

The Role of Social Media Marketing and Brand Consciousness in Building Brand Loyalty

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Abstract

The upcoming expansions in the field of information technologies (IT) have infused an influential impact on the basic marketing practices of businesses and the consumer engagement methodologies. The evolution of social media has provided massive opportunities for the dynamic businesses of today to collaborate and develop strong networks with their target customers. The research talks about the role of social media marketing and brand consciousness in building consumers' brand loyalty. It is an empirical investigation in which a structured questionnaire was distributed among 320 respondents through convenience sampling. Data was analyzed using the SPSS version 23 examining the reliability, correlation and regression results of the study. The findings showed that a) There is a positive relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty; b) brand consciousness has a positive impact on brand loyalty. The study provided valuable recommendations for the marketers and policy makers in developing engaging social media contents over brand communities that is different and more innovative from traditional advertising channels. Although the research study faced limited resources and time constraints, the quantitative model proposed additional moderating variables to be tested and focused on the need for a longitudinal study for greater precision and attaining pragmatic consumer insights. Overall, the proposed research portrays that active presence of brands on social media not only helps in establishing strong relationships with consumers but also in building brand loyalty.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Brand Consciousness, Brand Loyalty, Advertising

1. Introduction

Social media has become a way of life and is considered as a mainstream communication podium which connects and facilitates one third of the world's population (Nelson-Field & Taylor, 2012). It is defined as a *"group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content"* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media builds new foundations of information that is effectively created, originated, disseminated and applied by a typical consumer's intent on informing each other about the upcoming products, services, brands & personalities (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The communication budgets are being readapted as the modern marketers move from traditional to digital mediums where social media marketing (SMM) is paving it way.

Facebook is by far the most popular medium reaching more than 1 billion consumers while connecting more than 15 million brands globally (Koetsier, 2013; Rageh, 2017). The number of total active Pakistani users on Facebook, have crossed the landmark of 25 Million with its two third majority under the age of 24 and below (SocialBakers, 2016). Social media has turned into an approach, an attitude for the Pakistani netizens⁴ especially the youth. More than 80% spend an hour online daily with an average session crossing five minutes. After the official unblocking of YouTube in February 2015, it has become the most popular content community site (video portal) followed by dailymotion.com and tune.pk. Instagram and Twitter record one of the highest hits per day by the highly emotional yet energetic youth of Pakistan (InternetWorldStats, 2016; SocialBakers, 2016).

The key word in social media marketing (SMM), social media advertising (SMA) or social networking is 'social'. As long as a set of target audience is responding and contributing to a company's social media activities, there are greater chances of positive consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

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The power of social media also provides opportunities for digital advertisers to track consumer information based on his or her following of brand pages (brand loyalty) and his personal interaction with others, through likes, comments & reviews. Consumers on the other hand can turn out to be brand conscious considering them as symbols of status and prestige when exposed to digital adverts. Businesses now are joining social media to target the highly brand conscious and loyal consumers by executing low cost integrated marketing activities (Rageh, 2017).

Social media is now being used as a marketing tool to attain strategic objectives including marketing research, publicity and branding (Thoring, 2011). The dynamic companies of today have made the best use of social media to augment their reach, the two questions that remain unanswered are: How social media marketing (SMM) activities can develop brand loyalty and what is the impact of brand consciousness on the brand loyalty of the consumers using the social media. The current study attempts to fulfill this gap by constituting a conceptual model that empirically tests the associations between brand consciousness & social media marketing (predictor variables) on brand loyalty (predicted variable). The next section provides the conceptual development and hypotheses. Furthermore, the methodology accompanied by the empirical results would be presented. Finally, discussion, implications, limitations and conclusions from the study are presented.

2. Conceptual Development and Hypotheses

2.1 Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty

Social media marketing (SMM) involves methods pertaining to direct and indirect marketing to generate consumer awareness, recognition and recall for a product, person or a brand being executed through web tools of social networking, content dissemination and microblogging (Gunelius, 2011). In simpler terms, it is referred to as a practice of advertising done online, that makes use of the ethnic characteristics of a society, in the form of social networks (Facebook & YouTube), virtual networks (Second Life) and opinion oriented sites (Eopinions) to accomplish strategic marketing objectives (Tuten, 2008, p. 19). It has the ability to convert consumers into marketers and advertisers who have the tendency to formulate, edit and disseminate online information pertaining to products, services and brands.

Brand loyalty is a positive feeling shown by the customers towards a brand and a strong dedication to make efforts in purchasing the products/services of the same brand over the time repeatedly, despite of the competitors' offers or any change in the overall business environment (Liu, 2007). Pettinger (2012) defines brand loyalty as a process where consumers show strong preference for a particular brand and its products against other brands. There are different approaches presented by the researchers relating to brand loyalty, confirming the evolution of loyalty over the period of time. This evolution involves different interpretations regarding brand loyalty and its dimensions. Behavioral loyalty theories were the earliest in the field and dominated until 1970s. Behavioral theories presented loyalty as a share of total purchases, purchase frequency or purchase probability. These researches saw brand loyalty in term of results or repeated purchase behaviors rather than reasons behind it (TaghiPourian & Bakhsh, 2015).

Social media marketing (SMM) is based on a two-way communication where consumers participate actively as compared to the traditional marketing methods where consumers are passive. In simpler terms, it is more about relationships marketing where firms opt for 'making connections' rather than 'trying to sell' (Gordhamer, 2009). Marketers need to be sincerer with their customers in communications through social media and try to show the true image of the brand rather than exploiting and manipulating, as consumers on social media now possess greater knowledge and power. They may be money rich but time poor, therefore brands should be within the reach and available on every possible social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogs and Virtual Forums/Communities (Gordhamer, 2009).

Initially it seemed to be quite difficult for the marketers to engage with every single consumer online and respond to their expectations and hence brand communities were introduced to make this job easier for the marketers. A brand community in its true sense, depicts a structured set of social relationships exhibited by brand loyalists through their liking and following for specific brands (Muniz & O'guinn, 2001). It is created by establishing a profile on a social network or by producing a self-generated brand community. These communities bridge communications not only between consumers and brands but also amidst consumers themselves as they get the opportunity to view, like and comment on each other's messages

(Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011). Hence these brand pages promoted through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap Chat & YouTube play a vital role in developing a one-to-one relationship with the customers and strengthening their brand loyalty.

Consumers have their own motivations, psychological and social needs for joining brand communities (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Consumers join such brand communities because they want to be identified with the image and reputation of those particular brands to fulfill their social needs. Consumers search for signs and symbols in brand communities over the social media and join them to interpret who they really want to be and how they want others to identify them (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Schembri, Merrilees, and Kristiansen (2010) assert that consumers find it aspirational to be identified with brand signs and symbols. Signs and logos of brands such as Ferrari and BMW have symbolic meaning for the consumers and they consider them as part of their personality.

Brand communities are not just communication channels but also provide valuable information to the companies. Von Hippel (2005) insists that customers within online brand communities can provide brands with innovative ideas and what changes they want in products and services. This builds, strengthens and nourishes brand loyalty and allows consumers to become the co-creators of the firm's products/services. Following similar trends, companies like Dell and Cisco have gone further by transforming their customers and suppliers into members of corporate communities (Chaffey & Smith, 2008). The branding literature also reflects that companies are able to reinforce brand loyalty by strengthening their consumer-brand relationship (Aaker, 1996; Kotler & Keller, 2009). These valuable relationships provide added benefits to the consumers in the form of better prices and improved product/service quality. This in turn raises customer satisfaction and builds brand loyalty through brand communities (M. R. Lee, Yen, & Hsiao, 2014; Rageh, 2017).

There is no doubt in saying that social media has now become a nucleus for the marketers in promoting their brands. This social media based communication has facilitated the consumers by providing relevant and updated information with a minimum effort (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Moreover, it has provided opportunities for them to voice their pleasure/displeasure with a greater reach. If a consumer is able to respond positively towards a branded content promoted through social media, a relationship is gradually established with the company and a strong customer-brand relationship ultimately leads to a healthier brand loyalty (Fournier, 1998). As the communication from the brand is strengthened, the level of brand loyalty gets stronger (Merisavo & Raulas, 2004; Rageh, 2017). So, based on the above arguments provided, we hypothesize that:

H1: Social media marketing activities exert a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.

2.2 Brand Consciousness & Brand Loyalty

According to Sprotles and Kendall (1986), brand consciousness is the mental orientation of the consumers to go for the products of a brand that is well known and highly advertised. Consumers having a high brand consciousness for a brand believe that the strong brand name and brand image stand for good quality. Due to this high brand consciousness, the consumers are willing to pay premium prices for this particular brand and its products (Shim & Kotsiopoulos, 1992). They even express personal characteristics and preferences by choosing a particular brand (Manrai, Lascu, Manrai, & Babb, 2001).

Lachance, Beaudoin, and Robitaille (2003) presented that the level of brand consciousness varies among different consumers. Furthermore, brand consciousness is related to the consumers' socialization processes in consumption behaviors and different cultural settings. Consumers with high level of brand consciousness are more likely to buy well known and expensive brands' products which signals their brand loyalty (Liao & Wang, 2009). Their brand loyalty reaffirms their complete belief in the quality of the product and its ability to exceed their expectations.

Consumers possessing higher brand consciousness consider brands as mere symbols of higher status (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Phau and Teah (2009) went further and propagated that consumers gain self confidence in building their own self-identity through brands and feel pride in portraying such identity to others. Such consumers are willing to pay higher prices for well-known brands due to its cult following.

Hofstede (2003) supported the work of Escalas and Bettman (2005) and stated that the level of brand consciousness will be higher in those consumers who consider social status and prestige as important and relate them with the well-known brands. Keeping it simpler, brand consciousness is not just about having brand knowledge and brand awareness or choosing one brand over another. Rather, brand consciousness is a belief that a particular brand has unique image and value in the eyes of consumers (Rageh, 2017). Consumers pay higher prices for the brands that match their self-identity. They want others to identify them by looking at the brands they use. All these actions give a clear signal that consumers of today value the brands around them and believe in the core identify of the product/service they utilize.

Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) has been considered a useful model in understanding the consciousness of consumers about brands. Sprotles and Kendall (1986) introduced the approach which probes into consumers' cognitive and affective orientations when they are involved in decision making process in a shopping context. The CSI focuses on different cognitive dimensions of consumer decision making. The consumer style inventory (CSI) identified eight mental characteristics of consumer decision making which comprised of High Quality Consciousness, Brand Consciousness, Novelty-Fashion Conscious, Recreational & Shopping Conscious, Price Conscious, Impulsiveness, Confused by Over Choice & Habitual Orientation.

Lysonski, Durvasula, and Zotos (1996) asserted that three consumer buying orientations of CSI approach i.e. 'brand consciousness', 'novelty fashion consciousness' and 'habitual orientation' were most common and brand consciousness topped amidst them. Walsh, Mitchell, and Hennig-Thurau (2001) found out that six consumer buying orientations were common which included brand consciousness, perfectionism, recreation & hedonism consciousness, confused by over choice, impulsiveness and novelty-fashion consciousness. These studies clearly showed that brand consciousness is one of the commonly found consumer orientation when they make any purchase decision.

Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1981) developed the 'Symbolic self-completion theory' which proposes that people use material possessions as symbols of social recognitions; communicating their identities. The researchers defined symbol as any feature of a person that signals to others, his true identify (Braun & Wicklund, 1989, p. 164). The aforementioned theory proposes that individuals make use of use brands to safeguard their self-identity. As an example, consumers with high brand consciousness may think of purchasing valuable brands and develop strong loyalty for them. However this brand loyalty is not necessary because of the quality perceptions they have about the brand but due to the fact that others consider them as socially integrated due to better prices (Bao & Mandrik, 2004; Rageh, 2017). Hence based on the above literature provided, we hypothesize that:

H2: Brand consciousness exerts a significant a positive effect on brand loyalty.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

After reviewing the literature, the study presents the research model in Figure 1. The theoretical framework demonstrates the independent and dependent variables of the research in a graphical form. There are two independent variables and one dependent variable of the study. The two independent variables include social media marketing and brand consciousness. The only dependent variable of the proposed research study is brand loyalty.

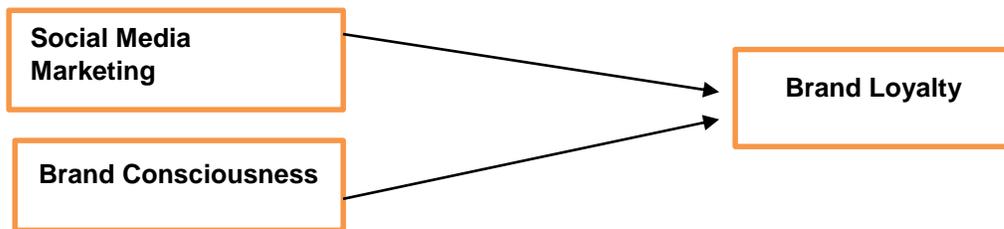


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Context

Pakistan resides under the category of 'Next Generation Markets' (Atkearney, 2013) and is amidst the emerging economies of Asia-Pacific which is experiencing ever increasing internet penetration rates (SoicialBakers, 2016). Since January 2014 there has been a dynamic 47% growth in the number of active internet users, 72% growth in the number of active social media users and an alarming 113% growth in the number of active mobile social users (Internetlivestats, 2015; Simon & WeAreSocial, 2015). Pakistan comprises of a unique geo-demographic composition, with two-third of its population, possessing an age bracket of 30 and less. It is not surprising to know that by 2030, the majority of the age bracket would be 24 years and below, with urban population climbing to more than fifty percent by 2020 (Unicef, 2016). More than 60% of young Pakistani netizens interact with brands through social media advertising, from Facebook being the most popular medium (SoicialBakers, 2016).

3.2 Data Collection & Sample

A structured set of survey questionnaires were emailed in the major universities of the twin cities, namely Comsats University, Islamic University, Riphah International University and Arid Agriculture University. Using Google Docs, 320 questionnaires were floated, and 250 usable responses were employed for data analysis. A convenience sampling technique was deployed for this self-administered survey. This technique has earlier been applied in the context of social media marketing by J. Lee and Hong (2016), Zhang and Mao (2016) and Rageh (2017) when targeting college/university students.

The sample for the study represented college and university students. This segment is techno-literate, well-educated, self-confident and receptive towards customized offerings and services on the social media. Moreover, they have easy access to internet (Wi-Fi-facilities) and greater exposure to social media advertising (Wang & Sun, 2010). Under graduate and graduate students have earlier been considered as ideal sampling frame while evaluating consumer behavior over the social media. (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2016; Nevarez & Torres, 2015).

3.3 Measures

A 5-point Likert Scale was applied for the variables of the theoretical model, oscillating from the range of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The scales for measuring the constructs were adopted from academic literature. The scale for the construct, social media marketing was adopted from (Kim & Ko, 2012; Rageh, 2017). Brand consciousness utilized the scale developed by Sprotles and Kendall (1986) and brand loyalty scale was adopted from the works of (Ailawadi, Neslin, & Gedenk, 2001; Rageh, 2017).

3.4 Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Science v. 20.0 (SPSS) was incorporated to perform a concrete Reliability test for the items representing the study's latent constructs. Furthermore, to evaluate the hypothesized relationships amidst the constructs, Pearson correlation analysis and multi-collinearity tests have been carried out to analyze the hypothesized relationships. Finally, for confirming the extent of effects of social media marketing & brand consciousness on the independent variable of the study i.e. brand loyalty; a Regression analysis has also been undertaken.

4. Results

4.1 Respondent's Profiling

Table No. 1: Age Wise Distribution of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30	210	84.0	84.0	84.0
	31-40	33	13.2	13.2	97.2
	41-50	5	2.0	2.0	99.2
	51 and above	2	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 2: Gender Wise Distribution of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	91	36.4	36.4	36.4
	Male	159	63.6	63.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

The demographic profiling of respondents is developed through frequency tables. Table 1 shows that out of total 250 respondents, 210 respondents were between the age group of 20-30 years which makes 84% of the total sample size. The 31-40 age group had the second most number of respondents with the frequency of 33 and percentage of 13.2%. A total of 5 respondents were among the age group of 41-50 with a 2% representation and only 2 respondents were of 51 and above, making it just 0.8% of the total sample size. The youth aged between 20-30 represented the majority of the sample size which now considers social media as a way of life. On the other hand, Table 2 shows that out of total 250 respondents, 91 respondents were female which represented 36.4% of the study's total sample. Total number of male respondents were 159, which makes it 63.6% of the total sampling frame. Males dominated the study's sample under empirical examination.

Table No. 3: Educational Characteristics of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Postgraduate	151	60.4	60.4	60.4
	School/College Level	13	5.2	5.2	65.6
	Undergraduate	86	34.4	34.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 4: Occupation Wise Distribution of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	16	6.4	6.4	6.4
	Salaried Person	53	21.2	21.2	27.6
	Self-employed	19	7.6	7.6	35.2
	Student	162	64.8	64.8	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 reflects the educational qualification of the respondents which is yet another vital indicator of the study's demographic data. It shows that 151 (60.4%) out of total 250 respondents were postgraduates while 86 (34.4%) were identified as undergraduates. Only 13 (5.2%) respondents had school/college level education. Table 4 shows the occupation wise distribution of the respondents. 162 respondents out of 250 were full time students, making it the largest group of this demographic study. The second largest group consisted of salaried persons having 53 respondents while 19 respondents were self-employed. Only 16 respondents chose not to disclose their occupation.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Table No. 5: Cronbach's Reliability Summary

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Social Media Marketing	0.777	6
Brand Consciousness	0.748	6
Brand Loyalty	0.691	5

The Cronbach's alpha measures the internal reliability and consistency of the items measuring a construct. The literature shows that, DeVellis (2016) concluded that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient should be greater than 0.7 to be duly acceptable. Additionally, Malhotra (2008) suggested that the rejection criteria of any construct should be 0.6 or lower. Table 5 above shows the reliability results of our constructs. Social media marketing (0.777), Brand Consciousness (0.748) and Brand Loyalty (0.691) are above the minimum criteria, defined by the aforementioned literature. Hence, the study concludes that there is a presence of strong internal consistency between the measurements of our variables.

4.3 Correlation Breakdown

Table No. 6: Pearson's Correlation Summary

		Social Media Marketing	Brand Consciousness	Brand Loyalty
Social Media Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.399**	.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	250	250	250
Brand Consciousness	Pearson Correlation	.399**	1	.559**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	250	250	250
Brand Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.401**	.559**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	250	250	250

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation reflects the degree of relationship between the two variables; having a range of +1 to -1. A value +1 indicates perfect positive correlation, -1 with perfect negative correlation while 0 shows existence of no relationship between the variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

Referring to Table 6, Social media marketing ($r = 0.401$) has a significant moderate correlation with brand loyalty. On the other hand, brand consciousness ($r = 0.559$) also possesses a significant moderate correlation with the study's dependent variable. For addressing the issue of multi-collinearity, the r -values of the two independent factors should be less than 0.80 (Garson, 2012). The values shown in Table 6 are not greater than the set criteria. To further validate it, a multi-collinearity test has also been applied shown by Table 7 below.

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) reflects the inflation of variances amongst the estimated coefficients, ultimately leading to multi-collinearity. The value should ideally be less than 3 and the Tolerance level should be greater than 0.1 (Hair Jr, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010; Kennedy, 2003; Pan & Jackson, 2008). The results clearly show that multi-collinearity is non-existent between the independent variables of the research study.

Table No. 7: Collinearity Coefficients			
Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Social Media Marketing	.841	1.189
	Brand Consciousness	.752	1.542

a. Dependent Variable: BrandLoyalty

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis measures the change in the dependent variable which in this case is 'Brand Loyalty', caused by a change in the independent variables; comprising of social media marketing and brand consciousness.

Table No. 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.591 ^a	.350	.344	.58475

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Consciousness, Social MediMarketing

Table No. 9: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	45.399	2	22.700	66.387	.000 ^b
	Residual	84.457	247	.342		
	Total	129.856	249			

a. Dependent Variable: BrandLoyalty,

b. Predictors: (Constant), BrandConsciousness, SocialMediaMarketing

Table 8 shows the values in the form of R, R square and adjusted R square. The R value is 0.591, showcasing that 59%% of the variation in the dependent variable (brand loyalty) has been caused by the independent variables (social media marketing & brand consciousness). The value of R square, which is a more accurate prediction of multiple linear regression; shows that 35% of the variation in the predicted variable has been due to the study's two predictor variables. The value of R square is adjusted, in order to attain how much of the study's target sample is able to justify the population. The adjusted R square value shows that 34% of the variation reflected in brand loyalty is due to the existence of social media marketing and brand consciousness.

Table 9 shows the F statistic, representing the overall significance of the conceptual model and shows that the regression equation is fitting with the data collected. The F statistic value is 66.387 while the p value is significant at the 0.05 level, showing statistically significant results (Field, 2013). This dictates that the regression equation is statistically significant and independent variables of the study have truly represented its dependent variable.

Table No. 10: Coefficient Application

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.042	.222		4.693	.000
	SocialMediaMarketing	.217	.057	.211	3.779	.000
	BrandConsciousness	.491	.058	.474	8.476	.000

a. BrandLoyalty: Dependent Variable:

Table 10 shows the coefficient application of the conceptual model. The independent constructs i.e. Social media marketing ($p=0.000$, $t=3.779$, $b=0.217$) & brand consciousness ($p=0.000$, $t=8.476$, $b=0.491$) have a statistically significant influence on brand loyalty as the p values and t values are significant at the 0.05 and 2.00 level respectively i.e. less than 0.05 and greater than 2.00 (Field, 2013). Finally, the beta values further show, that the relationship of social media marketing and brand consciousness with the dependent variable (brand loyalty) is positive and significant.

5. Discussion of Results

The social media platforms are not only widely popular but have become a way of life for the young, empowered and effervescent consumers of this developing region. It has become an area of growing interest for the academicians, marketers and policy makers of today. From the surveys conducted online and analyzing the results of the data gathered through reliability test, correlation & regression analysis, it is evident that marketing done through the social media and their brand consciousness has an impact on their emerging brand loyalty. Earlier studies conducted by (Bao & Mandrik, 2004; Chaffey & Smith, 2008; Habibi,

Laroche, & Richard, 2016; Rageh, 2017) also provide similar findings in the context of social media marketing.

From the reliability results attained of the three major constructs, it was found that the internal consistency of the items was admirable. This supported the study of Rageh (2017) who studied the role of social media marketing activities and consumer's value & brand consciousness on their underlying brand loyalty. The correlation and regression analysis portrayed that SMM and brand consciousness had a significant positive impact on brand loyalty and serve as key predictors in its variation. This shows that if the modern marketers are able to develop proactive social media advertising techniques and raise the consumers' brand consciousness, they would ultimately be successful in building their life time brand loyalty. These relationships developed, support the earlier research works of Bao and Mandrik (2004), Merisavo and Raulas (2004) and Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006). So, in a nutshell, our hypothesis H1&H2 have both been accepted. The overall findings of the research study are congruent to the works done on raising consumers' brand loyalty (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Rageh, 2017; Schau, Muñoz Jr, & Arnould, 2009; Zhou, Jin, Vogel, Fang, & Chen, 2011).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of this empirical research was to study the impact of social media marketing (SMM) and brand consciousness on brand loyalty. After analyzing the survey results through reliability test, regression and correlation analysis, it was observed that there is a positive role of SMM and brand consciousness in building Brand Loyalty. The outcomes of the aforementioned tests verify the hypothesis H1, that Social media marketing has a positive impact on brand loyalty. The empirical investigation also verifies the hypothesis H2, that Brand consciousness has a positive impact on brand loyalty. So, the quantitative analysis truly justifies the conceptual development of the proposed model.

The findings clearly portray that marketers need to develop online and social media marketing strategies that are different from traditional media strategies. Social media now has penetrated the concept of 'co-creation of value' and now the consumers need to be engaged in every aspect of the business process. Brand consciousness consumers believe that a stronger brand name and brand image stand for good quality. This quality is now effectively being marketed through an emerging channel known as the social media. Consumers with higher level of brand consciousness and greater awareness of social media are willing to pay premium prices for specific brands. They consider brands as symbols of stature and attain self confidence in relating their own self-identity with that of a brand. Therefore, these consumers are likely to pay higher prices for a well-known brand and the policy makers need to target such profitable prospects.

Advertisers and the modern marketers are required to identify which social media platforms will be most beneficial for the organization in promoting the brands. Based on effectiveness and reach of the platforms, an integrated and well-articulated social media marketing strategy can be formulated. Moreover, these strategies should be reviewed regularly to find out their effectiveness and make changes if required. Hence, engaging consumers on different social media platforms accompanied by diverse incentives and offers can result in an enhanced brand loyalty.

7. Limitations & Future Research

As it happens with all other scholarly works, this study also represents some limitations. The research examines the consumer behavior of young age segments over the social media. Although more than sixty percent of the young Pakistani netizens interact with brands through social media advertising (SoicialBakers, 2016), there is still need of investigating consumer's brand loyalty behaviors amidst older demographics. The present research was conducted using a small sample size of 250 respondents. Therefore, the sample does not represent the majority of the population. The future research can be carried out by using a fairly large sample size for improved generalization of the population. Moreover, future studies could be more specific and evaluate online behavioral trends in emerging industries of Pakistan in which e-commerce, fashion and beauty are leading the way with an online fan base crossing 50 million by average (SoicialBakers, 2016).

As the study's sample has been drawn through a convenience method, issues pertaining to generalizability arise. Moreover, consumer responses over the social media are still passing through an

embryonic process, a cross-sectional design is often not enough to capture its true evolution. For greater precision, a longitudinal study would be more appropriate to attain better findings into consumer behavior and their brand associations on the virtual communities. The study has not evaluated any moderating variables in its empirical investigation. No doubt, there is also a presence of other significant moderator variables that exert an impact on social media marketing activities such as a consumer's age, gender, income and education. This would provide greater demographic comparisons within the sampling frame. Finally, future research should add a greater depth by comparing the impact of traditional and social media marketing on the proposed variables of the study. This would provide better implications for the policy makers and marketers in institutionalizing and refining their social media marketing strategies.

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