

RESEARCH PAPER

# Antecedents of Brand Loyalty Using Brand Personality as a Moderator in Social Media Brand Communities

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study is to examine the notion of social media brand communities. Social media is gaining popularity as a brand-building tool. Some researchers consider it as a new way to manage and build relations with customers. The study investigated the benefits of using a social media-based brand community as a tool to increase brand loyalty. Brand communities are considered as a solution for joining and helping consumers in their connections with the brand. The results of this research indicated that all these four consumer relationships can enhance brand loyalty. Questionnaires were distributed to 480 respondents of social media brand community users of fashion clothing brand. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was used to test the hypotheses. Results showed that social media brand community (customer-centric model), have significant relationships with brand loyalty (three-dimensional brand loyalty). Moderator analyses highlighted that four out of five brand personality dimensions moderate the relationship of social media brand communities, toward brand loyalty. The findings of this study help marketers to enhance their chances of creating successful SMBCs. Marketing or e-commerce managers understand the important role of different customer relationships within SMBC should make every effort to participate in the active management of these digital relationships on social media brand community. Also, this study was motivated by an interest in whether the brand personality of a brand community, rather than of the brand itself, can increase brand loyalty through customer relationship in social media.*

**KEYWORDS:** Social media brand communities (SMBCs); Brand loyalty; Customer-centric model; Brand personality.

## 1. Introduction

In the midst of stiff business competition, the present brand and companies actively seek methods that can effectively maintain or retain loyal consumers [1]. In the realm of ever-evolving digital market, consumers have multiple options of brands to purchase from. In fact, the increasing number of brands has adversely affected brand loyalty [2]. As consumers tend to select one brand over another when their

demands change, retaining brand loyalty has turned into a challenging task in the business acumen. This threat towards brand loyalty has intensified studies to devise effective innovations that are appealing to both potential and existing customers [1, 3]. As claimed by E-handel [4], "It is easy to see and talk about the importance of repeat customers, but it is more difficult to point out what actually causes them to return." Brand loyalty refers to consumers who become attitudinally loyal to a brand and demonstrate the behavior of repeat purchase over time for a certain brand [5, 6].

A number of studies have outlined the key determinants of brand loyalty, given the importance of building brand loyalty in marketing and customer behavior segments [7]. To date, intense competition has turned into a huge challenge despite the efforts made by managers to devise effective customer loyalty strategies [8, 9]. Various strategies have been

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proposed for retaining customers and for hindering customers from deviating to another brand [10]. However, in developing markets (i.e., Pakistan), consumers continue to switch brands; thus the main reason scholars look into brand loyalty [11, 12]. Kang, Tang [13] depicted that brand loyalty is comprised of three stages, in which each stage relies on the accomplishment of the previous stage. Similarly, [14, 15] proposed a three-stage brand loyalty concept, which consists of the following stages: cognitive loyalty (positive brand knowledge), emotional loyalty (emotional attachment to the brand), and action loyalty (repurchase behavior) [16].

Brand loyalty is not a new idea. Plenty of studies have unearth elements that can increase brand loyalty. Nevertheless, the brand loyalty framework seems to be changing from day to day [17]. In a digital and borderless world of business where various firms and brands are easily available to consumers, it has become a challenge for companies and marketers to retain, as well as create loyal consumers. Therefore, brand loyalty is an integral issue and a central aspect in the marketing plan of any company and brand [18, 19].

Scholars [20-22] have highlighted that the idea of brand loyalty is fading with each passing day. Brand loyalty is, at present time, driven by share, comments, online review, like, and dislike on the social media (SM) platform of specific brands [17]. Social media (SM) forums have become the most feasible means to develop and maintain brand loyalty in this futuristic era.

Globalization and competitive marketplace have directed businesses to tackle a number of challenges [23]. The advancement of Web 2.0 offers consumers a range of options to choose from. Easy access to brand information is not only about products, but also on prices and provision of services [24]. Notably, consumers have gained more power due to the emergence of Web 2.0 [25]. As the shift in power from business to consumers has intensified brand competition [26], companies are forced to continuously seek initiatives that build and enhance brand loyalty. In this interactive setting, consumers not only respond to brand-related connections, but also create these communications themselves (i.e., user-generated content [27]), thus revealing a high degree of interaction [28].

The initiation of SM has expanded and built significant ways to attract customers across the globe [17]. Social media (SM)\_network not only provides the opportunity for customers to interact

with others, but also offers multiple opportunities to cooperate with the engaged audience effectively [29]. This helps to build a brand community (BC), where brands advertise and managers communicate effectively in regard to their brands [30]. Brand-sponsored social media brand community (SMBC), defined as a brand-initiated community developed around a brand on social networking sites (SNSs) [31], is gaining attention and consideration as a potential way to influence SM for brand marketing purpose [32, 33]. Bidmon [34] rightly established that high profile brands are investing huge budgets on SM sites for advertising and sponsorship. In a similar vein, many studies [35, 36] have reported that customers are very much affected by advanced technology, particularly SM sites due to their benefits. They normally get excited about using these technological platforms. Concurrently, customers in SMBC can communicate with others and retain their relationship with favorite brands [37]. On SMBC, brands may share their commercial posts with customers on their Facebook brand pages [38].

Brands have become more dependent on SNSs to activate their communities on SM [39] since the number of SNS users worldwide has escalated – one-third of global population use SM, whereby the numbers rose from 97 billion in 2010 to 2.62 billion in 2018 [40]. The relationship scheme developed in BC is called BC triad – a relationship of customer-customer-brand [41]. McAlexander, Schouten [42] further broadened the scheme to four consumer-centric relationships model, which are: consumer-product, consumer-brand, consumer-marketer, and consumer-other consumers.

However, the intriguing question is ‘how the interaction between BC and SM is translated into relationships with brand, product, marketer, and other customers. According to Chou [43], SMBCs provide a two-way communication that facilitates brands to receive response from consumers about their expectations of services and products efficiently, thus allowing customers to respond accordingly and satisfy their needs. Satisfied consumers are not only loyal to a specific brand, but also become continual buyers to the specific brand product and are happy to share or promote the brand products to their relatives and friends. In recent years, the advancement of SM and the cost-cutting pressure as a result of financial crises have led to the need to search for economical solutions for company promotion, thus motivating brands to use SNSs as

part of their brand building and marketing activities [44, 45].

Brand personality has an essential theoretical element in branding literature ([46]. Brand personality is one of the main ideas in branding that may be applied to create competitive differentiation. Aaker [47] defined brand personality as the set of human features that customers associate with a brand. In this competitive world, divergence is the best way to present one's position in the market. With the growth of globalization, international trade, and the effects of Internet communication; the people at present time have access to more information and product options than ever before [48]. The aspect of brand personality helps a company differentiate its brand differently from that of its competitors [49]. Meanwhile, fashion is a form of lifestyle for many. The preference for fashion brands is highly dependent on individual personalities [50]. Brand personality has become a key priority amidst the most stringent competition in the market [46]. In this context, it has long been recognized that customers buy products and brands not only for their functional features, but also for their representative content [51, 52]. From the stance of consumers, brand personality may help them to create and communicate their actual or idealistic personality to others in multiple social contexts [53, 54]. Brand personality is beneficial to firms and customers, especially to companies whose brand personality develops emotions, trust, and loyalty among customers [46]. Hence, to cover this aspect in brand loyalty research domain, it is important to examine the moderation effect of brand personality. Rojas-Méndez, Papadopoulos [55] assessed the concept of brand personality in several countries by examining the impact of people's attitude towards China and the US if they were personified. The assumptions were that if a country could be viewed as a person, it would help to develop a unique positioning strategy that may enhance competitive advantage. As a result, country brand personality exhibited both positive and negative elements [55]. Country brand personality is a crucial indicator of people's intentions to visit a country, purchase products and services from the country, develop relationships with the country, and their overall attitude toward the country.

Brand personality is a simulation of human features used to define brand personality. In light of marketing, brands are struggling to impose their brand image as a person in the minds of their consumers. The concept behind this is that

when a consumer sees his favorite brand as a personality, they shall develop associations and certain affiliation with that brand [56]. The study empirically investigated the influence of brand personality on the minds of customers' popular fashion brands across Pakistan. The Aaker Brand Personality Scale was deployed to measure the personality of fashion brands. One way to measure the importance of a brand is to measure it via brand personality. Brand personality dimensions are rather similar to the replica of human personality traits, which also apply to brands [57]. Branding has been a key element in effective marketing strategy, wherein the emergence of brand personality is witnessed. The concept of brand personality can greatly influence consumer choices and has gained great attention of marketers [58, 59]. George and Anandkumar [60] claimed that in the intense competition arena, no brand can be successful, but it can differentiate itself from other competitors. Most past studies neglected the value of brand personality [61] that helps to build the image of the brand in the minds of customers. The growing competition in Pakistani fashion industry has proven to be a significant challenge for the brands to stay relevant in the market. Therefore, it is vital for marketers to create a differentiation in their brands to attract more consumers. One of the productive ways to create brand differentiation is by developing brand personality [62]. In order to create an intimate relationship between brands and their customers, brand personalities are used [48]. Notably, online brand personality exists in the same way as offline brands [63]. This means; SM has brand personalities that can influence consumer perceptions in a variety of ways. Past studies on brand personality have disregarded the Facebook platform, where SMBC can be further explored. Brand personality is a critical lens for a brand but has been omitted as a moderator from the SMBC stance. This research makes integral contribution by filling this void.

## **2. Conceptual Framework Based on Theoretical Foundation**

Bandura (1986) Social cognitive theory is a widely accepted theory that gives an in-depth critical perspective to investigating why individuals adopt specific behaviors. In particular, SCT explains psychological performance in terms of triple reciprocity causality in which behavioral, personality, and environmental factors act as interactive determinants of individual behavior [64]. Social

cognitive theory has proven to be beneficial for understanding individual behavior in IT contexts [65] and due to its focus on social and cognitive processes that govern human behavior, it is useful for learning loyalty behavior in community contexts across the Internet. This theory has not been used to studying community loyalty behavior in online communities based on, for example, Usenet news, instant messaging, or interactive online games [66]. Social cognitive theory outperforms other theories in investigating community loyalty behavior because of its focus on the behavioral formation of individuals from an environmental and personal perspective. Social cognitive theory is a psychological perspective on human performance that emphasizes the critical role the social environment plays in motivation, learning, and self-organization [67].

Social cognitive theory shows that individuals have a self-belief system that enables them to participate and develop loyalty to online communities [66]. When consumers participate in SMBC, they use social cognitive theory. They tend to exchange ideas, obtain and send recommendation letters, and hope to meet the expectations of other community members, which will make them loyal to the community [68].

### **2.1. Social media brand communities**

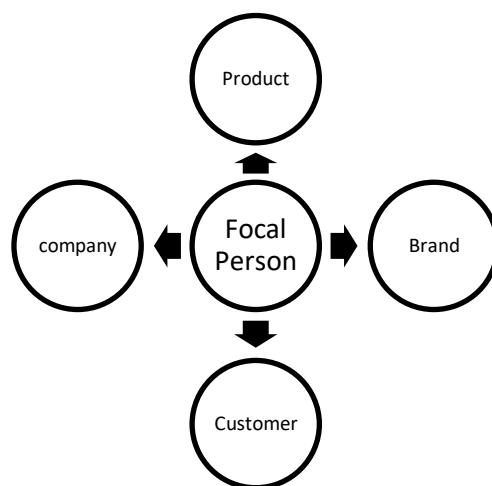
With heavy use of social media, brand communities are also growing fast. Hence, the social media brand community is receiving increasing attention from researchers [69]. The social based brand community is a relatively new concept in community research. It is based on the concept of a brand community, which is defined as a community associated with a brand. They can be created by the brand owner or users and usually have rules, regulations and rituals [41]. More, McAlexander, Schouten [42] expanded it on the relationship of the focal consumers with the brand, product, company, and other customers. The idea of brand community comes from sociology [41].

Brand communities are integrated by social media; users brought together with a joint belief in a brand and defines an important platform in which the brand builds, creates, maintains the relationship between the customer and brand or

other consumers. These friendly consumer/brand/consumer trio connections create an online brand community that is beneficial and stable [70, 71]. Furthermore, the brand community concept was developed by [41, 72]. According to [41, 72], brand community is “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand”. Social media is the best place for the aim of development of brand communities. The development of the digital world has been welcomed by the world's population. The internet, gadgets, and human are like friends who cannot be separated [73].

Additionally, brands and marketers are creating important contributions in the online brand communities to improve communication with their consumers to analyze and provide modernization conditions [74-77]. Online brand communities on social media have evolved into the new podium of socialization for organizing collective customer relationships managed by accomplishing particular needs like an exchange, sharing knowledge, information, and experiences [78, 79].

According to Chou [43], SMBCs provides a two-way communication, which promote brands to receive customer's response regarding their expectations of products and services efficiently, allowing consumers to respond to, and fulfill/satisfy their needs. Recently, both the growing popularity of SNS and their competitors; existence on social media and the cost-cutting pressure obtained from financial crises have consequently led to a need to search for economical solutions for firm promotion, thus motivating brands to use SNSs as part of their marketing activities and brand building [44, 45]. Meanwhile, past research on social media brand communities have examined different components and methods, for example [41] utilized a consumer/brand/consumer trio aspect in order to analyze brand community, and [42] suggested a consumer-centric model to understand the brand communities depending on the connection among brand, marketer, product, and between other consumers [80] which has shown in figure 1.



**Fig. 1. Consumer-centric model customer-centric model of SMBC adapted from [42]**

Other researchers have introduced a more elements of brand community integration, like a relationship with the staff [81], to fit with the distinct nature of their study context. The consumer-to-company dimension has also been deleted in some studies [81, 82] and justified by a factual inability of the respondents to discriminate between the company and the brand. In the study of [83] has been deleted customer-to-company dimension because of discriminant validity between the customer-to- brand and customer-to-company was not achieved because respondents did not discriminate between Moto Guzzi as a brand and as a company. Similarly, in the context investigated here, researcher has deleted customer-to-company dimension because respondents did not discriminate between fashion clothing brands as a company and as a brand.

## 2.2. Brand loyalty

Nowadays, maintaining and retaining brand loyalty are among the central ideas of study for marketers. They have applied numerous tactics to maintain brand loyalty over a period of time [17]. The latest definition of brand loyalty is presented by [84] stating “positive feelings towards the brand and intense dedication to purchase the same product/service repeatedly now and in the future from the same brand, regardless of competitors’ actions”. Brand loyalty on a similar note is not a new idea. Plenty of examinations were performed to unearth the elements that can increase brand loyalty. Still, the brand loyalty framework is changing day by day [17].

Many types of research have focused on different levels of loyalty base on nature, although some researchers have attracted on the personal elements of the method [85]. Furthermore, many authors defined the concept of loyalty [86]. [87] explained a concept of loyalty in which they

introduced two factors that influence loyalty namely cognitive and emotional loyalty. Cognitive loyalty is a judgment on performance, whether it meets the requirements or exceeds the expectation and emotional loyalty is related to the feeling of customers who engage with the brand. [88] also described the term of loyalty with two elements: endorsements or repeat behavior. Furthermore, [89] have shown that loyalty has two elements, namely attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty is defined as an attitudinal inclination existing with a strong desire to a specific brand with the purpose of rebuying that specific brand. Moreover, loyalty may be assessed and defined by both attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty measures [90].

According to [91], all human behavior is blended with cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions. When the two-dimensional concept comes together with behavioral loyalty, it becomes a three-dimensional approach of brand loyalty [85]. However, the long-established two-dimensional approach of loyalty is helpful in analyzing consumer loyalty for the aims of gestating and understanding the concept. Behavior/attitude methods are not helpful in some fields like business to business and three important consequences of marketing, namely endorsement, exploration, and maintenance [85, 91]. After all the debates and evolution, it may very well be that brand loyalty is not related to only one or two-dimensional approaches; relatively, it is a complex multi-dimensional approach. To sum up, the problem of brand loyalty is concerned on how brand loyalty is operationalized. It is very necessary to understand how we should measure brand loyalty [92]. There are three approaches that may be applied to measure brand loyalty (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral). Unlike past loyalty

research, the loyalty perspective is broadened, conceptualizing and measuring cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors of loyalty.

**Tab. 1. Literature review**

Articles	Country	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Mediator	Moderator
Stokburger-Sauer [93]	US	Customer-centric model	Brand loyalty		No study
Laroche, Habibi [78]	Canada	Customer-centric model	Brand loyalty	Brand Trust	No study
[94]	US	Customer-centric model	Brand trust	Engagement	No study
[95]	US	Customer-centric model	Brand loyalty	Brand relationship Quality	No study
[96]	China	Customer-centric model	Customer Participation	Flow	No study

The table no 1 has shown the past studies. In the past studies, researchers have used customer-centric model with the brand loyalty and other constructs. But past studies have not included moderator and brand loyalty dimensions. Therefore, this is the first study which has moderator i.e., brand personality and brand loyalty dimensions such as cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

### 2.3. Brand personality

Brand personality is one of the key concepts in branding that may be applied to create competitive differentiation [50]. Brand personality does not only differentiate from one brand product to the next but it is also a common strategy that marketers use to create a competitive advantage for their business [62]. Brand personality plays a role when marketer objectives in purposefully communicating a different product trait [97]. [98] described brand personality as “the set of human personality traits that are both applicable and relevant to brands”. The concept of brand personality was first proposed by [99] and defined as a set of human elements related to the brand. For illustration, the Apple brand is observed to be young, while IBM is observed to be old. Through this approach, brand personality has become highly preferred as an effective way to capture customer’s perceptions about the brand that is considered to reflect the customers’ self. It may be beneficial for brand managers to find out to lead their brands to life by developing a brand personality [100]. Customers can shape their connections and relations with the brand through brand personality [101].

Brand personality is an important variable, the understanding of which can be useful in gauging consumer behavior towards a specific product [102]. Companies are starting to focus more on creating a strong sense of brand recognition for themselves and providing personal meanings to consumers. This issue is even more important in the current digital age as people grow to be more socially conscious than ever before [48]. Therefore, marketers have shifted their attention from promoting the functional aspects of the product to building a strong relationship between the customer and the brand. Researches have expressed that brand personality is certainly related to customer’s understanding, the quality of product by using Aaker’s framework [103], brand loyalty [104], brand equity [105], and product assessment [106]. For illustration, by applying an imaginary brand, [106] expressed positive impact of brand personality through five elements. z

Ahmed and Jan [107], Sung, Hou [108] and [109] demonstrated the influences of brand personality on consumer behavior. [47] described brand personality “as a set of human characteristics associated with the brand.” The researcher exploited five elements of brand personality, which are brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand competence, brand sophistication, and brand ruggedness. In the context of this study, it is important to note that Aaker model of BP will be used because it is remaining the most recent and prominent brand personality framework for brand management [110]. According to [110], The Aaker scale “has been rigorously tested and validated resulting in known limitations”. Figure no 2 has shown the theoretical Framework of SMBC.

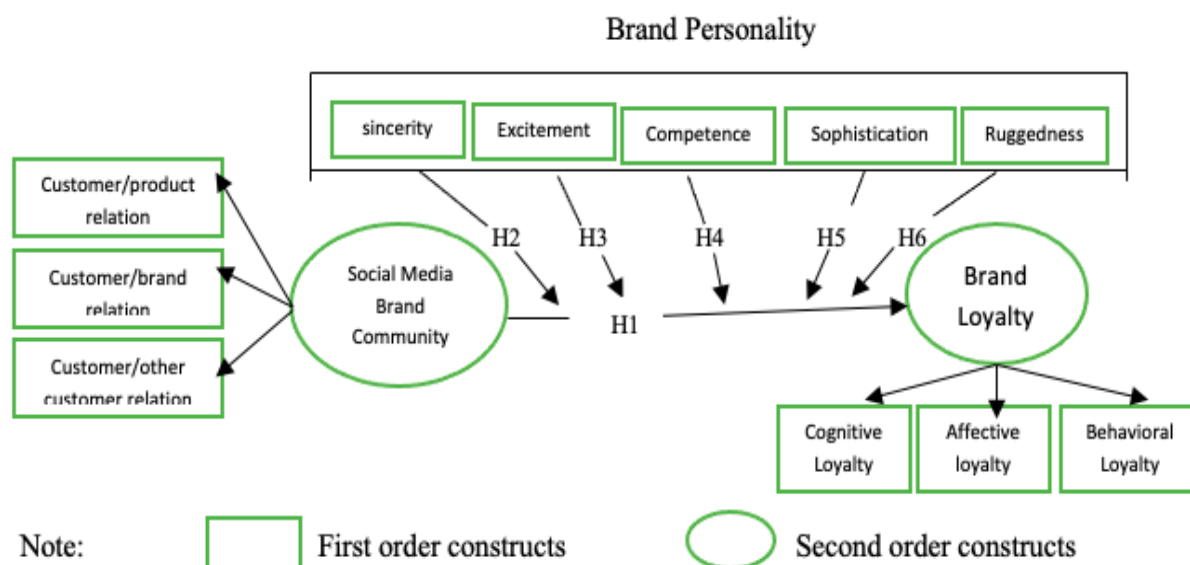


Fig. 2. Theoretical Framework SMBC

### 3. Development of Hypothesis in Relations to the Conceptual Framework

#### 3.1. Social media brand community and brand loyalty

Brands are the focus of one question of how to build strong brand loyalty through social media. In the literature, the term tends to be used refer to a study by [111] in which companies should put focus and considerable efforts to handle social media in a better way and create a healthier relationship between the companies and consumers with interactive communication that will ultimately commute brand loyalty.

The SMBC is the best platform for the program of brand loyalty and at the same time, it works on the level of loyalty directly [112]. In the past, researches have concentrated on the relationship of brand communities (methods, connection and relationship inside communities) and brand loyalty [21, 39, 79, 94, 113-115]. However, it remains unclear how the process of being more loyal happens in SMBC and level of loyalty remains to be tested [116]. In the social media rostrum, brands are esteemed consider SMBCs as a brand-inaugurated community [78]. It was found that SMBCs boost the emotion of the community among the customers and provide a creating value for both companies and the customers. Moreover, it was stated how brand loyalty enhanced the brand community. In this research, the role of SMBC is to give advantages to its users; to facilitate knowledge sharing and strong consumer' relations to each other, develop the consumers' connections with the brand,

product, company, and others consumers and increase brand loyalty.

A study by Wilimzig [117] proved that SMBCs had a significantly positive impact on brand loyalty. Similarly, Laroche, Habibi [31] stated that all elements related to online communities revealed a significantly positive influence on brand loyalty. As stated by budiman [118], the online community exhibited a significantly positive influence on the elements of brand loyalty. According to Balakrishnan, Dahnil [119], SMBC had a significantly positive impact on brand loyalty.

**H1:** Social media brand community is positively and significantly related to brand loyalty.

#### 3.2. Social media brand community and brand personality and brand loyalty

Most of the analysts have studied the impact of brand personality on brand management [120, 121]. Thus, there is a lack of investigation on the respective influence of the components of brand personality that lead to brand loyalty [122]. This is challenging the claims that brand personality build up customer choice and brand loyalty [123]. A theoretical research by [124] suggested that there is a connection between brand loyalty and brand personality. Moreover, [125] described a proposal for further research to study the impact of brand personality on other outcomes like brand loyalty. [126, 127] stated that the connection between brand loyalty and brand personality has presented contradictory outcomes, although a few types of research showed a positive impact, while some constructed no meaningful impacts [128].



Furthermore, brand personality elements were established to have direct impacts on consumers' loyalty [129-131]. Research literature on brand loyalty revealed that the key to achieving these benefits is to create different and powerful personality of the brand [132-134] because a few different brand personalities may prevent firms from creating powerful brand loyalty [135]. Research that has been done by Vera and Trujillo [16], Mabkhot, Shaari [124], Sop and Kozak [136], Kaushal and Ali [137] found that brand personality has significantly positive impact on brand loyalty. In the SMBC context, a study conducted by [138] examined the brand personality of the SMBCs, rather than of the brand itself from the online interaction within SMBC. The five elements of the brand personality of Aaker's model were adopted. This study supports the proposition in the current research that the brand personality in terms of Aaker's model has an effect on SMBC.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by [139], the impact of mediating factor of consumer satisfaction on the connection between brand loyalty and brand personality in the context of Malaysia on the automobile brands was analyzed. It was found that brand personality has a significant and positive relationship with brand loyalty. Brand loyalty was used in terms of four elements namely Cognitive, Affective, Connotation and Action loyalty.

**H2:** Sincerity plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.

**H3:** Excitement plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.

**H4:** Competence plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.

**H5:** Sophistication plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.

**H6:** Ruggedness plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1. Measures

The paper adopted a quantitative research approach to achieve a deeper understanding of brand loyalty in the social media space so far as the social media brand community is concerned. The constructs and measurement items used in this study were drawn from previous research with minor modifications to fit the research circumstances. We applied a five-point Likert scale to measure the variables. For all of the observed variables included in the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to express their expressions with each statement by using a five-

point Likert-type scale from disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). [140] suggested that at least 200 respondents are required for using SEM. (SEM) is a second generation multivariate analysis technique that connects path analysis and factor analysis, allowing scholars to simultaneously test and estimate the relationship between multiple endogenous and exogenous variables with many elements [141].

An alternative submission is that sample size can be considered in relation to the variables and numbers of a parameter included. This view proposes that the number of respondents is required to be a minimum of five times the number of items included in the study [142, 143]. A total of 520 questionnaires were collected according to rule of thumb and there were 40 responses dropped as there was no enough information or answered the same questions. Therefore, there were 480 responses accepted for the final analysis.

In this present study, we modified eleventh items of the social media brand community to address the three dimensions (i.e., four variables of consumer/product relationship, four variables of consumer/brand relationship, three variables of consumer/other customers relationship from McAlexander, Schouten [42], Pedeliento, Andreini [83]. We also adapted ten items of brand loyalty to address the three dimensions (i.e., four variables of cognitive loyalty, three variables of affective loyalty, and three variables of behavioral loyalty from [144, 145]. We also adapted twenty items of brand personality to address the five dimensions (i.e., four variables of sincerity, four variables of excitement, four variables of competence, four variables of sophistication, and four variables of ruggedness from Coelho, Bairrada [46].

### 4.2. Sample and data collection

This study is set in the context of social media, focusing more specifically on Facebook as an ideal social media platform for the study of SMBC. The target was not only a single SMBC, but rather a more general approach of members of SMBCs in which the participants were instructed to refer to the SMBC to which they belonged. In this study purposive random sampling methods was used. Precisely, for purposive sampling, the criterion for participation was being a member of one or more SMBCs on Facebook. The researcher used the purposive sampling technique to collect data, taking into account the definition of Wimmer and Dominick [146] "a sample is the subset of the population



that is taken to be the representative of the entire population". The researcher chose purposive sampling technique because only Facebook SMBC users were required for this research, SMBC users who are interested in participating in the survey will be required to answer by using the link to the online questionnaire that will be sent to fashion group or these five official branded clothing groups.

This study employed a sample of 480 Pakistani customers who are members of the social media brand community of certain Fashion brands ( i.e. Junaid Jamshed, Threads & Motifs, Asim Jofa, Maria.b and Tena Durrani) and used online survey to collect the data.

#### 4.2.1. Demographic analysis

Demographic characteristics of the respondents have been analyzed by using frequency distribution and age, gender, marital status, occupation, frequency of visits to the Facebook, status of joined communities, memberships of the brands and finally the visiting times have been analyzed which has shown in table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents have been analyzed by using frequency distribution and age, gender, marital status, occupation, frequency of visits to the FB, status of joined communities, memberships of the brands and finally the visiting times have been analyzed.

**Tab. 2. Descriptive statistics of the participant demographic information**

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Age		
15-25	173	36
26-35	280	58.3
36-45	10	2.1
46-55	13	2.7
55 and above	4	0.8
Gender		
Male	239	49.8
Female	241	50.2
Marital Status		
Single	314	65.4
Married	166	34.6
Occupation		
Student	112	23.3
Business Man	131	27.3
Employee	74	15.4
House wife	84	17.5
Trader	38	7.9
Others	41	8.5
Frequency of visits		
Almost every day	81	16.9
More than once a week	187	39.0
Every Week	77	16.0
Every Month	135	28.1
Brand Community Joining		
One Community	90	18.8
Two or Three communities	200	41.7
Four or Five communities	79	16.5
More than Five communities	106	22.1
Affiliation with the brand		
Junaid Jamshed	174	36.3
Threads & Motifs	118	24.6
Asim Jofa	51	10.6
Maria.b	62	12.9
Tena Durrani	75	15.6
Time spent on Facebook		
Less than 10 min	68	14.2
10-30 min	146	30.4
31-60 min	87	18.1
1-2h	91	19.0
2-3h	88	18.3

### 4.3. Analytical approach

We applied the partial least squared structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with Smarts PLS software 3.2.9 to test the proposed research model. To test the moderation related Hypothesis in this study moderation was run through Smart PLS. Product indicator approach was used. Initially the impact of independent variable along with moderating variable was tested and later on interaction term was generated to test the moderating impact on dependent variable. A bootstrapping level of 5000 sample size was considered to test the moderation.

#### 4.3.1. Assessment of the measurement model: construct reliability and validity

Measurement models are also called outer models in PLS-SEM. Measurement models fall in two

categories, one is reflective and other is formative. In this study a reflective measurement model was established keeping in view the nature of constructs. Measurement mode in this study has been tested with the help of reliability and validity. Reliability has been measured through Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and rho-A. Whereas validity has been tested through discriminant validity and convergent validity [142]. Typically, in quantitative research, two primary validation issues to address are reliability and validity of measures. Hence, in assessing the reflective measurement models, it includes the composite reliability to evaluate internal consistency and convergent validity by looking at the indicator reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 2 has shown the factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, CR, AVE.

**Tab. 3. Depicted the measurement scale of the construct's analysis results**

Construct	Measurement item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Social media brand community (SMBC)	I love my branded product that is supported by the social media brand community.	0.624	0.843	0.882	0.518
	I am proud of my branded product that is supported by the social media brand community	0.679			
	My branded product that is supported by the social media brand community is one of my favourite possessions	0.633			
	The product that is supported by the social media brand community is fun to use for me	0.773			
	I value the heritage of the brand that is supported by the social media brand community.	0.741			
	If I were to replace the product that is supported by the social media brand community, I would replace it with another product of the same brand	0.828			
	My brand that is supported by the social media brand community is of the highest quality	0.739			
Brand Loyalty (BL)	I would use my brand for a long period of time	0.819	0.898	0.922	0.662
	I will patronize this brand again for future needs	0.806			
	Repeatedly, performance of my brand is superior to what of competitor's one	0.848			
	I feel better when I use the services of my brand	0.757			
	I love using the services and products of my brand	0.827			
	I feel satisfied with my decision to stay with my brand	0.824			

Source: Data processing result

Then, we analyzed discriminant validity through the Fornell-Lacker criterion [147].

The above table shows that square root of AVE of Brand loyalty was 0.814 which was higher than the correlations in respective column and

row. Finally, the square root of AVE of Social Media Brand Community was 0.720 which was also higher than the correlations among the study construct of respective column and row. Table 3 has shown discriminant validity of the variables.

**Tab. 4. Discriminant validity**

Construct	SMBC	BL
Social media brand community	0.720	
Brand loyalty		0.814

Source: Data processing result

#### 4.4. Moderation analysis

The moderating effect of a variable occurs when a third variable changes the effect of the association between the determinant and outcome constructs by either reversing the direction or decreasing the magnitude of association [148, 149]. As stated by [150], moderation effect can be examined in two ways i.e. by latent variables and by observed variables. However, the interaction term of moderating construct wise is preferable. Let “M” be the moderator in the X to

Y relationship. The moderating role of “M” is “to change” the effects of ‘X’ on ‘Y’.

##### 4.4.1. Impact of sincerity between the relationship of social media brand community and brand loyalty

Moderating impact of moderating variable (W) was tested by creating the interaction term (W\*X) and later on testing its impact on the dependent variable (brand loyalty).

**Tab. 5. Impact of moderating variable (Sincerity)**

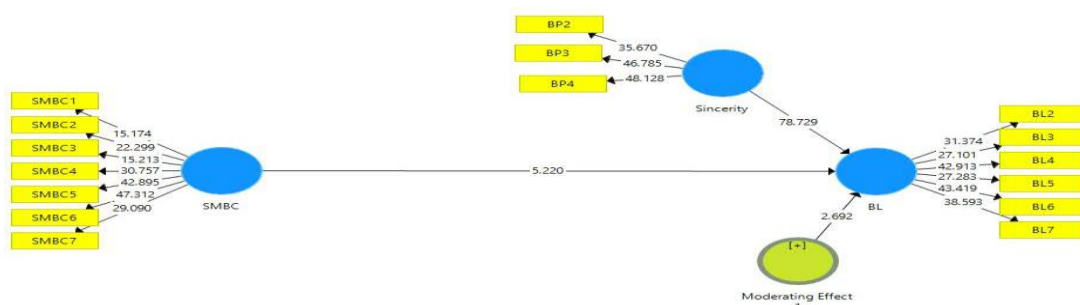
Path	B	SD	t	p
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	0.031	0.012	2.533	0.012
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.075	0.016	4.737	0.000
Sincerity -> Brand Loyalty	0.938	0.013	74.066	0.000

Above table 4.4 illustrates that impact of moderating variable (Sincerity) was found statistically significant on brand loyalty as well as the impact of social media brand community was also significant on brand loyalty ( $p < .05$  in both cases). While in case of moderating effect the impact of interaction term (SMBC\* Sincerity) the

impact has also been found significant which indicates that sincerity moderates the relationship between SMBC and brand loyalty. Coefficients in case of confidence intervals of 2.5 % and 97.5 % are also given as under table 5. and picture no 1 has shown the results.

**Tab. 6. Impact of moderating between (SMBC and BL)**

Path	B	2.5%	97.5%
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	0.031	0.008	0.055
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.075	0.046	0.105
Sincerity -> Brand Loyalty	0.938	0.914	0.963



**Fig. 3. Impact of moderating variable (Sincerity) between (SMBC and BL)**

#### 4.4.2. Impact of excitement between the relationship of social media brand community and brand loyalty

Moderating impact of moderating variable (W) was tested by creating the interaction term (W\*X) and later on testing its impact on the dependent variable (brand loyalty).

**Tab. 7. Impact of moderating variable (Excitement)**

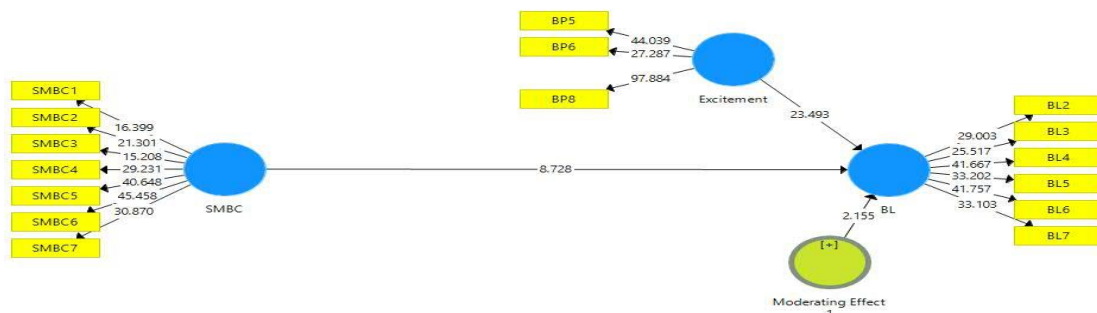
Path	B	SD	t	p
Excitement -> Brand Loyalty	0.712	0.030	23.805	0.000
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	-0.053	0.024	2.228	0.026
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.252	0.029	8.856	0.000

Above table 6 illustrates that impact of moderating variable (Excitement) was found statistically significant on brand loyalty as well as the impact of social media brand community was also significant on brand loyalty ( $p < .05$  in both cases). While in case of moderating effect the impact of interaction term (SMBC\*Excitement)

the impact has also been found significant which indicates that excitement moderates the relationship between SMBC and brand loyalty. Coefficients in case of confidence intervals of 2.5 % and 97.5 % are also given as under the table 7 and picture no 2. has shown the results.

**Tab. 8. Impact of moderating between (SMBC and BL)**

Path	B	2.5%	97.5%
Excitement -> Brand Loyalty	0.712	0.651	0.768
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	-0.053	-0.100	-0.006
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.252	0.197	0.309



**Fig. 4. Impact of moderating variable (Excitement) between (SMBC and BL)**

#### 4.4.3. Impact of competence between the relationship of social media brand community and brand loyalty

Moderating impact of moderating variable (W) was tested by creating the interaction term (W\*X) and later on testing its impact on the dependent variable (brand loyalty).

**Tab. 9. Impact of moderating variable (Competence)**

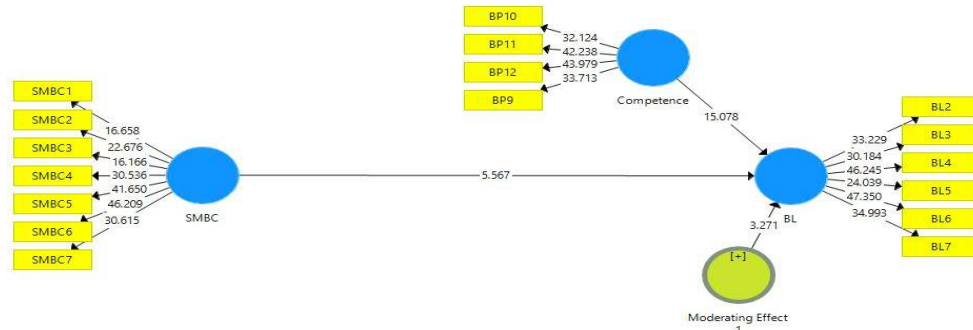
Path	B	SD	t	p
Competence -> Brand Loyalty	0.559	0.033	16.938	0.000
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	-0.110	0.034	3.185	0.002
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.257	0.040	6.270	0.000

Above table 8 illustrates that impact of moderating variable (Competence) was found statistically significant on brand loyalty as well as the impact of social media brand community was also significant on brand loyalty ( $p < .05$  in both cases). While in case of moderating effect the impact of interaction term (SMBC\*Competence)

the impact has also been found significant which indicates that competence moderates the relationship between SMBC and brand loyalty. Coefficients in case of confidence intervals of 2.5 % and 97.5 % are also given as under the table 9 and picture no 3. has shown the results.

**Tab. 10. Impact of moderating between (SMBC and BL)**

Path	B	2.5%	97.5%
Competence -> Brand Loyalty	0.559	0.494	0.621
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	-0.110	-0.175	-0.047
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.257	0.179	0.342

**Fig. 5. Impact of moderating variable (Competence) between (SMBC and BL)**

#### 4.4.4. Impact of sophistication between the relationship of social media brand community and brand loyalty

Moderating impact of moderating variable (W) was tested by creating the interaction term (W\*X) and later on testing its impact on the dependent variable (brand loyalty).

**Tab. 11. Impact of moderating variable (Sophistication)**

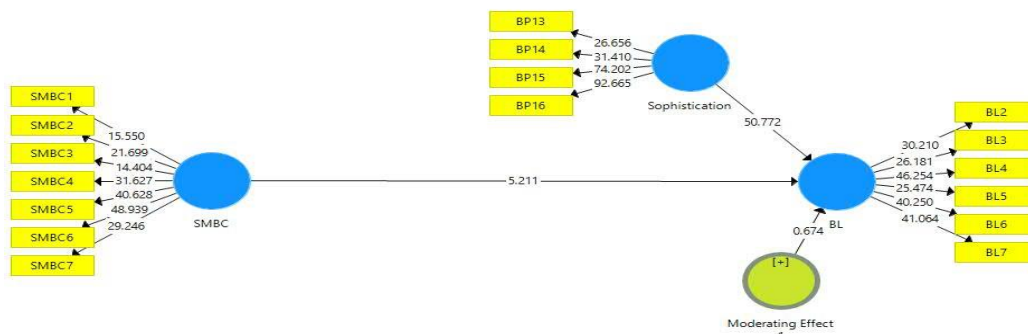
Path	B	SD	t	p
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	0.023	0.012	1.847	0.065
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.096	0.018	5.242	0.000
Sophistication -> Brand Loyalty	0.914	0.016	55.519	0.000

Above table 10 illustrates that impact of moderating variable (Sophistication) was found statistically significant on brand loyalty as well as the impact of social media brand community was also significant on brand loyalty ( $p < .05$  in both cases). While in case of moderating effect the impact of interaction term

(SMBC\*Sophistication) the impact has not been found significant which indicates that sophistication does not moderate the relationship between SMBC and brand loyalty. Coefficients in case of confidence intervals of 2.5 % and 97.5 % are also given as under the table 11 and picture no 4. has shown the results.

**Tab. 12. Impact of moderating between (SMBC and BL)**

Path	B	2.5%	97.5%
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	0.023	-0.002	0.046
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.096	0.064	0.133
Sophistication -> Brand Loyalty	0.914	0.880	0.944



**Fig. 6. Impact of moderating variable (Sophistication) between (SMBC and BL)**  
**4.4.5. Impact of ruggedness between the relationship of social media brand community and brand loyalty**

Moderating impact of moderating variable (W) was tested by creating the interaction term (W\*X) and later on testing its impact on the dependent variable (brand loyalty).

**Tab. 13. Impact of moderating variable of ruggedness**

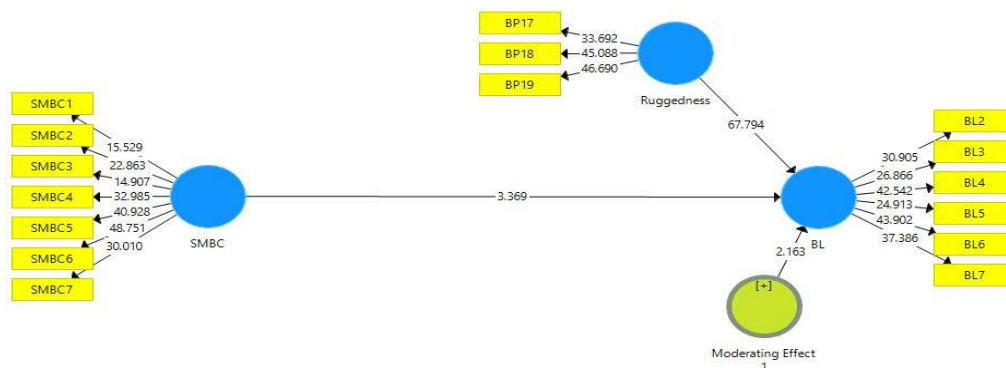
Path	B	SD	t	p
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	0.029	0.014	2.167	0.031
Ruggedness -> Brand Loyalty	0.930	0.014	66.020	0.000
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.066	0.020	3.370	0.001

Above table 12 illustrates that impact of moderating variable (Ruggedness) was found statistically significant on brand loyalty as well as the impact of social media brand community was also significant on brand loyalty ( $p < .05$  in both cases). While in case of moderating effect the impact of interaction term (SMBC\* Ruggedness)

the impact has been found significant which indicates that Ruggedness moderates the relationship between SMBC and brand loyalty. Coefficients in case of confidence intervals of 2.5 % and 97.5 % are also given as under the table 13 and picture no 5. has shown the results.

**Tab. 14. Confidence intervals of the variables**

Path	B	2.5%	97.5%
Moderating Effect 1 -> Brand Loyalty	0.029	0.002	0.056
Ruggedness -> Brand Loyalty	0.930	0.904	0.959
SMBC -> Brand Loyalty	0.066	0.027	0.102



**Fig. 7. Impact of moderating variable (Ruggedness) between (SMBC and BL)**

**Tab. 15. Results of the hypotheses testing**

Hypotheses	Status
H1 Social media brand community is positively and significantly related to brand loyalty	Supported
H2 Sincerity plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.	Supported
H3 Excitement plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty	Supported
H4 Competence plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty.	Supported
H5 Sophistication play a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty	Not-Supported
H6 Ruggedness plays a moderating role between SMBC and brand loyalty	Supported

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This contribution of the present study was to empirical research on the impact of brand personality dimensions between social media

brand communities and three-dimensional brand loyalty of Fashion clothing brands. Most of the previous studies focus on these effects for the various industries without moderator effect, this



study is first study in which brand personality used as a moderator.

Based on the analysis we can see prove of a positive relationship between the factors where we can assume that SMBC has a positive impact on brand loyalty. These findings agree with pasts research from [95] as well as Laroche, Habibi [78] who in their separate studies also concluded that SMBC affects brand loyalty (BL), interesting to see that the same conclusion about SMBC's positively effects brand loyalty even though they are examined in different industries and also different geographical areas.

This finding the of this study suggest that in order for clothing brands to enhance their brand loyalty through their social media brand communities it might be especially important to make sure that the SM users experience with the brand is as enjoyable as possible also making the informational communication between users as simple as possible, in order to help increase the trust, participation and brand loyalty dimensions. However, since all SMBC elements indicated statistical significance and positive relationships towards brand loyalty the brands should try to increase all elements.

With the changing economy and competition conditions, companies have to evolve and change in order to sustain. Technological advances have led to intense competition to decrease or even eliminate physical differences altogether. It is crucial to distinguish products from each other on the basis of the meanings attributed to them, and not on the basis of their physical characteristics. Attributing different meanings to products begins with their brand. Successful brand differentiation can be achieved through personality development. The brand personality enables customers to perceive the brand as friends by providing emotional benefits to customers.

Clearly, it is crucial to weigh in the various dimensions of brand personality to enhance brand loyalty. According to [151], brand personality is one of the most important elements that generate brand loyalty. In this context, brand personality is a crucial element in forming an emotional bond. While building brand personality, it is important to weigh in customers' preferences for the brand depending on the circumstances and situation, apart from determining the appropriate image and emotional forms.

## 6. Managerial Insights

This study has several important practical implications for marketing managers and for those who wish to create OBCs or enhance

marketing efforts that include existing OBCs. The results of this study have management implications for apparel marketers and retailers who operate OBCs as a marketing tool. In addition, brand loyalty is a critical factor in maintaining customers and fulfilling demands for products and services over time. Moreover, brand loyalty enhances efficacy and efficiency of the branding operations. As a result, companies spend huge amounts of resources to gain and strengthen brand loyalty through SMBCs. However, in order to create and maintain brand loyalty, merely creating BCs is insufficient. It is important for brands to focus on efforts in regulating favorable brand personalities and building brand relationships with their customers. This study was motivated by an interest in whether the brand personality of a BC, rather than of the brand itself, can increase brand loyalty through customer relationship in SM. Brand personality concept brings a promise that brands, similar to humans, have some specific features (Aaker, 1997), alive, and "experienceable" [152]. The findings of this present study suggest that consumers on SM can positively influence of personality of online brand community.

## 7. Recommendation for Future Research

First, the current study investigated only one social media platform in an Asian country; However, many platforms, such as Instagram and You Tube, Pinterest, can be studied as that grows. There is a need to expand Aaker's BPS to the study of other social media platforms in order to build this very limited amount of literature. Second, another avenue could be to conduct a comparative study of at least two different social media platforms, or in different social contexts, such as conducting a study in both developing and developed countries. Third, this current study may not be generalizable to all other studies Industry sectors, so future studies should focus on different industry areas.

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