

The effects of facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty on customer-based brand equity through social media marketing

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CHRONICLE

ABSTRACT

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The prime concern of the current research effort is to assess the role of social media marketing efforts to explain the consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of the United Arab Emirates. The study incorporated the facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty that influence the utilization of social media marketing that further develop the consumer-based brand equity. The restaurants are an important element of the hospitality sector in UAE and important due to the huge number of visitors. Therefore, the importance of social media marketing becomes more evident due to effective approaches in attracting the customers remotely. The collected data was analyzed on Smart-PLS and results depict that facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty influence social media marketing and consumer-based brand equity. However, the mediating role of social media marketing remained insignificant.

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1. Introduction

Social media marketing has rapidly emerged in the current highly competitive business environment around the world to grasp the customers by providing speedy services to gain loyalty and competitive advantage. The marketing approach embedded with technological advancements has taken the center stage for research scholars and practitioners. The marketing efforts have been relying on traditional patterns for such a long period but involvement of social media applications and sites such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other available applications has altered the marketing approach due to its effectiveness in communication and interaction. The utilization of social media applications for marketing purposes is supported by various industries to attract the customers due to large-scale users of social media platforms that approximately 2 billion active users are engaged (Koay, Ong, Khoo, & Yeoh, 2020). The effective communication and interaction between stakeholders have significant importance for business success and social media platforms provide the place to interact and communicate. The social media platform found to be very effective in spreading rapid information among large-scale existing customers and to acquire new customers that create brand awareness, brand image to boost the sales and increase the market share (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). It has been reported and accepted widely that business owners believe that social media platforms play an important role in creating the benefits for businesses because these elements provide the opportunities to communicate effectively with the customers. The communication with customers provides assistance in helping with complaints and influence their decisions to buy the product by providing them accurate and timely information. The 93% social media users prefer to search products and services online for any business due to its cost-effectiveness as compared to traditional marketing approaches such as radio, print media or magazines (Amersdorffer, Oelrich, Bauhuber, & Gottstein, 2013).

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Sustaining the market position in a highly competitive globalized environment has become challenging and extremely important so firms focus on adopting the latest available social media platforms that enable organizations to create awareness and acquire the customers by fulfilling their demands (Mohsin, Kamran, Nawaz, Hussain, & Dahri, 2021). There are a number of threats facing industries in a challenging business environment that have to be addressed in competition to gain the customer loyalty and to achieve the business goals. The previous studies have acknowledged that customers' preferences are a point of concern for organizations for becoming the choice of customers for product or services they require (Akram, Siddiqui, Nawaz, Ghauri, & Cheema, 2011). The marketing strategies play an important role in creating awareness and attracting consumers that also increase the cost of firms but utilization of social media platforms found to be more effective in cost reduction and rapid spread of information. The literature reported that firms adopt realistic and favorable ways to increase the sales and to take initiatives for customer satisfaction in order to gain their loyalty to retain them. It has been reported that acquiring new customers is more expensive than retaining the existing customers so firms should strive to gain the loyalty of existing customers. The retained loyal customers contribute to profitability as literature argues that 5% increase in retention enhances the profit by 85% depending on the industry (Abdullaeva, 2020).

The literature depicted that loyalty of customers and retention contributes to an increase in profitability and market growth so therefore it is highly recommended that firms must focus to retain the customers by gaining their loyalty in order to maintain the competitive position, competitive edge and market share. The hospitality sector faces the higher competition, specifically restaurants face the higher competition due to its rapid emergence and rapidly increased food providers around the world (Nawaz & Hassan, 2016b). The lifestyle has been changing with the passage of time and food style is also receiving the impact of changing eating habits as an easily observable phenomenon in developing or developed countries (Sun et al., 2020). There are a number of segments in the restaurant industry including family style, fine dining, fast-food providers, casual food, ethnic food and casual dining restaurants (Nawaz & Hassan, 2016a). The diverse type of restaurants provides a different range of food as well with specialized drinks and specific tailored food for different segments of the customers. The customers prefer to take the taste of different food each time they visit the restaurants, this situation creates the challenging situation for food and restaurants industry and makes hard to track the challenges in sales and growth. The formulation of marketing strategies offers a wide range of possibilities to gain the customer loyalty and retention to ensure the sales and market share. The research has been conducted to investigate the effect of service quality factors on satisfaction of customers and to influence their behavior in the restaurant industry. The previous research depicted that service quality plays a major role in sustaining the competitive position and customer retention that contribute to profitability through gaining customer loyalty (Abdullaeva, 2020).

The food safety with health concerns have gained critical attention worldwide due to the significance of food and beverages available in the market. The number of serious diseases occurs due to poor food quality as number of cases have been increased in recent years in various parts of the world so that regulatory bodies have been established for effective control and reduce the negative health impact that specifically affect the health of tourists (Taylor, Taylor, Garat, Simreen, & Sareddine, 2015). In the USA, approximately 47.8 million cases were reported related to health issues caused by food that also causes a number of deaths, so therefore it is necessary to evaluate and assess the restaurant industry that has an important role to play in the hospitality industry for tourism promotion and growth. There are drastic changes observed in food consumption behavior and life-style that also impact the food preparation patterns at home or in restaurants. The European Food Safety Authority has highlighted that 48.7% diseases occurred from the food sector due to unhygienic practices during cooking, cleaning and serving (Sabbithi et al., 2017; Taha, Osaili, Viji, Albloush, & Nassoura, 2020). The similar risk has been observed in the Middle East more than developed countries because of a clear lack in appropriate surveillance data and controlling policies. The required awareness about food safety is largely absent and the attitude and behavior of food handlers in restaurants is observed as inappropriate that causes negative devastating health related outcomes (Taha, Osaili, Saddal, et al., 2020). In UAE the recent studies have been conducted to assess the food services related to health and safety and focused on the establishment of food authority for safety of food from food handlers while fulfilling the criteria of health and safety. The study conducted in Jordan on fast food restaurants highlighted the need to develop the knowledge about food safety and identified that food handlers were unaware of health and safety practices and similar issues were identified in Malaysian market as well (Osaili et al., 2013; Woh, Thong, Behnke, Lewis, & Zain, 2016). The research scholars have focused on the creation of awareness of food safety, knowledge and taking appropriate measures to develop the attitude and behavior of individuals towards the serious issue of health and safety standards in the food industry. The prior research efforts showed that safety knowledge was found to be influential towards attitude and behavior but practically it is observed and reported that these practices are rarely implemented among food handlers. The literature depicted various relationships related to knowledge of food safety, attitude and behavior and reported medium or high correlation among safety knowledge and attitude and behavior (Baser, Ture, Abubakirova, Sanlier, & Cil, 2017). However, the research gap still exists in assessing the role of food safety behavior influenced by food safety knowledge and awareness, however it is argued that food handlers affect the food safety behavior (Lim, Chye, Sulaiman, Suki, & Lee, 2016). The current pandemic era in 2020 has a negative impact on all aspects of life, similarly one of the most important hospitality and tourism industries also received negative impact so ultimately restaurants got affected due to the lockdown situation. The restaurants were forced to close the doors to prevent customer gathering to avoid physical contact in order to reduce the virus spread. So therefore, restaurants have to develop innovative approaches to sell their product and give way to customers to approach them through online applications. The full-service restaurants in UAE market research report says that there was an impact on volume, values and brand market shares, the trends were changed in growth due to the

current situation. It was forecasted that food services in UAE expected to grow by 5.22% during 2019 to 2024 but due to pandemic situation the expectations were not met but reduced the existing market share as well. The number of tourists reduced, the change in disposable income, change in lifestyle has impacted the foodservice market. The lack of recreational opportunities also reduced the growth in the foodservice industry. The restaurants strive to provide the international cuisines for the customers to boost the food away from home, through online applications due to lockdown situations (Foodservice, 2021). The foodservice providers in UAE provide a place to enjoy for friends and family for further official meetings and to entertain customers. The competition in the UAE market has increased due to the emergence of fast-food chains and full service restaurants. The survey conducted in the UAE on the food industry has revealed that 32.6% of consumers in UAE are willing to spend for eating outside that reflect the higher potential and willingness of people to dine out. The figure below presents the market share of the food and beverage industry of UAE that shows cafes and bars acquired 42% and full-service restaurants occupied 30% shares and fast food restaurants acquired 28% market share according to Statista (2021).

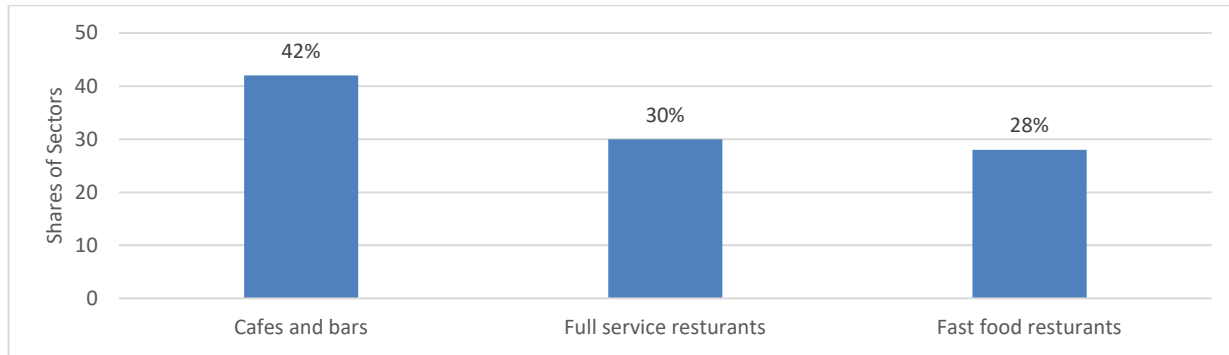


Fig. 1. Market share of food and beverage industry in UAE

Source: Statista 2021

Fig. 2 below shows the sales value of food industry as expected to grow in 2022, the data is acquired from Statista (2021).

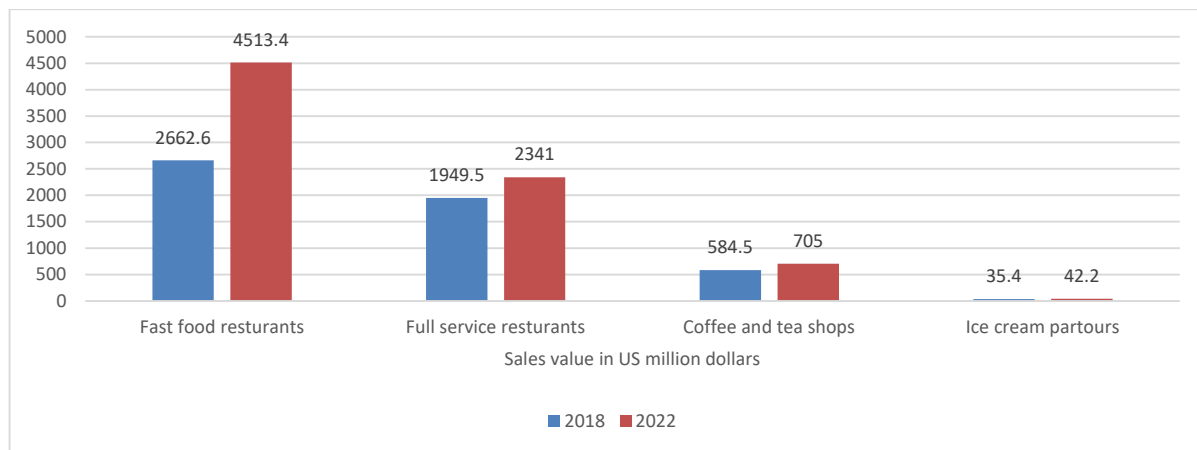


Fig. 2. sales value of food industry in UAE

The current study intends to determine the customer-based brand equity influenced by social media marketing approach in the restaurant industry of UAE. The study intends to incorporate the facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty that predict or can be achieved through effective social media marketing that influences to gain brand equity. The study claims to be contributive in assessing the role of unique marketing factors through social media marketing approach to predict and explain the customer-based brand equity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social media marketing and Customer-based Brand Equity

The literature has embarked on the virtual environment based on blogs, websites and digital commerce platforms that has significant importance in business operations and play a vital role in developing the brand for firms (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). The online brand community is referred to as an aggregation of self-selected people that share similar interest in communication among stakeholders about the brand through computer-based solutions. The social media platforms have

enhanced the interactive manners through online applications that influence the brand through effective two-way communication. Social media incorporates different and unique types of content in terms of photos, videos or text between brands and consumers. The research articles have argued that social media not only assists in brand development but also promotes the brand to consumers while managing the long-term relationship. The research studies have highlighted the fashion industry's initiatives to create the brand through effective utilization of social media to influence the CBBE for improvement in brand image, value creation and identity (Chu, Kamal, & Kim, 2019). The research studies have highlighted that consumer-based equity can be perceived by positive influence of brand experience, later the research studies have examined the perceived SMM efforts that affect the brand experience (Altaf, Iqbal, Mokhtar, & Sial, 2017). The research studies have examined the mediating role of brand experience between perception of social media utilization to predict the CBBE. The previous literature has contributed in various aspects, while scholars have extant the direct impact of perceived social media marketing activities on consumer-brand equity. The prior research also explained and examined the mediating effect of brand experience to explain the consumer brand (Koay et al., 2020). The effectiveness of social media marketing influences the social media users and further impacts the consumer-based brand equity as occurred in prior studies. The prior studies have explained the multidimensional perspective of brand equity influenced by social media efforts and brand experience.

H₁: *Social Media Marketing efforts influence consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

2.2 Facilitating Condition to Social Media Marketing and consumer-based brand equity

The current study incorporated the construct of facilitating conditions to determine the social media marketing that further explain the consumer-based brand equity. The facilitating condition refers to the extent to which a person has a belief towards appropriate technical infrastructure and top management support for new system implementation and utilizations. Prior studies have revealed that facilitating conditions influence the adoption of innovative technologies and behavior of individuals towards utilization of social media marketing efforts. The cultural issues also play an important role in utilization and adoption of social media marketing, which means small and medium enterprises do not hesitate in adopting the social media marketing approach due to large-scale benefits (Hung & Lai, 2015). The employees must be trained to use social media applications and sites for effective communication so appropriate internet facilities must be given while keeping the cost low. The appropriate measure must be taken to reduce the resistance from any end in adoption of new systems so therefore firms must be able to provide proper training to eliminate the resistance in usage of social media marketing. The small and medium enterprises focus on the facilitating conditions in adoption of social media applications for marketing purposes.

The current study argues that firms must be able to ensure the facilitating conditions in adoption of the social media marketing efforts that further influence the brand equity. So therefore, following hypothesis is derived:

H₂: *Facilitating Conditions influence the adoption of social media marketing efforts among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

H₃: *Facilitating Conditions influence the consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

2.3 Customer Experience to Social Media Marketing and Consumer-based brand equity

The marketing strategies have been devised while considering the social media applications and tools, the social networking sites and applications enable users to communicate efficiently to each other and stakeholders. The social media sites provide an alternate platform of communication between businesses and customers, the social networking sites have the ability to entertain a wide range of users at low cost and due to the large number of active users on social networks. The fact has been reported that common citizens can be accessed through marketing efforts by creating the customer awareness and building the brand communities (Chen & Lin, 2019). The survey conducted in Indonesia by the Ministry of communication and informatics depicted the utilization of social media platforms for selling the products or services to the customers they want to buy to meet their needs. The social media platforms have advanced features that encourage the people to utilize and rely on social media applications and tools to communicate and information seeking and sharing between the participants specifically to attract the customers. The messages given on social media and utilization of social media applications or tools for marketing activities to attract the customers impact the experience of consumers that leads towards the achievement of marketing goals (Wibowo, Chen, Wiangin, Ma, & Ruangkanjanases, 2021).

The customer's experience is incorporated in the current study to predict the effectiveness of social media marketing efforts that further influence the brand equity. The customer experience can be expressed as cognitive, emotional, sensory, behavior and social responses for consumer buying habits (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). It has been reported and criticized that online transactions have poor experience due to inability to communicate face-to-face interaction but on the other hand face-to-face communication is believed to be more effective according to the study of McLean and Wilson (2016). The firms must ensure the effective online communication and processing system that serve the customer with better experience to gain the trust and loyalty specifically during covid19 lockdown era. The research scholars have highlighted that perceived benefits and perceived ease of use towards utilization of social media applications influence the individuals to adopt the technological change to conduct the transactions. One of the most essential frameworks is customer experience that must be able to provide opportunities that improve the competitive positions (Keiningham et al., 2020). The experience of customers has gained attention

in strategic formulation as the literature highlighted the five different types of experiences. Firstly, the view, taste and touch of the product influences the purchase decision, the social networking sites lack this fact and customers cannot see or touch the product before purchase. The second is feel, the online applications cannot offer to feel the product or service before purchase when they use social networking sites to sell the products. The thing is another fact that comes under the concept of customer experience, it enables the individual to think in innovative ways that allow them to perceive the experience and improve the participation in marketing efforts. Another customer experience is 'act' that incorporates the choice of behavior including physical activities, lifestyle and association that influence the behavior of the user to predict the reaction. The relationship is also considered under the description of customer experience that intimate the human feeling, that links the self with others and establishes the relationship with other social entities (Wibowo et al., 2021).

The previous study examined the role of customer experience to predict relationship quality significantly, the current study intends to investigate the relationship between customer experience and social media marketing efforts that further influence brand equity. The study develops the following hypothesis:

H4: *Customer Experience influences the adoption of social media marketing efforts among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

H5: *Customer Experience influences the consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

2.4 Brand loyalty to Social Media Marketing and Consumer-based brand equity

The current research effort incorporated the role of brand loyalty in influencing the social media marketing tools for adoption that further predict the brand equity. The prior studies have also examined the role of branding and brand equity due to social media marketing activities. The research studies have focused the social media marketing activities to predict and influence the intention of individuals to gain the brand loyalty and brand trust (Koay et al., 2020; Moslehpour, Dadvari, Nugroho, & Do, 2020; Zollo, Filieri, Rialti, & Yoon, 2020). The previous studies have examined the relationship between social media marketing activities and behavioral intention towards purchase intention as it is well researched in literature. A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the effect of social media marketing activities on behavioral intention (Cheung, Pires, Rosenberger III, & De Oliveira, 2020). The prior study overlooked the explanation of connection between social media marketing activities to influence the behavior. The social media platform enables businesses to gain success through adoption of social media efforts for marketing to attract the customers. The research has explored the literature that analyzed the social media marketing activities to influence the behavior and intention, which further influence the brand loyalty and trust. The number of gaps has been identified including incomplete pictures of social media marketing efforts and customer relationships. The previous studies focused on brand trust, revisit intention and social media utilization in the hospitality industry. The previous literature has also highlighted the gap in underlying the mechanism of social media marketing activities that influence the tourism and hospitality business to attract the customers. Number of studies have focused on the relationship of social media marketing activities in the luxury industry, education industry and smartphone users, the airline industry and service industry (Ibrahim, Aljarah, & Sawaftah, 2021).

H6: *Brand Loyalty influences the adoption of social media marketing efforts among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

H7: *Brand Loyalty influences the consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.*

2.5 Mediating Role of Social Media Marketing efforts

The current study intends to investigate the mediating role of SMM in the restaurant industry of UAE between independent variables including facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty and dependent variable CBBE. Social media is considered a secure generation of web-based applications with the aim to enhance the facilities for effective communication, information sharing, collaboration and interoperability among the participants (Elbanna, Bunker, Levine, & Sleigh, 2019). It has been reported that social media users spend more than 330 minutes on these social media platforms and seek information regarding their required products or services. These platforms provide easy services related to communication and interaction rapidly between the participants or stakeholders specifically between consumers and firms around the world. By utilizing social media, firms may build their brand by improving the business functions that improve the business activities among the SME sector. The previous studies have shown that social media marketing induce firms to invest in the digital aspect of marketing (Rana, Barnard, Baabdullah, Rees, & Roderick, 2019).

The previous studies have examined the brand experience as mediator to predict the relationship between perceived social media marketing and brand equity and reported significant results (Koay et al., 2020). Another study examined the mediating role of social media benefits including cognitive, social integrative, personal integrative and hedonic between the relationship of social media and brand equity and reported significant results (Zollo et al., 2020). Another study examined the mediating effect of brand loyalty between social media marketing and revisit intention and reported significant results (Ibrahim et al., 2021). The current study claims to be the pioneer in assessing the mediating role of social media marketing between exogenous or endogenous constructs. So therefore, following mediating hypothesized relationships are devised:

H₈: Social Media marketing mediates the relationship of facilitating condition and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.

H₉: Social Media marketing mediates the relationship of customer experience and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.

H₁₀: Social Media marketing mediates the relationship of brand loyalty and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE.

3. Research Framework

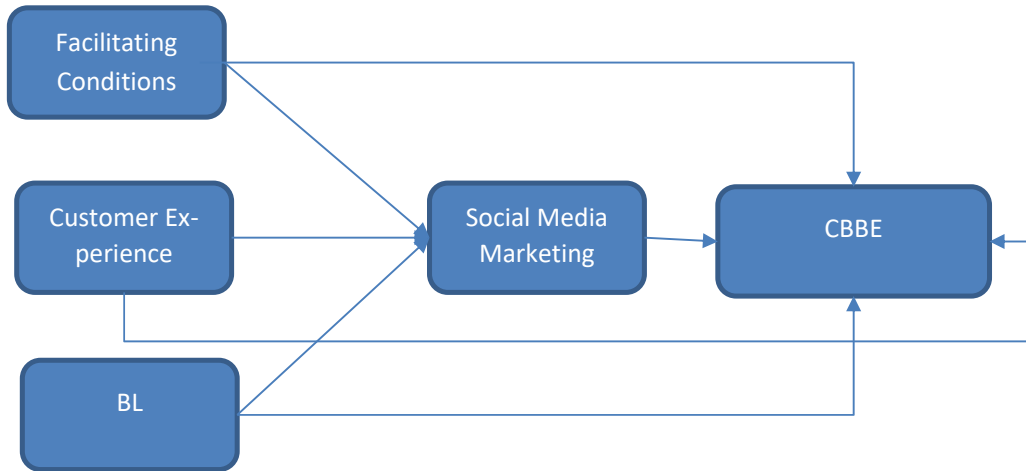


Fig. 3. Research Framework

3.1 Research Methodology

The current section of the study entails the details about the research method, the questionnaire was distributed among respondents for data collection. The study is quantitative in nature. The unit of analysis was an individual consumer that uses social media sites to purchase. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), population is “related to an overall group of people or organization which might be of interest to the researcher”. The population in the present study entails only those consumers engaged in online shopping through utilization of social media. The simple random sampling will be used for sample collection based on (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) table. The questionnaire was distributed among participants as sample size was drawn as 380, so 600 were distributed but 309 complete responses were received for data collection.

3.2 Measurement Scale

The measurement scale was adopted from previous studies for each construct. The 10 items measurement scale for consumer-based brand equity was adopted from the study of (Zollo et al., 2020). The 05 items measurement scale of social media marketing was taken from the study of (Koay et al., 2020). The 06 items measurement scale of facilitating condition was adopted from the study of (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). The 10 items measurement scale of customer experience was adopted from the study of (Wibowo et al., 2021). The 04 items measurement sale of brand loyalty was adopted from the study of (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

3.3 Data analysis

This section consists of data analysis, the collected data was analyzed on Smart-PLS, there are two sections in analysis phase, the first phase entails the assessment of measurement models that determine the reliability and validity of the constructs. The PLS-algorithm is utilized for measurement model assessment in PLS. The second section consists of a structural equation model that investigates the hypothesized relationship.

3.4 Assessment of Measurement Model

This section determines the constructs’ reliability and validity by assessing the values of Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted. The Cronbach alpha and composite reliability must remain higher than 0.70 for minimum acceptable value, higher than 0.80 is good and higher than 0.90 considered as an excellent reliability. The value for average

variance extract (AVE) must remain higher than 0.50 for acceptability (Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser, 2014). Table 1 shows the values of Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and AVE.

Table 1
Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and AVE

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
BL	0.808	0.874	0.635
CBBE	0.936	0.946	0.635
CE	0.906	0.922	0.543
FC	0.807	0.862	0.528
SMM	0.947	0.959	0.824

Note: Brand loyalty (BL), Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), Customer experience (CE), Facilitating condition (FC), Social media marketing (SMM)

Table 1 presents the constructs' reliability and validity based on Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). The results show that Cronbach alpha for brand loyalty, consumer-based brand equity, customer experience, facilitating condition and social media marketing are observed as 0.808, 0.936, 0.906, 0.807 and 0.947 respectively. Similarly, the composite reliability is observed as 0.874, 0.946, 0.922, 0.862 and 0.959 respectively. The AVE for all constructs is observed as 0.635, 0.635, 0.543, 0.528 and 0.824 respectively. The values meet the conditions for reliability and validity hence accepted statistically.

3.5 Discriminant Validity

The measurement model also examines the discriminant validity by assessing the correlation values, the table 2 below presents the discriminant validity. The square root of AVE is compared to the correlation value of other constructs, the square root of AVE must remain higher than the correlational values of other variables according to the Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 2
Discriminant validity

	BL	CBBE	CE	FC	SMM
BL	0.797				
CBBE	0.543	0.797			
CE	0.459	0.570	0.737		
FC	0.541	0.566	0.460	0.726	
SMM	0.642	0.535	0.456	0.543	0.908

Note: Brand loyalty (BL), Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), Customer experience (CE), Facilitating condition (FC), Social media marketing (SMM)

Table 2 shows the discriminant validity, the square root of AVE is compared to the correlation value of other constructs, the square root of AVE is higher than other correlation values, that shows it satisfies the condition for discriminant validity according to the condition of (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Hence it is accepted.

3.6 Structural Equation Model

This section of the study examines the hypothesized relationship between constructs of the proposed framework. The hypotheses are examined through the bootstrapping method of PLS and assessed on the basis of β value, t-value and p-value. The t-value must remain higher than 1.96 and p-value must remain lower than 0.05 due to 95% confidence interval in social sciences (Hair Jr et al., 2014). The table 3 below shows the direct hypotheses results and figure 3 shows the SEM model generated in Smart-PLS.

Table 3
hypothesis testing (Direct Effect)

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P-Value
BL → CBBE	0.170	1.701	0.090
BL → SMM	0.450	6.507	0.000
CE → CBBE	0.309	4.672	0.000
CE → SMM	0.142	2.488	0.013
FC → CBBE	0.252	3.340	0.001
FC → SMM	0.234	3.425	0.001
SMM → CBBE	0.148	1.604	0.109

Note: Brand loyalty (BL), Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), Customer experience (CE), Facilitating condition (FC), Social media marketing (SMM)

The hypothesis H1 investigates the relationship between *social media marketing efforts and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.148$; t-value = 1.604; p-value = 0.109); so therefore, H1 is rejected on statistical grounds.

The hypothesis H2 investigates the relationship *facilitating condition and social media marketing among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.234$; t-value = 3.425; p-value = 0.001); so therefore, H2 is acceptable statistically.

The hypothesis H3 investigates the relationship between *facilitating conditions and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.252$; $t\text{-value} = 3.340$; $p\text{-value} = 0.001$); so therefore, H3 is also significant and statistically acceptable.

The hypothesis H4 investigates the relationship between *customer experience and social media marketing among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.142$; $t\text{-value} = 2.488$; $p\text{-value} = 0.013$); so therefore, H4 is statistically acceptable.

The hypothesis H5 investigates the relationship between *customer experience and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.309$; $t\text{-value} = 4.672$; $p\text{-value} = 0.00$); so therefore, H5 is accepted on statistical grounds.

The hypothesis H6 investigates the relationship between *brand loyalty and social media marketing among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.450$; $t\text{-value} = 6.507$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$); so therefore, H6 is acceptable statistically.

The hypothesis H7 investigates the relationship between *brand loyalty and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.170$; $t\text{-value} = 1.701$; $p\text{-value} = 0.090$); so therefore, H7 is insignificant and statistically rejected.

SEM model

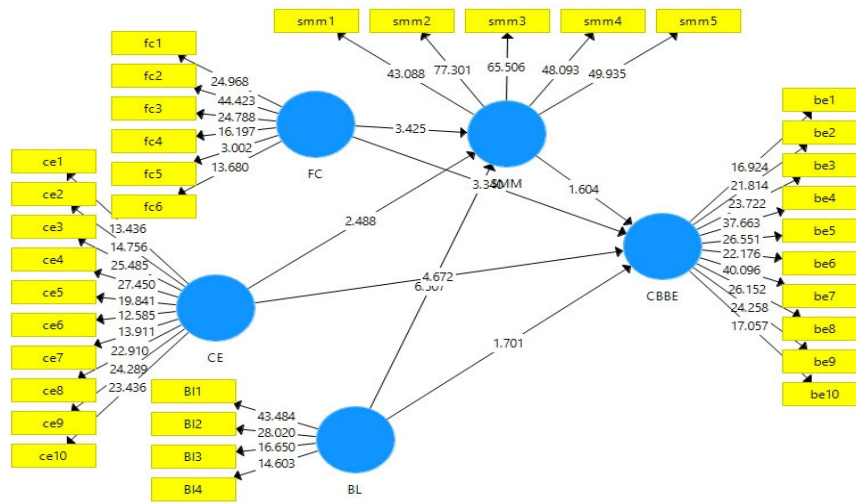


Fig. 2. Structural Equation Model

Note: Brand loyalty (BL), Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), Customer experience (CE), Facilitating condition (FC), Social media marketing (SMM)

3.7 Mediating Effect

This section of study determined the mediating role of social media marketing between independent and dependent variables. The details are given in table 4 below, The t-value must remain higher than 1.96 and p-value must remain lower than 0.05 due to 95% confidence interval in social sciences (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

Table 4
Mediating Effect

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P-Value
BL → SMM → CBBE	0.067	1.593	0.112
CE → SMM → CBBE	0.021	1.366	0.172
FC → SMM → CBBE	0.035	1.196	0.232

Note: Brand loyalty (BL), Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), Customer experience (CE), Facilitating condition (FC), Social media marketing (SMM)

The hypothesis H8 investigates the mediating relationship of social media marketing between *facilitating conditions and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.035$; $t\text{-value} = 1.196$; $p\text{-value} = 0.232$); so therefore, H8 is rejected on statistical grounds.

The hypothesis H9 investigates the mediating relationship of social media marketing between customer experience *and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the basis of ($\beta = 0.021$; t-value = 1.366; p-value = 0.172); so therefore, H9 is rejected.

The hypothesis H10 investigates the mediating relationship of social media marketing between brand loyalty *and consumer-based brand equity among the restaurant industry of UAE*. The hypothesis is assessed on the base of ($\beta = 0.067$; t-value = 1.593; p-value = 0.112); so therefore, H10 is also insignificant and statistically rejected

4. Conclusion

The current study determined the consumer-based brand equity influenced by facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty with the mediating role of social media marketing efforts among the restaurant industry of UAE. The restaurant industry of UAE faced a number of challenges specifically during the pandemic as the hospitality industry was in lockdown. So therefore, the importance of social media applications gained importance due to easy access to the services becoming possible at low cost. The study argues that social media marketing plays a vital role in attracting consumers and enabling effective communication and interaction among participants. The study reported that facilitating conditions influence the social media marketing efforts, customer experience also influence the social media marketing, brand loyalty found to be significant with social media marketing, but social media marketing do not influence consumer-based brand equity. But facilitating conditions, customer experience and brand loyalty influence the consumer-based brand equity. Surprisingly, the results stated no mediation role of social media marketing between facilitating conditions, customer experience, brand loyalty and consumer-based brand equity.

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