EXPLAINING NEXUS BETWEEN BRAND COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES (SNS) AND ONLINE CONSUMER'S PURCHASE INTENTIONS: A TEST OF AFFECTIVE AND COGNITIVE MEDIATORS

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Abstract
With the advancements in the digital media ecosystem, and particularly the proliferation of social networking sites (SNS) and their audiences, it is important to comprehend the role social media plays in marketing efforts. This study assesses the direct and indirect impact of SNS-based brand communication on Online Purchase Intention (OPI) in the online consumer market. Having literary support, Brand Attachment (BAT), and Online Brand Experience (OBE) were modeled as major mediators of the study under consideration. Seven hypotheses were made, and the AMOS 22.0 and SPSS 25.00 were employed to assess the relationship among the focal variables for three hundred and five respondents. The findings of the study reveal that Brand Communication (BC) on SNS has a significant positive impact on OPI. Limitations, future research directions, and management and academic ramifications are highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

BC involves a set of activities that shape consumers' opinions about a particular brand and influence their views about the brand offerings. It encompasses the deliberate blending of modern media, including digital marketing, SNS, blogs, content marketing, and digital marketing, with traditional media channels like newspapers and television to inform consumers and other stakeholders about the most recent brand advancements. (Voorveld, 2019). With the proliferation of digital technologies, marketing communication trends have undertaken deviations from conventional methods to contemporary and fast modes of promoting brand products and services

(Helal et al., 2018). In today's tech-savvy world, marketing communication research on consumer behavior has established that BC held on social media is an essential contributor to consumer intent to purchase and their overall purchase decisions (Jasin, 2022; Savitri et al., 2022). However, inclusive research is scarce on how BC, particularly on SNS, shapes consumers' OPI for brands dealing solely in e-commerce.

Belch and Belch (2019) contended that a marketing communication channel is a means by which information is sent from the source to the recipient or a device that enables the exchange of messages

between a company and its audiences. In the present dynamic realm, the internet is a substantial marketing communication channel for providing a potent mechanism for creating brands, expanding into new markets, and attracting potential customers. Over the virtual space, the emergence of the concept of new sites and developing social networks are the most momentous inclinations in online marketing. The 4Ps of marketing, which are product, price, place, and promotion (marketing communication) in traditional and digital media, are replaced on social networks by people, platform, participation, and promotion. In recent years, SNS has effectively taken over as the primary medium for social contact, and the phenomenon has received a lot of attention in the communication industry. A higher-order construct, BC on SNS, is characterized by a pair of secondary constructs named brand-created social media communication (SMC) and consumer-generated SMC (Arya et al., 2022). Due to the readily available nature of these networking sites, consumers are utilizing them as information sources not only about brands but also about their products and services.

Marketers, despite having a mindset of shaping web 2.0 technologies to their interests, a stark truth lies in the fact that the sole purpose of social media was not merely to sell branded products but rather to connect people in virtual settings through communal conversational webs. With the eventual mobility of branding activities on social media, marketers have realized that a technology that was meant to empower them has entitled consumers in reverse, either with or without obtaining any consent from the involved firms. The effects of SNS on how relationships and networks are created, mediated, and maintained between brands and customers are of major interest to academics. Over the years, studies have emphasized anticipating the dynamics that elaborate consumer-brand relationships more clearly over SNS (Arya et al., 2022; Arya et al., 2018a).

Over the past years, numerous studies have been conducted to observe consumer behavior in response to BC held over social media or SNS. The major studies in this regard are found to be clustered around the effect of social media in shaping the Brand Equity (BE) of business. Traditional media and social media have also been encapsulated to study their holistic influence over consumer-based BE (Zubair et al., 2022). In this regard, Ebrahim (2020) attempted to explain the effect social media marketing efforts have on consumer behavior and BE for luxury brands. With the emerging quest to study further constructs in the domain, social media marketing activities are seen to observe their impact on brand loyalty with brand trust and BE as mediators. Furthermore, studies are also directed to probe the link between social media in contrast to cultural tightness or looseness, media-based brand communities to brand relationships (Lee & Hsieh, 2022), social media marketing activities, and BE in the mediation of brand experience (Koay et al., 2020).

Confining within the boundaries of this study, a subtle review of the literature on consumer behavior has identified certain research gaps, which are as follows: Firstly, it is observed that the majority of studies related to BC in social media are heavily subjugated by social identity theory (Lee, Sara, 2022), elaboration likelihood theory (Perera et al., 2022). However, in contrast, scarce literature is found to pillared its study upon uses and gratification theory (Arya et al., 2022). Furthermore, the concept of BC on social media is progressively used in consumer-based BE, human brand sales, brand relation, higher education sector, cultural tightness/looseness narratives, message orientation and appeal on virtual media, and social media in comparison to traditional media, brand communities on social media (Lee et al., 2022; Santos et al., 2022). Moreover, BC on SNS plays a mediating role between consumer engagement on SNS and BAT (Arya et al., 2018a). However, literature is scarce regarding the direct impact of SNS-based brand communication on the OPI of consumers for online brands.

Secondly, the literature on OPI or web-based buying shows the effect of OPI influenced by electronic word-of-mouth credibility (Jasin, 2022), product information, price, quality, and external factors (NGO et al., 2022), social media advertisement (Xu et al., 2021), consumer interaction behavior (Chang & Dong, 2016) and SNS characteristics elements (Xu et al., 2021). Due to this, scholars have stressed the necessity to study different kinds of BC's impact on the virtual decision-making of consumers. Thirdly,

though the link between social media-based BC and purchase intention has been studied before, the two constructs are mostly observed through the mediation of consumer-based BE (Arya et al., 2022). However, to our best knowledge, the relationship between BC on SNS and OPI is not directly investigated for online brands. Marketers need to understand how BC proceeds through their pages and is generated by users, ultimately influencing the buying behavior of consumers in terms of their purchase intentions. Based on the research findings drawn about the behavioral effects of web-based advertising, it is revealed that the result obtained is not consistent; however, most of them indicate a positive relationship between them. BAT can be explained as an 'emotion-laden objective definite link between brand and consumers. People's actions and behaviors are strongly influenced by their emotions. By brand-related stimuli, emotions are aroused in customers during the decision-making process (Khatoon & Rehman, 2021). This research aims to identify and evaluate the impact of SNS-based BC on OPI. We posed three questions in this study, i.e., how does SNS-Based BC affect OPI? Is there any mediation effect of BAT among BS-SNS and OPI? And is there any mediation effect of OPI among BC-SNS and OPI? Based on these questions, our objectives are to investigate the impact of BC-SNS on OPI, to investigate a mediating effect of BAT among BC-SNS and OPI, and to investigate the intervening influence of OBE among BC-SNS and OPI.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Brand Communication on Social Networking Sites
The concept behind BC is that any good or service can be advertised by leveraging features that set it apart from rival products or services. The evolution of BC is driven by the advancement and change in technology and media (Eisend, 2015). Social media platforms give businesses and customers new possibilities to interact with one another. BC via social media is referred to as any chunk of a brand's marketing communication dispersed via social media that permits cyberspace users to access, engage with, share, and cogenerate (Alhabash et al., 2017). Based on the previous literature, BC is mainly conceptualized as two different types, i.e., brand-

created communication (BCC) and consumer-generated communication (CGC) (Arya et al., 2022). The concept of BC over social media is seen through various theoretical lenses.

2.2 Brand Attachment
The concept development of attachment theory began with dyadic relationships between newborns and their caretakers. It is perceived that the motivation for a person's bonding with an attachment figure is proximity seeking. Extending the discussion from dyadic connections, it is opined that attachment encompasses adult romantic relationships. Further, researchers contended that attachment may be formed with things, possessions, products (Dwayne Ball & Tasaki, 1992), and brands (Fournier, 1998), in addition to interpersonal interactions only. The idea of brand attachment has evolved since then. Consumer BAT is described in the marketing literature as "the intensity of the link between brand and one's self," building on a fundamental idea of the theory of attachment derived from a psychology discipline (Park et al., 2010). It reflects how closely customers and a brand are connected (Hwang & Lee, 2019). A publication on emotional attachment by Thomson et al. (2013) and several related studies serve as the foundation for research on BAT. These aforementioned pioneering studies serve as the theoretical foundation for several later publications on BAT and connected ideas such as emotive BAT, attachment, and emotional attachment (Hemsley-Brown, 2023). Emotional BAT was conceptualized as an emotional association, and the level of affection, passion, and connection were used to quantify it (Thomson et al., 2013). Subsequently, it is claimed that BAT encapsulates emotional and cognitive bonding, representing brand-self-connection, which refers to customers' perceptions of the significance of the relationship between "their self" and the brand (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Later, brand salience was included in the conceptualization, which demonstrates the importance of the brand-self-connection via perceived ease and frequency that comes in customers' thoughts (Park et al., 2010). Eventually, it has been observed that four aspects are used in other studies to quantify BAT: resonance, connection, companionship, and love. BAT is

recognized as a fundamental concept that explains how brands and consumers relate to each other.

In recent developments, Aureliano-Silva et al. (2018) describe that BAT is a psychological trait that shows the person's closeness to the brand on an emotional and psychological level. BAT and brand self-connection are terms used by Li et al. (2019) to describe how easily consumers can recall a particular brand and how they interact with it. BAT is understood to be a crucial motivator for a branding strategy (Centeno & Mandagi, 2022). It is the most accurate indicator of a successful brand (Karjaluoto et al., 2016). According to Rajaobelina et al. (2021), BAT should be a top priority for managers. It has been connected to several consumer outcomes, such as it can predict consumer purchase intention (Gilal et al., 2021). BAT is an important element in determining BE and brand loyalty (Levy & Hino, 2016). In addition to increasing consumer satisfaction, BAT raises customer views about brand legitimacy, brand trust, and assessments of quality. Furthermore, scholars have discovered connections between BAT and consumers' willingness to spend, their willingness to endorse a product, their loyalty, and their ability to forgive mistakes. During the past two decades, studies on BAT have investigated a variety of contexts and enhanced knowledge. Through the theoretical lens, the investigation is concentrated on psychological elements or models of attachment formation (Bagozzi et al., 2021; David et al., 2020). However, few studies have also focused on measurement scales (Park et al., 2010; Shimul et al., 2019). Empirically, it is observed that BAT has been researched in multiple contexts, including retailing (Diallo et al., 2021), social media (Rabbanee et al., 2020), travel (Bose et al., 2022), luxury brands (Donvito et al., 2020) and many more.

2.3 Online Brand Experience

Marketing and consumer research have shown that experiences take place when individuals look for goods, search for them, purchase them, get services for them, and use them. Brakus (2008) defined the brand experience concept as "subjective internal responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communication, and environments." In a study by Holbrook (2000), there are two contexts in which the experience might occur: directly, as when the customer shops, purchases, and consumes the items, and indirectly, when a consumer is exposed to marketing and advertising messages. However, in virtual settings, OBE is a person's internal, subjective reaction when he/she is exposed to a brand via online mediums or when given brand-related stimuli on the website of a brand (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). Furthermore, when users interact with technological platforms like websites, mobile applications, or social networking sites, such kind of a flow of brand meanings is also referred to as OBE (Zha et al., 2020).

Furthermore, while examining OBE, two lenses have been mainly used. The first lens of brand experience is grounded upon the operationalization provided by Brakus (2008), which conceptualized that consumers experience a brand online even before using it. On the other hand, a second approach/lens is grounded upon the measurement of OBE (Khan & Rahman, 2016), which they classified as e-tail brand experience or brand experience specific to a particular website. OBE is defined by Ha and Perks (2005) as "an experience of consumers on a brand's website, which assists the understanding of their behavior in virtual settings and named as positive consumer navigation (i.e., utilizing web-based groups and involvement in events) and insights (i.e., the appeal of cookies, and variation and distinctiveness of optical presentations and importance for cash) through a particular website." An operationalization of the OBE offered by Ha and Perks (2005) and Khan and Rahman (2016) Is expanded within this current study for two main reasons. First, Ha and Perks (2005) precisely formulated OBE for the online environment. Despite this, even in online settings, the majority of researchers have used the scale created by Brakus (2008) and only a small number of studies have used the operationalization of Ha and Perks (2005). Second, due to recent advancements, the OBE is built upon the features of e-tailers' websites, including website layout, products/services information, product-line classification, cookies, simple navigation, visual display, support center, and assured payments (Antoniadis et al., 2021).

2.4 Online Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a multidisciplinary concept that spans the fields of economics, psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology. A consumer's intent to buy anything is known as a purchasing intention. The theory of reasoned action contends that consumers' actions might be based primarily on their corresponding intentions. The desire to buy a product and the likelihood of making a successful purchase are both considered to be components of the consumer's buying intention. Purchase intent serves as a real-time indication of future purchases and tracks consumer behavior toward companies. Ramadan et al. (2021) opined that purchase intention can forecast future behavior, including whether or not a consumer will be motivated to make a purchase.

Internet adoption and OPI are primarily preceded by purchase intention. Users' readiness to utilize a digital environment, have a physical object, or value different products differently is known as their intention to make an online purchase. Consumer willingness to purchase through online platforms is defined as OPI (Meskaran et al., 2013). Sarkar and Roy (2016) conceptualized that consumer OPI is the construct that determines how strongly a customer intends to make an online purchase. Moreover, Shimul (2022) argued that OPI displays the consumer's current circumstances and their intent to transact online. Online shoppers' intent to buy anything using a virtual environment or shopping carts is referred to as OPI (Chand & Fei, 2021).

The concept of OPI is still developing in the literature. However, the major research streams that investigate the concept include attitudinal research (Lim et al., 2020), decision-making research (Mishra 2019), e-commerce website design and usability research (Brun et al., 2020) and behavioral economic research (Pedeliento et al., 2016). The evolution of social networking platforms and digital portals provokes academics to investigate consumer purchase behavior on them. In this regard, it is opined that brand activity on social media influences the choice to buy. The growth of digital marketing encourages businesses to interact with customers on social media, which eventually helps to raise OPI (Zhang & Patrick, 2021). Furthermore, on social media, consumers are concerned about factors that influence their decision to buy, including social recommendations, simplicity of use, navigation, aesthetics, reviews, and social networks. In recent times, multiple studies have investigated the impact caused by various constructs over OPI. Putter (2017) investigated the influence of social media content on consumer's OPI. Keeping consumer engagement in the mediation, the part social media marketing plays in purchase intention has also been scrutinized (Husnain et al., 2021). Lim et al. (2020) examined the social media influencers effect on customers' intent to purchase.

3 Theoretical Bones of the Study

The Uses and Gratification (U&G theory) were fabricated to recognize the significant role that individuals play in the usage of particular media. U&G theory is an effective theoretical framework to investigate particular media usage motives or behaviors. It diverges from earlier mass media theories to presuppose that the audience actively chooses media to meet certain needs rather than passively receiving media. The theory postulates that media consumers are driven to selectively expose themselves to media depending on their demands and gratification-seeking objectives, consciously working to attain those goals by utilizing certain media channels and material. In the age of the Internet and mobile technology, U&G theory is the paradigm that best measures consumers' urge to use new and cutting-edge tools to make better-informed decisions. Earlier studies have encapsulated the gratification needs of using social and mobile media into five major categories: information seeking, self-expression, entertainment, social interaction, and impression management. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model was developed to describe how people react to their surroundings in various circumstances. It illustrates how environmental stimuli (S) trigger a human's inner organism/emotional response (O) and compels a consumer to respond (R) favorably or unfavorably manner. According to the paradigm, a person's perception and interpretation of their surroundings dictate how they feel in that setting, which in turn affects how they behave generally. Based on this model, stimuli can affect an organism's (consumer's) attitude, reaction, and emotional state. The organism

is concerned with internal mechanisms and structures that mediate between external inputs and each person's final reaction, which is based on perception, experience, and appraisal. The response is a representation of consumer behavior, including approaches and avoidance behavior. The model examines how technology impulses influence cognitive, emotional, and participation intentions in social media environments. This study proposes BC on SNS as stimuli that provoke emotional or cognitive reactions like BAT and OBE that additionally lead to consumer behavioral outcomes such as OPI.

4. Integration of Variables

4.1 Linking Brand Communication on SNS and Online Purchase Intention

Social media have emerged among conventional channels of communication as a widespread phenomenon with a broad demographic appeal (Brakus et al., 2009). Consumers are using the Internet more often and for longer periods, which has a significant impact on their decision-making. Through online search engines and SNS searches, consumers will find their way to making purchases for their desired products (Xu et al., 2021). Businesses today are competitive and eager to expand in locations with high populations of people, whether those locations are actual or virtual. Brands all over the world now have access to a wider range of business opportunities due to the mediums available on social media like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp (Schivinski & Dabrowski 2013). These platforms enable marketers to engage with potential customers to forge bonds with them, thereby improving the reputation and trustworthiness of their brands (McManus et al., 2022). The personalized delivery of information through brand-created SMC channels can impact the customer's awareness level of a brand, knowledge seeking, and purchase decisions (Arya et al., 2022). To attain superior behavioral outcomes, marketers must recognize the value of developing a social media strategy and utilizing the finest SMC channels (Cheung et al., 2020). Consumers, while purchasing any product, trust user-generated content more than the owners of the goods and services or producer-generated content. Moreover, Alalwan (2018) opined

that consumers are more likely to purchase the offerings advertised on social media if they are useful and relevant to them. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₁: Brand communication on SNS has a positive effect on online purchase intention.

4.2 Linking Brand Communication on SNS and Brand Attachment

There is an essential relationship between what consumers say, their impulsive behaviors, and how they interpret brand messages on social media (Paul, 2015). Through social media marketing activities, consumers get satisfaction and experience that shapes how they see a brand. Japutra et al. (2018) contended that the band encounter that each customer has via social media channels is the kind of experience that can affect their BAT. Furthermore, consumers' screen time over online avenues such as SNS is comparatively much greater than watching TV or reading. Customers' increased existence on these sites is creating fruitful circumstances for BAT in consumers (Huang et al., 2018). Seemingly, this pattern is sticking around since a growing number of millennials now have access to cellular phones and other portable wireless internet-capable gadgets (Arya et al., 2022). Digital marketing in today's times contends that consumers' frequent existence in an online space inclined them to have frequent brand encounters, which ultimately leads them to purchase a branded product and consume some extra money (Hwang, et al., 2019). Thus, built on this discussion, the second hypothesis of the study is stated:

H₂: Brand communication on SNS has a positive effect on brand attachment.

4.3 Linking Brand Attachment and Online Purchase Intention

implies a consumer-brand link is termed BAT (Japutra et al., 2018) that produces favorable results, including brand satisfaction (Belaid & Temessek Behi, 2011), loyalty to a brand (Japutra et al., 2018), and purchase intention (Correia Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012). Furthermore, studies also revealed that BAT also has a positive association with important consumer behavior outcomes. According to academic research, BAT forecasts a variety of consumer behavior outcomes, including favorable WOM, intention to repurchase, and willingness to

pay more (Levy & Hino, 2016). More specifically, investigations that are grounded upon attachment theory associated with BAT to consumer purchase behavior. A study by Bian and Haque (2020) concluded that BAT considerably raises customer purchase intention about original brands. Furthermore, based on a cross-sectional study relating BAT to purchase intention concludes that BAT is a key influencer of consumer purchasing behavior. Thus, grounded upon past literature, we developed a hypothesis that:

H_3: Brand attachment has a positive effect on online purchase intention.

4.4 Mediation Perspective of Brand Attachment
Customers expect firms to communicate online in this digital age (Kim & Ko, 2012). They exhibit attachment to the brands that are proactive in reaching out to them, sharing valuable information in real-time, and being eager to establish positive interactions with them (Japutra et al., 2019). This influences their decision to engage with the company by online means through the brand's multiple social media channels (Arya et al., 2022). Utilizing social media as a BC medium is increasingly preferred over conventional blogs and web pages (Holbrook 2000). By offering content like photographs, text, and videos and involving customers through various gamification techniques, BC on SNS is establishing two-way contact with their customers (Arya et al., 2022). U&G suggests that brand devotees seek personal benefits and value, and SMC makes use of this drift to connect with customers and build relationships (Tang et al., 2019). Moreover, U&G also argued that hedonic rewards and social advantages are key factors that make consumer-brand interactions and engagement on social media mediums more effective. Additionally, these advantages help consumers to develop a favorable attitude and have a better brand experience (Kaldeen 2019), which ultimately leads to a positive brand attachment. Thus, the hypothesis has been proposed as:

H_4: Brand attachment mediates the relationship between brand communication on SNS and online purchase intention.

4.5 Linking Brand Communication on SNS and Online Brand Experience
To set their goods and services apart from rivals, marketers today talk about generating "experiences" for their brand consumers. With traditional media, which allows one-way communication, it seems a bit challenging, so marketers are seeking ways to engage with their consumers based on dialogue and interactivity. Lin et al. (2021) argued that social media has simplified and facilitated interactions with customers. Instead of serving as a one-way information tool, social networking sites have an impact on how internet users engage through a two-way participation channel. As stated by Eisend (2015) marketing communication is a crucial stimulant that creates the brand experience. Brand-related stimuli are mainly a source through which consumers attain these experiences (Khan & Rahman 2016). Online buyers may learn about a retailer's brand even before they visit the website by observing some brand-related indicators of BC on SNS in addition to the firm's website. Past research has found multiple antecedents of brand experience, including story-telling, event marketing, brand contact, and brand-related stimuli mainly marketing communications (Belch & Belch, 2019). Tang et al., (2019) stated that marketers employ social media platforms to promote brands and improve consumer experiences. Thus, considering this discussion, we hypothesize that:

H_5: Brand communication on SNS has a positive effect on the online brand experience.

4.6 Linking Online Brand Experience and Online Purchase Intention
In the expanding online buying environment, providing a great BE has received widespread recognition (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). Virtual retailers are offering consumers an OBE through appealing website design, simple website navigation, 24/7 availability, secure transactions, availability of an extensive variety offering information, quick returns, EMI choices, and many other advantages (Khan & Rehman, 2016). Fathima et al. (2022) opined that owing to an absence of experience elements on the brand's official website, many visitors give up on finalizing their online purchases. According to prior investigation, OBE marks have a favorable impact on customers'

purchase intention, specifically in the online purchasing environment. Moreover, different researchers reveal consumers' virtual experiences with destination brands significantly influenced their decision to visit or suggest the location. An optimal virtual brand experience impacts customers' online buying behavior therefore, offering an improved brand experience to online shoppers may be an effective approach (Rose et al., 2012). Moreover, most studies have concentrated on the brand experience outcomes of customer loyalty and satisfaction in the literature. In previous studies, these two outcomes have already received substantial discussion (Nofal et al., 2020). Scholars have notably emphasized the need for greater research on OPI as a result of OBE in different settings (Khan & Rahman, 2015). This is because existing research has identified OPI as a crucial outcome of OBE (Donvito et al., 2020). Thus, a current study posits the hypothesis that:

H$_6$: Online brand experience has a positive effect on online purchase intention.

4.7 Mediation Perspective of Online Brand Experience

Currently, the Internet's rapid expansion and the creation of contemporary network-connected gadgets like tablets and smartphones have contributed to the quick growth of communication media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (NGO

et al., 2022). From a psychological standpoint, Chand and Fei (2021) investigated OBE and discovered that it is an effect or outcome of consumer contact with brands. As a novel active tool for marketing managers to reposition their brands from conventional interaction to experiential engagement, the setting of online social media networks predominates. According to the S-O-R model, a stimulus-organism link proposes that peripheral stimuli may have an impact on how consumers perceive a brand's image, service, experience, etc. This notion lends credibility to the idea that OBE media users' brand experience is improved both when marketers and brand users offer informative and captivating material about their brands on their pages and regularly engage with customers and followers. Consumer decisions in one channel may be impacted by OBE and behavior in another channel (Gilal et al., 2021). The internal and subjective reaction to a brand interaction is captured through OBE (Mishra, 2019). When positive encounters with the brand outweigh negative ones, there is a positive OBE. Some of the major outcomes of a positive OBE include loyalty (Fatima et al., 2022), purchase intentions, and re-purchase intentions (Kim & Ko, 2012). Based on this, we hypothesized that

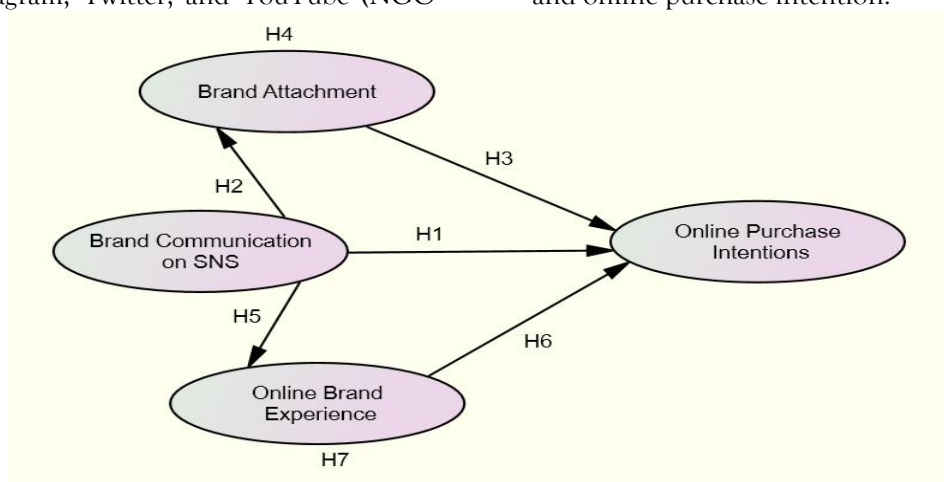**H$_7$:** Online brand experience mediated the relationship between brand communication on SNS and online purchase intention.

Figure 1 Research Model

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Survey Instrument

BC on SNS is examined by a scale adopted from a previous study by Arya et al. (2022). Using the study from Park et al. (2010), a four-item scale is used to measure BAT. The items of OPE are captured from the studies of Fathima et al. (2022). The items of OPI are adopted from the studies of Zhu et al. (2019). Using an online structured questionnaire, this study included closed-ended questions. Respondents were defined as those who interact with a brand's Facebook and Instagram sites. For measuring constructs, the 'five-point Likert scale,' ranging from 'strongly disagree' to "strongly agree," is used.

5.2 Population and Sampling

Users of social networking sites make up the study's population. Based on the nature of this investigation, non-probability sampling was employed in this study. A questionnaire survey was given to respondents who were involved in brand pages on social networking sites and had experience with them. For data gathering, a responder who interacts with the brand on Facebook and Instagram is chosen. To disseminate it, Google Survey Forms were used.

6. Data Analysis and Results

The assumptions of normality for multivariate analysis are fulfilled before further analysis, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Normality Assessment Indices (N=305)

Variables	M_{in}	M_{ax}	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
BC-SNS	13.00	40.00	-0.57	0.14	-0.18	0.27
BAT	7.00	25.00	-0.44	0.14	-0.19	0.27
OBE	10.00	30.00	-0.92	0.14	0.27	0.27
OPI	8.00	25.00	-0.79	0.14	0.42	0.27

Notes: *BC-SNS=Brand Communication on SNS; BAT= Brand Attachment; OBE= Online Brand Experience; OPI= Online Purchase Intentions; SE=Standard Error*

Before calculating statistics, seventeen cases (outliers) were deleted from the datasheet like case numbers (327, 326, 299, 296, 258, 257, 217, 170, 154, 153, 138, 102, 101, 93, 77, 73 and 62). BC-SNS has a M_{in}= 3.00, M_{ax}=0.00, Skewness= -0.57, SE=0.14, Kurtosis=-0.18 and S.E = 0.27. Similarly, BAT has a M_{in}=7.00, M_{ax}=25.00, Skewness=-0.44, SE=0.14, Kurtosis=-0.19 and S. E=0.27. OBE has a M_{in}=10.00, M_{ax}=30.00, Skewness=-0.92, SE=0.14, Kurtosis=0.27 and S. E=0.27. OPI has a M_{in}=8.00, M_{ax}=25.00, Skewness=-0.79, SE=0.14, Kurtosis=-0.42 and S. E=0.27. Based on the analysis, it shows that data is normally distributed.

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

The respondent's gender identification was the first question in the demographic section. Analysis has revealed that 63.6% (194) of the responses are female, with the remaining 36.4% (111) being male. The feminine gender predominates in the skincare sector. Regarding the respondent's age range, there are four divisions of age group: (18 - 25), (26 - 33), (34 - 41), and (42 and above). According to the respondent's data, most of the respondent's age group was (18-25), around 62.0% (189). Others include a (26-33) were 29.2% (89), (34-41) were 5.6% (17) and (42 and above) were 3.3% (10). The third question is concerned with the respondent's educational qualification. The four different ranges were developed to evaluate the responses: (Bachelor), (Master), (Ph. D), and (others). According to data analysis, most of the respondents have (Bachelors) education, 67.5% (206), remaining belonged to (Master's) 25.6% (78), (Ph. D) with 3.0% (9), and (others) with 3.9% (12). The fourth question requested about the respondent's financial status: according to data evaluation, a major chunk of the respondents was (dependent), 51.8% (158), and the remaining population was (independent), with 48.2% (147).

6.2 Unidimensionality Assessment and Measurement Model

Before hypotheses testing, individual CFAs and nested CFA were conducted to assess the scale's unidimensionality.

Table 2

Individual and Nested CFA's Indices (N=305)

Variables	Items	Unidimensionality					Convergent Validity		Reliability
Individual CFA		χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL (min-max)	α
BC-SNS	8	2.50	0.93	0.90	0.05	0.05	0.91	[0.51-0.70]	0.81
BAT	5	2.20	0.91	0.92	0.04	0.02	0.92	[0.50-0.86]	0.70
OBE	6	1.90	0.90	0.92	0.02	0.02	0.91	[0.55-0.68]	0.79
OPI	5	2.49	0.94	0.93	0.04	0.03	0.94	[0.50-0.67]	0.77
Nested CFA		2.31	0.91	0.92	0.05	0.05	0.94	[0.50-0.67]	0.84

Notes: *BC-SNS=Brand Communication on SNS; BAT= Brand Attachment; OBE= Online Brand Experience; OPI= Online Purchase Intentions*

For BC-SNS with eight items, χ^2/df= 2.50, GFI=0.93, CFI=0.90, RMR= 0.05, RMSEA=0.05, NFI= 0.91, and lastly, the FL lies between 0.51-0.70. A value of $\chi2/df$ for BAT with five items was 2.20, GFI=0.91, CFI=0.92, RMR= 0.04, RMSEA= 0.02, NFI=0.992, and FL lies between 0.50-0.86. Moreover, for OBE with six items χ^2/df =1.90, GFI=0.90, CFI=0.92, RMR=0.02, RMSEA=0.02, NFI=0.91 and the FL varying from 0.55-0.68. For OPI with five items

$\chi2/df$ was 2.94, GFI=0.94, CFI=0.93, RMR= 0.04, RMSEA= 0.03, NFI=0.94 and the FL from 0.50-0.67. α values, which are $\geq$ 0.70. As essential by SEM literature, the GFI, CFI, and NFI readings were likewise inside adequate bounds. The four factors nested CFA revealed sufficient fit indices (χ^2/df =2.61, GFI=0.91, CFI=0.92, RMR=0.05, RMSEA=0.05, and NFI=0.94. Moreover, the obtained values for FL also range from 0.50-0.67. The 24 items made up the total Cronbach's alpha value of 0.84. All values were within the permissible bounds specified by the SEM literature.

6.3 Discriminant and Convergent Validity Checks

Table 3

Discriminant Validity (N=305)

Constructs	BC-SNS	BAT	OBE	OPI	Mean	SD
BC-SNS	**0.42†**	0.26**	0.33**	0.40**	30.10	5.93
BAT		**0.27†**	0.11**	0.14**	18.66	3.59
OBE			**0.62†**	0.60**	24.09	4.71
OPI				**0.61†**	20.56	3.53

Notes: *BC-SNS=Brand Communication on SNS; BAT= Brand Attachment; OBE= Online Brand Experience; OPI= Online Purchase Intentions; SD= Standard Deviation; ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed; †√ (AVE) Values in the Diagonal*

According to Table 3, BC-SNS and BAT have a positive correlation (r=0.26). However, BC-SNS has a positive correlation with OBE (r=0.33) with OPI (r =0.40). Moreover, BAT also has favorable correlations with OBE (r=0.11) and OPI (r=0.14) correspondingly. OBE and BAT have a favorable correlation (r=0.60).

6.4 Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, the direct effect and indirect effect structural models have been fitted. Numerous fit indices, such as χ^2/df, GFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA, have been used to calculate the fit of both structural models. We evaluated the direct model (left out the path among BAT to OPI and OBE to OPI), the BC-SNS to OPI, the BC-SNS to BAT, and the BC-SNS to OBE with the indirect model, which included the path from the BAT to the OPI and the OBE to the OPI. The fit indices for the direct effect

model are χ^2/df =3.50, GFI=0.81, NFI=0.87, CFI=0.77, and RMSEA=0.11. The indirect model, which incorporates the paths from BA to OPI and from OBE to OPI (mediating variables), showed fit indices of χ^2/df =2.50, GFI=0.91, NFI=0.92, CFI=0.90, and RMSEA=0.05, which advocates an improvement in fit indices over the direct model. In an indirect model, Shrout and Bolger's (2002) study guidelines served as the foundation for the mediation test technique.
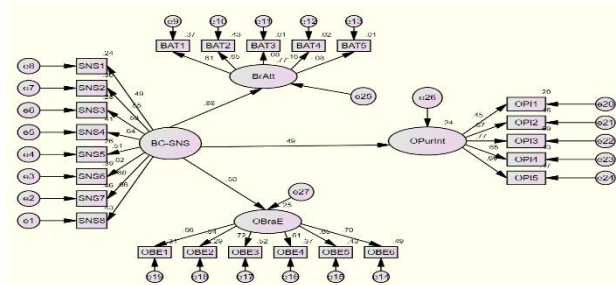
According to H₁, brand communication on SNS influences online purchasing intentions favorably. Table 4 shows that BC-SNS has a favorable impact on OPI (H1: β=0.49, $p>0.001$), hence H₁ is accepted. H₂ is accepted since the results in Table 4 show that brand communication on SNS has a positive influence on BAT (H2: β=0.88, $p>0.001$). According to H₃, BAT has little influence on OPI. Thus, H₃ is disproved as shown by the data in Table 4 (H3: β= -0.34, $p<0.001$).

Figure 2 Direct Effect and Indirect Effect Models

Table 4
Results (N=305)

The relationships between Variables	Direct model			Indirect model		
	β	S. E		β	S. E	
H1: BC-SNS→ OPI	0.49***	0.06	Significant			
H2: BC-SNS→ BAT	0.88***	0.09	Significant			
H3: BAT→ OPI				-0.34	0.24	Insignificant
H5: BC-SNS→ OBE	0.45***	0.24	Significant			
H6: OBE→ OPI				0.66***	0.06	Significant
Model Comparison indices between direct and indirect effect models for mediation analysis						
H4: BC-SNS→ BAT→OPI	χ^2/df ratio=3.50			χ^2/df ratio=2.50		GFT=0.91;
H7: BC-SNS→ OBE → OPI	GFT=0.81; NFI=0.87; CFI=0.77; RMSEA=0.11; R^2 (BAT)=0.77; R^2 (OBE)=0.25; R^2 (OPI)=0.24			NFI=0.92; CFI=0.91; RMSEA=0.05; R^2 (BAT)=0.79; R^2 (OBE)=0.30; R^2 (OPI)=0.57		

Notes: *BC-SNS=Brand Communication on SNS; BAT= Brand Attachment; OBE= Online Brand Experience; OPI= Online Purchase Intention*
According to H₅, BC-SNS has a favorable impact on the OPI. H₅ is likewise accepted as a consequence of the conclusions in Table 4, which again supports (H5: β = 0.45, $p > 0.001$). H₆ is acceptable as depicted (H6: β=0.66, $p< 0.001$) since it indicated that an OBE positively influences OPI. Furthermore, H₄ and H₇ describe the mediation of BAT OBE among the relationship of BC-SNS and OPI, respectively. The indices of the direct model are stated as χ^2/df =3.50, GFI=0.81, NFI=0.87, CFI=0.77, and RMSEA=0.11

while, in the indirect effect model, which contains path BC-SNS to OPI and BC-SNS to OBE (mediating variable) explained fit indices i.e., χ^2/df = 2.50, GFI=0.91, NFI=0.92, CFI=0.90 and RMSEA = 0.05. The indirect impact model's hypothesized linkages were found to be better understood when the mediating variables BAT and OBE were considered. We can conclude that H₄ and H₇ regarding the mediating role of BAT and OBE between BC-SNS and OPI are accepted based on the findings of the comparison of direct and indirect effect models.

7. Discussion

This study evaluates the effect of BC-SNS on OPI. Additionally, the mediational role of BAT and OBE has been studied. Based on the U&G theory and S-O-R model, the study is put up in a social media environment. The following crucial insights have been established. First, BC-SNS significantly influences OPI. The more a brand does BC on SNS, the higher the propensity of consumers to develop OPI. The study demonstrates that consumers for skincare brands are stimulated by BC-SNS, including both brands-created and peer-generated, thus tending to boost the OPI of customers. Second, the research indicated a significant positive link between BC-SNS and BAT. This indicates the higher the brand digs into digital networking apps to communicate about its offerings, the higher they are enabled to elicit BAT levels from their consumers. Thus, by employing online platforms or networking apps in a brand's marketing strategies, marketers can develop BAT. Third, this study tends to hypothesize a significant positive relationship between BAT and OPI. However, contrary to assertion and unexpectedly, the research found a negative relationship between BAT and OPI. The findings of this study are contradictory to earlier investigations where BAT was found to have a significant positive impact on OPI. Consumers may develop an extremely strong attachment to a brand, resulting in resistance to change or reluctance to try new products or brands. This over-attachment can lead to a negative correlation with OPI, as consumers may be less inclined to explore alternative options online.

In the current study, it is revealed that BC-SNS enhances OPI through BAT. BC on SNS provides valuable brand information, peer-to-peer information sharing about the brand, and access to a brand in real-time, escalating BAT by drifting the brand to connect with consumers and build relationships with them. The stronger the BAT, the higher the propensity of OPI, fifth, BC-SNS has a positive effect on OBE. BC-SNS is a critical stimulus to enhance OBE. Social media allows for interactive communication between brands and their audience. It enables users to provide feedback, ask questions, and share their experiences directly with the brand. This two-way communication fosters engagement and builds a sense of community around the brand.

When brands actively listen and respond to their audience, it enhances the OBE. Social networking sites provide an avenue for brands to engage with their audience in real-time, creating a sense of community and connection. By actively responding to comments, messages, and mentions on SNS, brands can foster engagement and establish meaningful interactions. When users experience responsive and engaging brand communication on SNS, it positively influences their perception of the brand. This positive impression carries over to the website-based online brand experience, where users expect a continuation of the engaging and responsive communication they experienced on social media.

Sixth, OBE has a significant positive impact on OPI. A well-designed website that is user-friendly and intuitive enhances the OBE. When users can easily navigate through the website, find the information they need, and have a seamless browsing experience, it creates a positive impression of the brand. A positive online brand experience increases the likelihood of users developing trust and confidence in the brand, leading to a higher intention to make a purchase. A positive online brand experience reinforces the positive BC on SNS and strengthens users' trust and confidence in the brand, increasing their purchase intention. The OBE encompasses users' engagement and interaction with the brand, such as browsing the website, exploring products or services, reading customer reviews, and participating in discussions on SNS. Engaging experiences, interactive features, and positive interactions further enhance users' online brand experience, leading to a higher purchase intention.

8. Implications

The study reveals why customers choose to connect with brands on SNSs. This study, which focuses on brand communication on SNS, demonstrates that it improves the exposure of brands on SNSs and enables a brand to communicate digitally with customers, which strengthens the bond between them and the brand. SNS content is seen as a great channel for companies to interact with customers and develop relationships with them, which helps customers make decisions. Therefore, this study considers how brand-created and user-generated material improves consumers' OPI to investigate the

latest understanding of brand engagement on SNSs. Furthermore, this study also SOR framework in the context of digital advertising, which affirms brand communication on SNS as stimuli, BAT and OBE as an organism, and OPI as a reaction to stimuli. The result of this study adds to the previous literature on digital advertising. With the rise of social media, new channels for BC have emerged. The suggested model considers consumer perceptions and purchase behavior. The research aims to provide managers with the tools they need to map and capture the minds of their customers through SMC by providing a variety of services. To interact with customers, brands must establish a presence on SNSs. Doing so will enable them to develop long-term strategies for their digital space. Brands should investigate the tech-savvy attributes of consumer segments grounded on their SNS's usages and inclinations while focusing on developing stronger online consumer purchase attention as part of a marketing strategy. The research indicates that when consumers actively engage with BC on SNS, it has a positive impact on their OPI. Skincare brands can foster consumer engagement by initiating dialogues, promptly addressing inquiries and feedback, and organizing interactive campaigns or contests. By nurturing a sense of community and involving consumers in activities related to the brand, skincare brands can cultivate a loyal customer base and boost their customers' inclination to make purchases online.

9. Limitations and Future Directions

The study focuses exclusively on exploring the influence of BC on SNS for skincare brands. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the broader digital marketing landscape, future research could explore the roles of various other marketing channels or touchpoints. This could entail investigating the impact of BC on websites, mobile apps, influencer marketing, and other relevant platforms. By examining multiple channels, researchers can gain deeper insights into the overall dynamics of digital marketing strategies. Additional mediating and moderating factors that affect the association between BC on SNS and OPI should be explored in future studies. To offer a more thorough knowledge of the underlying mechanisms, elements like trust, perceived value, social impact, or cultural

aspects might be taken into account. Furthermore, comparative research across several sectors or product categories may give information on the particular characteristics and difficulties that skincare brands confront. It may be possible to detect industry-specific implications and opportunities by comparing the results with those from other industries.

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