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Deciphering Emotional Sensitivity in Social Media: A Paradigm for Brand Equity Enhancement

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Abstract

This study rigorously explores the transformative impact of the digital landscape on businesses and consumers, with a specific focus on the pivotal role of social media engagement in shaping brand equity. Aligned with the contemporary imperative for businesses to establish a robust online presence, our primary objectives involve gaining a comprehensive understanding of the transformative impact of social media engagement on brand equity and exploring the nuanced dynamics of consumer relationships cultivated through these platforms. To precisely assess this impact, our research employs a rigorous methodology, introducing validated Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to quantitatively measure the influence of social media engagement behaviors on various dimensions of brand equity. The findings reveal crucial insights: liking enhances brand-consumer relationships, sharing significantly impacts self-presentation motives, and commenting complements brand association and loyalty. These insights contribute to a nuanced understanding of how specific engagement behaviors distinctly influence elements of brand equity. The novelty of our research lies in developing and validating a precise measurement model for the impact of social media engagement on brand equity, representing a significant improvement and addressing a notable gap in the existing literature. This scholarly contribution extends its relevance to both academic research and practical applications in digital marketing. The study not only highlights the transformative influence of social media engagement on brand equity but also signifies a methodological advancement through SEM. The derived insights offer actionable implications for enhancing digital marketing strategies, optimizing social media performance, and fostering long-term sustainability in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: Social Media Engagement; Brand Equity; Brand Relationship Connection; Self-Presentation; Purchase Intention.

1. Introduction

The rapid and transformative evolution of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped individuals' lives, compelling them to fully embrace the digital era. This pervasive digitalization has revolutionized communication, connecting people on unprecedented scales [1]. In the intensely competitive digital landscape, businesses, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), face the urgent need to adapt swiftly [2]. To navigate this environment effectively, businesses must devise comprehensive strategies that integrate traditional marketing approaches with the indispensable element of social media marketing. Recognizing the paramount importance of social media marketing is

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essential for businesses aiming to thrive in today's fiercely competitive business environment [3]. Within the realm of social media, researchers such as Nechaeva et al. [4] emphasize the necessity of validating consumer-brand engagement (CBE) through the brand equity scale across diverse cultural contexts and integrating it into nomological network models. Recent investigations by Buzeta et al. [5] bring attention to the underexplored nature of CBE within social media platforms, underscoring the need for further examination in this area.

The digital landscape has transformed significantly due to technology and engaging social platforms, turning users from passive consumers into active content creators [6]. Social media networks provide diverse avenues for interacting with content, encompassing expressive actions such as likes, dislikes, shares, and comments, which yield valuable data and metrics that contribute to meaningful insights [5, 7]. These metrics, including the number of followers, likes, comments, and post views, vary depending on the specific platform, thereby possessing platform-specific implications [8]. Social media platforms have revolutionized online customer behavior and redefined customer-brand interactions. Interactive features have transformed consumers from passive observers to active content creators through online engagement [9]. The measurement of the impact of social media communications poses a significant and pertinent challenge [10]. While quantitative metrics of success, such as followers, likes, and comments, are readily available, their suitability as a proxy for evaluating the outcomes of brand equity marketing campaigns through social media remains uncertain [11]. These metrics serve as indicators, but it remains unclear whether they truly capture the desired information accurately. For instance, the number of intentional post views may provide more meaningful insights than the mere count of account followers [12]. The interpretation of metrics derived from social media communication results is not straightforward, and account holders must exercise caution in accurately and comprehensively interpreting the obtained results [13, 14].

In the field of marketing and branding, comprehending consumer engagement with branded social media content remains a significant hurdle. While existing research has explored various drivers of social media use and engagement, there is a notable gap in empirically examining the distinct motivations underlying specific engagement actions like liking, commenting, and sharing [15]. Furthermore, previous studies have predominantly focused on consumer-to-consumer motivations, neglecting the exploration of consumer-brand interactions [16, 17]. Consequently, the influence of customer brand engagement dimensions on brand equity dimensions within the context of brand social media pages remains largely unexplored.

Our study addresses this research gap by examining the impact of social media engagement on brand equity. While metrics like likes, shares, and comments are common KPIs for engagement, their connection to brand equity remains unclear. We aim to uncover this link and provide marketers with insights on using engagement to enhance brand awareness, perceived quality, associations, and loyalty. Furthermore, our study delves into the interplay between social media engagement and emotions, offering insights into brand value in digital marketing. We analyze how engagement influences emotions, shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. This understanding aids in brand equity assessment, providing marketers with a tool to measure the impact of social media on brand outcomes. Integrating emotions with engagement enhances our grasp of how feelings shape brand perception, contributing to digital marketing knowledge. This study will also address three key questions:

RQ1: *What is the influence of social media engagement on brand equity?*

RQ2: *How do different forms of response to social media engagement affect various elements of brand equity?*

RQ3: *What measures and methodologies are employed to assess the impact of social media engagement on brand equity?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Fundamental Motivator: Exploring the Drivers of Social Media Use and Their Impact on Brand Equity

Individuals exhibit diverse motivations when engaging in online brand-related activities across different social media platforms, driven by their specific needs and preferences [18]. Users utilize diverse social media platforms to fulfill a multitude of personal and professional objectives, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of their online interactions [19]. They exhibit a heightened propensity to allocate greater attention and engagement towards content that closely aligns with their individual needs and preferences within specific social media platforms [20].

Motivated consumers who receive brand content demonstrate a tendency to actively engage with the brand and share the messages within their specific social networks [21–23]. This behavior reflects their willingness to interact with the brand and extend its reach among their social circles. By engaging and sharing, consumers become active brand advocates, endorsing the brand's messages and expressing their affinity for the brand to others. Swani & Labrecque [15] propose that social media engagement choices, like liking, commenting, and sharing, are driven by two key mechanisms: self-presentation (SP) and brand relationship connections (BRC). Prior research on word-of-mouth (WOM) has identified various motivations for brand engagement, categorized as brand-related and non-brand-related factors [24]. Brand-related motivations include commitment, satisfaction, loyalty, quality, perceived value, and trust, which drive

WOM [25]. Non-brand-related motivations encompass self-enhancement, self-affirmation, social comparison, the need to help others, sharing social information, and social bonding [26]. Brand commitment, representing the desire to maintain a valued relationship, is a significant driver of engagement with brands [27]. Additionally, self-presentation focuses on managing impressions and presenting favorable images [28].

Aligned with the notion of the need to belong as a fundamental motivator for social media use [16, 17, 28], our study recognizes the role of social media platforms, such as Facebook, in facilitating and reinforcing online and offline relationships between users, as well as between users and brands. Additionally, we acknowledge individuals' utilization of social media as a platform for impression management and self-presentation, where users strategically curate content and brand associations to convey their desired identities [21, 29]. In distinctiveness from existing literature, our study meticulously explores the interplay between Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) and Self-Presentation (SP), unravelling the sensitivity of emotional reactions to social media engagement and its implications for enhancing brand equity measurement. This nuanced investigation contributes a unique perspective to the understanding of consumer-brand interactions, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that influence brand equity outcomes.

2.2. The Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) and Self-Presentation (SP)

The impact of social media on consumer behavior has garnered considerable attention in academic research. In this context, the concept of Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) has emerged as a pivotal factor influencing consumer engagement and brand interactions. Esteemed scholars such as [23, 30, 31] have delved into BRC as a driving force motivating individuals to actively engage with brands on social media platforms. Their empirical study underscored the significance of BRC in shaping consumer decision-making processes, emphasizing the imperative for organizations to comprehend and leverage this mechanism to enhance consumer-brand relationships.

In addition to BRC, another pivotal construct in the realm of social media engagement is Self-Presentation (SP). Researchers have acknowledged the role of self-presentation motives in shaping individuals' online behavior and interactions. Building on the foundations laid by previous studies [32], it is evident that individuals leverage social media platforms to project desired self-images and manage their impressions. This self-presentation motivation profoundly influences the content they engage with and the manner in which they interact with brands on social media.

Recognizing the significance of both BRC and SP, it becomes imperative to comprehend the intricate interplay between these constructs and their impact on consumer engagement. This research endeavors to explore the sensitivity of emotional reactions to social media engagement, delving into the implications of BRC and SP for enhancing brand equity measurement. Through an examination of the dynamics inherent in these constructs, valuable insights can be gleaned into the mechanisms propelling consumer-brand interactions on social media platforms, contributing to a nuanced understanding of how emotional reactions shape brand equity. The innate desire for social connection serves as a fundamental motivation for individuals to establish and sustain relationships, as illuminated by Baumeister & Leary [28]. This basic human need has also been identified as a driving force behind the adoption and use of social media platforms [16, 17]. Online platforms, such as Facebook, provide users with the opportunity to fulfill their need for belonging by facilitating and reinforcing relationships with both other users and brands in both virtual and real-world settings. In particular, the interactive features of social media have empowered brands to cultivate and enhance connections with consumers [33].

Consumer engagement with branded content on social media is primarily influenced by the brand-relationship connection. Likes and reactions play a significant role in shaping consumer engagement with branded postings. Engagement with brand communications on social media is motivated by the brand-relationship connection, and consumers' self-presentation also significantly influences their decisions to participate in branded postings through comments (Figure 1). Consumer engagement in brand communication on social media is propelled by consumer self-presentation, which represents the primary factor influencing their decision to engage with brand posts through sharing [23, 34, 35].

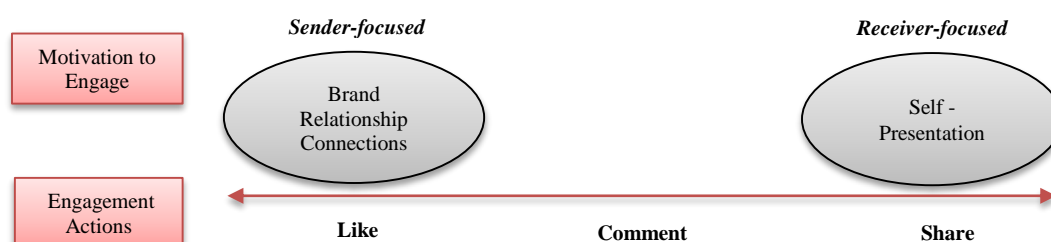


Figure 1. Illustrate the relationship between BR versus-SP for social media engagement

These findings underscore that consumer engagement with branded content on social media is primarily motivated by their connection to the brand and their desire for self-presentation. Social media interactions play a pivotal role in empowering brands to cultivate and fortify relationships with consumers [36]. The Brand Relationship Connection and Self-Presentation emerge as critical factors encouraging consumers to actively participate in a brand's content. The inherent desire to belong to a group or community acts as a motivator for consumer engagement, propelling the formation and maintenance of relationships [37]. The utilization of social media by consumers is influenced by the need to facilitate and support their relationships within both online and offline networks, including other customers associated with the brand [38].

Social media platforms offer individuals the means to mold and manipulate their image, enabling them to craft a personal brand and convey their identity [39]. Users meticulously curate their social media accounts to present a desired image, encompassing the content they engage with and the information they share. The shared information reflects the identity they wish to portray [40]. Social media users deliberately choose content aligning with their desired identity while avoiding contradictory material. Brands play a pivotal role in this process, with social media users utilizing them to generate and communicate their ideas [41]. This includes conveying meaning to others [42]. Consumers leverage brand content and narratives to create and communicate ideas about themselves to their target audience and social networks [43]. They may repurpose brand content, showcase the brand's logo on personal websites, or share brand links to communicate the brand's quality that resonates with their self-perception [44].

Social media interactions contribute to shaping individuals' identities, with self-reflection playing a crucial role in determining how individuals interact within their social environment based on their constructed identity and interpretations of interactions with others [45]. Whether conscious or unconscious, individuals communicate and share content aligned with their desired image, intending to influence and impress others [46]. Brands offer users a platform to express their ideas, convey meaning, and shape their self-presentation. Consumers incorporate brand narratives and content into their own stories and interactions, utilizing them as tools to construct and communicate their desired image [47]. "The Fundamental Motivator" delves into social media motivators and their impact on brand equity, focusing on Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) and Self-Presentation (SP). BRC embodies emotional bonds, while SP involves self-image. Actions such as liking, sharing, and commenting signify engagement. A comprehensive understanding of BRC, SP, and the dynamics of social media reveals profound insights into consumer-brand relationships and brand equity. Furthermore, it explores the facets of social connection and self-presentation, shedding light on the pivotal role of social media in brand engagement. This research unveils the drivers influencing social media's impact on brand equity, grounded in established literature.

2.3. The Influence of Social Media Engagement on Brand Equity

2.3.1. Social Media Engagement

In recent years, the concept of "*consumer engagement*" has garnered significant attention in marketing research, leading to various proposed definitions [48]. Consumer engagement encompasses a series of interactive interactions between consumers and brand-related content on social media platforms [49], measured through a range of behaviors such as Reacts, Likes, Comments, and Shares [50]. These actions reflect the commitment and effort exerted by consumers in response to the brand's content [34]. Consumer engagement on social media spans various behaviors and interactions across diverse platforms, influenced by factors like context, brand, and audience [51]. Each action signifies a distinct level of consumer involvement with the brand's content [52]. It's crucial to note that consumer engagement is multifaceted, varying among individuals and over time. By quantifying and assessing social media engagement, marketers gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of their brand content and the extent of consumer interest and involvement.

2.3.2. Social Media Engagement with Likes

Examining social engagement on Facebook provides insights into consumer interactions, with liking content being a prevalent behavior. However, it is crucial to note that liking represents the least weight or significance in consumer engagement [13, 53].

A "Like" on Facebook can signify an individual's acceptance and attitude towards the content, page, or creator, expressing support with minimal effort [54]. In instances where consumers passively consume brand content, a "Like" may serve as a superficial indication of support for the brand, lacking a deep understanding or genuine liking. Unlike motivations primarily driven by self-presentation, users' liking of brand content is majorly influenced by the Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) [55]. Likes on brand content represent the relationship between the brand (sender) and the user (recipient) [56], with the interaction being more influenced by the brand owner or sender than the user themselves [22]. Likes reflect users' support for the brand, maintaining a connection rather than expressing genuine inner feelings [56]. Clicking "Like" demonstrates users' support for brands with which they have established a connection [34, 57]. It's essential to note that Likes generate minimal exposure and limited influence on others, as they do not necessarily indicate user preferences or admiration [58].

2.3.3. Social Media Engagement with Comments

Commenting involves more steps than liking, requiring users to click the Comment button, compose a message, and post it [59]. Viewers are likely to examine the brand's original material before reading comments to form their response [60]. Connecting through commenting is seen as requiring more work and comprehension than engaging in conversation [61]. Commenting generates a two-way interaction between the sender and the receiver, contributing to or altering the original post's significance [32]. It enables users to express opinions that demonstrate legitimacy, expertise, and concerns, driven by both brand relationship connections and self-presentation [8, 62].

2.3.4. Social Media Engagement with Share

Sharing through the share button allows users to distribute the original sender's content or add their message before sharing it, increasing exposure to a wider audience [63]. This action has the potential to increase the reach and visibility of the post more than likes or comments [64]. However, users often share content for self-fulfillment or self-serving purposes rather than purely for branding [65]. Users engage on social media by sharing content aligned with their ideal selves, presenting a particular image to others [66]. This study aims to uncover the fundamental mechanisms driving consumer engagement with branded social media content and explore its contribution to brand equity. Through a systematic literature review, two key motivators have been identified: self-presentation (SP) significantly encourages users to share brand posts, while brand relationship connection (BRC) drives likes and comments [34, 67].

2.4. Integrating the Chain: Examining the Holistic Relationship between Social Media Engagements, Brand Equity, and Purchase Intention

Adopting a comprehensive approach, our study meticulously examines the intricate relationships between social media engagements, brand equity, and purchase intention. Brand equity, signifying the value a brand adds to a company, store, or customer in relation to a product, encapsulates knowledge and perception [68, 69]. This value is intricately linked to a company's profitability, shaped by customer expectations, experiences, and perceptions of past brand interactions [70].

2.4.1. Brand Preference as the Precursor

Customer inclination towards a specific brand, influenced by factors such as convenience, novelty, chance encounters, and repertoire buying behavior, emphasizes the centrality of building brand equity [71]. It is a catalyst for increased consumer brand preference and purchase intentions [72, 73]. This research delves into the theoretical foundations underpinning these relationships.

2.4.2. Financial and Emotional Dimensions of Brand Value

Pioneered by David A. Aaker, a renowned marketing professor at the University of California, Berkeley, brand value encompasses both financial and emotional dimensions [74]. The numerical representation of a brand's value, reflected in operational and sales outcomes, constitutes its financial value [75]. In contrast, emotional value captures the subjective perception of a brand's value by customers, encompassing aspects such as leadership or social standing [76]. Esteemed researchers have significantly contributed to the discourse surrounding Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) [77, 78].

2.4.3. Strategic Role of Social Media

Users of social media platforms strategically engage in impression management and personal branding, aligning themselves with brand symbols and content to construct and communicate their desired image [79]. This self-concept-driven behavior not only shapes social interactions but also guides individuals in managing the impressions others have of them [80].

2.4.4. Critical Role of Brand Awareness

Brand awareness, representing the extent to which a brand is recognized and remembered by customers, is pivotal in establishing brand narrative awareness [81]. Linked closely with brand knowledge, including brand awareness and brand image [82, 83]. It is a decisive factor in enhancing competition between brands. Recognition and recall significantly influence brand perceptions and consumer behavior, providing organizations with a competitive advantage [84].

- **H1:** Brand Relationship Connections significantly influence Brand Awareness.
- **H5:** Self-Presentation significantly influences Brand Awareness.
- **H9:** Brand Awareness significantly influences Purchase Intention.

2.4.5. Perceived Quality as a Determinant

Perceived quality, a key determinant of brand value, represents the subjective evaluation made by consumers regarding the actual quality of a product [85]. Perceived value, rooted in customers' evaluations of the benefits received against the costs incurred, holds paramount importance in consumer decision-making [86]. Acknowledging its significance, we introduce:

- **H2:** Brand Relationship Connection significantly influences Perceived Quality.
- **H6:** Self-Presentation significantly influences Perceived Quality.
- **H10:** Perceived Quality significantly influences Purchase Intention.

2.4.6. Brand Association and Its Role:

Brand associations, reflecting what consumers associate with a brand, play a crucial role in brand development [87]. This study acknowledges the strength of positive connections between brand relationship connections and consumer associations, proposing:

- **H3:** Brand Relationship Connection significantly influences Brand Association.
- **H7:** Self-Presentation significantly influences Brand Association.
- **H11:** Brand Association significantly influences Purchase Intention.

2.4.7. Brand Loyalty as an Indicator:

Brand loyalty, indicative of the likelihood of customers choosing a brand over others, is a critical component of brand value [30, 88]. Acknowledging the role of customer attitudes in shaping brand loyalty [89], this research asserts:

- **H4:** Brand Relationship Connection significantly influences Brand Loyalty.
- **H8:** Self-Presentation significantly influences Brand Loyalty.
- **H12:** Brand Loyalty significantly influences Purchase Intention.

Framework for measuring customer-based brand equity, illustrated in Figure 2 [74, 76, 90].

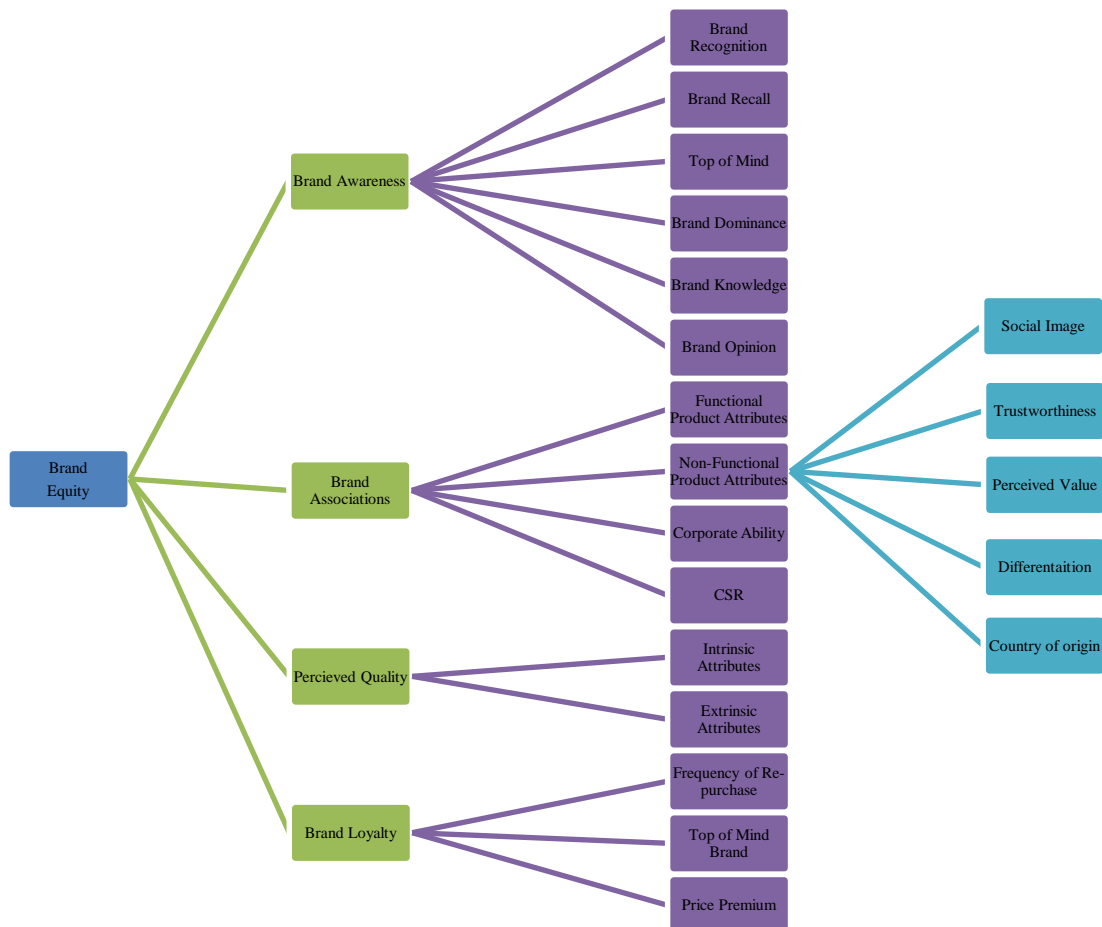


Figure 2. Framework for Measuring Customer-Based Brand Equity

2.5. Proposing the Social Media Customer-Brand Engagement (CBE) Model

Building upon foundational works [75, 76], our study introduces the social media customer-brand engagement (CBE) model. This conceptual framework integrates brand relationship connection and self-presentation as key drivers of social media engagement dimensions. Utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), we explore complex variable relationships, shedding light on the drivers of social media engagement and the impact on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and perceived value.

Based on an extensive literature review, we've developed a robust conceptual model explaining the intricate links between social media engagement and brand equity. This model integrates theories, empirical evidence, and concepts, forming a solid foundation. We use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to explore complex variable relationships, uncovering drivers of social media engagement and brand equity's impact. Subsequent sections detail our study's design, data collection, and analysis, culminating in a comprehensive model. This enhances understanding, offering insights for marketers to strengthen brand-consumer relationships and brand equity. Our study focuses on brand relationship connection, self-presentation, brand equity, and purchase intention, testing hypotheses from our framework.

The conceptual model for the measurement of social media engagement toward brand equity has been presented in Figure 3 [23, 67, 74, 76, 90, 91].

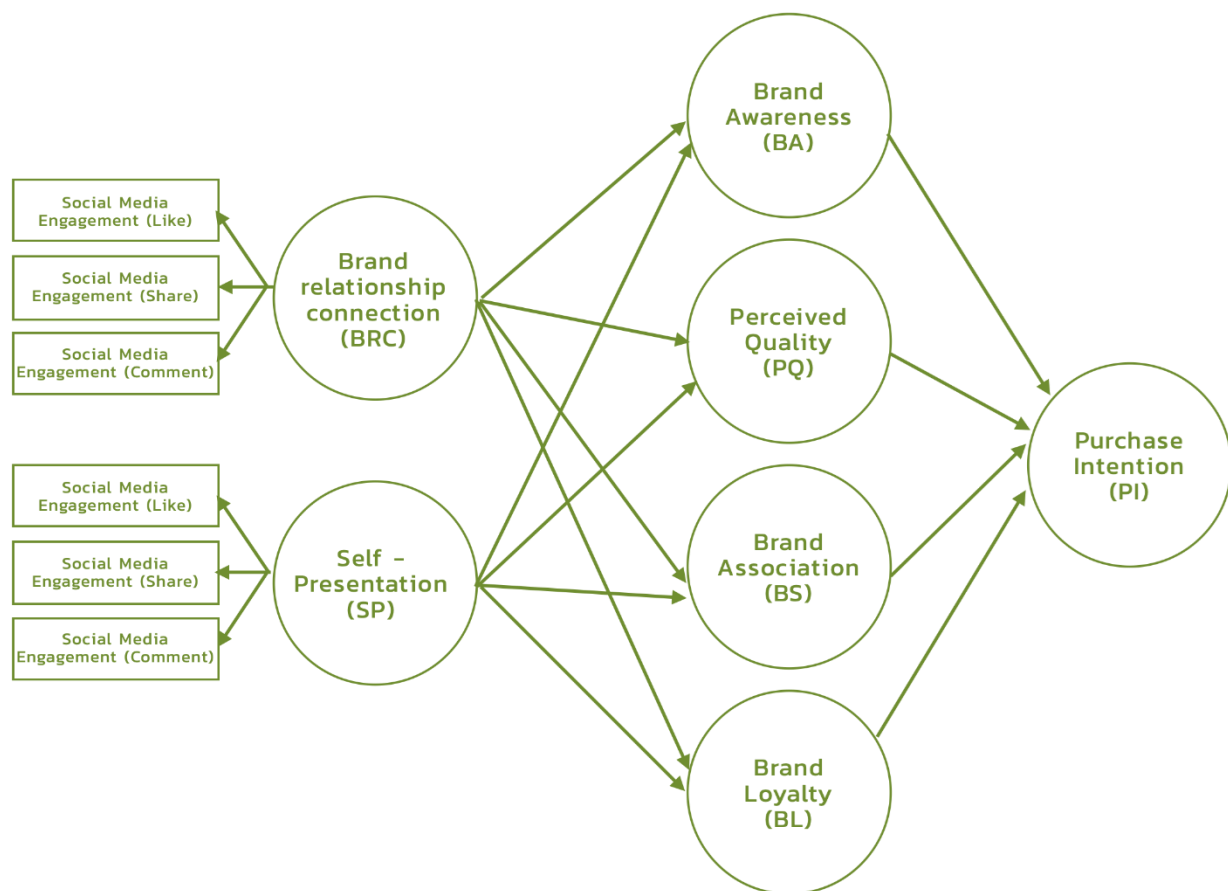


Figure 3. The Conceptual model for the Measurement of Social Media Engagement toward Brand Equity

To test these hypotheses and delve into the connections between brand relationship connection, self-presentation, brand equity dimensions, and purchase intention, we will employ a rigorous methodology. The following section will outline our research design, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis techniques.

3. Research Methodology

To validate the proposed relationships in the conceptual model, advanced statistical techniques are employed. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) assesses the measurement model's validity, ensuring indicators accurately represent brand equity constructs, enhancing reliability. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyzes data from a representative sample, examining complex variable relationships. SEM rigorously tests hypothesized relationships, validating findings. This approach, including CFA and SEM, enriches brand equity understanding in social media engagement. The methodology ensures research credibility and depth, contributing significantly to scholarly discourse.

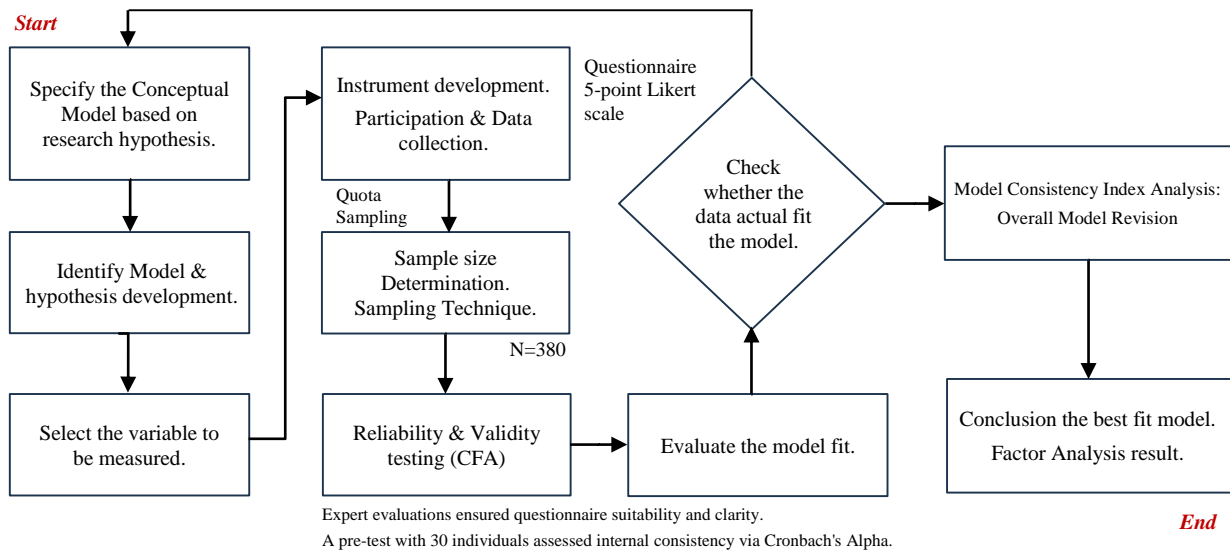


Figure 4. Comprehensive Research Methodology Flowchart

3.1. Instrument

The process of data collection was meticulously carried out by employing a quota sampling method to secure a representative sample from the population of individuals with active social networking online accounts. Our sample group comprised 380 participants who met specific eligibility criteria, which significantly exceeded the recommended minimum of 150 respondents for studies of this nature [92]. This achievement is particularly noteworthy, considering our focus on measuring fewer than seven constructs and working with modest commonalities within the context of structural equation modeling (SEM). This robust methodology yielded a sample group of 380 individuals who had been actively using online social networks for a minimum of two years and demonstrated a commitment to following at least one brand, product, or service. These participants were thoughtfully selected to provide a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics between social media engagement and brand equity.

The sample size was divided based on the proportion of the population composition by age, as derived from the Thailand Digital Stat Insight 2023 report by We Are Social and Meltwater. The age groups considered were as follows: 18-24 years old (8.5%), 25-34 years old (14.1%), 35-44 years old (14.4%), and 45-54 years old (14.4%). Consequently, the sample units were allocated as follows: 18-24 years old (63 people), 25-34 years old (105 people), 35-44 years old (106 people), and 45-54 years old (106 people). In total, there were 380 participants (sample units) who completed the paper and online questionnaires. These 380 participants with social networking online accounts formed the sample group for the study. The data collection process occurred in Thailand, the primary tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire, distributed both manually and online. In addition, we collected the data by means of an online survey, which was developed by the researchers.

The survey consisted of five sections. The first screened participants based on study criteria, requiring a minimum of two years of online social network use and active following of at least one brand. The second collected demographic data through 11 questions, including social media usage frequency, preferred platforms, brand interactions, and exposure to brand-related content. Sections three to five featured a 66-question Likert scale questionnaire. Derived from brand equity theory and prior research, it assessed various aspects of brand equity, including links between social media engagement and brands, social media engagement and brand equity components, and brand equity components and purchase intentions. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement, allowing for comprehensive evaluation based on established theories and research.

Expert evaluations ensured questionnaire suitability and clarity, enhancing methodological rigor and reliability. A pre-test with 30 individuals assessed internal consistency via Cronbach's Alpha: $\alpha \geq 0.70$ signified reliability. Variables related to brand relationships had α values from 0.76 to 0.89, meeting standards. Including all 380 completed questionnaires ensures data's reliability and validity. This rigorous methodology, with statistical analyses, enriches understanding of social media's brand equity impact among online users, academically.

3.2. Participants and Data Collection

The study participants were primarily female (63.13%) and male (33.13%). The largest age groups were 35-44 years old and 45-60 years old (28%). A significant portion were aged 20-35 years old (27.43%), including those under 20 years old (16.54%). The majority held a bachelor's degree (64.38%), while some had less than a bachelor's degree or a master's degree (16.88% and 15.63% respectively). The primary occupations included students (32.50%), office workers (29.37%), civil servants/state enterprise employees (25%), and self-employed individuals (10.62%). In terms of income, most earned less than \$800 per month (31.25%), followed by those earning \$800 - \$1,600 (21.25%). Similar percentages earned between \$1,600 - \$2,400 and \$2,400 - \$3,200 (18.13% and 18.75% respectively). All participants used Facebook, with 58.75% using it multiple times a day. Many followed over 10 brands (31.30%) and frequently encountered brand-related content or advertisements on Facebook (35.63%).

4. Result

4.1. Testing the Structural Model

In this study, we employed structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SPSS and AMOS software to examine and assess variable relationships. SEM helps model complex connections between observed and latent variables, while CFA validates underlying factor structures. These methods enabled us to investigate and verify relationships within our research framework, building on established methodologies and prior studies [93].

Our model aimed to explain how emotional reactions to social media engagement influence brand equity and purchase intention. It included seven latent variables: Brand Relationship Connection, Self-presentation, Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Association, Brand Loyalty, and Purchase Intention ("PI"). Brand Relationship Connection (BR) and Self-presentation (SP) served as independent latent variables. Liked, shared, and commented on content were significant predictors of Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) and Self-presentation (SP). Brand Awareness (BA), Perceived Quality (PQ), Brand Association (BS), Brand Loyalty (BL), and Purchase Intention (PI) were dependent latent variables. Liked, shared, and commented on content also played significant roles in predicting these variables.

Before applying structural equation modeling, we conducted a preliminary assessment of observed variables' data quality and reliability. These variables had high mean levels (ranging from 3.62 to 4.16), with Purchasing Intention scoring the highest at 4.16. Skewness values indicated a left-skewed distribution (ranging from -1.09 to 0.36), with scores surpassing the mean. In terms of kurtosis, 22 variables displayed platykurtic characteristics. Although skewness and kurtosis values deviated slightly from zero, they approximated zero, suggesting a nearly normal distribution. The study assessed internal consistency, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. Composite reliability scores were above 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory construct reliability. Convergent validity was supported by AVE values exceeding 0.5. The measurement model exhibited a good fit with chi-square (187.264), df (160), CMIN/df (1.170), GFI (0.908), NFI (0.853), CFI (0.974), and RMSEA (0.033) values. These findings validate the measurement model's reliability and validity for subsequent structural analysis, without concerns of multicollinearity [94] (Table 1).

Table 1. Aaverage variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) analysis

Variable	Factor	Cronbach	AVE	CR	N
BR	-	0.81	0.59	0.70	3
BR1	0.63	-	-	-	-
BR2	0.87	-	-	-	-
BR3	0.79	-	-	-	-
SP	-	0.87	0.59	0.70	3
SP1	0.82	-	-	-	-
SP2	0.71	-	-	-	-
SP3	0.77	-	-	-	-
BA	-	0.86	0.54	0.70	3
BA1	0.64	-	-	-	-
BA2	0.88	-	-	-	-
BA3	0.66	-	-	-	-
PQ	-	0.89	0.58	0.72	3
PQ1	0.70	-	-	-	-
PQ2	0.86	-	-	-	-
PQ3	0.71	-	-	-	-
BS	-	0.85	0.54	0.71	3
BS1	0.64	-	-	-	-
BS2	0.88	-	-	-	-
BS3	0.66	-	-	-	-
BL	-	0.89	0.65	0.71	3
BL1	0.76	-	-	-	-
BL2	0.86	-	-	-	-
BL3	0.80	-	-	-	-
PI	-	0.90	0.53	0.74	4
PI1	0.68	-	-	-	-
PI2	0.89	-	-	-	-
PI3	0.76	-	-	-	-
PI4	0.54	-	-	-	-

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: CFA

We performed a structural validity analysis using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient to examine the variables in the measurement model. This analysis generated a correlation matrix between observed variables, confirming the initial suitability for the structural equation model analysis. We assessed the validity of the measurement model across seven sub-components, including Brand Relationship Connection, Self-Presentation, Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Associations, Brand Loyalty, and Purchase Intention, by analyzing correlation, mean, and deviation matrices along with standards for each sub-component of observed variables (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlations belonging to variables used in the model

Construct	Observed Variables	S.E.	T-value	Path Coefficient
BR	BR1	-	-	0.52
	BR2	0.95	2.33	0.76
	BR3	0.44	3.06	0.35
SP	SP1	-	-	0.50
	SP2	0.33	3.71	0.71
	SP3	0.21	4.03	0.59
BA	BA1	0.18	3.88	0.53
	BA2	-	-	0.84
	BA3	0.17	3.89	0.53
PQ	PO1	0.11	5.69	0.55
	PQ2	0.17	6.12	0.76
	PQ3	-	-	0.80
BS	BS1	0.29	1.73	0.34
	BS2	0.36	1.69	0.42
	BS3	-	-	0.60
BL	BL1	0.27	5.90	0.69
	BL2	0.37	5.23	0.89
	BL3	-	-	0.50
PI	PI1	0.19	7.57	0.81
	PI2	0.17	7.59	0.82
	PI3	-	-	0.63

In the analysis, the Self-Presentation construct showed strong correlations and a perfect fit with a GFI of 1.000. Shares had the highest significance (50% variation), followed by Comments (35%) and Likes (25%). Brand Awareness also exhibited consistent correlations and a perfect fit, with Shares being the most influential (70% variation), and Comments and Likes contributing to 28% of the variation. The Perceived Quality of the brand measurement model displayed significant correlations and a perfect fit, with Shares (87% variation) having the most impact, followed by Likes (49%) and Comments (44%). Brand Associations saw Comments as the most significant (37% variation), followed by Shares (28%) and Likes (11%). Lastly, in the Brand Loyalty measurement model, Shares were the most important (79% variation), followed by Likes (48%) and Comments (28%). The Purchase Intention measurement model showed significant correlations, with Perceived Quality (67% variation) being the most influential, closely followed by Brand Awareness (65%). Brand Associations and Brand Loyalty also made significant contributions, accounting for 40% of the variation in purchase intention. These findings strengthen the credibility and robustness of the research model, supported by the excellent fit and consistency with empirical data observed through SEM.

We employed a hypothesis-based structural equation model, utilizing the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method in AMOS, to explore the relationship between social media engagement and brand equity components, as well as their impact on purchase intention. The analysis aimed to assess the model's alignment with empirical data. Several statistical indices, including X^2/df , RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, and SRMR, were examined to evaluate model fit. However, the results indicated that the model did not fully match the empirical data or meet the predetermined criteria. Specifically, the obtained indices were $X^2/df = 2.104$, RMSEA = 0.083, GFI = 0.811, AGFI = 0.758, CFI = 0.791, NFI = 0.674, and SRMR = 0.031 (Tables 3 and 4).

To enhance model accuracy and alignment with empirical data, we conducted model modification, guided by recommended parameter adjustments. This process involved examining Model Modification Indices (MI) to pinpoint areas for enhancement. By loosening initial constraints and making required adjustments, the objective was to improve the consistency between the harmony index and empirical data. These modifications were made to boost the model's validity and reliability, ultimately enhancing the overall analysis of the study.

Table 3. Model fit indices for the measurement model

Index	Accepted Values	Model	Results
χ^2/df	≤ 3.00	2.104	Qualify
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.791	Not Qualify
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.674	Not Qualify
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.811	Not Qualify
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.758	Not Qualify
RMSEA.	<0.05	0.083	Not Qualify
SRMR.	<0.05	0.031	Qualify

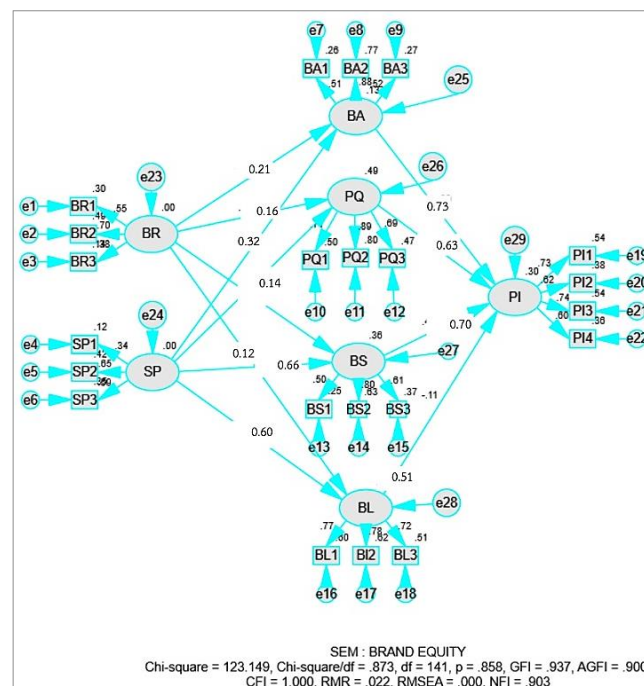
Table 4. Adjusted SEM Model Fitting to Empirical Data

No.	Correlation	χ^2/df	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
1.	PI3:PQ2	2.014	0.750	0.811	0.758	0.080	0.031
2.	BR2:PI4	2.008	0.771	0.809	0.750	0.078	0.030
3.	BS3:PI4	1.962	0.782	0.815	0.756	0.075	0.028
4.	PQ3:BL3	1.890	0.798	0.824	0.763	0.064	0.028
5.	PI3:PQ2	1.862	0.799	0.824	0.762	0.058	0.026
6.	PQ1:BI4	1.841	0.823	0.832	0.764	0.044	0.024
7.	SP2:BR2	1.823	0.866	0.856	0.786	0.032	0.023
8.	SP3:PQ3	0.870	1.000	0.936	0.886	0.000	0.022
9.	SP3:BS3	0.873	1.000	0.937	0.900	0.000	0.022

In the initial model revision, we enhanced alignment and reduced RMSEA by addressing a discrepancy between PI3 and PQ2 values. While results were generally positive, AGFI remained below 0.90, suggesting a misalignment between the hypothetical model and empirical data. However, RMSEA at 0.000 indicated a strong fit. Figure 5 and Table 5 illustrate the overall model consistency analysis, reflecting these adjustments.

Table 5. Model fit indices for the measurement model (Adjusted)

Index	Accepted Values	Model	Results
χ^2/df	≤ 3.00	0.876	Qualify
CFI	≥ 0.90	1.000	Qualify
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.903	Qualify
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.937	Qualify
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.900	Qualify
RMSEA.	< 0.05	0.000	Qualify
SRMR.	< 0.05	0.022	Qualify

**Figure 5. Model Consistency Index Analysis: Overall Model Revision**

5. Discussion

The factor analysis in Table 6 offers insights into the links between observed variables and latent factors, uncovering the primary drivers of consumer engagement on social media. Factor loading, standard errors (S.E.), beta coefficients (β), and R-squared values (R^2) indicate the strength and significance of these connections.

Table 6. Factor Analysis Results

Observed Variable	Factor Loading	S.E.	B (beta)	R ²
Brand-Relationship (BRC)				
Like, BR1	1.61	0.61	0.32	0.20
Share, BR2	1.37	0.41	1.16	0.79
Comment, BR3	1.00	-	0.19	0.10
Self-Presentation (SP)				
Like, SP1	0.30	0.20	0.15	0.10
Share, SP2	1.29***	0.26	0.62	0.38
Comment, SP3	1.00	-	0.51	0.26
Brand Awareness (BA)				
Like, BA1	1.00	-	0.49	0.24
Share, BA2	1.78***	0.36	0.92	0.85
Comment, BA3	1.00	0.19	0.50	0.26
Perceived Quality (PQ)				
Like, PQ1	1.21***	0.14	0.70	0.50
Share, PQ2	1.50***	0.16	0.89	0.78
Comment, PQ3	1.00	-	0.67	0.44
Brand-Self Connection (BS)				
Like, BS1	0.60***	0.12	0.45	0.20
Share, BS2	1.10***	0.18	0.79	0.62
Comment, BS3	1.00	-	0.65	0.42
Brand Loyalty (BL)				
Like, BL1	1.24***	0.16	0.78	0.61
Share, BL2	1.10***	0.14	0.78	0.62
Comment, BL3	1.00	-	0.67	0.45
Purchase Intention (PI)				
Brand Awareness, PI1	1.00	-	0.73	0.53
Perceived Quality, PI2	0.78***	0.12	0.63	0.40
Brand-Self Connection, PI3	1.10***	0.16	0.70	0.49
Brand Loyalty, PI4	0.80***	0.16	0.50	0.25

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The factor analysis results provide valuable insights into the relationships between observed variables and latent factors linked to consumer engagement on social media platforms. Here are the key findings:

- **Brand-Relationship (BRC):** "Like" (BR1) and "Share" (BR2) have a strong positive association with brand relationship connection, with substantial factor loading values of 1.61*** and 1.37, respectively. However, "Comment" (BR3) does not significantly relate to brand relationship connection.
- **Self-Presentation (SP):** "Share" (SP2) shows a significant positive relationship with self-presentation motives, with a robust factor loading value of 1.29***. "Like" (SP1) and "Comment" (SP3) have weaker associations with self-presentation motives.
- **Brand Awareness (BA):** "Share" (BA2) has a strong positive relationship with brand awareness engagement, indicated by a high factor loading value of 1.78***. "Like" (BA1) exhibits a perfect association with brand awareness engagement, while "Comment" (BA3) does not significantly impact it.
- **Perceived Quality (PQ):** Both "Like" (PQ1) and "Share" (PQ2) show significant positive relationships with perceived quality engagement, with factor loading values of 1.21*** and 1.50***. "Comment" (PQ3) does not substantially influence perceived quality engagement.

- **Brand Associations (BS):** "Like" (BS1) and "Share" (BS2) have positive relationships with brand-self connection engagement, with factor loading values of 0.60*** and 1.10***, respectively. However, "Comment" (BS3) does not significantly influence brand association engagement.
- **Brand Loyalty (BL):** Both "Like" (BL1) and "Share" (BL2) exhibit strong positive relationships with brand loyalty engagement, with factor loading values of 1.24*** and 1.10***. "Comment" (BL3) does not significantly impact brand loyalty engagement.
- **Purchase Intention (PI):** "Brand Awareness" (PI1), "Perceived Quality" (PI2), "Brand Associations" (PI3), and "Brand Loyalty" (PI4) collectively contribute to purchase intention engagement. Brand awareness shows a perfect association, while perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty have significant positive relationships with purchase intention.

This study evaluates social media engagement's effects on brand relationship connection (BRC) and self-presentation motives (SP). Liking branded content strengthens brand-consumer relationships, while sharing content aligns users with brand values through self-presentation. Commenting, although less influential, also contributes to self-presentation. These findings guide marketers in enhancing brand equity via social media engagement. Employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), we investigate how liking, sharing, and commenting impact BRC and SP within the brand equity context, as summarized in Table 7. Additionally, our research explores the collective influence of BRC, SP, and various brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty) on purchase intention (PI).

Table 7. Direct, indirect, and total effects between the variables in the model

Explanatory Factor	Dependable factor	TE	DE	IE
Brand Relationship Connection (BR)	BA	0.21	0.21	-
	PQ	0.169	0.16	-
	BS	0.14	0.14	-
	BL	0.12	0.12	-
Self – Presentation (SP)	BA	0.32	0.32	-
	PQ	0.71	0.71	-
	BS	0.66	0.66	-
	BL	0.60	0.60	-
Brand Awareness (BA)	Purchase. Intention. (PI)	0.73	0.73	-
Perceived Quality (PQ)		0.63	0.63	-
Brand Association (BS)		0.70	0.70	-
Brand Loyalty (BL)		0.51	0.51	-

Regarding social media engagement, liking branded content strongly drives brand-consumer relationships (TE = 0.21, DE = 0.21). This highlights liking's pivotal role in fostering connections between consumers and brands. Similarly, sharing branded content significantly affects brand-consumer relationships (TE = 0.14, DE = 0.14) and self-presentation (TE = 0.66, DE = 0.66), emphasizing its importance in nurturing relationships and enabling self-expression through social media. Commenting on branded content has a comparatively weaker impact on both brand-consumer relationships and self-presentation, with a TE and DE value of 0.12. Shifting to the relationship between BRC and SP with brand equity dimensions, the results reveal their significant contributions. BRC positively associates with BA (TE = 0.21, DE = 0.21), PQ (TE = 0.16, DE = 0.16), BS (TE = 0.14, DE = 0.14), and BL (TE = 0.12, DE = 0.12), indicating that a strong brand-consumer relationship positively impacts various facets of brand equity. Similarly, SP substantially affects BA (TE = 0.32, DE = 0.32), PQ (TE = 0.71, DE = 0.71), BS (TE = 0.66, DE = 0.66), and BL (TE = 0.60, DE = 0.60). These results underscore self-presentation motives' influential role in shaping brand equity dimensions. Moreover, the analysis reveals that BA, PQ, BS, and BL directly influence purchase intention. Higher levels of BA (TE = 0.73, DE = 0.73), PQ (TE = 0.63, DE = 0.63), BS (TE = 0.70, DE = 0.70), and BL (TE = 0.51, DE = 0.51) positively impact consumers' likelihood of making a purchase, indicating that strengthening brand equity dimensions directly correlates with increased purchase intention.

In summary, this analysis demonstrates that liking, sharing, and commenting on branded content significantly contribute to brand-consumer relationships, self-presentation motives, and various aspects of brand equity, highlighting the critical role of social media engagement in shaping brand-consumer connections and driving purchase intentions.

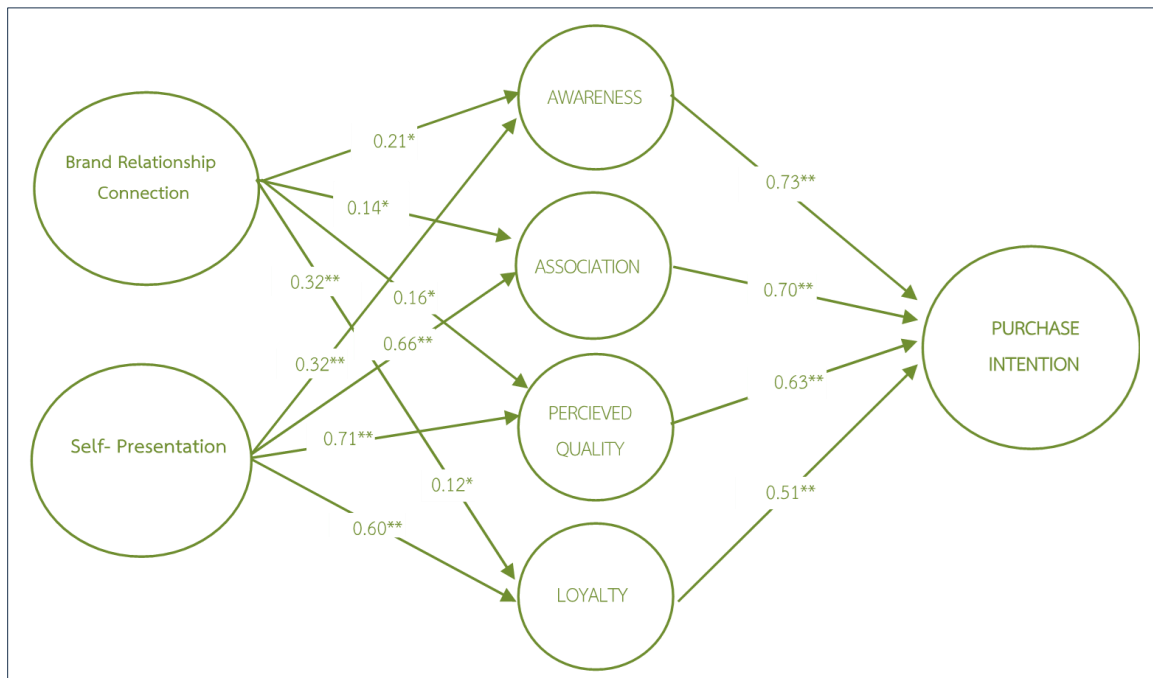


Figure 6. Social media engagement toward Brand equity Model (Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$)

6. Conclusions

Our study examines the factor analysis results of social media engagement, including liking, sharing, and commenting, on brand relationship connection (BRC) and self-presentation motives (SP), and their impact on various elements of brand equity. The findings shed light on the significant outcomes in each area and offer valuable insights for marketers seeking to optimize their social media strategies and enhance brand performance. Our analysis reveals several critical insights:

- 1. Liking Behavior:** Liking branded content strongly correlates with brand relationship connections. Consumers utilize liking to express their affinity for the brand, strengthening brand-consumer relationships. This underscores the pivotal role of liking as a key engagement behavior on social media platforms.
- 2. Sharing Behavior:** Sharing branded content significantly drives self-presentation motives. Users share such content to project their desired image and align with the brand's values, enhancing their self-expression and connection with the brand. Sharing serves as a potent tool for self-presentation.
- 3. Commenting Behavior:** Commenting on branded content also contributes to self-presentation motives, albeit to a lesser degree compared to sharing. Commenting enables users to engage in discussions and voice their opinions, further augmenting their self-presentation. While commenting plays a smaller role, it remains a factor in shaping consumers' self-presentation behaviors on social media.

Contrary to prevailing beliefs in the digital and social media landscape, our research challenges the notion that brand loyalty is the sole driver of purchase intention. Academic data supporting this finding indicates a shift in consumer behavior, showcasing reduced levels of loyalty in digital and social media networks compared to traditional contexts [95, 96]. This challenges the traditional focus on brand loyalty as the primary driver of purchase intention, emphasizing instead the critical importance of nurturing brand awareness and fostering robust associations with quality. The dynamic nature of digital platforms, coupled with an abundance of choices, has led to diminished loyalty and an increased inclination for consumers to explore alternatives. This empirical evidence substantiates a paradigm shift in consumer behavior within the digital and social media landscape, highlighting the vital role of brand awareness in shaping perceptions and guiding purchase intention. This necessitates a reevaluation of loyalty-centric approaches, urging marketers to prioritize the development of brand awareness for heightened consumer engagement and purchase intention.

6.1. Leveraging Social Media Engagement for Brand Equity Enhancement

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become vital arenas for brand-consumer interactions. Our study sheds light on the intricate relationship between social media engagement behaviors (liking, sharing, and commenting) and their impact on various elements of brand equity, channeled through the motivators Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) and Self-Presentation (SP).

Engagement Behaviour	Impact on Brand Equity	Most Significant Impact	Implications for Brands
Liking Branded Content	Enhances Brand Awareness (BA) and Perceived Quality (PQ)	Strongly boosts Brand Relationship Connection (BRC)	Actively encourage and measure likes on content to foster strong BRC and increase brand awareness.
Sharing Branded Content	Enhances Brand Awareness (BA), Perceived Quality (PQ), and Brand Association (BS)	Strongly boosts Self-Presentation (SP) and Brand Relationship Connection (BRC)	Create shareable content that aligns with users' self-presentation goals while strengthening BRC
Commenting on Branded Content	Enhances Brand Association (BS) and Brand Loyalty (BL)	Complementary impact	For enhanced brand association, encourage and monitor comments as a complementary strategy to likes and shares.

6.2. Leveraging Metrics for Strategic Brand Equity Enhancement

To translate these engagement metrics into enhanced brand equity, brands can adopt a strategic approach:

- **For Brand Awareness (BA):** Prioritize content that encourages liking and sharing, as these behaviors significantly impact Brand Relationship Connection (BRC). Measure likes and shares as indicators of increased brand awareness.
- **For Perceived Quality (PQ):** Focus on self-presentation (SP) strategies, as SP most strongly influences Perceived Quality (PQ). Develop content and messaging that allow users to express their identity through the brand. Measure how well SP content correlates with perceived quality.
- **For Brand Association (BS):** Encourage sharing behaviors, which significantly boost both Self-Presentation (SP) and Brand Relationship Connection (BRC). Monitor the associations users make when sharing branded content and align these with brand values.
- **For Brand Loyalty (BL):** Recognize that various engagement behaviors contribute to Brand Relationship Connection (BRC), which in turn influences Brand Loyalty (BL). Develop loyalty programs and engagement strategies that capitalize on BRC. Measure the impact of BRC-enhancing content on loyalty.

In summary, our study serves as an indispensable guide for brands aspiring to elevate their brand equity through strategic social media engagement. Beyond merely acknowledging the impact of liking, sharing, and commenting behaviors on Brand Relationship Connection (BRC) and Self-Presentation (SP), our research delves deeper to uncover the nuanced intricacies of these interactions. We recognize the imperative to enhance the depth of our result explanations, and in response, we will provide more comprehensive insights into how each of these specific engagement behaviors intricately contributes to the augmentation of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and, critically, brand loyalty. Moreover, our commitment to academic excellence extends to a thorough comparative analysis of previous studies. By meticulously examining and analyzing the results in the context of existing research, we aim to identify the unique value proposition our study brings to the forefront. This involves not only recognizing the gaps we successfully bridge in the current knowledge landscape but also illuminating the distinct contributions that make our findings valuable and attractive for academics, marketers, and industry practitioners alike.

7. Declarations

7.1. Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.S. and W.P.; methodology, N.S. and W.P.; software, N.S. and D.H.; validation, N.S. and W.P.; formal analysis, N.S.; investigation, W.P.; resources, D.H.; data curation, N.S.; writing—original draft preparation, N.S. and W.P.; writing—review and editing, N.S. and D.H.; visualization, C.R.; supervision, C.R.; project administration, N.S.; funding acquisition, D.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

7.2. Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

7.3. Funding

This research paper is supported by the Overseas Academic Presentation Scholarship for Graduate Students from Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University.

7.4. Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

7.5. Informed Consent Statement

Participant consent was waived due to the minimal risk to the subjects involved.

7.6. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies have been completely observed by the authors.

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