Relationship of Paid Social Media Advertisement with Brand Equity: Mediating Role of Emotional Brand Attachment among Cosmetics Consumers

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Abstract
The cosmetic industry in Pakistan is rapidly growing, especially the use of social media for advertising, which demands innovative strategies. Previous studies have explored different aspects of social media engagement on brand equity across various retail and service sectors. This research extends on these studies by examining the association of paid social media advertisement on brand equity and its dimensions (brand image, brand awareness and brand loyalty), also it is focusing the mediating role of emotional brand attachment for this relationship, specifically within the context of Pakistan's cosmetic industry. Using a quantitative research approach, data via self-administered questionnaires from 315 female respondents were collected from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS.
Study results indicate that paid social media advertisement is favorably associated with the brand equity and its dimensions, and emotional brand attachment mediates this relationship. The findings further underscore how strong emotional attachment enhances the effects of social media advertisement on brand image and loyalty, reinforcing consumers' emotional connections with cosmetic brands are pivotal in elevating brand equity. Lastly, the discussion highlights the implications for the extant literature and for the marketers in the cosmetic industry, suggesting that tailored social media strategies fostering emotional brand attachment can significantly elevate brand equity.

Keywords: Paid Social Media Advertisement, Emotional Brand Equity, Brand Equity, Cosmetic Industry, Pakistan.

Introduction
Since the digitalization of businesses is becoming prevalent, the use of social media is becoming increasingly dynamic across by the organizations. Kim and Ko (2012) concluded that social media acts as a platform for enhancing customer interaction with the businesses. Social media usage has rapidly increased in the last few years. Global Web Index reported that 63.2% of the world population utilizes social media, with the average daily usage of around two hours and 23 minutes per individual (Kemp, 2024). Moreover, advertisement methods and strategies are evolving, with most brands and businesses now favoring social media advertising over conventional mainstream media ads. This shift is attributed to the increased recall rates for social media advertisements, which are 55% higher than the conventional advertisement methods (Seo and Park, 2018).
These statistics indicate that social media advertisements not only help boost business sales but also impact brand equity (BE), as highlighted by Alhaddad (2015) and Ra'd & Al-Gasawneh et al. (2021). Brand equity proves to be an intangible asset for companies as it helps strengthen the association between a firm and its customers. Further, the brand equity, is defined by Aaker (1991), as "a set of categories of brand assets

(liabilities) linked to a brand's name or symbol that add to (subtract from) the value provided by a product or service" (p. 22). Mudambi et al. (1997) described the same as "the total value added by the brand to the core product" (p. 18). According to Chen (2007), brand equity adds value to a company's goods and services, resulting in longer-term financial gains. Therefore, when it comes to improving a company's image and augmenting its worth through both financial and non-financial assets, brand equity is a valuable component. The business climate is constantly changing due to the modern internet and communication technologies, which brings new opportunities and challenges (Alhaddad, 2015), shifting power to consumers (Onete et al., 2017), also in Pakistan (Asif et al., 2023). Social media has been experiencing a 14 percent global annual growth rate (ZenithOptimedia, 2015), and small businesses investing in these campaigns found that such forms of advertisement could substantially improve visibility (Carmichael and Cleave, 2012). To increase digital engagement, advertisers continuously seek to inculcate advertisement elements into their campaigns. Pentina and Koh (2012) positing that a mix of social media marketing and other forms of communications gets the best results. A winning advertisement requires eye-catching content, the right audience selection, and the right social media channel, but rapidly changing algorithms and competition make promotional goals difficult, requiring non-traditional paid promotions. Several studies have been conducted on various advertisement-related factors (e.g. Litvin et al., 2008; Febrian et al., 2022). Like, Alhaddad (2015) observed the effects of advertisement on BE. Brandão and Ramos (2024) suggested testing emotional brand attachment (EBA) as a mediator in different settings, while Heidari et al. (2023) studied social media marketing's effect on BE without considering emotional attachment. Manohar et al. (2022) suggested examining sentimental attachment in digital campaigns. This study thus utilizes emotional brand attachment (EBA) as a potential mediating mechanism between paid social media advertisements and brand equity and its dimensions as well. Not many studies have been examine the role of social media advertisements on the BE, particularly with the mediating role of EBA. Thus, current study aims to focus this gap in theory. The targeted population for this research is female users of the cosmetic industry of Pakistan, due to the emergence of new startups and their high visibility on social media. It has been revealed that to attain sustainability, the challenges in Pakistan's cosmetic industry must overcome (Abdul Majeed et al., 2022). The elaboration likelihood model and social media marketing theory have been used in this study to develop and support the hypothesized relationships. The main purpose of this research is to ascertain the correlation between paid social media advertising and BE and its dimensions along with the intervening role of EBA in the cosmetic industry of Pakistan. To gather and analyze the data, a quantitative methodology is implemented and data analysis through structural equation modelling.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review
Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)
This Model, developed by Petty and Cacioppo, is one of the most well-known probabilistic models of persuasion. It describes two possible routes to attitude change: the central and peripheral routes. This model has been considered fundamental to the process of persuasion as it can affect attitude formation or change the subsequent behavior, with applications across contexts such as social networks and e-word of mouth (eWOM). The central route requires the active engagement of the receiver and significant cognitive elaboration, in which attitudes are formed through a deliberate consideration of message arguments, usually evoked through complex cues and knowledge about the product. Conversely, the peripheral route involves a basic understanding of the message with minimal processing; attitudes are based on peripheral cues rather than arguments. These cues are usually emotional appeals that produce positive feelings or attention-grabbing production techniques. In practice, the content and execution of viral ads are designed using fewer central cues than peripheral cues, since this infectious quality of the ads often concerns emotions, suggesting that the focus of modern marketing should be on campaigns that will stir feelings.

Paid Social Media Advertisement and Brand Equity and its Dimensions

Advertising could be described as any paid, impersonal promotion or communication of goods, services or brands to an audience through mass media by an identified sponsor (Kotler and Keller, 2009; Nwaoboli, 2022). Brands are increasingly investing resources in social media advertisements (SMA) for their capacity to development, maintenance, and interaction with the potential consumers (Bulearca & Bulearca, 2010). SMA is said to be most effective when it is relevant and unique to the target audience and is also delivered appropriately (Brown, 2016). This is evident within the industries like cosmetics, where the social media influencers play a key role in the success of advertising (Baker, 2018).

A holistic model for SMA includes informativeness, entertainment, credibility, awareness, personalization, and incentive factors that affect the overall value of SMA (Arora and Agarwal, 2019). Effective ads tend to be stimulating, entertaining, immersive, and fun, clearly communicating the message it is intended to (Alhaddad, 2015; Brown, 2006).

Moreover, social media advertising plays a vital role in establishing the brand equity by impacting the brand knowledge structure in consumers' mind (Alhaddad, 2015). It acts as a source of brand awareness and enhances competition (Cobb et al., 1995; Alhaddad, 2015). The SMA is a strong predictor of a brand's reputation (Kim and Ko, 2010) and significantly influences all the key elements of BE, such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, and brand loyalty (Karamian et al., 2015; Soewandi, 2015).

Brand equity (BE) is usually perceived as a value-enhancing asset of a brand, where a company and/ or consumer values a product or service. It refers to "the set of brand assets and liabilities associated with the brand, its name and symbol," which adds or subtracts from the value (Laroche et al., 2012, p. 7). A strong BE means a better reputation, building a better relationship of trust with customers and assuring product purchases. A consumer perceives BE as additional value added to the product of a brand, influencing his or her potential reaction to the offerings.

Brand equity is critical to brand marketing; it acts as a source of differentiation from the offerings of the competitors. Social media marketing (SMM) activities are crucial for building up a good brand image and favorably influence the consumer brand engagement. Extensive SMM activities are a strong predictor of brand equity, and the efficiency of SMM campaigns is highly related to and improves BE.

A brand's overall market dominance is a critical component of BE, highlighting the value that a product offers. Customer-based BE is defined as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing" (Keller, 1993, p. 32). Brands with high BE are more attractive to consumers, influence purchasing decisions, and yield high stock returns. In competitive industries, such as the cosmetic industry, BE is a vital term that directly influences customer behavior, purchase choices, satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived value. Social media can bring a high level of engagement that fundamentally changes BE. For social media marketing, emotional messages are important to establish relationships between an individual and a brand; this is related to the emerging theme of emotional branding, which encourages favorable brand attitude and might enhance BE. Brand image and brand awareness are the two central components of customer-based BE. Thus it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Paid social media advertisement has a positive association with BE.

Brand image (BI), a dimension of BE, is the perception of the brand stored in the memory of customer (Yuan et al., 2016). It is defined as a "set of brand associations" or "beliefs held about a particular brand" (Aaker, 1991, p. 5). The development of BI via word-of-mouth and experience is favorably linked to and a creator of brand equity (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2003). Social media has given consumers the power to affect brand equity; hence, organizations should use it to shape the brand image (Alhaddad, 2015). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H1a: Paid social media advertisement has a positive association with BI.

Brand loyalty (BL), another dimension of brand equity, is the degree of customer attachment with the brand, according to Wantini et al. (2021), and it forms the core of brand equity, as stated by Laroche et al. (2012). It

involves commitment to re-purchase in the future despite competition (Laroche et al., 2012). Satisfaction and emotional brand attachment are factors that affect BL, according to Selten & Klievink, (2024). Behavioral loyalty refers to repeated purchases, but true loyalty comprises attitudinal loyalty, which is a psychological predisposition to, commitment to, and positive attitude towards the brand, according to Tatar & Eren-Erdogmus, (2024). Loyalty drivers are different in virtual place; connectivity and community are important aspects to be focused on, as cited by Srinivasan et al., (2024). Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H1b: Paid social media advertisement has a positive association with BL.

Brand awareness (BA) is also one of the most critical component of BE (Keller, 1993). BA is defined as "the potential buyer's ability to recognize and recall that a brand belongs to a product category" (Aaker, 1991, p. 11). It is a gauge of brand recognition and recall (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993), representing the brand's strength as a mental image in the minds of consumers (Pappu et al., 2005). BA is the result of consumer exposure (Alba et al., 1987) and develops brand equity (Tong and Hawley, 2009). High BA benefits marketers by ensuring customers consider the brand during product selection and decision-making (Seetharaman et al., 2001). BA influences decision-making through learning, consideration, and choice advantages (Keller, 1998). BA builds brand equity by creating a brand node in memory, fostering familiarity and trust (Gil et al., 2007). Social media advertising, by providing a platform for information surfing, expands BA and favorable associations, help in creating brand image (Alhaddad, 2015). BA has a positive effect on both BI and overall BE (Juntunen, 2009; Yoo et al., 2000; Mishra et al., 2011). Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H1c: Paid social media advertisement has a positive association with BA.

Paid Social Media Advertisement and Emotional Brand Attachment

Emotional band attachment (EBA) is based on a fundamental, enduring association between a consumer and a brand. According to Kinniburgh et al. (2005) and Dunn & Hoegg (2014), it is characterized by the feelings of love, emotional attachment, and passion. Affection refers to the feelings related to care and friendliness; connection is about a sense of belonging; and passion is derived from delight and irresistibility. The notion of EBA has been applied in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from products to digital characters (Thomson et al., 2005; Dunn and Hoegg, 2014; Suh et al., 2011).

The psychological attachment of a customer with the brand is considered critical aspects in the study of consumer behavior. EBA reflects in the form of favorable consumer outcomes in the form of strong bonding of customer with the brand (Vredeveld, 2018). The attitude of the customer towards the advertisement plays a significant role in determining the level of emotional and psychological attachment with the brand. Aziz et al. (2023) examined the relationship of belief and trust in the advertisement by the customer and their emotional attachment with the brand. They found that customers' attachment with the brand is high when advertisements are considered credible and trustworthy. This highlights that the advertising strategies that builds customer trust are critical elements in establishing strong emotional attachment with the brands. Moreover, Ramish et al. (2023) identified that the advertising strategies favorably impact the EBA of the customer. Thus, this can be hypothesized that:

H2: Paid social media advertisement has a positive association with EBA.

Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Equity and its Dimensions

EBA has a strong influence on BE through brand knowledge, since it is a set of brand associations in the memory (Keller, 1993). EBA forms affective memories that reinforce brand-associated messages (Fedorikhin et al. 2008) and creates differences which make the brand different from its competitors, hence enhancing the equity of the brand (Keller, 1993). One of the ways to target this emotional component is by emotional appeal in advertising, which is stored in the memory (Friestad and Thorson, 1986). Further, brand attachment, as a relational factor, has an effect on commitment projected towards a brand, where high emotional bonding encourages consumers to involve cognitively and financially in the brand to create brand loyalty, hence

making it hard for competitors to take them away (Fedorikhin et al. 2008; Thomson et al., 2005). Customers establish these emotional bonds over time, mainly through social media (Hudson et al., 2015). Brand attitudes follow EBA in being closely related but also differentiated from concepts such as brand love and brand addiction (Park et al., 2010; Moussa 2015; Mrad, 2018). Based on the above arguments, we are proposing the following hypotheses:

H3: EBA has a positive association with BE.
H3a: EBA has a positive association with BI.
H3b: EBA has a positive association with BL.
H3c: EBA has a positive association with BA.

H4: EBA acts as a mediator between paid social media advertisement and BE.
H4a: EBA acts as a mediator between paid social media advertisement and BI.
H4b: EBA acts as a mediator between paid social media advertisement and BL.
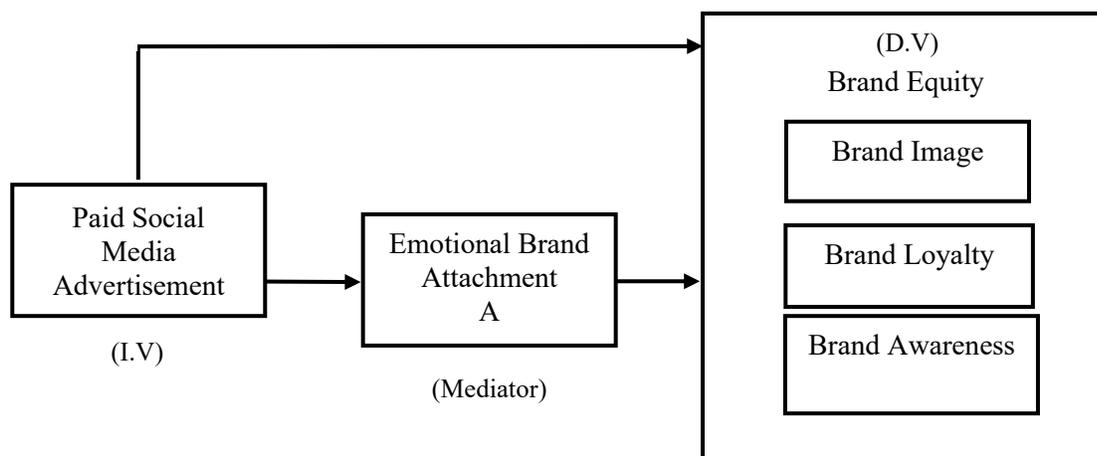H4c: EBA acts as a mediator between paid social media advertisement and BA.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Research Methodology
Research is carried out according to certain rules that prescribe the investigation of the hypothesized links between various phenomena in a systematic, empirical and critical way. Research is a step-by-step logical process to achieve a solution to a problem. Research methodology is a logical structure for a scientific investigation (Dubey & Kothari, 2022). The research philosophy followed for the purpose of this study is positivism. The research methodology and approach is deductive. A self-administered survey was used to collect data for this study. The choice of methodology is quantitative. The time horizon is cross-sectional. The unit of analysis is individual customer. Non-probability convenient sampling technique is used, and data were gathered through both physical and online questionnaire. Sample for this study included 315 females aged from 16 to 55 years and living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad who are regular users of cosmetic products.
Measurement scale refers to the systematic and rule-based process applied while assigning numbers or symbols to the units under research. The measurement scales for this study are adopted and adapted from previous studies. For every construct, the responses have been recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 = "strongly agree" to 1 = "strongly disagree".

Paid Social Media Advertising: A 6-item measurement scale developed by Rajeh, (2016) was used to measure the paid social media advertisements from female consumers of cosmetic products.

Emotional Brand Attachment: A 4-item measurement scale developed by Thomson, (2005) was used to measure the EBA of the female consumers of cosmetic products.

Brand Equity: Brand equity comprised of three dimensions including brand image, brand loyalty, and brand awareness. A total of 12 items were used to measure three dimensions which collectively to comprised the brand equity. The details are as follows:

Brand Image: A 5-item measurement scale developed by Rajeh, (2016) was utilized to capture the perceptions of the brand image of the female consumers of cosmetic products.

Brand Loyalty: A 4-item measurement scale developed by Rajeh, (2016) was used to measure the brand loyalty of female consumers of cosmetic products.

Brand Awareness: A 3-item measurement scale developed by Bilgin, (2018) was used to measure the brand awareness of the female consumers of cosmetic products.

Participants Demographics

This study surveyed 315 participants from Islamabad (73.7%) and Rawalpindi (26.3%). A high prevalence in terms of gender distribution was noted, with 98.4% females and a small group not willing to disclose their gender, i.e. 1.6%. The age brackets represented the largest group between 16–23 years at 66.3%, followed by 24–31 years at 23.5%, 7.0 % were from 32–39 years, followed by small groups across older age cohorts: 40–47 years (1.3%), 48–55 years (1.3%), and 56 and above (0.6%).

The participants' education level varied, with most participants holding a bachelor's degree (53.3%), followed by master's degree holders (23.5%). Smaller groups of respondents reported other qualifications, including intermediate (19.4%), matriculation (0.95%), and primary education (0.6%), while 1.3% reported PhDs and 0.95% reported other qualifications. In terms of occupation, the largest group consisted of students (59.3%), followed by full-time employees (21.9%), part-time employees (8.9%), self-employed individuals (3.8%), homemakers (2.5%), and a small number of retirees (1.3%) and others (2.2%).

Monthly incomes or pocket money varied; half, or 50.2%, received less than 15,000 PKR, while 18.7% would receive between 15,001–30,000 PKR and 11.7% in each of the 30,001–50,000 PKR and 50,001–80,000 PKR ranges. A minority reported their income levels to be between 80,001–130,000 PKR and above 130,000 PKR, with 4.1% and 3.5%, respectively.

The primary usage of social media was varied, as respondents chose more than one platform. In total, frequency counted to 935. Most use were Instagram, 241; WhatsApp, 201; and YouTube, 132, followed by Snapchat, 127; TikTok, 74; and others in smaller frequencies. The time spent on social media is varied: the daily average was 2-4 hours for 44.8% of users, less than 2 hours for 21.9%, 4-6 hours for 17.5%, and more than 6 hours for 15.9%.

The cosmetic purchase sources included online stores 12.4%, physical stores 32.1%, and both options 55.2%. For online shopping platforms, official brand websites were preferred by 157 participants, while Facebook/Instagram marketplace was used by 61. Among the participants' favorite cosmetic brands, Miss Rose was mentioned by 28.9%, Maybelline by 18.7%, Huda Beauty by 15.6%, and Rivaj by 8.3%, among others.

Moreover, the most favored commodities were foundation with 33.3%, lipstick with 14.6%, concealer with 13.3%, perfumes with 7.9%, and others. The periodicity of shopping was also noteworthy: every six months, 30.5% shopped, while 26.0% purchased cosmetics every three months. Monthly expenditure also showed variation, as the majority, 70.8%, spent less than 5,000 PKR on cosmetics.

Measurement Model Evaluation

Before hypotheses testing, measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test

the validity and reliability of the measures used in present study. Firstly, the factor loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated, results are reported in Table 1. All the factor loadings were above 0.70, except one which was 0.69, almost 0.70 and was considered for further analysis. Further all the AVE values were well above 0.50. Overall, these findings ensured the convergent validity of the measures used in this study.

Further, Fornell-Larcker Criterion was applied to establish the discriminant validity of the measure used. As presented in the Table 2, all the correlation values between the variables were lower than the square root of AVE, thus established the discriminant validity of the measures. In addition to this, Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio, being more contemporary and robust measure, was also used for ensuring the discriminant validity. According to HTMT, as shown in Table 3, all the scores were well below the cutoff value of 0.85, thus established the discriminant validity of the measures.

Table 1: Factor Loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha Scores

Variable		Factor loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Paid Social Media Advertisement					
PSMA1		0.69			
PSMA2		0.81			
PSMA3		0.76	0.54	0.87	0.83
PSMA 4		0.68			
PSMA 5		0.77			
PSMA 6		0.70			
Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA)					
EBA1		0.82			
EBA2		0.80	0.62	0.87	0.80
EBA3		0.80			
EBA4		0.73			
Brand Image (BI)					
BI1		0.78			
BI2		0.76	0.54	0.84	0.78
BI3		0.80			
BI4		0.63			
Brand Loyalty (BL)					
BL1		0.73			
BL2		0.70	0.58	0.84	0.75
BL3		0.79			
BL4		0.81			
Brand Awareness (BA)					
BA1		0.85			
BA2		0.87	0.71	0.88	0.79
BA3		0.83			
Brand Equity (BE)			0.62	0.89	0.87
Brand Image		0.74			

Brand Loyalty	0.75	
Brand Awareness	0.84	

Moreover, the reliability was also gauged using Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability (CR) scores, reported in Table 1. All the Cronbach's Alpha scores were well above 0.70, whereas the CR scores were well above 0.80. Overall, these results established that all the measures are reliable and warrant further hypotheses testing.

Table 2: Results of Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	BA	BI	BL	EBA	PSMA
BA	**0.84**				
BI	0.44	**0.73**			
BL	0.60	0.60	**0.76**		
EBA	0.37	0.64	0.54	**0.79**	
PSMA	0.35	0.53	0.26	0.49	**0.73**

Diagonal values refer to the square root of AVE

Table 3: Results of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

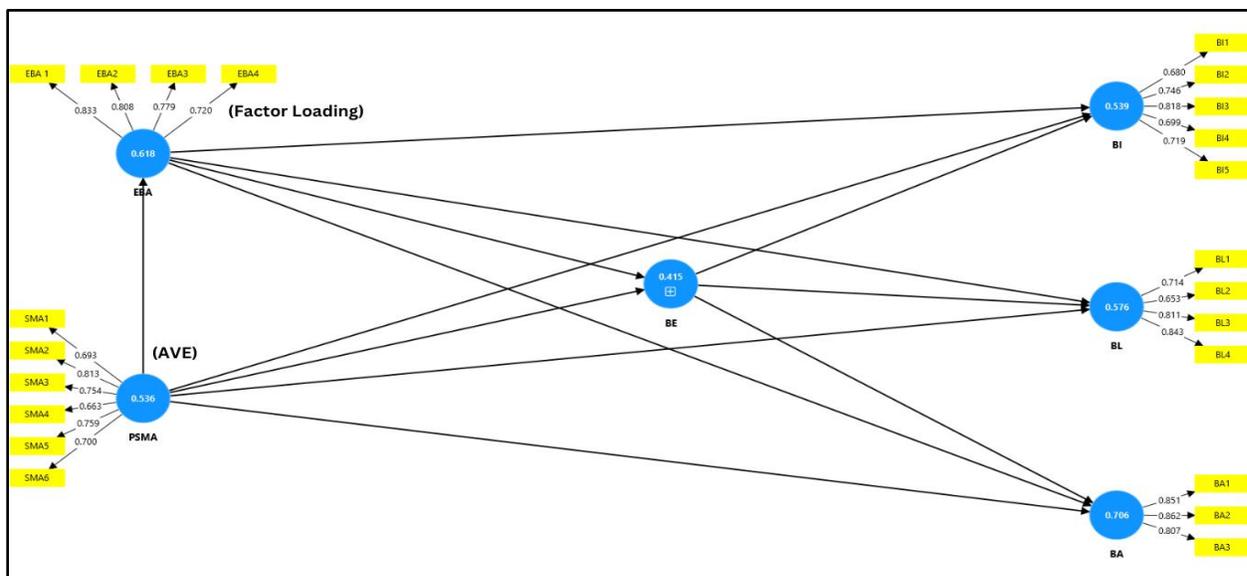|	BA	BI	BL	EBA	PSMA
BA					
BI	0.56				
BL	0.76	0.78			
EBA	0.46	0.78	0.67		
PSMA	0.41	0.63	0.31	0.59	

Figure 1: Structural Model (Exported from Smart PLS)

The correlation scores, as presented in the Table 4, revealed significant positive relationships among the key constructs of the study, provided initial support for the hypothesized relationships of the study. Specifically, paid social media advertisement (SMA) demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation with emotional brand attachment (EBA) (r = .47, p < .01) and brand image (BI) (r = .52, p < .01), indicating that effective social media advertising strengthens emotional connections with brands and enhances brand image. EBA also shows significant positive correlations with BI (r = .61, p < .01) and brand loyalty (BL) (r = .51, p < .01), underscoring that EBA contributes meaningfully to both brand perception and customer loyalty.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	-	-	-									
2. Age	1.49	0.86	-.073	-								
3. HQ	-	-	-.009	.282**	-							
4. MI	2.11	1.41	.44	.517**	.373**	-						
5. PSMA	3.50	0.74	-.097	.040	-.063	.017	-					
6. EBA	3.59	0.79	-.127*	.131*	.125*	.122*	.472**	-				
7. BI	3.89	0.69	-.009	.007	.158**	.114*	.518**	.611**	-			
8. BL	3.78	0.73	.063	.067	.171**	.129*	.229**	.511**	.584**	-		
9. BA	3.73	0.85	.050	.142*	.059	.057	.336**	.362**	.437**	.565**	-	
10. BE	3.80	0.52	-.001	.030	.157**	.141*	.376**	.520**	.753**	.735**	.486**	-

Notes: HQ= Highest Qualification, MI= Monthly Income, PSMA= Paid Social Media Advertisement, EBA= Emotional Brand Attachment, BI= Brand Image, BL= Brand Loyalty, BA= Brand Awareness, BE= Brand Equity

Brand image (BI) showed a positive relationships with BL (r = .58, p < .01) and BE (r = .75, p < .01), highlighting that a strong brand image positively impacts customer loyalty and overall brand value. Furthermore, BL demonstrates a significant association with BE (r = .74, p < .01), illustrating that loyalty is a key contributor to BE. Finally, BA shows a positive association with BE (r = .49, p < .01), suggesting that higher brand awareness strengthens brand equity. These statistically significant correlations, all at the 0.01 level, emphasize the positive interrelationships among the variables, reflecting statistical support for the hypothesized relationships of the study.

Table 5: Parameter Estimates for Direct Relationships in Hypothesized and Alternative Model

Relationships	B	P-value	Confidence Interval		Decision
			Lower-Level CI 2.5%	Upper-Level CI 97.5%	
PSMA → BE	0.199	0.000	0.097	0.301	H₁: Accepted
PSMA → BI	0.132	0.003	0.049	0.222	H₁ₐ: Accepted

PSMA → BL	-0.181	0.000	-0.265	-0.105	H_{1b}: Accepted
PSMA → BA	0.040	0.390	-0.054	0.134	H_{1c}: Rejected
PSMA → EBA	0.486	0.000	0.380	0.586	H_2: Accepted
EBA → BE	0.535	0.000	0.448	0.613	H_3: Accepted
EBA → BI	0.128	0.004	0.043	0.214	H_{3a}: Accepted
EBA → BL	0.021	0.578	-0.055	0.095	H_{3b}: Rejected
EBA → BA	-0.210	0.000	-0.316	-0.115	H_{3c}: Accepted

Bootstraps 5.000 samples; two-tailed*

Table 6: Parameter Estimates for Indirect Relationships in Hypothesized and Alternative Models

Relationships	B	P-value	Confidence Interval		Decision
			Lower-Level CI 2.5%	Upper-Level CI 97.5%	
PSMA → EBA → BE	0.260	0.000	0.194	0.333	H_4: Supported
PSMA → EBA → BI	0.062	0.008	0.019	0.112	H_{4a}: Supported
PSMA → EBA → BL	0.010	0.579	-0.028	0.045	H_{4b}: Rejected
PSMA → EBA → BA	-0.102	0.000	-0.105	-0.163	H_{4c}: Supported

Note: Bootstraps 5.000 samples; two-tailed

Paid social media advertisement (PSMA) positively correlates with brand equity (BE) (β = 0.20) and Brand Image (BI) (β = 0.13) while having a significant positive association with EBA (β = 0.49), yet it surprisingly shows a significant negative association with BL (β = -0.18) and no significant relationship with brand awareness (BA) (p=0.39); emotional brand attachment (EBA), in turn, is a strong positive driver of BE (β =0.54) and BI (β =0.13) but has no significant relationship with BL (p=0.58) and an unexpected significant negative effect on BA (β =-0.21); finally, EBA successfully mediates the relationship between PSMA and both BE (β =0.26) and BI (β =0.062$ positively, does not mediate the relationship with BL (p=0.579), and acts as a negative mediator between PSMA and BA (β =-0.102).

Discussion of Results
Current study was set to test the relationship of paid social media advertising with BE and its dimension along with the mediating role of EBA for the aforementioned relationship. The results revealed that the SMA had positive and significant association with BE and its dimensions except for the relationship between SMA and brand awareness. These results are consistent with previous literature where Brandão and Ramos (2024) also identified that the social media engagement is positively related to BE.in the same way, Nobar et al. (2020) suggested that the social media activities have positive relationship with BE and brand commitment in the leather industry. These findings signifies the importance of social media advertising activities to establish the brand equity and its dimensions especially brand image and brand loyalty. These results add to the literature by confirming the role of PSMA as a key driver in shaping BE perceptions among consumers.
Further, the results revealed that the EBA has positive association with the BE and its dimensions. These findings are consistent with previous literature that demonstrate that the EBA is positively related with the BE (Brandão & Ramos, 2024). This suggests that consumers who feel emotionally connected to a brand are more likely to perceive it as valuable. Emotional attachments can significantly enhance consumer loyalty and, consequently, willingness to pay a premium price, which subsequently boosting brand equity. This connection emphasizes the importance of cultivating emotional ties through marketing strategies that target the consumers' values and experiences. Brands that successfully create and maintain these emotional connections

can expect to see not only improved brand equity but also a more resilient customer base, demonstrating the long-term benefits of prioritizing emotional engagement in marketing.

Lastly, the study also proposed and empirically proved that the EBA mediated the relationship of paid social media advertising with BE and its dimensions. This suggests that the impact of PSMA on BE is significantly influenced by the emotional bonds consumers develop with the brand. Consistent with this, Brandão and Ramos (2024) demonstrated that EBA acts as a mediator between perceived social media advertisement and brand equity. These findings highlight the role of emotional connection in enhancing the impact of social media advertising on BE. Previous studies have established that emotional connections can amplify the effects of marketing efforts, enhancing brand equity. By investing in SMA that resonates emotionally, brands can foster deeper consumer attachments, thereby increasing perceived value. Brands should focus on creating advertisements that not only inform but also engage consumers on an emotional level to maximize their impact on brand equity. Moreover, the mediation of EBA for relationship of SMA with the brand loyalty dimension of brand equity was not empirically substantiated. Previous studies have highlighted that brand loyalty is influenced by a range of factors, including customer satisfaction, experience, and trust (Azizan & Yusr, 2019). The lack of significant mediation implies that brands may need to implement strategies beyond emotional advertising to foster true loyalty.

Theoretical Implications

This study also has a few theoretical implications for the existing literature by highlighting the influence of social media advertising on BE along with the mediating role of EBA for this relationship in the cosmetic business of Pakistan. The data show a positive association between SMA and BE, furthering literature on the ways in which emotional connections enhance consumer behavior. Specifically, EBA is defined as a mediator of social media commercials and consumer outcomes, such as brand equity and awareness, extending work by Levy and Hino (2016) and Hanaysha (2016). This furthers the insights regarding the link between brand and the consumer by showing emotionally connecting marketing to improve consumer equity. This research also puts forth social media's transformative power for the development of emotional connections, supporting contemporary digital marketing theories. Lastly, this investigation described the role of EBA as a mediator between social media marketing and consumer loyalty in the cosmetic industry of Pakistan, which further provided a theoretical framework upon which further research could be based into digital-era relationships between consumers and brands.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial/ practitioner's perspective, the implications of this research are multifaceted and hold practical significance for cosmetic companies aiming to enhance their marketing strategies in Pakistan. By recognizing the impact of emotional brand attachment (EBA), brands can tailor their social media advertising to resonate more deeply with their target audiences. This targeted approach allows for more efficient resource allocation, ultimately saving time and costs associated with ineffective marketing campaigns. Cosmetic brands that understand the emotional drivers of consumer behavior can craft messages that not only attract attention but also foster loyalty and engagement.

Further, the ability to access comprehensive metrics through digital platforms, such as those offered by Facebook Meta Suite, empowers brands to evaluate their advertising efforts in real-time. This facilitates immediate adjustments to enhance engagement and improve overall campaign effectiveness (Febrian et al., 2022). Marketers can monitor various metrics, including impressions, clicks, and conversions on different digital media platforms, allowing them to revamp their strategies based on the data related to the performance. This data based approach ensures that marketing initiatives are not only reactive but also proactive, enabling brands to stay ahead of consumer expectations and preferences.

Moreover, organizations can implement training and development programs for their marketing teams focused

on creating emotionally resonant content tailored to the Pakistani market. By investing in such programs, companies can cultivate a culture of emotional branding, where all marketing efforts are designed to create meaningful connections with consumers. This strategic emphasis on EBA can lead to improved customer retention rates, as emotionally attached consumers have huge probability to remain loyal to a brand (Barreda et al., 2020).

In summary, the implications of this study underscore the critical role of EBA in digital marketing strategies for the cosmetic industry in Pakistan. By understanding and leveraging EBA, brands can optimize their social media marketing efforts, leading to enhanced consumer interactions and increased brand equity. The insights gained from this research can inform future studies in digital marketing, paving the way for continued exploration into the consumer-brand relationship dynamics in this digital era. Companies that adopt these strategies will likely find themselves better positioned to connect with consumers meaningfully, driving both engagement and loyalty in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Limitation of the Study

Like all other scientific studies, this too has some limitations that pave the ways for future researchers. The main limitations of this study include the narrow geographical area in which the survey was conducted (Islamabad and Rawalpindi) and convenience sampling, which reduce representativeness and can also limit the generalizability of the study. Second, this study only focuses on emotional brand attachment as a mediator and its linkage to BE in the cosmetic industry, which calls for further studies on other mediators, such as brand associations and perceived quality. Finally, other studies should expand their scope to different industries, like fashion and technology, to compare the dynamics of emotional brand attachment across diverse contexts.

Conclusion

This study was conducted with the aim to explore the association between social media advertising, BE and EBA in the cosmetic industry of Pakistan. For this, a quantitative research design was adopted, where the data were gathered from female customers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi through convenience sampling. The research applied SEM to test the proposed relationships and evaluate the strength of various constructs in the model, demonstrating a positive association of social media advertising and EBA with BE and its dimensions, hence confirming that emotional attachments substantially lead to an increase in BE. Findings revealed that EBA mediates the relationship between SMA and BE, which implies that effective social media advertising enhances emotional attachment and, in turn, leads to enhanced BE. The study adds not only to the literature on BE and emotional branding but also provides practical implications for cosmetic brands in terms of modifying their marketing strategies to enhance emotional attachment of consumers and brand equity.

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