IMPACT OF POST COVID-19 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES ON CUSTOMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP WITH MEDIATING ROLE OF E-BRAND EXPERIENCE. A CASE OF TWIN CITIES OF PAKISTAN.

By:

SHANZA NOREEN   **01-222211-010**

Supervisor:

DR. QAZI MUHAMMAD AHMED

Department of Business Studies,

Bahria University Islamabad

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Names of Student: Shanza Noreen   **Enroll #:** 01-222211-010

Class: MBA 2 (4C) Evening

Approved by:

_____
Supervisor

_____
Examiner-I

_____
Examiner-II

_____
Dr. Syed Haider Ali Shah
Research Coordinator

_____
Head of Department
Business Studies

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Shanza Noreen

Bahria University, Islamabad.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of Post COVID-9 Social media marketing activities like trendiness, active presence, and eWOM (electronic word of mouth) on the customer-brand relationship with the mediating effect of E-brand experience in the twin cities of Pakistan. This study has used the trendiness, active presence, and eWOM (electronic word of mouth) as independent variables. E-brand experience is used as a mediator. While, customer-brand relationship is used as a dependent variable. The literature shows that all these variables are well structured and work has been done in this regard however, the literature shows the gap where post-COVID-19 social media marketing activities and the changes in trends have not been covered. Hence, this study is conducted to know the trendy social media activities that can enhance the customers experience and their relationships with brands. The method that is used to investigate the relationship between the mentioned variables is the quantitative research method and the primary data is collected through adopting a structured questionnaire based on a 5 point Likert scale. The responses collected by this survey include 280 respondents through convenience sampling method. These responses are then recorded and analyzed by using SPSS and the tests used in the analysis are regression, correlation, Hayes test for mediation, normality test and descriptive tests. The results of the analysis shows that the trendiness, active presence, and eWOM impact the customer-brand relationship while the E-brand experience plays a major role in the framework. Based on the findings it can be said that the independent, mediating and dependent variables have positive relationships with each other and significantly impact other variables as they increase or decrease.

Key Words: *eWOM (electronic word of mouth), Post COVID-19, E-brand experience, Customer-brand relationship, trendiness, active presence, social media marketing activities, etc*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The traditional or pre-COVID social media marketing strategies used to be very different from the post pandemic social media marketing activities, especially in Pakistan as the consumers of this market were focused on physical shopping rather than online shopping. This major shift has been seen in the shopping behavior of consumers in Pakistan and now they are more inclined towards online shopping as they are comfortable in this way and have developed a habit. Hence, the focus of marketers and consumers has been shifted to the social media marketing of different brands and marketers are trying to fulfill this need and improve their position in the market. This study examines the mediating role of the E-brand experience of consumers by studying the relationship between social media marketing activities of brands and the customer-brand relationship that is developed by these activities. The main focus of this study is to fill the gap of social media marketing activities before and after pandemic as the region under study that is Pakistani market gained a lot of value and importance of social media marketing which was not seen before pandemic. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables will be checked from the mediation of E-brand experience. The increasing use of social media has led to an increase in the number of hours spent by a normal potential client on the social media platforms of brands and this is why marketers are encouraging brands to adopt the social media trends to grow their business. Hence, this study will help the marketers and brands to know the trend shift that will help them in the future (Kamboj et al, 2018). This chapter will discuss the background of the study, research problem, research questions, research objectives, and significance of this study.

1.1 Background of the study:

Due to the vast development in this field, we can say that social media can be the backbone of developing a brand. however, the problem is that marketers in Pakistan are not sure how to use this vast development of technologies available in this domain and which strategies are better for which brand and which ones are not because different types and different niches of brands need to have a different set of social media tools and strategies for having a successful social media presence. This is because the consumer's focus was not on the social media marketing strategies before pandemic however, now these businesses are developing their online presence because it means a lot for the development of better brand image. Digital media marketing has gained a lot

of importance in the past few years and it has been using all these improved technologies to enhance the literature and practice of social media marketing. As the trend of social media marketing has increased many folds, it has resulted in the development of increasing the customer-brand relationship that uses social media for the purpose of retailing (Koay et al, 2020). Marketers are looking for different ways to improve the social media activities of brands in order to enhance the quality of their service and improve sales and brand equity as well. Brand experience is developed by better and enhanced social media activities as it is supposed to attract more customers and improve their experience on the online platforms of brands. The increasing trends of social media and the increasing number of social media users along with their increasing usage of social media, especially since the COVID pandemic, in encouraging brands to use social media strategies for the betterment of their relationships with their customers. As social media marketing can develop better E-experience for these customers and this is how brands can maintain and improve their relationships with their customers for long-term commitments and loyalty (Quan et al, 2020). This is why marketers are always looking for new ways to improve the social media activities of their brands to enhance the value and equity of these brands by using these famous social media platforms. A lot of different studies have shown that the social media marketing activities are important for developing brand image and brand equity and marketers are very keen to know and develop new strategies and technologies that can help them to enhance brands in terms of equity, image, awareness and brand love (Seo & park, 2018, Sikander & Ahmed, 2019). So in this study, this relation will be discussed in detail and the impact of mediation will be mainly tested by checking the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

This study involves variables that have been studied in different contexts in different areas of the world. A significant part of this study is that it is focused on the mediatory role of E-brand experience in the relationship between SMMAs and the customer-brand relationship. This is why the importance of the E-brand experience is a lot more than the other independent and dependent variables. The mediation of the E-brand experience will be studied in this study according to the context of twin cities (Islamabad and Rawalpindi) of Pakistan. Effective social media marketing activities can be described by using different attributes of social media activities like personalization, trendiness, word of mouth, interactivity, and informative-ness. In this study, the relationship between trendiness, active presence, and electronic word of mouth will be studied in order to know the impact of SMMAs on the customer-brand relationship (Koay et al, 2020). Active presence on social media is a very tough task because nobody knows how actively frequent updates

are better for the brand and how many updates can be annoying for the customers that are following the social platforms of the brands. This is why we have to know the impact of active presence on social media users so that we can attract them positively and avoid any kind of negative effect on the consumers. Trendiness in SMMAs is about the process of looking out for the latest trends in the markets and following those trends to provide the trendiest and modern content and enclosing information and details about the product or services of the brand incorporated into this trendy content (Koay et al, 2020). This means that the content available on the social platforms of the brands should be trendy and catchy to attract the desired traffic. In the Pakistani context, some studies have been done to identify how these activities play an important role in the marketing campaigns of brands before this pandemic however, this study will add value as it will be based on the marketing campaigns and activities after COVID and it will help the marketers and brands to evaluate the potential SMMAs that can be effective in deriving customer-based outcomes.

1.2 Problem statement of research:

Since before COVID-19, people in Pakistan were not very keenly interested in shopping online and the shift that is seen in the times of COVID till today shows that it is now a very important aspect of shopping for a lot of people who belong to different classes. According to a report of SBP in the first quarter of 2020, 79 percent shift has been seen in the trend of online shopping in Pakistan (SBP, 2020). Hence, it is important to study the impact of social media marketing activities that brands are adopting after COVID-19. In this study, we will analyze how social media platforms can be used to improve the E-brand experience of customers and in turn how it can affect the customer-brand relationship in a better way especially now, when the importance of social media is a highlight in this emerging market after COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 Research gap:

1.3.1 Gap analysis:

The above problem statement shows a gap in the market in before and after activities of social media marketing for brands in Pakistan. This study will fill that gap along with the gap that exists in the existing literature focusing on the post pandemic (COVID-19) activities of brands on social media and it will be an important addition to the study of SMMAs and how they affect the marketing of the brands in a positive way. As a lot of work is available on the past practices of social media marketing but it is evident that we have just entered the post pandemic era (Post-

COVID-19) and it requires this type of research to help marketers, researchers, and students to learn more about these new trends. The variables used in this study have been used in other geographical regions in some other symmetries however, in the Pakistani context, there are a few studies related to the topic in different industries hence, the gap that is discussed here will be filled by studying different preferences and perspectives of the potential customers for developing better relationships between brands and consumers using social media after the trend of market shift from physical to online stores for convenience.

1.3.2 Significance:

This study will be able to show the relationship between the aspects of post-COVID 19 social media activities with customer-brand relationship and the results of this study will help the marketers to produce content that will help their brands to adjust with the changed trend after this pandemic. Marketing activities are one of the most significant strategies to help the brand develop its brand image among its customers. Especially in this social era, we all need to find new ways to attract customers through online platforms as this is one of the best ways to increase the loyal consumer bank nowadays. Hence, we need to know how the trendiness and active presence of social media activities are linked to the development of the long-term customer-brand relationships. This study will also help to contribute to the literature as well as the practice by providing theory and evident guidelines and the results of this study will help us to know the relationship between the variables under study. This study will also help researchers to gain knowledge and future insights and it will help the marketing students to understand the literary and practical importance of these variables as well.

1.3.3 Contribution:

The findings of this study will help to enhance the understanding of its variables which are SMMAs, E-brand experience, and customer-brand relationship and this will be added to the present literature to help researchers in their future research. As this study is based on a part of the Pakistani market hence, it will help the Pakistani marketers and brands to know the techniques and ways in which they can improve the E-brand experience of their customers and enhance their relationships with their customers as well by using the SMMAs that will be discussed in this study especially, after Post COVID-19. As the trend of Pakistani consumers have changed during and after COVID-19 because of lack of physical business, therefore, this study is supposed to add value

to the SMMAs of brands in Pakistan as well as the literature after COVID-19. The study will also contribute in enhancing the understanding of variables used in this study.

1.4 Research objectives:

RO1: To study the impact of the trendiness of social media activities on the customer-brand relationship by studying the mediating effect of E-brand experience.

RO2: To study the impact of active presence on the customer-brand relationships by studying the mediating effect of E-brand experience.

RO3: To study the impact of electronic word of mouth on the development of the customer-brand relationships by studying mediating effect of E-brand experience.

1.5 Research questions:

The research objectives of this study will help marketers to improve their social media marketing activities according to the said industry specifically. The research objectives of this study are:

RQ1: What is the impact of the trendiness of social media activities on the customer-brand relationship by studying the mediating effect of E-brand experience?

RQ2: What is the impact of Active presence on the customer-brand relationships by studying the mediating effect of E-brand experience?

RQ3: What is the impact of electronic word of mouth on the development of the customer-brand relationships by studying mediating effect of E-brand experience?

1.6 Definitions/background of variables:

There are three independent variables of this study that is trendiness, active presence, and eWOM which are the components of SMMAs that will be studied here. While the mediating role of the E-brand experience will be studied and the dependent variable is the customer-brand relationship.

Independent variable:

The independent variable is SMMAs which are the social media marketing activities that are done by the brands and the marketers to enhance the E-brand experience of the consumers that are linked to these social media platforms of these brands. This means that the independent variable will have components based on which we will be measuring their impact on the mediating or

dependent variables. These components of SMMAs that will be discussed in this study are trendiness, active presence, and eWOM of the social media platforms of different brands.

1. ***Trendiness***: social media activities are the backbone of developing an e-brand store of any brand to attract more customers and retain the present customers by adding content that can keep them hooked to the brand's social media accounts. When these activities are implemented by the brands, they look out for personalized ways to enhance their relationships with their customers through online platforms (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Hence, it is said that the trendiness of the posts and activities carried out on the social media platforms of the brands must have an effect on the e-brand experience of the customers which will mold their relationships with the brands.

2. ***Active presence:*** As discussed above, the social media activities on the social media platforms of the brands are very important in enhancing the customer's e-brand experience hence, it is important to study how actively the activities must be done in order to keep the customers interested in the brand without invading their personal space. It is said that the increased interaction of customers with brands attaches them more to the brand (Lim et al, 2020). Hence, this study will look at how frequently or actively these brands must update their social platforms in order to maintain the right amount of social media activities.

3. ***eWOM***: electronic word of mouth is another social media activity that is adopted by firms to spread the notion of goodwill among their consumers and to endorse their brands. This helps them to enhance their capabilities, their publicity, and their brand's awareness over the online platforms. This study will investigate the sources of positive eWOM for the consumers in Pakistani market.

   Mediating variable is the E-brand experience of the consumers which is influenced by the SMMAs and this influence can be positive or negative depending on the likes and dislikes of costumers hence, in this study this effect will be studied to help the marketers know what can be a positive impact and vice versa.

4. ***E-brand experience***: e-brand experience is the perception of the customers about different brands online. This means that if the brands try to create a positive brand image of their brands online then their E-brand experience will also be positive and this will help the brand to grow and flourish with an increase in the customer bank and their brand love. It defines the concept of having a good or bad experience over the social media platforms of the brands. This plays a very important role in defining the customer-brand relationship over the online platforms hence, it is an important variable that is used as a mediating variable in this study.

The dependent variable of this study is the customer-brand relationship which is a very important variable for the brands and the firms because it is the backbone of any brand because customers are the most important stakeholders of any brand.

5. *Customer-brand relationship*: it is the dependent variable of this study which is defined as the linkage of customers to the particular brand and defines whether it is a short-term link or a long-term link depending on the type of relationship that brands tend to develop by doing different social media activities. As an established fact, the customer is the king which means that the most important stakeholder of any brand is its customers, as without them, the brand means nothing to anybody and has zero value. For these reasons, the brands have been working for the betterment of their customer-brand relationships for the past few decades (Sharma et al, 2020). So it is evident that this variable is an important variable to study as it will help these brands to develop better relationships with their customers.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Introduction

This chapter will cover the review of literature about the customer-brand relationship and how the social media activities like trendiness, active presence, and eWOM affects the dependent variable with the help of the mediating variable that is electronic brand experience. In short, this chapter will cover a brief introduction of all the variables of this study along with their relationships with each other and finally, hypotheses will be developed.

2.1. Customer-brand relationship (DV):

Customer-brand relationship is the way to define a relationship between the brands and their customers. This relationship can be affected by several different factors but the main factors that will be investigated in this study are the three factors of SMMA (social media marketing activities) through the mediation of E brand experience. There is a very established fact in the world of marketing that the customer is the king of all as without any customer there is no presence of any business hence, all brands must build their strategies revolving around their customers and their interests. Kujur & Singh (2020) have mentioned in their study that customer relationships have become a very important aspect of business in the past few decades and this fact has been backed by a lot of different studies and theories that help to build better customer relationships. They have also stated that YouTube is the most innovative and the most loved social networking sites where anyone can easily post, view, comment, and watch videos that are posted for the purpose of entertainment or information and YouTube promotions can be used by the brands to widely advertise their products and use SMMA to develop their relationships with their customers (Kujur & Singh, 2020). Consumer brand relationships can be built by using visual communications very easily as consumers like the visual content more than any other mode of online communication on any corporate networking site. SMMAs are also proven to determine the customer-brand relationship in terms of visual content that these brands under investigation post on their social media accounts. This content should be informative, entertaining, as well as engaging in order to build consumer engagement that can lead to the building of the better consumer-brand relationships. Social media is becoming a new horizon in the field of marketing as E-commerce is blooming on daily basis and new technologies are discovered every other day.

This is equipping marketers for developing a perspective about a specific brand or its products and services among its potential customers (Ellison, Gibbs, & Webber, 2014). Hence, it can be said that there can be a positive or a negative effect of social media on the E-commerce of any brand based on the activities of these brands online (Singh & Singh, 2018). Social media provides a channel for communication between a business and its customers by using well-established tools that can improve the public perspective of that brand (Hwang et al, 2014). Hence, we can say that social media plays an important role in building customer-brand relationships in a good or a bad way depending upon the nature of SMMAs done by the brand.

2.2 Trendiness of SMMAs and E brand experience:

Trendiness is a term that can be used to define the quality of online activity based on the trends of the market. Effective SMMAs (social media marketing activities) are said to have some attributes that are used as independent variables in this study. These attributes are trendiness, active presence, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). However, there are a lot of other attributes that can be used to define the SMMAs which are informativeness and interactivity (Koay et al, 2020). Social media marketing activities are supposed to be personalized according to the new market trends that will attract the customers easily and this can happen once we gather the data and information of our customers and we have to analyze the market to find the continuously changing trends of the market (Walrave et al, 2018). The independent variable here is trendiness of social media activities which means that brands must provide the trendiest, latest and modern details and information about their products and services on their social media platforms (Koay et al, 2020). Hence, the relationship between the trendiness and e-brand experience will be studied here in order to know how these trendy activities can help to build a better experience for the online audience of brands and how it can help these brands to build a better relationship with their customers. So, brands must be looking for different attributes of their social media marketing activities that can help them to derive some customer-based outcomes like the development of better e-brand experience and better customer-brand relationships, more brand love, and improved brand equity. Literature shows that having better social media activities can have a significant part in the improvement of customer-brand relationships however, the Pakistani market has not been able to develop a lot of literature on this concept which is why it will be studied in this study to check the impact of trendiness of social media activities on the E brand experience of customers and their relationships with the brands. Literature states that consumer buying behavior is also highly

influenced by the better E brand experience and satisfaction of the customer. The theory of planned behavior can also be used to assess the customer's behavior based on their buying history and buying intentions which can lead to the collection of data to develop exact behavioral responses towards the trendiness of the social media activities on the social media platforms of different brands. Hence, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: trendiness of SMMAs have a positive impact on the E-brand experience

2.3 Active presence and E brand experience:

Social media has brought the world into a common interactive place where people can easily share their opinions, reviews, and any other information that can add value to the bigger knowledge. They can share anything of their free will according to their experiences which means that the development of a better E brand experience is the need of time today (Ahmad et al, 2015). Moran (2012) has stated that for the improvement of E brand experience for the customers, brands need to have better advertisement ideas that can help them to have better customer interactions and can attract more customers to the brand which can actually help to create better customer-brand relationships. Moreover, social media has been scaling a lot of businesses for a long time now and it has been helping to expand their businesses in order to hold a better place in the market and compete with the competitors easily. Looking at this literature, we can say that social media activities can be used to develop a better E brand experience among their customers. But along with the use of social media posts to attract these customers or enhance their E brand experience, it is very important to determine the frequency of these updates on their social media platforms. Intrusive marketing is always discouraged and there is a fine line between attracting the consumer and annoying the consumer hence, it is a requirement to check the likes and dislikes of their customer to check how many updates can be best for the enhancement of customer's experience with the brand and how many updates will become a burden for the consumer and in return affect the e brand experience of those customers. The main purpose of the use of social media is entertainment and it can be easily exploited to enhance the popularity of any brand on online mediums (Shao, 2009). If you are advertising in the right way, your advertisements will be visited frequently, which means that when a brand is making its marketing strategy it must involve the importance of frequency of updates to keep the essence of marketing alive (Ho et al, 2015). It is very much natural for the customers to get annoyed if something starts to bother them more than

it should hence, this study will be looking at the frequency of social media updates that are actually better for enhancing the e brand experience of customers knowing that the right amount of updates can have a positive effect on the E brand experience of the consumer. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H2: active presence of SMMAs have a positive effect on the E brand experience

2.4 eWOM and E brand experience:

EWOM is a term that stands for the electronic word of mouth of brands and how the customers and online community thinks of that brand. It can be the electronic perspective of the brand that people have in their minds and they share it on different electronic platforms and collectively it can become the eWOM of that brand. It can be positive and negative depending upon the perspective of that specific brand in the eyes of different customers. The purpose of studying this attribute is that the consumer perspective can affect the E brand experience of other customers as well. If a brand has a bad reputation or bad eWOM then it is possible that the customers attracted to the brand may bounce back by looking at the bad reviews of that brand. Hence, it is clear that eWOM has got a lot of importance in terms of defining the E brand experience. Mangold & Faulds (2009) have stated that social media is a reliable channel for collecting information and it can be used to build the personality of a brand and have better advertisements to enhance e brand experience. eWOM can have a very significant effect on the purchase intention and buying behavior of any customer as it is a marketing tool that is driving a lot of industries, especially the apparel industry (Naqvi et al, 2019). This tool has been gaining a lot of importance through social media platforms and a gradual increase in the user base is seen because of this tool of marketing that a lot of brands are actually using to enhance their E brand experience and their customer relationships as well (Hajli, 2014). This attribute of SMMAs that will be discussed in this study is the most important attribute as this part of SMMAs is done by the customers and not the brand itself and it includes reviews, comments, praises, or any negative thoughts of any customer about the brand. The channels that are available for a customer to develop content for the brands are leaving reviews on the websites and other social media platforms of the brand, using third-party platforms to review the products or services of a brand, have Facebook communities and other groups where they have a free will to talk about anything they want to talk about, and most importantly the social media platforms of the brands and their own platforms as well. These are very easy to use platforms to build eWOM of any brand and that brand cannot do

anything against their customer if their perspective about the brand is not good. Those brands will have to face consequences if their electronic image goes down and this is exactly why the customer-brand relationship and E brand experience of customers are very important for brands. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H3: eWOM in SMMAs has a positive impact on E brand experience

2.5 E brand experience and Customer brand relationship:

E brand experience is the mediating variable in this study however, this part of the study is based on the relationship between e-brand experience and customer brand relationship which is the dependent variable of this study. Koay et al (2020) stated that E-brand experience is the tool that can easily improve the image and value of the brand in the eyes of its customers. A lot of past studies show that the positive E brand experience of any brand contributes to better relationship of that brand with its customers (Altaf et al, 2017). A lot of studies have recently used the E brand experience as a mediating character between SMMAs and brand equity, value, or brand love and the results show that a better E brand experience helps to have better relationships with the customers (Zollo et al, 2017, koay et al, 2020). Whenever customers feel that they are having a very positive brand experience through the brand's electronic strategies and content, they become emotionally attached to the brand and this develops better relationships between brands and their customers. When the content is developed after conducting better market research, the consumer thinks that the content developed by the brand is customized according to the preference of that customer and this shows that a better e brand experience will help in achieving better relationships with their customers as their customer becomes loyal to the brand (Huang, 2017). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H4: E brand experience has a positive impact on the customer-brand relationship

2.6 E-brand experience as a mediator between trendiness and customer-brand relationship:

Mulyawati et al, (2020) have also elaborated that E brand experience is the predictor of having a positive or negative relationship between a brand and its customers. Thus, it is said that E brand experience is the most important factor between the SMMAs and customer-brand relationship and if the brands focus on developing a better E brand experience they can boost their

success and create a lot of value for their brand, especially, now when most of the business is done by using electronic platforms and the market trend has shifted from the conventional to online methods of shopping . Trendiness of social media marketing activities plays an important role in creating better E-brand experience for the followers or customers and this fact can be used to improve the customer-brand relationship and this study will look at this mediation of E-brand experience between trendiness of SMMAs of brands and their customer relationships. Roy et al (2013) have also concluded that a positive brand experience leads to the development of brand love and brand loyalty and social media activities help in improving the electronic brand experience. This study is also looking at the mediation effect of E brand experience between SMMAs and customer brand relationship.

H5: mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between trendiness and customer-brand relationship.

2.7 E-brand experience as a mediator between active presence and customer-brand relationship:

Customer brand relationships need to have good quality as they play a very important role in developing better performance for the brands. E-brand experience plays an important role in improvement of these relationships while active presence through SMMAs allow the users to have better E-brand experience which leads to having better relationships with customers (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016). Homburg et al (2006) have described the role of cognition and response of brands that can positively impact the customer-brand relationships. They have concluded that frequent response form the brands develop a sense of belonging in customers and they commit to those brands in a longer run. Literature shows that purchase intention of a customer is highly influenced by the content they see on the social platforms of the brands and if that content is better for the customers then it has a positive impact on the buying E-brand experience of these brands and better E-brand experience has a positive impact on developing better customer-brand relationship. Generally, it is said that the high quality of relationship has a high level of intention to buy and be loyal to the brand (Kujur et al, 2020). And this can happen only when the online customer will experience a positive E-brand experience over the social media platforms. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H6: mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between active presence and customer-brand relationship.

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2.8 E-brand experience as a mediator between eWOM and customer-brand relationship:

Electronic WOM has a very broad influence on development of customer-brand relationship and the E-brand experience mediates this relationship. As a good eWOM will create good brand reputation and that good reputation will help to maintain better e-brand experience of brand for its customers (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013). This means that E-brand experience has high capacity to improve the eWOM of the brand and then enhance the customer-brand relationship as well. The theory of planned behavior can also be used to explain this mediation of electronic brand experience between the eWOM and customer-brand relationship (Armitage & Conner, 2001). This means that customers look at the reviews, comments, and experiences of other customers online and then decide what they will perceive about the brand. This means that their E-brand experience is also influenced by the eWOM of the brand which is kind of a new attribute of SMMA and has got a lot of importance lately. This is why it is important to study the mediation of E-brand experience to know the relationship between the eWOM and customer-brand relationship. It is also important to notice that this relationship can portray and manipulate the buying intentions of customers. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H7: mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between eWOM and customer-brand relationship.

2.9. Theoretical framework:
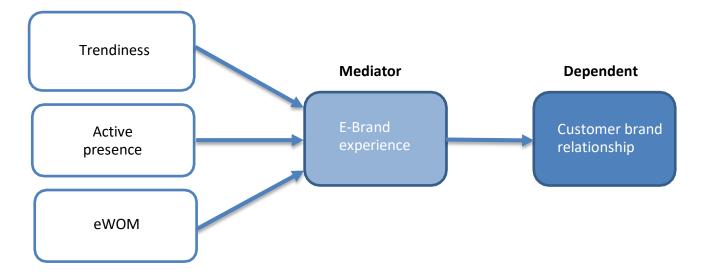
Fig 1. Research framework

This theoretical framework shows that there are three independent variables, one mediating variable and one dependent variable. The trendiness, active presence, and eWOM are the three components of SMMAs of brands after COVID-19 as they have changed a lot in Pakistan and they are independent variable. Meanwhile, E-brand experience is used as mediator. However, the customer brand relationship is the dependent variable in this study. The framework shows that the trendiness, active presence, and positive eWOM has a positive influence on the customer-brand relationship. In addition, it also shows a positive impact of E-brand experience on customer-brand relationship.

The **foundational theory** of this research is WEB 2.0 which uses the user generated ideas to produce content in terms of marketing. The research framework of this study shows that the independent variables are influenced by the users especially eWOM is user generated reference which is used by marketers and customers to develop a brand image in their minds hence, marketers need to work on eWOM (comments, feedbacks, and reviews) in order to generate content that is preferred by customers.

Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction:

This chapter throws light on the methodology that has been used to assess the impact of trendiness, active presence, and eWOM over customer brand relationship by the help of E-brand experience as a mediator. This chapter highlights the research methodology used for collecting data and analyzing it to find results. It also focuses on philosophy of this research, approach used in this research, sample size, data collection and data analysis etc. which has helped us to find the relationship between these variables.

3.1 Research Approach:

The research methodology of this study is based on a quantitative approach as the study is quantitative and this study examines the impact of three different attributes of SMMAs on customer-brand relationships along with the mediating role of E-brand experience in the context of Pakistan. Hence, it can be said that the population of this study involves the customers of Pakistan that shop online and uses social media to interact with brands and their social media platforms. Brands across the world, are using social media networks and the internet as a medium to gain brand endorsement and better market position as customers have developed a trust in the online marketplace (Quan et al, 2020). This study is targeting this population of Pakistan who is exposed to SMMAs at online marketplaces and interact with the brands online. The purpose of this study is to examine the phenomena of the Pakistani market in the context of consumers hence, the required data will be customer-based data and it will be collected from the online customers of different brands across the capital of Pakistan majorly (Chaudhary et al, 2020). This approach is combined with positive paradigm in order to ensure the objectivity of this study. The study uses a deductive approach which means that hypotheses are developed first and they are tested afterwards (Flick, 2015).

3.2 Research paradigm/ philosophy:

The research philosophy behind this study is the "*positivist paradigm*" because of the fact that this study is totally based on a quantitative approach and hence, the positivist paradigm fits this study in an appropriate way. Positivism focuses on the impression of "factual information"

which is more trustworthy (Michell, 2003). This study is an experimental study in which respondents will be able to respond to a questionnaire and provide data in quantitative terms as the questionnaires are based on the Likert scale. These questionnaires include item scales of developed variables and this is how this philosophy fits the research that we are conducting.

3.3 Research design:

As discussed in the research philosophy, this study is based on the quantitative mode of conducting research and uses the survey/questionnaire approach to collect data hence the research design of this study is based on surveys that will be conducted among the sample population/. This sample can be generalized as online customers have almost a same pattern to interact and shop. The data is collected by sharing this online questionnaire with the potential consumers of the online marketplace and the information is gathered from the responses of the respondents. The questionnaire is shared online because the study is based on the activity of online customers and they are likely to be more responsive and active online.

- *Type of study:*

This study is correlational type of study which means that it focuses on the correlation between the variables under study which are SMMAs, E-brand experience, and customer-brand relationship.

- *Time horizon:*

This study involves a said population at a specific time hence it is a cross-sectional study that involves the analysis and observation of the data that is collected from the said population over a period of time.

- *Research strategy:*

Every research has a specific strategy which helps the researcher to collect data, analyze it and make observations and conclusions. The research strategy used in this study is the structured questionnaire which gives the researcher a necessary direction to act in a specific way and conclude the research.

- *Research interference:*

Every research needs to have a researcher and this study is also conducted by a researcher who has collected data through questionnaires and statistical tests have been used to analyze this data. Conclusions are made on the results obtained from the analysis of this data collected from the respondents through questionnaires.

3.4 Target population:

Target population is defined as the set of individuals from the population that a researcher chooses to target for data collection (Kumar, 2019). The target population of this study is the online consumers of the Pakistani market as this study investigates the impact of online activities on the customer-brand relationship hence, the target population of this study is the online customers of Pakistan. Especially, the sample is based on the consumers of Islamabad and Rawalpindi as this study is conducted in these areas of Pakistan. However, it is easy to generalize the results because the social media interactions is more or less the same in the Pakistani market. However, the tools like Morgan table and other calculations were done in order to finalize the sample.

3.5 Sample:

As it is not easy to investigate or take responses from the whole target population hence, this study takes responses from the sample of the population that consists of the residents of Islamabad and Rawalpindi who are involved in the online shopping and interact with the brands through online market place hence, the sample of this study is the residents of twin cities majorly because it was easy to take sample from this population in the given time constraints.

3.6 Sampling unit:

The smallest unit from which a sample can be derived is the sampling unit of a study and as for this study the Morgan table is used to finalize the sample size for this study (krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Hence, this study will be looking at the responses of 280 respondents who are using social media platforms to interact with different brands in order to be certain about the risk of invalid, missing, or blank responses.

3.7 Sampling technique:

The sampling technique that will be used in this study is the non-probability sampling technique. The size of the sample and the reasoning behind it is already mentioned in the section on sampling unit while the sub-category of non-probability sampling technique which we have used in this study is the convenience sampling technique that is used to gather responses from randomly selected people who use the social media platforms and can provide information about

its effectiveness especially during and after COVID-19. Due to time constraints, ease of use, geographical proximity and resource constraint this sampling method was opted in order to acquire the data that was needed for this research. Along with all these limitations the exact population was also unknown that is why convenience sampling was optimal. Data was collected from the accessible population of Islamabad and Rawalpindi and the sample size is 280 after data collection in the giving time. As this study is focused on the transformation of consumers from physical to online shopping because of pandemic, online data collection is a best strategy for this study.

3.8 Data Collection:

For the survey purpose, already tested and structure survey questionnaires having a closed end design were distributed to general population by using google forms. The link was generated and sent to people through email and WhatsApp and a QR code of form was also generated for the ease of data collection.

3.9 sample characteristics:

The demographics of the data that was collected through this structured questionnaire is as follows:

- Gender (1: male, 2: female)
- Age (1: 15-20, 2: 20-24, 3: 25-30, 4: 30 and above)
- Education (1: intermediate, 2: Bachelors, 3: Masters, 4: Phd, 5: others)
- Income (1: 25k-50k, 2: 50k-75k, 3: 75k-100k, 4: 100k-150k, 5: 150k and above)
- Ethnicity (1: Pakistani, 2: others)

3.10 Research instruments:

The data collected for this study is gathered through a survey method including a structured questionnaire technique which is designed by adopting scales from the literature as the variables that are used in this study are developed variables which is evident from the literature review of this study. The respondents of this study are open to having any brand of their choice in their minds while filling this questionnaire because there are a lot of brands and this study is a generalized study and it is not specific to one brand hence, the respondents are free to choose brands. The study uses developed scales adopted from different studies.

3.10.1 Independent variables: The first scale is about the perceived SMMAs and this study includes three different attributes of SMMAs that is trendiness, active presence, and eWOM. For the trendiness and eWOM variables the 6 item scale (3 items each) is adopted from the study of koay et al (2020). While the active presence variable is studied by adopting a 3 item scale from the study Tafesse & Wien (2018).

3.10.2 Mediating variable: To measure the mediating variable which is EBE, a 4 item scale is adopted from the study of Morgan-Thomas and Veloutosou (2013).

3.10.3 Dependent variable: The variable of the customer-brand relationship is measured by using a 5 item scale that is adopted from the study of Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and this scale is also used by Singh et al (2020). The responses to all these questions that are included in the questionnaire are measured by 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The table below enlists all the variables along with their respective authors, items and one sample from each set of item as well.

Variable	Author(s)	Sample Item
Trendiness (SMMAs)	(Koay et al, 2020)	Contents visible on the [brand's] social media is the latest trend.
Active presence (SMMAs)	(Tafesse & Wien, 2018)	Brand post frequently on their primary social media account.
eWOM (SMMAs)	(Koay et al, 2020)	I would like to share my purchase experiences with friends and acquaintances on the [brand's] social media
E-brand experience	(Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013)	The web page layout is appealing
Customer-brand relationship	(Sharma et al, 2020)	Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this brand.

Table 1: Research instruments

3.11 Data analysis:

The data collected through questionnaires is the quantitative data that is analyzed by using SPSS is also performed. Before applying any of these tests the data is validated by reliability, validity, and normality tests so that the authenticity of the results can be enhanced. Regression analysis and correlation analysis are used to check the relationship of hypothesis in general and the mediation test will be done by the HAYES process V4.2 using SPSS. The results from these tests reveal the relationship between all these variables as discussed below. The researcher sent the questionnaires to the potential customers online to invite people to participate in this survey. The questionnaire is divided into sections based on the variables for the ease of the participant and the researcher.

Chapter 4

Data analysis and results

This chapter will look at the aspects of analysis of the data collected by the questionnaire and the analysis will describe the results that are obtained from the analysis of this data. On the basis of the data that has been collected by floating this survey, results are obtained and SPSS is the software that is used to validate and analyze this data by using the statistical tests.

4.1 Data analysis:

4.1.1 Demographics:

Demographic section of questionnaire was categorized other than the main part of the questionnaire and it was further divided into sub-sections that included age, gender, education, monthly income and ethnicity of the respondent. Following is descriptive statistics of the data collected through the demographics research of the respondents of the survey of this study.

Descriptive Frequencies

Demographics		Frequencies	Percentages	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	Male	149	53.2	100.0
	Female	131	46.8	46.8
Age	15-20 years	29	10.4	10.4
	21-25 years	139	49.6	60.0
	26-30 years	79	28.2	88.2
	31 and above	33	11.8	100.0
Education	Intermediate	20	7.1	67.9
	Bachelors	157	56.1	60.7
	Masters	89	31.8	99.6
	others	1	0.4	100.0
Income	25k-50k	138	49.3	72.9
	51k-75k	48	17.1	90.0
	76k-100k	28	10.0	100.0

	101k-150k	32	11.4	12.9
	150k and above	30	10.7	23.6
Ethnicity	Pakistani	269	96.1	100.0
	Others	11	3.9	3.9

Table 2: Descriptive frequencies

The above table shows the demographics and their descriptive frequencies after analysis of the data collected from survey. The total number of respondents were 280 out of which 149 were males (53.2 percent) and 131 were females (46.8 percent). On the basis of age 29 people out of 280 (10.4 percent) are from the age group of 15-20 years, 139 out of 280 (49.6 percent) are from the age group of 21-25 years, 79 out of 280 (28.2 percent) are from the age group of 26-30 years, and 33 out of 280 respondents (11.8 percent) are above 30 years of age. On the basis of education 20 out of 280 respondents (7.1 percent) are from intermediate, 157 out of 280 respondents (56.1 percent) are from Bachelors, 89 out of 280 respondents (31.8 percent) are from Masters, no respondent is from PhD, while 1 respondent out of 280 (0.4 percent) respondents have opted for others. On the basis of monthly income, 138 out of 280 respondents (49.3 percent) have income of 25k-50k, 48 out of 280 respondents (17.1 percent) have income of 51k-75k, 28 out of 280 respondents (10.0 percent) have income of 76k-100k, 32 out of 280 respondents (11.4 percent) have income of 101k-150k, and 30 out of 280 respondents (10.7 percent) have income of 150k and above. as this study was majorly based on Pakistani consumers, hence ethnicity of respondents was also required in the survey and on the basis of ethnicity, 269 out of 280 respondents (96.1 percent) is Pakistanis while 11 out of 280 respondents (3.9 percent) belong to other ethnic groups.

Results of the descriptive frequencies as calculated by SPSS shows that the survey consists of more males that are 53.2 percent than females that are 46.8 percent. Similarly, the majority of respondents of this study belong to the age group of 21-25 years (49.6 percent) in comparison to other groups like 15-20 years are 10.4 percent of the total sample and 26-30 years are 28.2 percent while more than 30 years are 11.8 percent only. Results also show that this survey includes 157 respondents have education equivalent to Bachelors that is 56.1 percent showing that majority of data was collected from this subgroup as compared to 31.8 percent having Masters or equivalent education and only 7.1 percent having intermediate equivalent education. On the basis of income, the results show that the majority of the respondents belong to the income group majority of the

respondents have income between 25k and 50k (49.3 percent) as compared to 17.1 percent of people having income between 51k to 75k and 11.4 percent who have income between 101k to 150k. However on the basis of ethnicity 96 percent of data is collected from the respondents who have Pakistani ethnic background.

4.1.2 Reliability analysis:

After checking the demographics result, the data is supposed to be checked for validity or reliability to determine how trustworthy the questionnaire is, that was used to gather data. For this purpose Cronbach's Alpha test is used to check the level of reliability of the data being used in this used. The higher level of questionnaire reliability is shown by lower deviations in the repeated interval measures. This can also show the dependability, consistency and relevancy of the questionnaire that is used in this study. The following data is obtained from the Cronbach's test by using SPSS as shown in the table below:

Reliability Statistics		
Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	*N of Items*
Trendiness	0.584	*3*
Active presence	0.662	*3*
eWOM	0.688	*3*
E-Brand Experience	0.739	*4*
Customer Brand Relationship	0.818	*5*
Total	*0.899*	*18*

Table 3: reliability statistics

High reliability is shown by the results of this test of the questionnaire which is used in this study. The results of this test are indicated by the values obtained by running these reliability analysis in SPSS. Results which are closer to 1 or are at least more than   0.6 are considered to be highly reliable and acceptable index. The Cronbach's Alpha values like 0.823, 0.739, and 0.818 are very close to 1 showing that these variables and the items used to validate these values are highly reliable to be used in this study as per the range defined by Hair et al. (2014).

These high values also indicate that the data gathered by using this questionnaire is highly reliable as the overall Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.899 is almost about 0.9 which is closest to 1 showing that the overall data collected by this questionnaire is highly reliable.

4.1.3 Normality statistics:

The normality statistics is used to provide a statistical overview of the dataset that is used in the specific research and descriptive statistics help to define the sample and its measures as well as it is a useful tool for data analyzers as well. This includes the mean, median, mode, standards deviation or skewness of the dataset under consideration and this method can be used in both quantitative and qualitative data to specify their datasets if it is a good fit or not.

	Normality Statistics								
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Trendiness	277	1	3	1.83	0.571	0.532	0.146	-.333	0.292
eWOM	274	1	4	2.04	0.661	0.884	0.147	1.516	0.293
A.P	280	1	4	2.07	0.586	0.042	0.146	-.112	0.290
EBE	278	1	4	2.18	0.612	-0.328	0.146	-.440	0.291
CBR	276	1	5	2.21	0.644	0.302	0.147	.950	0.292
Valid N (listwise)	269								

Table 4: normality statistics

The above table shows the normality of data form the values of skewness of data and the major highlight of this table is the kurtosis value. Kurtosis value is the measurement of "peaked-ness" or "flatness" of data and the kurtosis value closer to zero is considered to be normal. The table shows the value of skewness and kurtosis and for the standard the value of kurtosis and skewness must be below +1.5 and above -1.5 which means that the acceptable range of kurtosis and skewness is +1.5to -1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). All values of skewness (-1 to 1) and kurtosis (+1.5 to -1.5) in the table fall in this range hence, showing the normality of the data collected to be used in this study. The value of mean for all values also falls in the acceptable range that is 1-5 which validates the normality of data.

4.1.4 Correlation Analysis:

Correlation analysis is done to check the link between two or more variables. When two or more variables are significantly associated with each other, the correlation is considered to be "high" between them. Similarly, the correlation is considered to be low when this association is weak between the variables under study. At the same time, if the strength of association between the two

variables in moderate then the correlation between them is also considered to be moderate. The range of correlation coefficient is considered to be from -1 to +1. The method that is used by the correlation function of SPSS is the Pearson r method which examines the connection between the variables under investigation. Following is the table of correlation which shows the result of correlation between the variables of this study.

Correlations		trendiness	WOM	A.P	EBE	CBR
trendiness	Pearson Correlation	1	.600	.482	.383	.515
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	277	272	277	276	274
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.600	1	.580	.518	.655
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	272	274	274	272	270
A.P	Pearson Correlation	.482	.580	1	.434	.415
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	277	274	280	278	276
EBE	Pearson Correlation	.383	.518	.434	1	.657
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	276	272	278	278	276
CBR	Pearson Correlation	.515	.655	.415	.657	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	274	270	276	276	276

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

Table 5: correlation analysis

The result of correlation of all three variables with each other show that these relationships are highly significant. As the correlation is said to be significant at level 0.01 in level (2-tailed) hence. 0.00 is considered to be highly significant as it falls perfectly in the range of -1 to +1. The results in the above table show that Social media Marketing Activities (trendiness, active presence, and eWOM) have a moderate significant relationship with E-brand Experience in the positive direction as the value is 0.383, 0.518 and 0.434 and Social media Marketing Activities (trendiness, active presence, and eWOM) have a significant relationship with Customer-brand relationship as the value is 0.515, 0.655 and 0.415 in the positive direction showing an even stronger association of Social Media Marketing Activities (trendiness, active presence, and eWOM) and Customer-

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Brand Relationship. Similarly, the relationship of E-brand Experience with Customer-Brand relationship is equal to 0.657 which is a highly significant figure showing a positive direct relationship between these variables. It means that an increase in one variable will always have a significant increase in another variable and vice versa.

4.1.5 Regression analysis:

Regression analysis is a process of SPSS that is used to test the link between the variables under study as well as it   is used to find the magnitude of that relationship between them. The summary of model is shown below as it shows the significance value of 0.000 which means that overall results show that the variables are linked to each other in a significant positive way.

Model Summary[b]										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.771[a]	.594	.588	.41860	.594	96.562	4	264	0.000	1.493

a. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM, EBE, AP, trendiness

b. Dependent Variable: CBR

Table 6: regression analysis

The value of R-square shows the variations that the independent / predicting variables (trendiness, Active presence, eWOM and EBE) have caused in the dependent variables (customer-brand relationship). According to the summary of this model, the R-square value is 0.594 which means that the predicting variables have caused 59.4% change in the dependent variable that is customer-brand relationship. While the value of R is 0.771 which shows that the model is 77.1 percent fit or reliable. Another significant value is the Durbin-Watson value which has a threshold value ranging from 0 to 4 and according to the results, the Durbin-Watson value is 1.493 which falls perfectly in the range of significance. The value of adjusted R-square shows the fitness of model. As the value of adjusted R-square is 0.588 this means that the theoretical model of this study is 58.8 percent fit.

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	67.681	4	16.920	96.562	0.000[b]
	Residual	46.260	264	0.175		
	Total	113.941	268			

a. Dependent Variable: CBR

b. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM, EBE, AP, trendiness

Table 7: ANOVA table

The results of ANOVA are used to check the statistical significance of the theoretical model. The value of F must be more than 4 and in this case the value is 96.562 while the significant value must be less than 0.05 and the results show that the significance value is 0.000 which is highly significant value showing that the model is highly significant. This also means that the independent variables (trendiness, Active presence, and eWOM) and the mediating variable (E brand experience) have a highly significant impact on the dependent variable (customer-brand relationship.

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.255	.114		2.228	0.027		
	EBE	.479	.050	.444	9.506	0.000	.705	1.418
	trendiness	.179	.058	.156	3.070	0.002	.598	1.674
	AP	-.057	.055	-.052	-1.046	0.297	.620	1.612
	eWOM	.353	.056	.361	6.354	0.000	.477	2.095

a. Dependent Variable: CBR

Table 8: coefficients

The coefficients table is used to check the significance level from VIF which must be less than 5 (Kock & Lynn, 2012). According to the results of VIF, the values are 1.418, 1.674, 1.612, and 2.095 which are visibly less than 3 hence the data is validated to be significant.

Collinearity Diagnostics[a]								
Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions				
				(Constant)	EBE	trendiness	AP	eWOM
1	1	4.833	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.056	9.295	.28	.19	.24	.00	.18
	3	.042	10.670	.27	.43	.20	.04	.24
	4	.041	10.914	.01	.10	.37	.72	.01
	5	.028	13.037	.44	.28	.19	.24	.57

a. Dependent Variable: CBR

Table 9: collinearity diagnostics

The above table of collinearity diagnostics is used to validate the reliability of data even if the P value is significant. The Eigenvalue shows the significance of data as long as it is closer to 0 and the results show that the values 0.56, 0.42, 0.41 and 0.28 are very close to zero which means that the independent variables are interrelated with the dependent variables and they have a significant association in the positive direction.

4.1.6 *Hayes test for mediation:*

Hayes test is used to check the mediation of the mediator between the independent variable and dependent variable as well. Hayes test is a tool developed by Andrew Hayes and is specifically used to test moderations or mediations in complex frameworks to show whether this relationship is significant or not. In this study, a mediator is used which means that the mediation test is required to check the mediation of E-brand Experience between Social media marketing activities (independent variable) and the Customer-brand relationship (dependent variable) of this study. Following is the result of direct and indirect effects of these variables on each other using Hayes test by Andrews's process 4.2.

Mediation analysis assumptions:

These are the assumptions of mediation that were undertaken before performing mediation analysis:

1. All the independent, dependent and mediating variables are using a continuous scale.
2. All the independent, dependent and mediating variables have a linear relationship.
3. The data shows no multicollinearity as shown in Table 9.
4. There are no spurious outliers, and the distribution of these variables in approximately normal.

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4.1.6.1.Mediation of EBE between trendiness and customer-brand relationship:

Model: 4

  Y: CBR

  X: TRD

  M: EBE

Sample

Size: 274

OUTCOME VARIABLE:						
EBE						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4033	.1626	.3034	52.8228	1.0000	272.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.3927	.1116	12.4792	.0000	1.1730	1.6125
TRD	.4234	.0583	7.2679	.0000	.3087	.5381
Standardized coefficients						
	coeff					
TRD	.4033					

The model summary shows that trendiness has a significant effect (0.0000) on the EBE and the value of R shows that the model is 40.33% reliable.

OUTCOME VARIABLE:						
CBR						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7202	.5186	.2024	145.9948	2.0000	271.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.3277	.1143	2.8665	.0045	.1026	.5527
TRD	.3307	.0520	6.3590	.0000	.2283	.4330

EBE	.5918	.0495	11.9492	.0000	.4943	.6893

Standardized coefficients	
	coeff
TRD	.2929
EBE	.5503

The value of R shows that the model is 72.02 percent fit and the relationship between all these variables is significant as value of P is 0.000 which is significant.

************************ TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *************************

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

CBR

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5148	.2650	.3079	98.0796	1.0000	272.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.1518	.1124	10.2450	.0000	.9305	1.3732
TRD	.5812	.0587	9.9035	.0000	.4657	.6968

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
TRD	.5148

This table shows the total effect model on all variables as EBE mediates between the trendiness and the CBR. The total effect model is 51 percent reliable and results are significant as well.

************** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **************

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
.5812	.0587	9.9035	.0000	.4657	.6968	.5148

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.3307	.0520	6.3590	.0000	.2283	.4330	.2929

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
EBE	.2506	.0366	.1800	.3224

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
EBE	.2219	.0340	.1575	.2886

4.6.1.2 *Mediation of EBE between AP and CBR:*

Model: 4

   Y: CBR

  X: AP

  M: EBE

Sample

Size: 276

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

 EBE

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4308	.1856	.3013	62.4472	1.0000	274.0000	.0000

*********************** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *************************

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

CBR

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4146	.1719	.3446	56.8891	1.0000	274.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.2761	.1293	9.8674	.0000	1.0215	1.5307
AP	.4538	.0602	7.5425	.0000	.3354	.5723

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
AP	.4146

**************** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **************						
Total effect of X on Y						
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
.4538	.0602	7.5425	.0000	.3354	.5723	.4146
Direct effect of X on Y						
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.1770	.0543	3.2597	.0013	.0701	.2840	.1618
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
EBE	.2768	.0410	.2014	.3592		
Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
EBE	.2529	.0385	.1820	.3306		

4.6.1.3 *Mediation of EBE between eWOM and CBR:*

Model: 4

   Y: CBR

   X: eWOM

   M: EBE

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7611	.5792	.1796	183.7809	2.0000	267.0000	.0000

*********************** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL ***************************						
OUTCOME VARIABLE:						
CBR						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6548	.4287	.2429	201.1369	1.0000	268.0000	.0000

Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.9106	.0968	9.4096	.0000	.7201	1.1012
eWOM	.6414	.0452	14.1823	.0000	.5523	.7304
Standardized coefficients						
	coeff					
eWOM	.6548					

************** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **************						
Total effect of X on Y						
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
.6414	.0452	14.1823	.0000	.5523	.7304	.6548
Direct effect of X on Y						
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
.4122	.0454	9.0780	.0000	.3228	.5016	.4208
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
EBE	.2292	.0402	.1591	.3177		
Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
EBE	.2339	.0419	.1624	.3262		

FINDINGS OF HAYES PROCESS V4.2

Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	T-statistics	P value	Conclusion
Trendiness > EBE > CBR	0.5148	0.3307	0.2506	7.542	0.0000	Partial mediation
Active presence (AP) > EBE > CBR	0.4538	0.1770	0.2529	3.5297	0.0000	Partial mediation
eWOM > EBE > CBR	0.6414	0.4122	0.2292	9.0780	0.0000	Partial mediation

Table 10: Hayes test findings

The above table shows the mediation of E-brand experience in between the independent and the dependent variable of this study. The significance is shown by the P value which is highly significant however, as indirect and direct relationships are all significant as shown in the details above hence, it is concluded that these variables have partial mediation of E-brand experience which is the mediator of this study.

4.2 Data Findings:

The results that we obtained from the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire used in this study shows that all variables have a significant effect on each other according to the theoretical framework which means that H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted. Along with that the mediating effect is tested through Hayes test using SPSS which shows that the models are highly significant and EBE as a partial mediating effect between all IVs and DV which proves that H5, H6, H7 are accepted. This shows that the hypothesis under observation are significant and all the hypothesis of this study are significant.

4.3 Hypothesis analysis:

Hypothesis	Statement	Accepted/Rejected
H1	Trendiness of SMMAs have a positive impact on the E-brand experience	Accepted
H2	Active presence of SMMAs have a positive effect on the E brand experience.	Accepted
H3	eWOM in SMMAs has a positive impact on E brand experience.	Accepted
H4	E brand experience has a positive impact on the customer-brand relationship.	Accepted
H5	Mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between trendiness and customer-brand relationship.	Accepted
H6	Mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between Active presence and customer-brand relationship	Accepted
H7	Mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between eWOM and customer-brand relationship	Accepted

Table 11: hypothesis analysis

Hypothesis acceptance:

H1: trendiness does have a positive effect on E brand experience as when brands and marketers follow the trends of the market like 11.11 sale there customers feel as if brand cares for them and this improves their E-brand experience.

*H2***:** Active presence does have a positive impact on E-brand experience as brands who post actively on their social accounts are likely to increase ease of access for the customers which improves E-brand experience.

H3: eWOM does have a positive impact as if the word of mouth is spread positively then customers are attracted to brands even more. A positive eWOM is actually the result of better E-brand experience.

H4: E-brand experience has a positive impact on the Customer brand relationship because better E-brand experience makes customers more loyal and committed to the brands.

H5: Mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between trendiness and CBR because the results shows partial mediation and the trendiness improves E-brand experience which enhances CBR.

H6: Mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between Active presence and CBR because the results shows partial mediation and the Active presence improves E-brand experience which enhances CBR.

H7: Mediation of E-brand experience shows a positive relationship between eWOM and CBR because the results shows partial mediation and the eWOM improves E-brand experience which enhances CBR.

Chapter 5

Discussions and Implications

5.1 Discussions:

This research has aimed to investigate the relationship between perceived SMMAs like trendiness, active presence, and eWOM, E-brand experience and Customer-brand relationship in the twin cities of Pakistan especially After COVID-19 pandemic which has significantly changed the buying behavior of the customers of twin cities of Pakistan. this study shows that the changed Social Media Marketing Activities like keeping the social accounts up to date and trendy, actively posting on these social accounts, and having a positive electronic word of mouth actually enhances the E-brand experience of customers and it has significant positive effect on building better relationships with customers that helps to add value to the services provided. The perceived social media marketing activities (SMMAs) which are trendiness, active presence, and eWOM are considered to be the independent variables of this study. The E-brand experience is considered as a mediating variable while the Customer-brand relationship is considered to be the dependent variable of this study. An adopted and structured questionnaire has been used to collect data from consumers of twin cities of Pakistan and a scale is set to accept and reject the hypotheses developed in this stud according to the significance level that is already a standard range or value of significance. To accept or reject the hypothesis, a range of 5% is set to be allowed for the chance of error. As the results show that the significance level of trendiness, active presence, and eWOM are less than 0.05, this means that hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are accepted. Just like that the hypothesis H4 is accepted because the association between the E-brand experience (mediator) and the Customer-brand relationship (Dependent variable) have also a significance value of less than 0.05. The mediation test for checking the hypotheses H5, H6, and H7 are also accepted based on the Hayes process test for mediation which shows the significant value of less than 0.05 along with the valid and significant R-square values as shown in results.

The results of this study also shows that most of the results are in line with the previous studies as the variables have shown to be in positive significant relationships with each other in different studies like Koay et al. (2020), Seo & Park (2018) and Nobar et al. (2020). These studies are based on the social media marketing activities and their influence on variables like E-brand experience, brand love, loyalty, brand image and customer-brand relationship and they show that the social media marketing activities have a significant effect on development of better brand

image and can improve the experience of customers as well. As when the customer is satisfied with their experience with the brand, it directly effects the customer-brand relationship in a positive way and increases the trust of customers on brand. Along with that, the brands also gets the benefit of having better relationships with the customer as customer is the key and after the pandemic situation, the market under consideration in this study has seen a huge shift to the online shopping hence, the marketers and brands need to influence on their social media marketing activities like Trendiness and eWOM especially as they have a greater effect on E-brand experience and Customer brand relationship.

5.2 Research implications:

5.2.1.1.1 Theoretical implications:

This study is proven to be very effective in terms of marketing activities Post COVID-19 as the trends of brands and the customers have changed a lot during the era of lockdowns. However, this study will also be helpful for the research students as it is going to increase their knowledge and provide theoretical basis regarding the variables used in this study like trendiness, Active presence, eWOM, E brand experience, and the customer-brand relationship in the context of Pakistan. The research will also be very helpful for the marketing students that want to understand the relationships between the variables under study and future do research on the basis of this knowledge. They will also get assistance in understanding the social media inventory of different brands by using this study which means that this study will be helpful for the theory as well as for the operations where this study can be implemented for better understanding of the environment in which brands are working.

This study is also an important addition to the literature as we have examined the role of marketing activities after COVID-19 on the E-brand experience and customer-brand relationship and theoretically, this study provides an empirical evidence that social media marketing activities have a significant effect on customer-brand relationship. The role of mediation of E-brand experience is also evident as shown by the Hayes process in the analysis which can be used in the further researches as well. The theoretical implications of this study also involve the addition of customization aspects of SMMAs in the literature as if the SMMAs are done in a way that is liked by the consumer then it becomes better than the traditional SMMAs. This means that if the social media marketing activities are trendy and create positive eWOM of the brand that means that these activities are customized according to the present and continuously changing demands of the

market which means that marketing activities must be done while keeping in mind, the demand of customers.

5.2.2 Practical implications:

This study is very significant for the marketers of Pakistan who are trying to keep up with the changing dimensions of consumer behavior of Pakistan after COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders of Pakistani brand will practically take advantage form this study as they will be benefitted from the results of this study by molding their marketing activities which can be beneficial for their brands. This study will also be beneficial for customers as it will enhance their experience, commitment, value and love for the brands which are incorporating the requirements of potential customers into their marketing activities for their ease and interest (Beig & Khan, 2018). Marketers will be able to develop better E-brand experience for their customers and it will help them to enhance the customer-brand relationship in long run. The similar theoretical frameworks have been proven to work for marketers, consumers and similar positive results have been obtained from them as well (Seo & Park, 2018, Koay et al, 2020, Lim et al, 2020, and Nobar et al, 2020). This study practically suggests that customer-brand relationship can be enhanced by improving the Social Media Marketing Activities which is also recommended by previous studies (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017).

Practically, another significant option that has been highlighted in this study is that the social media marketing activities that will be done in the future must be done while keeping in mind that the present customer likes the trends of the market or not and if the activities that marketers are doing will lead to positive eWOM or not or maybe the active presence of a brand on social media is fine or is it become intrusive for the customer. All of this can be understood by the results of this study. The brands or marketers will also be able to develop better online environment for their customers so that they can attract more customers and satisfy their customers. This can be done by making the social presence easier for the customer like navigation on the webpage must be easy for the customers belonging to any age group.

5.3 Research limitations:

Limitations are the problems that are encountered by researcher while conducting the study and they restrict the researcher to certain points such as limited time period or limited sample size, or some geographical restrictions as well. As this study was conducted in four to six months period

of time which is an extremely limited time period and the sample size was also restricted to the twin cities of Pakistan as it was convenient for this research exclusively so for the extensive study of this theoretical framework more time is required and a broader sample size might be more helpful to know the choices of respondents from different backgrounds and geographical locations. This means that the data collected for this study having a sample size of 280 and only gathered from the twin cities of Pakistan is insufficient and if more time and broader sample size was available then the results could be more specific and could have generalized the whole population of Pakistan. Another limitation of this study is that it is a cross-sectional study and most of the researchers have conducted similar researches on the cross-sectional research method however, longitudinal research on the topic can enhance the understanding of these variables in the future.

5.4 Recommendations and future implications:

The current study provides an empirical evidence that the study conducted on this theoretical framework is significant and the consumers of twin cities of Pakistan show a relative importance of social media marketing activities and customer-brand relationship. As if the brand wants to enhance its relationships with its customer and improve their E-brand experience then the brand must work on its social media marketing activities like their content must be trendy, up-to-date, frequently available and their electronic Word of Mouth must be positive. However, as the study is lagging in the sample size and time constraints so improving the time period, population size, sample size, and research nature can be made to improve the results. In the future, more time period can help the researcher to gather the data from a broader sample size and enhance the outcomes of the research to different backgrounds and cultures even. More sample size will improve the accuracy, reliability and validity of data even more. The study can also be specified to some specific industries or sectors in order to specify the study. Along with this, it is recommended that the longitudinal research must be done on the topic rather than only cross-sectional research to analyze the correlation between variables of this study on a different sample as well. As this study is conducted on Pakistani consumer another future implication of this study is that it can be replicated on any other nation as well because COVID-19 has changed the prospects of almost all populations across the world.

5.5 Conclusion:

As discussed in the study, in chapter 1, the study is aimed to assess the impact of Social media marketing activities on the customer-brand relationship while the mediation of E-brand experience is also checked on the sample of twin cities of Pakistan. To investigate this relationship between the independent, dependent and mediating variable, a structured questionnaire was used which was distributed on the online platforms with the help of Google Forms and data was collected from 280 respondents who were regular users of social media. This data was tested for normality and reliability and then correlation, regression and Hayes test analysis were done by using SPSS to conclude the analysis of this data and found out that these variables have a positive relationship with each other. As correlation of these variables showed results like 0.600, 0.515, 0.383, 0.482, and 0.657 which show that these variables are highly correlated to each other in positive direction. Moreover, the regression analysis of the data shows that the variables are significantly related to each other which proves that the increase in trendiness, active presence, and eWOM is going to have a significant positive effect on customer-brand relationship. Another significant result of this study is the mediation of E-brand experience between trendiness, active presence, and eWOM and Customer-brand relationship. This study will help marketer, brands, and consumers and will be a positive addition to literature.

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APPENDIX:

I am an MBA student who is doing a research on the Post COVID-19 social media marketing activities. For this purpose, your valuable input will be highly appreciated. All the data collected by this form will be used for research purposes only. it is advised to think of a particular brand whose social media presence is familiar to you and fill the form accordingly. Thankyou!

Section A: General Information

Education:

- Intermediate

- Bachelors

- masters

- PhD

- Others

Gender:

- Male

- Female

Age:

- 15-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- More than 30 years

Annual Income:

- 25k-50k
- 51k-75k
- 76k-100k
- 101k-150k
- 150k and above

Ethnicity:

- Pakistani
- Others

Section B: Social Media Marketing Activities

Social Media Marketing Activities	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contents visible on the [brand's] social media is the latest trend.	1	2	3	4	5
Using the [brand's] social media is really trendy.	1	2	3	4	5
Anything trendy is available on the [brand's] social media.	1	2	3	4	5
[Brand] have a regular posting schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
[Brand] post frequently on their primary social media account.	1	2	3	4	5
[Brand] produce sufficient content for our social media needs.	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend my friends to visit the [brand's] social media.	1	2	3	4	5
I would encourage my friends and acquaintances to use the [brand's] social media.	1	2	3	4	5
I would like to share my purchase experiences with friends and acquaintances on the [brand's] social media.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: E-brand Experience

E-brand experience	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The web page layout is appealing.	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to navigate.	1	2	3	4	5
Results are always returned promptly.	1	2	3	4	5
The results are always up to date.	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Customer brand relationship

Customer brand relatoinship	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is my belief that this brand takes opinions into account to make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
A brand and I benefitted from the relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this brand.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that this brand is trying to support a long-term commitment for me.	1	2	3	4	5
I can see that this brand wants to keep a relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5

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