

Investigating the Role of Social Media Marketing towards Brand Loyalty in Online Shopping

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary digital environment, social media has emerged as an effective instrument for companies to reach out to customers and establish long-lasting relationships. This research explores the effect of primary dimensions of Social Media Marketing (SMM)—entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, eWOM, and content quality—on brand loyalty among internet consumers. Although prior studies have discussed the overall impact of SMM on consumer behavior, few have focused on how these particular elements affect brand loyalty in online shopping. Adopting a quantitative study, responses were gathered from 350 young adults and working professionals through a standardized questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale, administered through social media platforms. For ensuring analytical strictness, statistical methods like Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were employed. The results show that all six SMM dimensions have a significant and positive impact on brand loyalty, emphasizing the significance of creating compelling, customized content strategies in case of online shopping.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Brand Loyalty, Online Shopping, e-Commerce, eWOM, Customization, Content Quality, Digital Consumers

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has revolutionized the marketing paradigm where change in customer lifestyle has brought more and better use of social media networks (Jackson & Ahuja, 2016) and expected to do so in the upcoming times. On a continuum social media has played a major role in the life of the customers to make better informed decisions and on the other end it is a game changer for number of organizations in each kind of domain. Ye, Hou, Wang, & Omar, (2024) undermines the effective use of social media matrix and relationship marketing for enhancing companies environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance. Thus, it has been outlined that social media has increasingly emerged as an integral part of consumers' brand perceptions and behaviors (Godey et al., 2016). Social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter etc.) is now an essential, daily and regular mode of connection in individuals routine lives (Jackson, & Ahuja, 2016) but for brand it is imperative to measure uninterrupted brand image, social media effectiveness and customers cyclical behavior answering few questions about brands changing behavior to reach consumers, measurement of communication value, enhancing customer loyalty, and connection made with their audiences' (Anjorin et al., 2024). Devoted results from multiple consumer centric reports synthesize that social media plays an interesting role in the decision-making process and purchase activity (Jeswani, 2023).

It is highly acceptable that integration of social media into the marketing mix and strategies has expanded new ways to access and connect with consumers in an interactive format (Moore 2012). Currently, consumers have access to brand pages that allow sharing content across their networks, providing feedback, and participating in a development of a community surrounding an organization's brand, which represents a new dimension of the brand/consumer relationship (Khan et al., 2016). In continuity to the advantages of using social media for brands, it highly demonstrates features of eliminating the barriers of communication and directly engagement with consumers at multiple touch points, as well as to be responsive to consumers' needs and requests (Bashir et al.,

2024). In addition to increasing accessibility and level of engagement clear the way for improved customer service, access to information, and building trust as a facilitator of brand loyalty (Abasin & Huseynov, 2020).

Moreover, the participatory aspect of social media allows consumers to co-create brand stories either through user-generated content (reviews, testimonials, opinions, etc.) or modern-day customers take no time to change brand options (Ismail, 2017; Sohaib et al., 2022). The overarching benefits make marketers to devote effort into creating visually appealing and emotionally-engaging content, as well as offering opportunities for consumers to create their own content (Jayasekara Liyanaarachchige, & Thirana Gamage, 2024). Social media networks are without borders; brands can reach a global audience where technology interventions have taken the role of infomediary from intermediary (Bhatia, 2020).

The present study investigating the research gap further aim to explore the dimensions of Social Media Marketing and its contribution to brand loyalty in the over demanding domain of online shopping in general. The key focus of the current research is on identifying multiple social media strategies while exploring dimensions of entertaining content, interactive content, personalized experience and eWOM to build consumer trust and sustained brand loyalty over time. The current research positions to aim and show which SMM elements are most critical in building brand-consumer relationships in digitally mediated and transaction-based setting in a developing nation like India where social media penetration is more and fast as compared to the developed nations (Coleman, Manago, & Cote 2016).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media marketing is the adoption of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to display e-commerce merchandises, connect, and create rapport between brands and customers. SMM also emphasizes factors that enhance the power of brand loyalty creation, such as personalization, connections in real time, and two-way interactions between brands and consumers (Yusuff & Odubanjo, 2020). Brand awareness and brand-loyalty are major consumer behaviours heavily influenced by the SMM (social media marketing) core or foundational behaviour factors of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, personalization, eWOM, and content quality (Qamar et al., 2023).

Entertainment involves content with some form of emotional engagement or humour that captures attention and enhances the brand connection (Chi, 2011). Interactivity refers to the two-way conversation and engagement with consumers through comments, feedback, and other tools to make customers feel heard (Muntinga et al., 2011). Trendiness is the degree to which a brand's content is relevant and contemporary with the ongoing social media trends that keep the brand visible and relatable (Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). Customization or personalization refers to tailored content based on user preferences and behaviour to enhance satisfaction & emotional attachment to the brand (Kaplan et al., 2010). eWOM which consists of user-generated reviews/recommendations, also features the trusted social proof that can change other peoples' buying behaviours (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Content quality is the degree of quality of material, referring to clarity, usefulness, and visual appeal, which together can help establish trust, credibility and present your brand professionally (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

So here, we define brand loyalty as what happens when a consumer has a consistent preference for and positive attitude towards a brand, resulting in repeated purchases products of the same brand and every time they want to tell somebody how much they love the brand. Vu Thi Thu & Vu Thi Phuong (2021) present SMM as a consideration to influence both attitude and behavior. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) describe brand loyalty as attitudinal loyalty (positive emotional attachment), behavioural loyalty (repeat purchase), and emotional or commitment loyalty (brand's deep level of trust and long history).

Now-a- days social media has developed from a single mode of communication into a large-scale marketing platform to substantial degree of effect on consumer behaviour and brand image (Schivinski, & Dabrowski, 2016). In contrast to traditional media, social media enables real-time, interactive, personal communication between brands and consumers which creates greater opportunities for brands to develop deeper, more reliable and even trusted relationships with customers (Ismail, 2017; Alalwan et al., 2017). As a result, SMM has emerged as multi-dimensional, interconnected strategy, made up of six, multifaceted, dimensions entertainment,

interactivity, trendiness, customization / personalization, eWOM, and content quality, of which all help determine consumer experience and brand loyalty (Bashir et al., 2024; Van & Fah, 2022). Therefore, it is vital to understand how each of these components has effect on long-term consumer loyalty in the context of e-commerce context, where new competition is fierce emerging fast, brand switching is very common, price wars are on the top and loyalty is becoming increasingly vital. The literature review outlines the relationship among dimensions of SMM and brand loyalty to provide a conceptual basis for this undertaken study.

Entertainment in SMM and Brand Loyalty

- **H1:** There is positive relationship between entertainment in Social Media content and brand loyalty.

Entertainment-based content is essential for grabbing attention and creating engagement on social media. According to Khan et al. (2016) and Van & Fah (2022), engaging formats such as memes, short videos, reels, funny posts, and behind-the-scenes storytelling greatly improve emotional engagement and leads to brand recall at right times. The similar type of content not only entertains, but creates an everlasting relationship recall that can making a better connect with the brand and create gain customer loyalty over time. As Amblee and Bui (2011) asserted, brands that entertain an audience tend to have greater repeat engagement and attachment to a brand. Similar kind of results are highlighted in the multiple areas like luxury brands (Bazi, Filieri, & Gorton, 2023), gaming (Baek, Ko, & Marsh, 2014), education (Dzogbenuku, Doe, & Amoako, 2022) etc.

Interactivity and Consumer Engagement

- **H2:** Interactivity on Social Media platforms positively influences brand loyalty.

Interactive components of social media platforms, like live sessions, polls, quizzes, and replying to comments provide equal opportunities for maintaining the reciprocal communication between the brand and the consumer. Rai & Dahal (2024) affirmed that interactivity fosters customer engagement, strengthens community ties, and enhances loyalty through regular conversation and responsiveness. Van & Fah (2022) support this argument by noting that when consumers feel acknowledged and valued in real time, they are likely to establish longer-term relationships with the brand.

Trendiness in Content and Cultural Relevance

- **H3:** Trendiness of the social media contents enhances brand loyalty.

By adapting trendiness into content, brands can connect with current cultures and evolving consumer behaviours. Bashir et al. (2024) explain that use of trending hashtags, viral challenges, and real-time marketing based on current events can enhance overall brand visibility and relevance, especially against youth-focused audiences. Trend-aware brands can stay top-of-mind, and may develop a feeling of consumer loyalty by being relatable and timely.

Customization and Personalization in SMM

- **H4:** Personalization/customization on social media platforms is positively related to brand loyalty.

Personalization has become a crucial strategy to help consumers feel acknowledged and appreciated. Kristiyono et al. (2023) and Amelia et al. (2023) explain that personalized content—including content including appropriately targeted dynamic ads, personalized product recommendations and personalized offers in return—encourages greater consumer engagement and consumer-involvement leading engagement by consumers on a personal level. Van & Fah (2022) note that even offering users the ability to create their own personalized experience through things like user-generated content or polls on their corporate social media pages can increase feelings of emotional investment.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Consumer Trust

- **H5:** eWOM significantly impacts brand loyalty.

E-WOM is said to be an extremely powerful precursor of consumer trust and brand loyalty. Alalwan et al. (2017) have noted that all types of peer recommendations such as ratings and reviews, testimonials, and user-generated content inform perceptions and establish credibility. Positive eWOM helps reinforce loyalty because thereby it acts as social proof, while negative e-WOM can seriously destroy a brand's reputation if ignored. Bashir et al. (2024) noted that responding to problems voiced by consumers was critical in instilling trust and reassuring customers that their concerns were being heard and addressed.

Quality of Social Media Content and Brand Perception

- **H6:** High-quality content (informative and visually appealing) contributes positively to brand loyalty.

The quality of content in terms of visual attractiveness, relevance, coherence, and consistency can significantly affect consumer perceptions. A high-quality post represents professionalism, increases the credibility of the brand, and increases interest of consumers to engage more with the brand. According to Ismail (2017), to create a positive and long-lasting impression, we would want our highly rated audience to encounter to enjoyable storytelling, high-quality aesthetics, and good informative content that is interesting and enjoyable to the audience.

Theoretical Foundation

When building a robust theoretical framework to understand social media marketing impacts on brand loyalty in online shopping, several existing theories can help illustrate the processes and reasons for understanding the locus of these actions. The Social Exchange Theory hypothesizes that all social behaviours take place within an exchange process. Each participant of the exchange attempts to maximize benefits and minimize costs (Manyanga et al., 2024). Within the construct of social media, when a consumer interacts with a brand, an exchange will require a perceived value in the form of entertainment, content, and personalization (Bashir et al., 2024). Once their excitement is fulfilled, creates an expectation of return and creates loyalty toward the brand (Cai, 2024). The theory explains the reasons for entertainment, interactivity, customization and quality of content on social media sites can impact brand loyalty (Godey et al., 2016)

Additionally, the Stimulus-Organism-Response model provides another useful theoretical framework that shows how marketing stimuli, such as social media content, can affect a consumer's internal state (such as emotions, perceptions), which then leads to behaviour outcomes (brand loyalty) (Bashir et al., 2024). The brand's social media efforts act as the stimulus that draws customers' general perceptions, attitudes, and emotions (organism) that are related to the eventual response (brand loyalty). The model further emphasizes the necessity of developing social media content that engages consumers at an emotional level because positive emotions have been identified as primary indicators of brand loyalty. In addition, the Technology Acceptance Model could also be utilized to represent consumers' perceptions (usefulness and ease of use) of social media platforms, which can both influence brand adoption and brand loyalty. When consumers perceive that a brand's social media platform is easy to use, informative and valuable, they are likely to have positive attitudes towards a brand and consequently engage in loyal behaviours (Bashir et al., 2024).

Need of the Study (Research Gap)

There are numerous studies that focus on how SMM influences consumer behaviour and brand loyalty in sectors such as fashion, hospitality, and telecommunications (Ercis et al. (2020), Man and Rahman (2019) but limited research exists about how the various components of SMM (entertainment, interaction, novelty, customization, content quality, and e-WOM) influence brand loyalty in online shopping or e-commerce contexts. Most of the studies either focus on limited area of brand engagement, purchase intention, or loyalty within the offline or traditional contexts and do not account for the unique behaviour in e-commerce, namely how digital engagement and personalization through SMS, as well as real time engagement through social channels are instrumental in shaping loyalty. Furthermore, while research examining the impact of specific components of SMM has been undertaken, few studies have explored these elements together, and not taken into account their specific, direct or indirect impacts on brand loyalty for digital natives. In an era of alpha, gamma and beta population increasing online shopping continues to evolve resulting in rapid compounded growth driven by the integration of social

media for technological (e.g., virtual stores) engagement. Therefore, there is an immediate need for quantitative study on the meaningful use of SMM targeting brand loyalty on dedicated online shopping platforms. The undertaken study aims to fulfil void by examining the role of important SMM elements and its impact on brand loyalty within the context of online shopping ecosystem.

Objectives of the Study

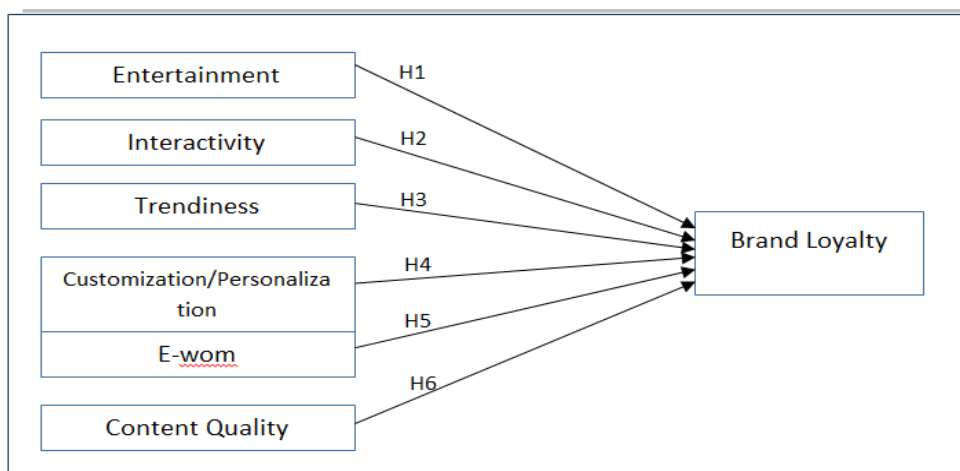
- To analyse the impact of entertainment in Social Media Marketing on brand loyalty in e-commerce.
- To examine how interactivity on social media platform influences brand loyalty towards e-commerce.
- To analyse the effect of trendiness in social media content on brand loyalty.
- To assess the role of customization/personalization in social media marketing in building brand loyalty.
- To evaluate how eWOM shared via social media affects brand loyalty in e-commerce.
- To estimate how the quality of Social Media content impacts brand loyalty in e-commerce.

Hypotheses: Drawing upon the aforementioned objectives and insights from the literature review, the study proposes the following hypotheses

- **H1:** There is positive relationship between entertainment in Social Media content and brand loyalty.
- **H2:** Interactivity on Social Media platforms positively influences brand loyalty.
- **H3:** Trendiness of the social media contents enhances brand loyalty.
- **H4:** Personalization/customization on social media platforms is positively related to brand loyalty.
- **H5:** eWOM significantly impacts brand loyalty.
- **H6:** High-quality content (informative and visually appealing) contributes positively to brand loyalty.

These hypotheses were tested using regression and correlation analysis.

Proposed Conceptual Model



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the role of six Social Media Marketing (SMM) dimensions namely entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, e-WOM, and

content quality- on brand loyalty (behavioural, attitudinal, emotional) on online shopping. A quantitative approach was employed to gather data using a structured Google Forms questionnaire (5-point Likert scale). The target respondents who belong to (Himachal Pradesh and Haryana) were young adults and working professionals who also have online shopping and social media experience. The researchers used convenience sampling, resulting in 350 valid responses via WhatsApp, Instagram, and email. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, relationships among variables were determined using Pearson Correlation Analysis, and regression analysis was used to determine the degree of SMM dimensions affecting brand loyalty.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S. No.	Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Age	Under 18	5	1.4%
		18–24	233	66.6%
		25–34	102	29.1%
		Above 34	10	2.9%
2	Gender	Male	171	48.9%
		Female	179	51.1%
3	Highest Education	High School	11	3.1%
		Diploma/Certificate	21	6.0%
		Bachelor's Degree	127	36.3%
		Master's Degree	183	52.3%
		Doctorate or above	9	2.6%
4	Monthly Income	Less than 5000	97	27.7%
		5001–10000	109	31.1%
		10001–20000	28	8.0%
		More than 20000	116	33.1%
5	Occupation	Student	218	62.3%
		Self-employed	12	3.4%
		Private Sector Employee	97	27.7%
		Government Sector Employee	23	6.6%
6	Usage Frequency of Social Media	Multiple times a day	272	77.7%
		Once a day	55	15.7%
		A few times a week	23	6.6%

		Rarely	2	0.6%
7	Purchase Duration	Weekly	83	23.7%
		Monthly	149	42.6%
		Rarely	97	27.7%
		Never	21	6.0%
8	Most Influential Social Media Platform	Facebook	32	9.1%
		Instagram	246	70.3%
		YouTube	60	17.1%
		Twitter/X	12	3.4%

The sample for the study consisted of 350 respondents with a large proportion of them being aged between 18 - 24 years old (66.6 %), followed by 25 - 34 years old (29.1%) which indicates that the population is these younger ages. 52.3% of the respondents were female (51.1%) and males (48.9%) were close in number. 52.3% of respondents had a Master's degree, 36.3% had a Bachelor's degree which shows that the sample was a well-educated group. For the monthly income segment, 33.1% reported an income level higher than ₹20,000.00, while 31.1% reported having an income between ₹5,001.00 - ₹10,000.00 per month. 62.3% of the respondents were students with the remaining being private-sector employees (27.7%). Social media was used very actively with 77.7% of the respondents using it on a multiple times a day basis. 42.6% of the respondents identified that they purchased products online often and with small percentage of respondents identifying they purchased weekly (23.7%). Instagram was the platform that had most influence on their shopping decisions (70.3%), followed by YouTube (17.1%) and Facebook (9.1%). This shows that Instagram had a strong impact on how the consumers shopped.

Reliability

Internal scale consistency was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha, and an acceptance level of at least 0.6 was specified to display good reliability.

Table 2: Variability

S. No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Entertainment	.760
2.	Interactivity	.791
3.	Trendiness	.799
4.	Customization/Personalization	.770
5.	Electronic Word of Mouth	.747
6.	Content Quality	.798
7.	Brand loyalty	.886
8.	Overall	.956

Descriptive Statistics of Independent variables

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Lowest	Highest	Mean	Std. Dvtion
Entertainment	350	1.00	5.00	3.9765	.81340
Interactivity	350	1.00	5.00	3.8576	.91523
Trendiness	350	1.00	5.00	3.9028	.86751
Customization/ Personalization	350	1.00	5.00	3.9347	.86241
Electronic word of mouth (eWOM)	350	1.00	5.00	3.8141	.88607
Content Quality	350	1.00	5.00	3.8861	.87834

INTERPRETATION: We can observe from the table 3 that the descriptive statistics indicate that participants overall viewed all six social media marketing dimensions positively. The highest rated were Entertainment (Mean = 3.98) and Customization/Personalization (Mean = 3.93), indicating consumers are most influenced by fun and customized content. Trendiness (Mean = 3.90) was equally well-rated, which indicates that one has to keep oneself updated with the latest trends in order to appeal to users. Content Quality (Mean = 3.88) and Interactivity (Mean = 3.86) were not far behind, with Electronic Word of Mouth (Mean = 3.81) having the lowest mean—but that was still positive. The standard deviations (around 0.8–0.9) indicate a reasonable level of agreement from respondents. Overall, these findings point to the significance of participatory, and personalized social media content for propelling user attitudes in e-commerce contexts.

Data Analysis

The present study investigated the relationship between six key elements of Social Media Marketing (SMM)—entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization/personalization, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and content quality—and their impact on brand loyalty in the e-commerce domain. A series of Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analyses were conducted on data collected from 350 respondents to explore the strength and significance of these associations.

Table 4: Correlation Between SMM Elements and Brand Loyalty (N = 350)

SMM Element	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Entertainment	0.667**	.000	High positive correlation
Interactivity	0.704**	.000	High positive correlation
Trendiness	0.701**	.000	High positive correlation
Customization/Personalization	0.692**	.000	High positive correlation
eWOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth)	0.738**	.000	Very high positive correlation
Content Quality	0.760**	.000	Very high positive correlation

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As it was outlined in Table 4, all SMM elements had correlations with brand loyalty that were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), and had strong positive correlations ($r = 0.667$ to $r = 0.760$), suggesting that as the elements of SMM increased in either strength or frequency, brand loyalty would increase. More specifically, eWOM ($r = 0.738$) and content quality ($r = 0.760$) had very high correlations, indicating that in lieu of the SMM factors, consumers' perceptions of peers' endorsements, and the type of content shared is of utmost importance to maintain customer loyalty. The theoretical underpinnings in the latter statement predict that trust and credibility, which occur through peer endorsement and meaningful content development, are the psychological bases for brand loyalty.

Table 5.: Regression Summary: Impact of SMM Elements on Brand Loyalty

SMM Element	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Value	Sig.	% Variation Explained
Entertainment	0.667	0.445	0.442	158.035	.000	44.5%
Interactivity	0.704	0.496	0.493	193.853	.000	49.6%
Trendiness	0.701	0.491	0.489	190.214	.000	49.1%
Customization/Personalization	0.692	0.478	0.476	180.743	.000	47.8%
eWOM	0.738	0.545	0.543	235.886	.000	54.5%
Content Quality	0.760	0.577	0.575	268.557	.000	57.7%

Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

Note: All models are significant at $p < .001$

The clear results of simple linear regressions are presented in Table . Each SMM dimension, presented individually as a predictor of, and contribution to brand loyalty, with R² ranging from 0.445 to 0.577, meaning between 44.5% to 57.7% of the variance in brand loyalty can be accounted for using only the SMM variable.

Content quality was the strongest predictor of brand loyalty, accounting for 0.577 of the variance in brand loyalty (R² = 0.577, F = 268.557, $p < 0.001$), followed closely by eWOM (R² = 0.545), signifying the importance of high quality informative content and users by using emergent forms of content to endorse brands driving consumer loyalty behavior in digital environments.

Interactivity (R² = 0.496) and trendiness (R² = 0.491) showed similarly high value. These predictors reflect the value of two-way communication as well as cultural relevance.

While lower than the previous dimensions, entertainment (R² = 0.445) and customization/personalization (R² = 0.478) were also considered reasonably valued predictors, indicating the importance of engaging enjoyable experiences and customizations means of communication.

All regressions resulted in statistical significance at $p < 0.001$, consistent with the emerging findings.

Table 6.: Summary of Objectives, Hypotheses, and Results

S.No.	Objective	Hypothesis (H)	p-value	Status
1	To analyze the impact of entertainment in SMM on brand loyalty in e-commerce	H1: There is significant relationship between entertainment and brand loyalty	.000	Accepted

2	To examine how interactivity on social media platforms affects brand loyalty	H2: Interactivity in social media platforms positively affects brand loyalty	.000	Accepted
3	To determine the effect of trendiness in SM content on brand loyalty	H3: Trendiness of social media content enhances brand loyalty	.000	Accepted
4	To assess the role of customization/personalization in SMM in building brand loyalty	H4: Personalization/customization positively connects to brand loyalty	.000	Accepted
5	To evaluate how eWOM shared via social media affects brand loyalty	H5: eWOM significantly impacts brand loyalty	.000	Accepted
6	To estimate how quality of SM content impacts brand loyalty in e-commerce	H6: High-quality content contributes positively to brand loyalty	.000	Accepted

Hypothesis Testing and Objective Alignment

The above Table showcases the alignment of the research objectives with the hypotheses and results. Empirical support was found for all six hypotheses with p-values of less than 0.001, which confirms that each dimension of SMM investigated in this study has a statistically significant and positive effect on brand loyalty. In validating all six hypotheses, this research adds to increasing body of literature which indicates the multi-dimensional nature of SMM. In contrast to past fragmented investigations of SMM that examined isolated constructs or combinations of constructs, the present study considers entertained, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, eWOM and content quality as integrated vehicles for driving brand loyalty in e-commerce.

Note: All p-values are <0.001, hence all hypotheses are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study provide evidence of a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between various aspects of social media marketing (SMM) and brand loyalty (BL), confirming, as well as expanding upon, previous research. Content quality was found to be the most important ($r = 0.760$, $R^2 = 0.577$) when confirming previous statements from Erdoğan and Çiçek (2012) and Ismail (2017), regarding the importance of content relevance, but more broadly to provide one new piece of empirical evidence to establish content quality as the most favourable predictive variable for BL, and valuable in providing quantitative researchers an avenue for future study. Electronic word-of mouth (eWOM) also had a high correlation ($r = 0.738$), confirming additional commentary from Fouad et al. (2019), Gholamveisy et al. (2023) and Bashir et al. (2024), regarding peers' feedback and trust, and loyalty.

Interactivity ($r = 0.704$) corroborated prior studies by Laroche et al. (2012), Ismail (2017), and Taylor et al (2019) that link two-way communication and loyalty, engagement, and community with brands. Trendiness ($r = 0.701$) has been found to foster loyalty previously, Hossain and Sakib (2016), Abbas et al (2023) emphasized that branding should align with the attraction of messages that integrate the culture and needs of the audience with their context. Customization/personalization ($r = 0.692$) was similarly found to be a strong predictor of loyalty in the present study, confirming earlier work by Nguyen et al. (2023) and Adriel et al (2023) that focusing on personalized brand experiences helps establish deeper relationships with customers. Entertainment ($r = 0.667$) was within a range previously identified by Ercis et al. (2020), Vu Thi Thu and Vu Thi Phuong (2021), and Rai and Dahal (2024) who argued enjoyable content elicited responses of emotional engagement and e-brand love. In contrast to Kristiyono et al. (2023) and Fetais et al. (2022) who argued that SMM strategies may not always have an immediate impact on brand loyalty were mediated by engagement, trust, or a similar factor, in the current study, all six SMM variables accounted for a direct, substantial relationship to brand loyalty suggesting that these indicators may have been an additive to brand loyalty in certain population groups or markets

Managerial & Practical Implications

This study found that all six dimensions of SMM (entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, electronic eWOM, & content quality) positively and significantly influence brand loyalty. Among these, content value had the strongest positive correlation, and closely behind was eWOM, suggesting that value, high-quality content, and peer-to-peer recommendations were the strongest influences on brand loyalty in an online context. Moreover, entertaining and interactive content also appear to have equal importance in acquiring and retaining customers. These findings emphasized the importance of having an integrated and customer-focused social media approach in fostering brand loyalty. In the highly competitive online shopping environment, firms that approach social media strategically considering marketing and engagement, personalization, and trust will have loyal customers.

Based on the results of the current study, e-commerce businesses can enhance their brand loyalty through the selective use of social media marketing. Businesses should create interesting, high-quality, and well-relevant visual content that speaks to a consumer's attention span. Creating user-generated content while developing eWOM may be synonymous with developing trust and authenticity for e-commerce brands. Additionally, using interactive features of social media (i.e., polls, Q&As) and responding to customer inputs increases engagement. The study findings also suggested that being aware of trends and using influencers lead to greater awareness as well. Likewise, personalizing content based upon customer behavior and individualistic features develop deeper relationships with the product, while also taking advantage of humorous, entertaining, or fun formats (i.e., short videos and stories) sustain consumer interest. Finding the right proportion of promotional and creative content is significant to sustain interest and brand loyalty.

Limitations of the Study

Despite impressive accomplishments with the study, it does have limitations. Respondents may not represent the larger e-commerce consumer population, because this study employed a "convenience sampling" technique. The generalizability of the results is narrow because the majority of respondents were active users of social media and the internet. The geography of the survey was quite localized, so many participants may have been simply replying to describe responses of their social groups or localities, rather than describing opinions representative of the overall population. Because the study ultimately included a small time frame to collect responses based on convenience sampling, the ability to reach a broader sample of individuals was also inevitably limited, thus influencing the overall breadth of data available.

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