Hows and Whys That Lead to Online Brand Engagement

Subhajit Bhattacharya, XIM University, Bhubaneswar, India*

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to digital branding and customer involvement via social media. To improve online brand engagement, this study examined brand awareness, social linkage, and online trust value. Effective web survey design acquired 317 empirical online sample answers for the paper. The current study uses structural equation modeling to evaluate and verify the postulated model. In this competitive internet era, social networking-supported marketing may raise brand engagement to increase online brand trust, positive brand attitude, and deeper customer emotional connection and brand likability. This study proposes a unique paradigm to improve online brand engagement by investigating brand awareness, social, and online trust value correlations.

KEYWORDS

Online Brand Engagement, Online Trust Value, OSN-Led Branding, Social Linkage, Social Media-Led Branding

INTRODUCTION

Social media and new online platforms have greatly impacted communication and information exchange (Qualman, 2009). Hence, social media/Internet has enabled direct and interactive contact (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Pegoraro, 2010). Social media helps consumers share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Smart Insights (2016) reports 2.306 billion social media users. At least one tweet in five mentions a brand, and 20% of these tweets express favorable or negative views about that brand (Jansen et al., 2009).

Digital content and word-of-mouth boost brand exposure, trust, and buyer engagement (Baldus et al., 2015; Islam and Rahman, 2016; Dessart et al., 2015). Brand engagement and likeability may rise with customer connectedness (Berger, 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Laroche et al.,2012; Lee et al.,2011; Morgan-Thomas et al., 2013; Nepomuceno et al., 2014; Wirtz et al., 2013).

Barari et al. (2020) presented functional, relational, and transformational engagement behavior in their meta-analysis. Transformational is customer- and firm-initiated, whereas functional is firm-initiated. In a functional approach, consumers want valued assets like money, and enterprises take advantage (e.g., encouraging customers). Customers co-create value in a relational way, creating engagement (engagement with brand). Technology drives consumer involvement in the transformative approach. Yet, the relational approach may strongly affect consumer engagement by recognizing consumers' voluntary resource contribution (e.g., knowledge, experience, and time) in their brand connection (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). The internet and new technologies have revolutionized

*Corresponding Author

consumer interaction and brought attention to the transformative level. Barari et al. (2020) also found various consumer engagement precursors. trust, dedication, and excellence. Second, adopting a consumer relational approach, Loureiro et al. (2017) identified brand involvement, online brand experience, and self-brand image congruency as online consumer brand engagement antecedents. Consumer interest in a brand based on their needs and beliefs is called brand participation (Zaichkowsky, 1985; De Vries and Carlson, 2014). Customers' brand interactions online (Gentile et al., 2007). Consumer self-concept and brand image congruency are called self-brand image congruency (Sirgy, 1982).

Brand engagement strengthens consumer-brand bonds via emotional and intellectual connections (Goldsmith et al., 2011). Engaging customers and building a virtual brand community in the online marketplace are difficult. It increases customer trust and brand likeability (Morgan-Thomas et al., 2013; Nepomuceno, 2014). (e.g., Casalo et al., 2007; Hollebeek, 2011). Online Brand Engagement supports emotional attachment to the brand (Chan and Li, 2010) and good brand attitude (Zuroni et al., 2012; Romaniuk, 2013). (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kozinets, 2014; Pletikosa et al.,2013; Wirtz et al.,2013). In this study, we propose a framework to understand and explore the linkages between Brand Awareness Linkages (Barreda et al., 2015; Bija & Balaş, 2014, Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012); Social Linkages (Berger,2013; Dessart etal.,2015; Hollebeek, 2014; Laroche, 2012; Lee, 2011; Morgan-Thomas, 2013; Nepomuceno, 2014; Wirtz, 2013); and Online Trust Value Linkages (Brodie et al., 2013). The theorized model shows integrated Online Brand Engagement.

The theoretical background section shows the four dimensions employed in this study: brand awareness, social connection, online trust value links, and online brand engagement. Social media-led marketing techniques and activities have been studied (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Bernoff & Li, 2008; Bianchi & Andrews, 2015; Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Social media also affects consumer purchasing behavior, according to studies (Pooja et al., 2012; Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015; Kumar et al., 2016; Relling et al., 2016). Several studies underlined the importance of social media-led customer relationship management (Trainor et al., 2014; Malthouse et al., 2013; Baird & Parasnis, 2011); branding and brand management at post-social networking environment (De Vries et al., 2014; Habibi et al., 2014; Asmussen, Harridge-March et al., 2013; Laroche et al., 2013; Laroche et al., 2012). The aforementioned research examined the purchase behavior of new-age customers who actively use social media. They still only studied social-networking groups and eWOMs. Several studies have focused on brand loyalty and purchasing trust. Thus far, research has shown that consumer brand selection behavior in digital and online social networks is unintegrated. Online Brand Engagement in OSN-led marketing environments has received minimal integrated study. This gap has inspired us to develop the objectives of the research:

- To identify the underlying factors of Online Brand Engagement.
- To examine the effect of Brand Awareness, Social Linkages, Online Trust on Online Brand Engagement.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

Customers are more likely to enhance brand interactions (Gro¨nroos, 1997; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a). Further, customers develop a perceived value from specific brand interactions, which may be influenced by their cognitive, emotional and/or physical commitments (Higgins & Scholer, 2009). Drawing meaning from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), in a brand context, it can be anticipated that consumers are likely to respond with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward a specific brand (Hollebeek, 2011; Pervan *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, online brand engagement is likely to be influenced.

Online Brand Engagement

Digitally engaging customers creates value and increases customer lifetime value (Kannan and Li, 2017). Engagement has been tracked from brand-to-brand community (Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart et al., 2016). Some research examined the multidimensionality of brand engagement, although most focused on its emotive and cognitive components (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005, Bowden, 2009, Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014). We also concentrate on four key characteristics of online brand engagement: brand likability, trust, attitude, and emotional connection.

Online brand engagement may include brand likability, trust, attitude, and customer emotional connection (Heerden and Wiese, 2021; Porter and Donthu, 2008; Martínez-López et al., 2017). Brand likeability is a persuasive strategy and self-presentation that makes consumers like corporations and brands (e.g., Kenrick et al., 2002; Reysen, 2005). Online purchases give additional pricing and offer possibilities, which may indicate brand engagement behavior (Nguyen et al. 2013). "Trust impacts digital clients' selective information collecting and search behavior" (Kannan and Li, 2017, p. 27). Transparency, transaction information, and data security enhance online brand confidence (Shankar et al., 2002). Brand trust and dependability affect online customer engagement (Kannan and Li, 2017). Online brand engagement is the intensity of a customer's online participation (Vivek et al., 2012); the customer's attitudinal (cognitive and affective/emotional) commitment (Mollen & Wilson, 2010); or a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed, or engaged (Higgins and Scholer, 2009) with the brand.

Brand Awareness Linkages and Online Brand Engagement

Brand awareness links construct is crucial to customer brand selection behavior and marketing results (Chi et al., 2009; Hoyer & Brown, 1990; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). Brand awareness links include virtual brand community dialogue, online social touch-points, brand-related digital resource sharing on social media, and digital word-of-mouth communication.

Virtual brand community conversations may include customers, the brand, and/or other community members (Brodie et al., 2013). In this research, online social touch-points are brand interactions (Baxendale et al., 2015). Consumers share brand preferences and views online (Muntinga et al., 2011). (Kozinets, 2001). Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in virtual brand communities has grown increasingly strong and important (De Valck et al., 2009) since consumers may communicate online for free, which is more likely to spread swiftly inside and beyond the community (Brodie et al., 2013). Online social networking has boosted brand awareness links (Barreda et al., 2015; Bija & Balaş, 2014). Odhiambo (2012) said that social media is a wonderful way to raise brand recognition and enlighten potential shoppers.

Hammedi et al. (2015) postulated that online social groups boost online consumer engagement by increasing brand awareness. Online social media and digital marketing have increased consumer brand awareness and may affect online brand engagement (Barreda et al., 2015; Brodie et al.,2013; Dessart et al.,2015; Wirtz et al., 2013). Therefore, we build the following hypothesis:

H1: Brand Awareness Linkages will have positive impact on Online Brand Engagement.

Social Linkages and Online Brand Engagement

Social media encourages global sharing of information, opinions, and perspectives (Berger, 2013; Lin, 1999 and Weaver & Morrison, 2008). Social links may include loving online brand communities, social media recommendations, social media reviews, user-generated content, and online networking site chats.

Online brand communities (OBCs) for consumer management are growing (Porter and Donthu, 2008; Fournier and Lee, 2009; Baldus et al., 2015; Kumar and Kumar, 2020). Brand community involvement has grown from brand engagement online (e.g., Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart et al., 2016).

Social media may inspire OBC members to like, comment, and share (Kumar and Kumar, 2020). Online communities may appeal to consumers.

Numerous studies examined consumers' social media involvement, including their increased relationship with businesses, participation in diverse social media contexts, and information search (e.g., Martínez-López et al., 2017; Global Web Index, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015). Researchers then noted how social media suggestions affect customer involvement (e.g., Turcotte et al., 2015). So, understanding how Facebook's 1.26 billion users engage with companies and each other is important (e.g., Turcotte et al., 2015). Review behavior shows online involvement. 53.98% of online consumers utilize online reviews at least once a week (Customer review study, 2021); 90% read online reviews before visiting a company; and 88% trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations (Saleh, 2021). So, customers' reviews on goods, brands, and companies' websites or pages, as well as third-party websites and social networks, are more likely to influence other consumers' buying decisions (Court et al., 2009; Kannan and Li, 2017). User Generated Content (UGC) includes photographs, videos, text, and audio about goods, businesses, or organizations that individuals publish on digital platforms (Pierre et al., 2015). UGC boosts online engagement in brand communication (Hewett et al., 2016). Users chatter about others, events, and unexpected events (Guerin & Miyazaki 2006; Okazaki et al., 2014). Chitchat is socially manipulative discourse (Guerin 2003). Okazaki et al. (2014) discovered that online chatter (chitchat) affects social media participation. Next, online social linkages and the virtual brand community create an environment where consumers can be more connected with the brands (Islam and Rahman, 2016; Zhang et al., 2011). This also encourages the people to share information, opinions, and observation on the brand across the globe (Berger,2013; Brodie et al.,2013; Laroche et al.,2012; Lee et al.,2011; Lin, 1999; Weaver & Morrison, 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013). These studies have encouraged the construction of the following hypothesis:

H2: Social Linkages will have positive influence on Online Brand Engagement.

Online Trust Value Linkages and Online Brand Engagement

Online brand-related positive experiences shared in social media, online debates on perceived service quality, tangible functional value perception of the online brand community, and comparison brand feeling in online social group may contribute to online trust links.

Social media users create, distribute, exchange, and inform brand experiences (Johnston, 2011). (Blackshaw-Nazzaro, 2006). Building trust with stakeholders may boost brand awareness and commitment, which may lead to stakeholders sharing firm content (Macaulay et al., 2007). Hence, online brand experience drives brand engagement (Loureiro et al., 2017). Social media users typically discuss brand services (Blackshaw-Nazzaro, 2006).

Consumer trust in social media, brands, brand activities, and online brand communities is called online trust connections. Next, consumers will turn to social media for reliable information (Foux, 2006). Consumers want to network and share brand knowledge online (Bowen and Ozuem, 2015).

Trust is crucial to consumers' selective information collecting and search activity online (Kannan and Li, 2017). Brand engagement requires trust and dedication (Kumar and Pansari, 2016). Internet trust links may boost brand recognition and engagement (Macaulay et al., 2007). Many elements determine brand online service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Consumers review brand service quality on social media based on efficiency, fulfillment, accurate technical functioning of the brand site, privacy, and how a company answers to their enquiry (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Customers think shopping sites are trustworthy and secure their transaction and personal data (Kannan and Li, 2017). Internet communities may provide real and intangible benefits to a company (Iskoujina et al., 2017). (Porter, 2004). Online engagement (Porter, 2004) may also affect customers' brand community values. Consumers are more inclined to interact with a brand if they enjoy it and want to try it (Loureiro et al., 2017). Online users' product and brand knowledge, usage, experience, recommendations, and

complaints are trusted and dependable (Kannan and Li, 2017). So, online trust may affect customer involvement (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Hence, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H3: Online Trust Value Linkages will have positive effect on Online Brand Engagement.

Digitized social media content boosts brand exposure, trust, and buyer engagement (Baldus et al.,2015; Islam and Rahman, 2016; Dessart et al., 2015). eWOM and experience sharing in virtual brand communities and social media lead to online brand trust and engagement (Awad & Ragowsky, 2008; Islam and Rahman, 2016; Wallace et al., 2014). Online brand community involvement affects brand trust (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al.2015; Islam and Rahman, 2016; Habibi et al.,2014). Consumer trust in a changing commercial environment has greatly supported online social links (Barlow and Li, 2005; Bhuiyan et al., 2010; Carminati et al., 2013).

Catoiu et al. (2014) found that online social links increase trust. Kim and Ahmad (2013) said that online social links may assist delicate concerns like trust. Several researches have concurred (Chu et al., 2015; Habibi et al., 2014; Laroche et al.,2012; Smith et al., 2012; Schivinski et al.,2014; Zhang et al., 2015). Online social networking promotes brand recognition (Chi et al., 2009; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Odhiambo, 2012). It's also causing brand trust issues (Kim and Ahmad, 2013). Many studies showed that social trust enhances brand information processing (Jung et al., 2014; Loureiro, 2013; Lowry et al, 2008). Trust influences brand recognition, loyalty, and equity, according to Loureiro (2013). Islam and Rahman (2016) suggest that social media word-of-mouth greatly impacts brand recognition and trust. Consequently, we develop the following hypotheses:

H4: Brand Awareness Linkages and Social Linkage are positively connected to each other.
H5: Social Linkages and Online Trust Value Linkages are positively associated to each other.
H6: Online Trust Value Linkages and Brand Awareness Linkages are positively linked to each other.

Proposed Hypothetical Model

See Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection Process

Online consumer research uses a list-based sample frame to gather internet survey answers (Converse et al.,2008; Couper, 2000; Fleming et al.,2009; Fricker, 2008). This research collected primary contacts from India's most prominent social media networks. A snowball method created a large database of 3579 Indian social media users and online group members. Subsequently, 650 respondents were randomly chosen from the gathered database. Using a list-based sampling frame and an effective Online survey design (Couper et al., 2001; Converse et al., 2008; Fricker, 2008), sample answers were gathered (Couper, 2000; Converse et al.,2008; Fricker, 2008). Data was collected using a well-structured online questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2001; Torangeau, 2002). Sample answers were recorded using a five-point Likert scale (1–strongly disagree, 5–strongly agree). The online survey generated 341 replies out of 650. Data inadequacy limited the final analysis to 317 replies. The table shows the demographics of the sample (mean age = 32.7 years, female = 28.4%, graduate = 52.7 percent, post-graduate = 38.2%).

Cronbach's Alpha

The Cronbach's alpha value of all the latent constructs was found above 0.7 (Hair *et al*., 2015). The Chronbach's alpha value for the construct Brand Awareness Linkages was 0.846; for Social

Figure 1. Hypotheses-based model

Linkage was 0.874; for Online Trust Value Linkages was 0.816; for Online Brand Engagement was 0.785 respectively.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

After the sample collection, exploratory factor analysis has been conducted using the varimax rotation method to extract the vitals underlying dimensions of the present research. During the factor analysis, the items that loaded on more than one factor along with low factor loadings (< 0.60) were removed (Kline, 2005; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). After the performance of exploratory factor analysis, the researchers of this study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the psychometric properties of the constructs test the hypotheses-based model (Hair et al., 2008). Before performing the data analysis through structural equation modeling, a test of multivariate normality is done (Hair et al., 2008) to ensure the robustness of the data analysis in this current research.

Validity Analysis

Out of 17 items, 13 variables indicated factor loadings greater than 0.70 and others are greater than 0.6, as a good rule of thumb, is the factor loadings should be 0.50 or higher, and ideally 0.70 or higher (Hair et al.*,* 2008). All loadings are significant (p-value < 0.00) and thus confirmed the convergent validity of constructs. From Table 2 it is evident that all composite reliability values meet the minimum standard (with values 0.70 and above, Hair et al.*,* 2008), which approves the internal consistency of the model constructs. The Composite Reliability (CR) of all factors or dimensions are: 0.875 (*Brand Awareness Linkages*), 0.926 (*Social Linkage*), 0.859 (*Online Trust Value Linkages*), and 0.856 (*Online Brand Engagement*). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all constructs are: 0.716 (*Brand Awareness Linkages*), 0.606 (*Social Linkage*), 0.637 (*Online Trust Value Linkages*), and 0.598 (*Online Brand Engagement*). In all dimensions, the minimum criteria of convergent is maintained (Fornell and Larker, 1981; Hair et al.*,* 2008). Result indicated that the square roots of AVEs of the latent constructs were higher than inter-construct correlations. Therefore, discriminant validity has been achieved. Following Podsakoff *et al*. (2003) we addressed the common method variance (CMV) problem (because the data was collected through self-report questionnaire). We conducted Harman's one-factor test with an unrotated factor solution. The total variance found lesser than 50% by a single factor (Podsakoff *et al*., 2003). Hence, CMV accounts for negligible discrepancy.

Discriminant Validity

Measurement Model and Structural Relationships

This study used structural equation modeling and route analysis to determine causal relationships between components. Current study hypothesizes direct links between Brand Awareness Linkages, Social Linkages, and Online Trust Value Linkages. The study model shows how Brand Awareness, Social, and Online Trust Value Linkages affect Online Brand Engagement. The suggested, proven model has shown the important components and crucial procedures to build and enhance Online Brand Engagement in this digital era of social media freedom. Using 17 independent variables, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) verified the suggested model. Table 2 shows that all item CFA loadings are more than 0.60 (Hair et al., 2008; Byrne, 2010) and significant at the 0.001 level, indicating convergent validity of the study model (Kline, 2005; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The model fit indices also provide a reasonable model fit for the structural model. Chi-square statistic is 421.053 (Probability level=.000), $\chi 2 / d. f.$ is 2.313, The Normed Fit Index (NFI), Relative Fit index (RFI), Comparative Fit index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) are 0.897, 0.879, 0.97, 0.956, 0.888 and 0.877 respectively. RMSEA is 0.0613and PCLOSE is 0.00. Hence it is concluded that the proposed research model fits the data reasonably (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2008; Kline, 2005).

Testing of Hypotheses

Testing of significant impacts in this current research have been expressed through t-statistics and p-values. The present research outcomes have revealed significant positive associations and impacts pertaining to the projected model (see: Table 3a, Table 3b, Table 3c, and Table 4). The result has demonstrated that *Brand Awareness Linkages* has positive impact on *Online Brand Engagement* (Path Coefficient =0. 269, t = 2.512, p-value < 0.05). Hence, it supports H1. *Social Linkage* positively influences *Online Brand Engagement* (Path Coefficient =0.425, t = 3.162, p-value < 0.01). Therefore, it supports H2. *Trust Value Linkages* has positive effect on *Online Brand Engagement* (Path Coefficient =0. 407, t = 2.752, p-value < 0.05). Consequently, H3 is supported.

Next, the statistical results have demonstrated that Brand Awareness Linkages and Social Linkage are having significant positive association (Path Coefficient =0.774, t = 6.218, p-value < 0.01), Social Linkage and Online Trust Value Linkages have significant positive correlation (Path Coefficient =

Table 1. Items loading in exploratory factor analyses

Items	Brand Awareness Linkages (Dimension 1)	Social Linkage (Dimension 2)	Online Trust Value Linkages (Dimension 3)	Online Brand Engagement (Dimension 4)
Conversation at Virtual Brand Community	0.731			
Online Social Touch- points	0.76			
Brand-related Digital Resource Sharing at Social Media Environment	0.762			
Digital word of mouth communication	0.713			
Liking of Online Brand Communities		0.869		
Chitchat within online Social Networking Community		0.784		
Online reviews at Social Networking Platforms		0.849		
Recommendations of Social Media		0.802		
User-generate Content (UGC) at Social Media		0.805		
Online Brand Related Good Experiences Sharing in Social Media			0.779	
Online discussions on Perceived Service Quality			0.684	
Tangible Functional Value Perception of the online Brand Community			0.707	
Comparative Brand feeling in online social Group			0.791	
Brand likability				0.636
Online brand Trust				0.675
Positive Brand Attitude				0.704
Consumer Emotional Attachment with the Brand				0.782

0.813, t = 6.267, p-value < 0.01). The statistical outcome has also established positive relationship between the Online Trust Value Linkages and the Brand Awareness Linkages (Path Coefficient =0.592, t =5.338, p-value < 0.01). Hence, H4, H5, and H6 have been accepted.

DISCUSSION

Online Brand Engagement's underlying variables were the study's initial goal. This research found three major antecedents of Online Brand Engagement. Brand Awareness, Social, and Internet Trust Value Links. Second, the research examined how Brand Awareness, Social, and Online Trust Value Linkages cascade Online Brand Engagement. The data show that online brand engagement is crucial to construction. Brand Awareness, Social, and Internet Trust Value Linkages have good effects. The statistical results show that Social Linkage has the most beneficial influence on Online Retail Brand Engagement with the new age customer in the digital era, followed by Online Trust Value Linkages and Brand Awareness Linkages.

In online brand engagement, Brand Awareness Linkages, Social Linkages, and Online Trust Value Linkages show strong connections. Internet brand engagement is complicated. "Brand Awareness Linkages" may not be adequate to increase brand awareness and likeability on social media. To improve Online Brand Engagement, "Social Linkages" and "Internet Trust Value Linkages" would be prioritized. Brand Awareness Linkages that integrate with potential consumers may also help achieve Online Brand Engagement. Digital word-of-mouth communication, virtual brand community

Table 2. Measurement model fit indices

Factors/Items	Standardized Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Awareness Linkages				
Conversation at Virtual Brand Community	0.818			
Online Social Touch- points	0.848	0.637	0.875	0.846
Brand-related Digital Resource Sharing at Social Media Environment	0.722			
Digital word of mouth communication	0.799			
Social Linkage				
Liking of Online Brand Communities	0.915			
Chitchat within online Social Networking Community	0.811			
Online reviews at Social Networking Platforms	0.854	0.716	0.926	0.874
Recommendations of Social Media	0.806			
User-generate Content (UGC) at Social Media	0.841			
Online Trust Value Linkages				
Online Brand Related Good Experiences Sharing in Social Media	0.841			
Online discussions on Perceived Service Quality	0.687	0.606	0.859	0.816
Tangible Functional Value Perception of the online Brand Community	0.729			
Comparative Brand feeling in online social Group	0.845			
Online Brand Engagement				
Brand likability	0.706			
Online brand Trust	0.765	0.598	0.856	0.785
Positive Brand Attitude	0.775			
Consumer Emotional Attachment with the Brand	0.841			

Table 3a. Testing of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Estimate	S.E.	t-Value	P
Brand Awareness Linkages <--> Social Linkage	0.774	0.127	6.218	0.00
Social Linkage <--> Online Trust Value Linkages	0.813	0.132	6.267	0.00
Online Trust Value Linkages <--> Brand Awareness Linkages	0.627	0.114	5.578	0.00

conversations, online social contact points, and brand-related digital resource sharing on social media may be included. Trust and social support strongly impact marketing behavior. Online brand-related pleasant experiences, social media sharing, online debates on perceived service quality, tangible functional value, perception of the online brand community, and comparative brand feeling in online social groups create trust linkage in social media. Social Linkage is supported by online brand communities' likes, recommendations, reviews, UGC, and chitchat.

Table 3b. Testing of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Correlations
Brand Awareness Linkages <--> Social Linkage	0.817
Social Linkage <--> Online Trust Value Linkages	0.892
Online Trust Value Linkages <--> Brand Awareness Linkages	0.794

Table 4. Testing of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Standardized Path coefficients	S.E.	t-Value	P
Online Brand Engagement <--- Online Trust Value Linkages	0.407*	0.163	2.752	0.027
Online Brand Engagement <--- Brand Awareness Linkages	0.269*	0.094	2.512	0.031
Online Brand Engagement <--- Social Linkage	0.425**	0.148	3.162	0.00

(*: $p < 0.05$; **: $p < 0.01$)

Figure 2. Standardized model with path coefficients (*: $p < 0.01$; **: $p < 0.05$)
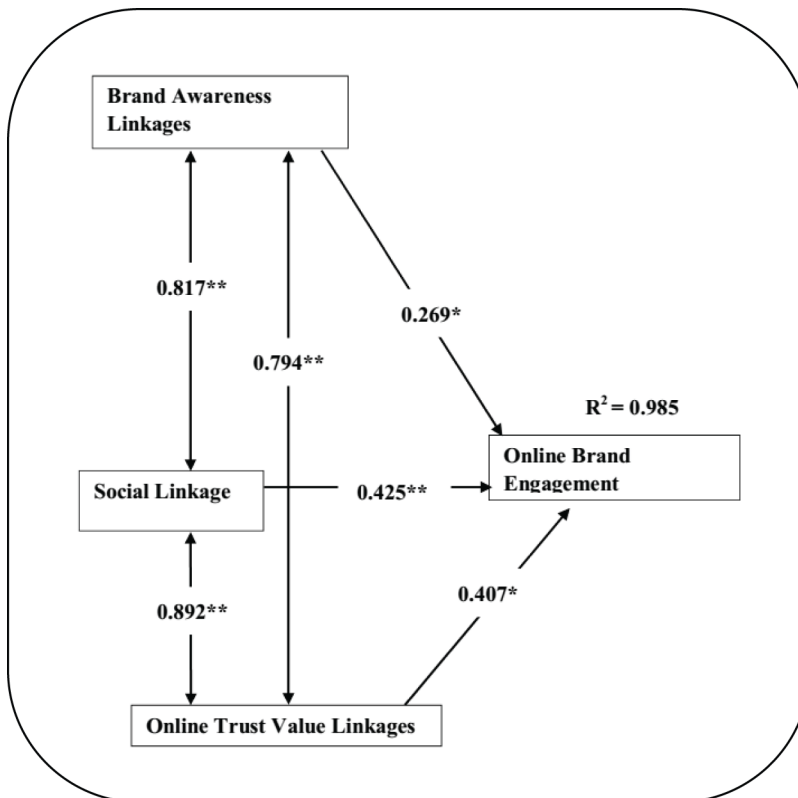
Theoretical Contributions

Although social media led consumers' brand preferences and recommendations in the online social networking sites are the emerging phenomenon in the modern Omni-channel marketplace. However, less research has been commenced in analyzing what leads to generating the Online Retail Brand Engagement of potential buyers in the context of marketing in the digital and online social-networking era. Few of the recent studies have tried to explore the dimensions relating to buying behavior of the new age consumer who actively participates in online social-networking and communicates with the internet based new media (e.g., Chung et al.,2016; Kumar et al.,2016; Liu et al., 2016;Pappas, 2016; Schnittka, Sattler, & Johnen, 2016; Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Bianchi & Andrews, 2015; Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015; De Vries et al., 2014; Habibi et al., 2014; Relling et al., 2016, Trainor et al., 2014; Asmussen, Harridge-March, Occhiocupo, & Farquhar, 2013; Laroche et al.,2013; Malthouse et al., 2013; Schultz & Peltier, 2013; Laroche et al.,2012; Pooja et al.,2012; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Bernoff & Li, 2008). Yet, researchers have restricted their study either within the influence of social-networking groups and eWOM or within the discussion of the trust element of the buying in connection with brand loyalty. The research undertaken so far has revealed the different elements linked with consumer brand selection behavior at the digital and online social-networking environment in an un-integrated manner. However, current research provides empirical evidence concerning exploring the significant antecedents i.e., Brand Awareness Linkages, Social Linkage and Online Trust Value Linkages to attain Online Brand Engagement. The proposed and tested model in the current research has critically explained the individual and joint contributions of the *Brand Awareness Linkages, Social Linkage* and *Online Trust Value Linkages components* in strengthening the *Online Brand Engagement* that in turn leads to brand likability, online brand trust, positive brand attitude and consumer-brand association.

Managerial Implications

This research impacts brand awareness and online brand engagement. To understand consumer brand choice, studies have focused on social-networking environment, online trust, and online brand engagement and loyalty. This research analyzed consumer brand choosing determinants. This research examines brand awareness, social, online trust value, and online brand engagement.

This research impacts branding and online brand engagement. Online brand building has opened the floodgate of research and ideas, but how to employ this new alchemy is unclear. Advertising, having a Facebook profile, or uploading YouTube videos are all possibilities. This article examines the fine threads that weave Brand involvement together. Social connection and brand awareness assist create online trust and brand engagement.

Brand engagement drives success. If you don't have a new brand (trust), borrow it. Websites begin trust-building. We discovered that people know hotels but not local restaurants. Co-branding with a reputable automobile rental firm might raise visibility. It raises visibility and, eventually, trust and brand engagement for the local unknown brand.

The current study's integrated model has systematically explained the complicated process of online brand engagement with brand awareness links, social linkages, and online trust value. Social, online trust value, and brand awareness links positively affect online brand engagement, according to statistical results. In today's competitive market, social networking marketing may promote online brand trust and positive brand attitude to increase brand engagement and customer emotional connection. The results of this research should assist online retail marketers, brand managers, marketing managers, and consultants start creating brand awareness, social, and online trust value connections to better interact with consumers and generate online brand engagement.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study only included Indian social media users. Generalizing these conclusions requires further research. Hence, combining Social Linkages, Online Trust Value Linkages, and Brand Awareness Linkages, the future research may duplicate the current study in multiple aspects of online social networking-led marketing or online branding. This research's model is statistically correct; however sample size may affect the results. What works for Indian customers may not work for other nations. So, future study may examine how the components might enhance the existing model.

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Subhajit Bhattacharya received his Ph.D. degree in Business Administration from the University of Burdwan. Dr. Bhattacharya's has more than ten years' experience in academics and teaches different courses in the marketing area. His areas of experience and expertise include teaching Marketing Management, Consumer Behaviour, Services Marketing and Managing Retail Business. Dr. Bhattacharya has published articles in quite a few national and international journals and has also presented papers at several national and international conferences. Currently, he is working in the areas of Brand Chemistry, Consumer Insight and Consumer Psychology.