, the findings are limited to the cellular industry.

The impact of SMA and ATT advertising may differ when investigating a different set of product brands, categories, or industries. Therefore future research may carry out an analytical comparison of the effects on different types of brands or product categories. Moreover, BE has been studied in composite terms, but future studies may study the impact of SMA on the different constructs of BE i.e. brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand identity, and perceived quality. It will offer great potential to marketers in terms of creating a broader understanding that what is the effect of SMA on individual components of BE. Finally, it would be interesting and useful to look into attitudes toward SM. This would provide useful insights for marketers regarding SM usage patterns and perception. Hence it could be useful for marketers to specify the scope of their advertisement by digging into the attitude toward SM.

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