

Digital Influence: Examining Social Media Marketing Dynamics and How They Affect Consumer Brand Loyalty

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Abstract: - Social media is becoming a medium of choice for businesses to interact with their potential and current customers to establish brand loyalty and grow customer trust in the digital age. This study investigates the complex relationship between social media marketing and its impact on consumer trust and loyalty to brands. A conceptual framework is developed based on the past literature to quantitatively measure the impact of social media marketing on brand trust and customer loyalty (cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty). Data was collected from 315 users of a fashion brand that they like and follow on social media. PLS-SEM was used to assess the proposed relationships. The findings of the study reveal that social media marketing significantly impacts brand trust and brand loyalty and its dimensions such as cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. The findings of this study offer insightful information for marketers looking to use the power of social media marketing to increase customer trust and loyalty. The results highlight the necessity for a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond simple promotional content and emphasizes developing deep connections with customers to build trust and shaping loyalty in the digital environment.

Key-Words: - Social Media Marketing; Brand Trust; Cognitive Loyalty; Affective Loyalty; Conative Loyalty; Action Loyalty.

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1 Introduction

The concepts of marketing have changed with the advancements in technology in this digital era, [1]. Now different social media platforms are available

where mass audience spend their time. Brands develop and design their campaigns targeting these social media platforms that further give them the leverage to select the target audience of their desired brand, particularly focusing on demographics such

as age, gender, and location, [2], [3]. Due to the mass audience reach different social media platforms, brands prefer to communicate with their consumers on social media, [4]. Whether a large-scale enterprise or a small-medium enterprise, all types of organizations consider the importance of their presence of social media platforms for their strategic marketing campaigns, [5].

In the past, it was difficult for brands to meet their customers at touchpoints. This problem has been solved by social media platforms where brands can easily communicate with their customers, [6], [7]. This communication helps the brand to build brand trust and establish the customer's loyalty to their brand, [6], [8]. A brand marketing plan ultimately targets customer loyalty for building a successful relationship between the brand and customers, [9]. Social media marketing efforts easily help the brand to build such relationships with customers, this is the reason behind brands investing much in social media marketing activities in this digital age, [8], [9].

Although several brands succeeded through social media marketing activities, it is not necessary that investing in social media marketing campaigns can lead to success. Several researches in the past conducted to understand this complex relationship between brand trust and loyalty, [10], [11], [12]. The previous research missed the theoretical foundations and methodological contributions. Brand loyalty is a multidimensional concept that is measured based on cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. However, often this multidimensional concept is not measured considering its relationship with other behavioral constructs.

In this study, the four core components of brand loyalty are used to assess their relationship with antecedents like social media marketing customer loyalty, and brand trust. The primary aims of this study are (i) to investigate the influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust, (ii) to investigate the influence of social Media Marketing on on Cognitive, Affective, Conative, and Action Loyalty, and (iii) to investigate the influence of Brand Trust on Cognitive, Affective, Conative, and Action Loyalty.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Marketing

The web-based platforms on which people interact with each other are referred to as "social media". The term is also being used interchangeably with

social networking sites, [13]. The social media platforms allow users to build their profiles and share the content with their friends, family, and acquaintances, [13]. According to the social network theory [14], human behaviors are integrated with these online interpersonal relationships.

Social media provides companies with an improved communication platform to efficiently and effectively promote and establish brand loyalty, surpassing conventional methods, [15]. Henceforth, companies can use social media platforms as a financially efficient method to generate brand recognition, which can foster customer loyalty, [16].

As a result of the expeditious pace of communication and the profusion of information outlets, marketers are to endeavor to shift their focus from conventional media to social media, [17]. According to studies, social media marketing initiatives, including customization, word-of-mouth, entertainment, interactivity, and trendiness, can positively affect consumers' intention to buy and their company awareness, [13], [18], [19].

Additionally, it has been discovered by researchers that customer relationship only significantly affects both brand image and brand loyalty, [13]. While SMM actions can increase consumer loyalty to the brand, more than they might be required to foster a favorable brand perception among consumers, [20]. Several researchers attempted to observe the effects of social media on brand trust and brand loyalty, [9], [11], [12], [13], [20]. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Social Media Marketing positively affects brand trust.

2.2 Brand Loyalty

The concept of brand loyalty is characterized by a solid and enduring dedication to repurchasing a particular brand in the future, irrespective of situational variables, [12]. Numerous scholarly investigations have examined the factors that motivate and result in brand loyalty within the digital realm, [21], [22], [23], [24]. These factors include ease of use, customization, connectivity, interactivity, convenience, cultivation, the relevance of online information, and community, [13].

Consumer loyalty is significantly influenced by social factors such as family, friends, and cultural norms, [25]. Oliver elucidates the impact of situational variables, such as accessibility, cost, and availability, on consumer allegiance in the immediate time frame while cautioning that such factors may not necessarily translate into enduring

loyalty. Table 1 (Appendix) depicts the phases of loyalty concerning vulnerabilities.

2.2.1 Cognitive Brand Loyalty

The concept of cognitive brand loyalty, which refers to the psychological attachment and commitment that consumers form towards a brand based on their cognitive processes, has garnered significant attention in consumer behavior research, [25]. The manifestation of loyalty in consumers can be observed through their cognitive assessments and evaluations of the brand, encompassing their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions toward the brand, [26]. Brand cognition model posits that cognitive brand loyalty encompasses three distinct dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations, and brand attitude, [27]. On the other hand, brand associations refer to consumers' convictions and attitudes regarding the brand. Brand attitude pertains to consumers' general assessment and disposition towards a particular brand, [26]. The formation of cognitive brand loyalty is frequently influenced by consumers' cognitive assessments regarding a brand's characteristics, advantages, and general brand perception, [25]. Brands that possess a robust brand presence in the minds of consumers are more likely to cultivate cognitive brand loyalty, [28].

H2a: Social Media Marketing positively affects cognitive loyalty.

2.2.2 Affective Brand Loyalty

Affective brand loyalty pertains to the emotional connection and allegiance consumers establish with a brand, which stems from their affective or emotional reactions, [25]. The phenomenon under consideration pertains to consumers' emotional bonds, fondness, and commitment toward a brand, which can significantly impact their propensity to make recurring purchases and offer favorable referrals through informal communication channels, [29].

When the personality of a consumer matches with the brand, affection is developed which leads to positive emotional association and positively establishes brand loyalty, [30]. The emotional association of consumers with the brand is also based on the trust that also contributes towards brand loyalty, [25].

H2b: Social Media Marketing positively affects Affective Loyalty.

2.2.3 Conative Brand Loyalty

Conative brand loyalty is one of the dimensions of brand loyalty, [25]. This dimension of brand loyalty refers to the willingness of consumers to use the brand again and again. When consumers purchase the product again, this is tangible evidence that depicts their association with the brand, [31]. Brands establishing a good value in comparison to their competitors are re-purchased by the consumers because of their value and this phenomenon is covered by conative brand loyalty.

H2c: Social Media Marketing positively affects conative loyalty.

2.2.4 Action Brand Loyalty

Auction loyalty is considered to be at the superior level of brand loyalty that expresses the phenomenon of customers purchasing the brand repeatedly and this repeated purchase has become their habit, [25]. Although customers may have a choice to purchase another brand, the preference of purchasing one brand shows the loyalty of the consumers towards that brand, [31].

Brands focus on maintaining action loyalty as this establishes an association between the customer and the brand through which they can retain their customers, [32]. Considering the alternative to any brand, customers may switch but their repeated purchase behaviour shows that these customers are loyal to the brand and reluctant to switch to another brand despite having different offers that specifically exhibit the actions loyalty, [33].

H2d: Social Media Marketing positively affects action loyalty.

2.3 Brand Trust

This concept of Brand Trust has been targeted by several researchers in the past and it refers to the confidence of customers on any brand, [34]. The antecedents of brand trust have been used differently particularly corresponding to the nature of the study, such as a research investigating the association of trust between social commerce attributes and behavioral intentions, [35].

The factor of trust has also been studied with Social Media Marketing but this study particularly focuses on the association of trust with each sub-dimension of loyalty, [36]. The features related to social media have been considered in this study. Literature also suggests the influence of social media marketing within the tourism industry considering brand trust and brand loyalty, [11], [25]. Brand Trust has been studied by targeting different

types of relationships including the mediating relationship with other variables, [37]. Based on the literature review, trust is proved to be a significant factor in developing and shaping the customer's loyalty, [13].

H3: Brand trust positively affects (a) cognitive loyalty, (b) affective loyalty, (c) conative loyalty, and (d) Action loyalty.

Based on the hypotheses derived from literature variables selected in this study, the conceptual framework was developed that is depicted in Figure 1 (Appendix).

3 Methodology

We gathered information through an online survey that was directed at consumers who used social media to test hypotheses. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to mention which social media they used and how much time they spent with social media in a day. Respondents were also asked to mention the name of the brand they like/follow on social media and directed to respond to the question statement keeping that brand in their minds. The top of each set of questions reminded respondents to take into account the social networking site and fashion brand they selected at the beginning of the survey while answering the questions. Foreshadowing our findings, Instagram is the social media site that most users are using and outfitters are the most likely brands to be followed.

Five educational institutes were selected to gather the information. We gathered the information both from male and female students. Students were selected based on the fact that the majority of the social media fall under the age of 18 and 35 years. Students shared have shared the survey link who follow fashion brands on social media and who are at least 18 years old. Because it is challenging to acquire a sufficient response by probabilistic sampling, we chose to employ a convenience sampling strategy, [38].

A total of 400 respondents were approached. 84 responses were nonetheless disregarded since they didn't adhere to the study's guidelines. The questionnaires were not filled out ($n = 51$), and respondents who took unreasonable or unrealistic time to complete i.e. too quick or too long to fill the form, were also eliminated ($n = 33$). Due to the nature of this study, which requires participants to reply to questions while taking their chosen social networking platform and fashion brand into account, we discarded surveys that took too long to complete.

So, after removing surveys that didn't fit the criteria, we were left with 315 surveys to analyze.

Seven point Likert scale was used to measure the responses (1 for strongly disagree and 7 for strongly agree). We used a multidimensional scale to measure SMMA (a second-order construct), [39]. The dimensions i.e. entertainment, customization, trendiness, and word of mouth were measured through two items each, and the interaction was measured through three items. Brand trust was measured through four items adopted from another study, [40]. Four phases of loyalty i.e. cognitive (four items), affective (three items), conative (four items), and action loyalty (three items) were measured by adopting the scale, [25]. Table 2 (Appendix) depicts the profile of the sample.

4 Data Analysis

To test research hypotheses partial least square technique was employed through SMART PLS, [38], [41]. PLS is appropriate for investigating causal effects resulting from theories using hypotheses and empirical data. Another approach that could be used was the CB SEM approach (citation). However, this study aims to predict the relationship of SMMA with brand trust and brand loyalty, hence, the use of PLS is justified, [38].

4.1 Measurement Model

While conducting Structural Equation modelling (SEM), measurement and structural models are tested to confirm the constructs and relationship between them, [42]. All the constructs were reflective, hence we reported internal consistency i.e. reliability through Cronbach Alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR), convergent validity through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) [43], and Discriminant Validity [44] and HTMT ratio [38]. Table 3 (Appendix) shows the results of the measurement model.

Table 3 (Appendix) shows that the values of α and CR exceed the threshold value i.e. 0.70 confirming the internal consistency [38], [45]. Convergent validity was established by observing outer loadings and AVE. All the outer loadings were above 0.7 confirming the suitability of constructs, [46]. AVE values for all the constructs were above 0.5, hence confirming the convergent validity, [38].

Discriminant validity was established through two criteria i.e. Comparison between Square Root of AVE and Correlation [44] and HTMT ratio. The square root of VAE was greater than the correlation values of all constructs and confirmed the

discriminant validity i.e. all constructs are unique and distinct from each other [44]. HTMT ratio values were less than 0.90, [47], hence, we safely conclude that constructs have no issue of discriminant validity, [38]. Table 4 (Appendix) shows the correlation and discriminant validity.

4.2 Common Method Bias

To assess common method bias, we applied Harman's single-factor technique. All of the research items were combined for the Harman single-factor test and exploratory factor analysis was run. Statistical analysis showed that the first factor accounted for 47% of the variance i.e. less than 50% and it is acceptable, [48].

4.3 Structural Model

To test the proposed hypotheses, we proceed with the structural model. In the structural model, we observe the coefficient of determination i.e. R^2 and path coefficient values i.e. β . Figure 2 (Appendix) shows the R^2 and coefficient values. Results showed that R^2 values for brand trust (0.514), Cognitive loyalty (0.541), affective loyalty (0.631), conative loyalty (0.651), and action loyalty (0.679) are considered good, [38] [47]. For hypotheses testing we used PLS bootstrapping with 5000 iterations, [38]. Results showed that all the proposed hypotheses were accepted based on the significant values. We find that SMMA significantly influences the brand trust ($H1$, $\beta = 0.717$, $P < 0.05$). Furthermore, SMMA significantly influences the four types of loyalty i.e. cognitive loyalty ($H2a$, 0.434, $p < 0.05$), affective loyalty ($H2b$, 0.431, $p < 0.05$), conative loyalty ($H2c$, 0.476, $p < 0.05$), and action loyalty ($H2d$, 0.548, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, BT significantly influences the four types of loyalty i.e. cognitive loyalty ($H3a$, 0.359, $p < 0.05$), affective loyalty ($H3b$, 0.355, $p < 0.05$), conative loyalty ($H3c$, 0.394, $p < 0.05$), and action loyalty ($H3d$, 0.337, $p < 0.05$). Table 5 (Appendix) shows the results of the structural model and the decision of the hypotheses.

5 Discussion

The current research aims to observe the influence of social media marketing on brand trust and four aspects of loyalty in luxury fashion brands using SNSs. SMMA is a order second-order construct. We observe that SMMA for luxury brands consists of five sub-dimensions i.e. interaction, customization, trendiness, entertainment, and word of mouth.

Our results showed that social media marketing has a significant effect on brand trust ($H1$, $\beta = 0.717$, $P < 0.05$). The findings are aligned with the previous work done, [11], [12], [13], [49]. On social media, consumers are involved in different types of activities. They discuss products, brands, people, and organizations with each other, [50]. This social media communication creates a level of understanding that ultimately leads to trust between consumers. Customers trust more on the content generated by the users than the content generated by the users, [51]. When consumers hear about a product from other consumers, there is a 15% more probability that they will become the user of that product than any other source of product information, [52]. Hence this finding is of key importance to marketers.

The second dimension of the study was to observe the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty. Our findings reveal that social media marketing significantly impacts the different forms of brand loyalty i.e. cognitive loyalty (0.434, $p < 0.05$), affective loyalty (0.431, $p < 0.05$), conative loyalty (0.476, $p < 0.05$), and action loyalty (0.548, $p < 0.05$). The findings are in line with the previous work, [6], [12], [13], [53], [54]. Most of the previous studies looked at loyalty as a single construct. In this, we aimed to provide a more holistic view of loyalty by looking at the micro perspective of loyalty. Loyalty can be seen from the perspective of cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, conative loyalty, and action loyalty, [55]. Our findings revealed that social media marketing significantly influences all aspects of customer loyalty.

Thirdly, we observe the impact of brand trust on customer loyalty. Our findings reveal that brand trust significantly influences the four types of loyalty i.e. cognitive loyalty (0.359, $p < 0.05$), affective loyalty (0.355, $p < 0.05$), conative loyalty (0.394, $p < 0.05$), and action loyalty (0.337, $p < 0.05$). The findings of the current study are supporting the findings of the previous, [8], [8], [20], [56], [57].

Among the four types, brand trust has the strongest effect on the conative loyalty of the customers towards the brand. Conative loyalty refers to the customer's willingness to purchase a brand. It is evident from this relationship that the effect being produced by Brand Trust on Conative Loyalty is good and it is justified that once trust is developed with the brand, consumers are willing to continue business with the same brand again.

5.1 Theoretical Implication

This study tested the association between Brand Trust, Social Media Marketing, and different dimensions of Brand Loyalty. First, the selection of variables together depicts the conceptual connectivity between our tested components that we established in the current research has not been proposed or connected in the extant literature. Our research model linked social media marketing with brand trust and the four dimensions of brand loyalty i.e. cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. Some of the links of our suggested constructs have been empirically evaluated in the body of existing literature, but not all of them. Social media marketing with attitudinal loyalty for luxury brands but not with cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty, [7]. The impact of brand trust on attitudinal loyalty was measured [58] but not on cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. Similarly [59] linked attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty with social media, but the loyalty concept concerning cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty is missing. This study provides a holistic view of the effect of social media marketing on the different forms of brand loyalty that previous research lacks. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the stimulus-organism-response model. This study also extends the theory of S-O-R in the luxury fashion brand context. Past research measured the effect of social media on brand loyalty in the hotel industry [11], another study observed the effect of social media marketing on university students' loyalty [60], in the travel industry [61], and the fast food industry, [49].

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence related to the effect being created by Social Media Marketing on Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty. Particularly, the four dimensions of brand loyalty have been individually considered in this study contributing to the theoretical underpinnings of Brand Loyalty.

5.2 Managerial Implication

This is established that social media marketing has a significant effect on brand trust and brand loyalty. This study presents several insights to managers. To build trust and loyalty among their audience, managers should take a proactive approach, place a high value on authenticity and openness, and use social media-based consumers' insights to continuously enhance trust and loyalty. Managers should consider social media marketing as a tool for establishing long-term relationships with consumers. Through proper and efficient use of social media, organizations can create trust with

brands that ultimately can be converted into loyalty, but developing trust and loyalty takes time. Managers can use social media to engage and reward devoted customers. Effective social media marketing should be used by managers to create different marketing programs e.g. exclusive deals, competitions, or loyalty programs to promote customer loyalty and a sense of community.

5.3 Limitations & Future Research Direction

This study has some limitations. The first limitation is the sample, as the data was collected from a single city, hence the generalizability of the study is limited. In future research, more cities can be included to observe the findings with a cross-cultural perspective. Brand trust was added in the model, but not tested for mediating effect. Future research can be designed to see the mediating role of brand trust in between social media marketing and different forms of brand loyalty. We developed the conceptual model based on the S-O-R model, but did not observe the consequence. Future research can be designed with this aspect based on the stimulus-organism-behavior-consequence model, [62].

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Phases of Loyalty concerning Vulnerabilities

Stage	Identifying Marker	Vulnerabilities
Cognitive	Loyalty to information such as price, features, and so forth.	Actual or imagined better competitive features or price through communication (e.g., advertising) and vicarious or personal experience. Deterioration in brand features or price. Variety seeking and voluntary trial.
Affective	Loyalty to a liking: "I buy it because I like it."	Cognitively induced dissatisfaction. Enhanced liking for competitive brands, perhaps conveyed through imagery and association. Variety seeking and voluntary trial. Deteriorating performance.
Conative	Loyalty to an intention: "I'm committed to buying it."	Persuasive counterargumentative competitive messages. Induced trial (e.g., coupons, sampling, point-of-purchase promotions). Deteriorating performance.
Action	Loyalty to action inertia, coupled with the overcoming of obstacles.	Induced unavailability (e.g., stocklifts—purchasing the entire inventory of a competitor's product from a merchant). Increased obstacles generally. Deteriorating performance.

Source: [25]

Table 2. Sample Profile

Variable	Frequency	%	Variable	Frequency	%
Gender			Social Media Use		
Male	176	55.8	Instagram	175	55.6
Female	139	44.1	Facebook	99	31.4
Education			Twitter	19	6
Bachelors	281	89.2	Snapchat	13	4.1
Masters	31	9.8	LinkedIn	9	2.9
Doctorate	3	1.0	Social Media use Tenure		
Income			1 – 3 Years	28	8.9
< 50K	62	19.7	4 – 5 Years	83	26.3
50k-100K	67	21.3	5 – 6 Years	124	39.4
100-200K	82	26	More than 6 Years	80	25.4
> 200K	104	33	Time Spent on Social Media		
			Less than 1 Hour	27	8.6
			1 – 3 Hours	119	37.8
			4 – 6 Hours	104	33
			More than 6 Hours	65	20.6

Table 3. Summary of Measurement Scale

Variable	Ld	CR	AVE	Variable	Ld	CR	AVE
Entertainment		0.93	0.86	Cognitive Loyalty		0.92	0.75
EN1	0.93			CogL1	0.87		
EN2	0.92			CogL2	0.89		
Interaction		0.94	0.84	CogL3	0.87		
INT1	0.91			CogL4	0.83		
INT2	0.92			Affective Loyalty		0.92	0.79
INT3	0.91			AffL1	0.89		
Trendiness		0.91	0.83	AffL2	0.91		
TR1	0.92			AffL3	0.88		
TR2	0.90			Conative Loyalty		0.89	0.68
Customization		0.86	0.76	ConL1	0.77		
CUST1	0.87			ConL2	0.75		
CUST2	0.87			ConL3	0.89		
Word of Mouth		0.90	0.82	Action Loyalty		0.93	0.82
WOM1	0.93			ActL1	0.92		
WOM2	0.89			ActL2	0.94		
Brand Trust		0.92	0.74	ActL3	0.85		
BT1	0.83						
BT2	0.89						
BT3	0.83						
BT4	0.89						

Note: Ld = Loadings, CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Table 4. Correlation and Discriminant Validity

Variable	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ActL	0.89	0.90									
AffL	0.87	0.68	0.89								
BT	0.88	0.73	0.66	0.86							
CUST	0.68	0.54	0.59	0.51	0.87						
CogL	0.88	0.68	0.98	0.67	0.59	0.86					
ConL	0.84	0.78	0.63	0.73	0.53	0.65	0.87				
ENT	0.84	0.64	0.49	0.51	0.49	0.51	0.62	0.93			
EWOM	0.79	0.41	0.44	0.39	0.42	0.47	0.37	0.33	0.91		
INT	0.90	0.64	0.48	0.56	0.34	0.48	0.58	0.46	0.24	0.91	
TR	0.80	0.46	0.39	0.51	0.32	0.38	0.47	0.34	0.21	0.38	0.91

Note: α = Cronbach Alpha, CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted; Bold & Italic values are the square root of the AVE. ActL = Action Loyalty, AffL = Affective Loyalty, BT = Brand Trust, CUST = Customization, CogL = Cognitive Loyalty, ConL = Conative Loyalty, ENT = Entertainment, EWOM = Electronic Word of Mouth, INT = Interaction, TR = Trendiness

Table 5. PLS results for Structural Model

Relationship	Coefficient	t-vale	p-value
H1: SMMA → BT	0.72	25.91	0.001
H2a: SMMA → CogL	0.43	7.92	0.001
H2b: SMMA → AffL	0.43	7.91	0.001
H2c: SMMA → ConL	0.48	9.59	0.001
H2d: SMMA → ActL	0.55	11.87	0.001
H3a: BT → CogL	0.36	5.87	0.001
H3b: BT → AffL	0.35	5.88	0.001
H3c: BT → ConBL	0.39	7.44	0.001
H3d: BT → ActBL	0.34	6.71	0.001

Note: ActL = Action Loyalty, AffL = Affective Loyalty, BT = Brand Trust, CUST = Customization, CogL = Cognitive Loyalty, ConL = Conative Loyalty, ENT = Entertainment, EWOM = Electronic Word of Mouth, INT = Interaction, TR = Trendiness

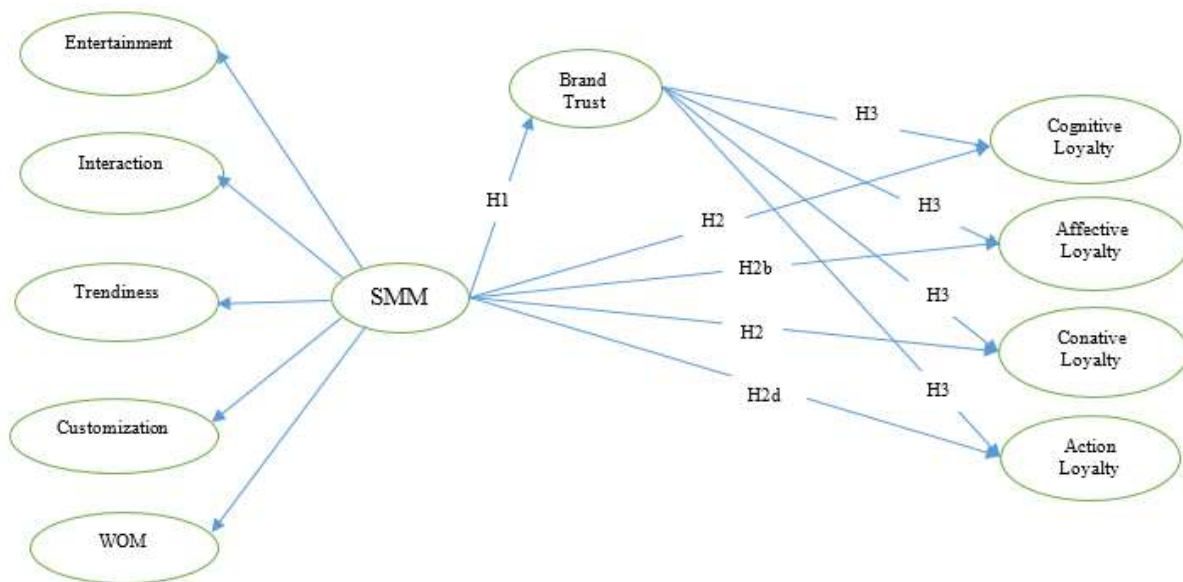


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

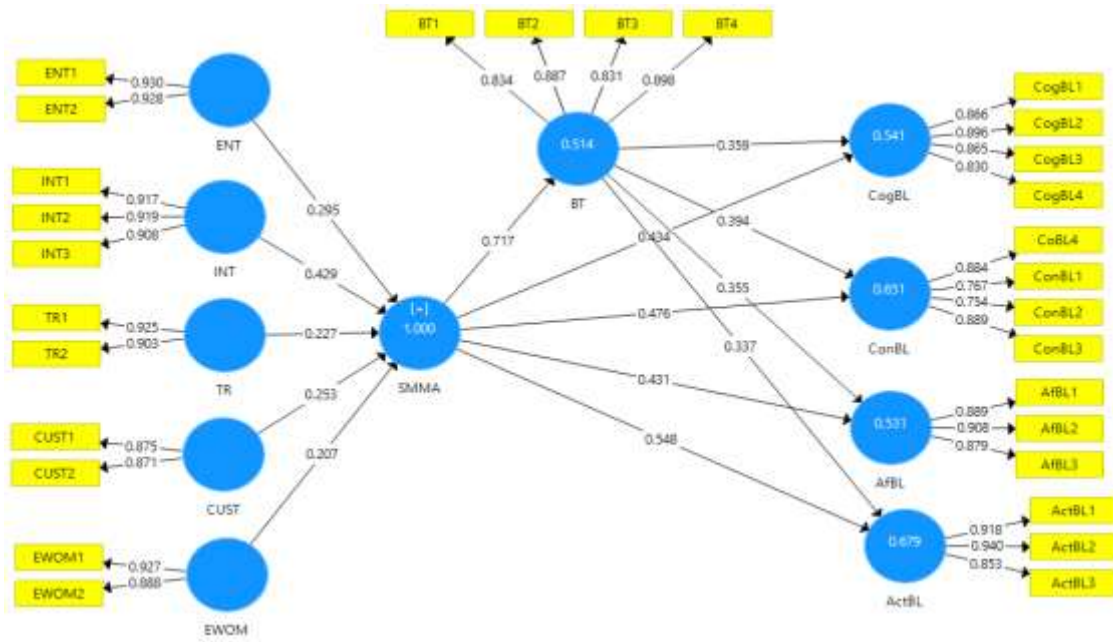


Fig. 2: Structural Model