

The Impact of Using Social Media Marketing on Consumer-Brand Engagement Among Generation Z in China — An Empirical Study on Tiktok

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of the five dimensions of social media marketing (SMM) activities on consumer brand engagement (CBE), and thus expands to the impact on brand awareness and brand image, as well as the mediating role of CBE in SMM on brand equity among the generation Z in China. This study used a quantitative research approach, using sampling among TikTok users (N=264) and analyzed with Hayes Process Macro in SPSS. The results of the study point out that among the five dimensions of SMM, only entertainment and customization have positive significant correlations on CBE. The relationship between consumer brand engagement on brand loyalty and brand image is significant. Under the influence of consumer brand engagement, generation Z shows increased brand awareness of brands promoted by social media marketing campaigns on social media with high entertainment, customization, and trendiness. Therefore, marketers focusing on the younger generation in China can use this article as valuable insights for their social media campaigns.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing (SMM); Consumer-brand Engagement (CBE); Gen Z; China; Brand Awareness; Brand Image; TikTok

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has played an essential role in the communication between consumers and communities and has become a part of consumers' lives (Miller et al., 2009; Kim & Ko, 2010). Ebrahim (2019) indicated that social media has reached 2.77 billion internet users worldwide and has become a very promising market channel, thus profoundly changing the practices of marketers. Additionally, the social media advertising budget has increased by 92.3% year-over-year spike, which aims at strengthening the bonds between brands and customers, as well as growing online

sales volume, enabling the practice of more cost-effective marketing activities with less effort (Kapoor, 2022; Kim & Ko, 2010).

Based on the broad expansion of social media networks, marketers have begun to utilize social media marketing (SMM) to provide consumers with trendy content in an accessible, engaging, customized way to attract them to participate in the value-creating procedures of the brand (Cheung et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2020b; Frasset-Deltoro et al., 2019). Additionally, social media facilitates the development of the online brand community, by providing marketers a channel to hold SMM, allowing customers to share content, building social networks, etc., which is supported by online applications, and web tools as well as other technological infrastructures (Habibi et al., 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Laroche et al., 2012). Up to now, although SMM is assumed as a more promising marketing practice to build brands and interact with customers than traditional advertising (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011; Abzari et al., 2014), there are relatively few studies regarding how SMM activities affect customers' brand knowledge and related value (Seo & Park, 2018).

According to research literature, social media-related marketing communication naturally influences customers' attitudes and engagements toward brand-related promotion activities (Cheung et al., 2020a). Consumer-brand engagement (CBE) usually be defined as: "consumers' specific level of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in brand interactions (Hollebeek, 2011, pp.7)". According to Gómez et al. (2019), a powerful strategy for brand promotion on social media is to increase brand engagement, which can assist businesses in creating a competitive advantage. Schulz and Peltier (2013) argued that when marketers strengthen the interactions with consumers via social media platforms to promote their brands, it will effectively create a positive effect on CBE. When marketers pay attention to the content they created and try to encourage consumers to involve in this communication process with the brand in the online brand community, the CBE will be strengthened and customers' feeling of community and brand affinity will be developed and improved (Barger et al., 2016; Simon & Tossan, 2018). In summary, social media platforms and SMM activities are crucial for fostering consumer-brand interactions and improving CBE (Schulz & Peltier, 2013; Simon & Tossan, 2018; Barger et al., 2016).

For young consumers, brand equity, especially brand awareness and brand image, will significantly impact their consumption intention (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). Therefore, it is very essential to take young consumers as the target group of brand promotion activities. Schroth (2019) assumed that the Generation Z (Gen Z) are the people who are born after 1997 and before 2013 (pp.1)". They are creative and young, living in the digital generation, and actively communicating with their favorite brands through online channels and participating in related activities (Bernstein, 2015). As consumers, they will focus more on innovation, they will present new challenges for market practitioners in the future (Priporas et al., 2017). As the main users of social media, Gen Z is heavily influenced by social media

marketing such as social media celebrity marketing (Lin et al., 2019). Therefore, Gen Z can be a high potential group of consumers to explore the future direction and impact of SMM activities.

As a social media platform with a lot of integrated user-generated content, TikTok (or Douyin, for its Chinese version) attracts the attention of a large number of young people with its interesting content and has a huge impact on their lifestyles (Lin et al., 2019). TikTok is a popular short video-sharing application on mobile devices. TikTok provides users with the tools to create short videos for users to create videos as well as offers real-time hotspots and discussion boards for users to develop their social networks and express their opinions on this social media platform. In 2019, there are around 442.6 million users of TikTok in China (Thomala, 2020). Therefore, TikTok can be considered a typical social media platform to study the views of generation Z on SMM activities and the potential impact.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To date, there are a significant amount of research on the area of SMM activities on consumer attitudes and reactions in the luxury, airline, and tourism industries (Kim & Ko, 2010, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018; Sano, 2014), while findings related to the direct impact of SMM activities on consumers remain limited (Ebrahim, 2019). Further, several research looked into how SMM activity affected customers' perceptions of brand value, brand awareness, as well as other relevant brand-related knowledge in Malaysia, Turkey, Hong Kong, and India (Koay et al., 2020; Bilgin, 2018; Cheung et al., 2020; Chahal & Rani, 2017), but studies about mainland China are still few. Therefore, the objective of this study is to ascertain to what extent the five SMM aspects have an influence on the brand development mechanism in the modern Chinese market. explore different features of the CBE process in this area, as well as the key impact factor to construct a holistic framework of consumer perceptions of brand value, brand perceptions, brand loyalty, and brand-related knowledge through one of the most well-liked online social networking applications: TikTok among Gen Z in China.

1.3 Research Objectives

This paper attempts to investigate the effects of SMM activities on Gen Zs' consumer behavior, brand-related knowledge-building systems through the social media platform TikTok. The next two research topics are noteworthy in order to fulfill this goal of the study:

1. How each of the five dimensions of SMM influences consumer behavior, and thus to what extent, affects CBE.
2. To explore the connection between CBE and consumers' related brand understanding such as brand equity.
3. To further analyze how these behaviors make an effect on Gen Zs' lifestyles.

1.4 Contributions of the study

This study will help marketers and researchers to improve their understanding of the generation Z consumer group in China, especially in the SMM space. Moreover, it will provide a theoretical basis and guidance for marketers to develop brand building and brand marketing campaigns to help them develop more effective and cost-effective marketing strategies. In terms of brand-related literature, this article will examine the applicability and validity of the findings in mainland China on the role of the five dimensions of SMM: entertainment, customization, trendiness, interaction, and EWOM, in the process of building consumer brand perceptions. Furthermore, this will contribute to future research to elaborate the framework of SMM characteristics and help draw more generalizable conclusions about the factors influencing consumers' brand understanding which can ultimately contribute to the establish of strong brand awareness and positive brand image, etc.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 Five SMM dimensions (Kim & Ko, 2010, 2012; Keller, 2010, 2016)

Kim and Ko (2010, 2012) proposed and examined the methodology of using five SMM dimensions to understand the impact of SMM activities on brand equity, especially for brand awareness and brand image. According to Kim & Ko (2010), the five dimensions include entertainment, customization, trendiness, interaction, and e-word-of-mouth (EWOM), which will affect consumer-based brand equity, especially on brand awareness and brand image under the mediating effect of product involvement level. This result is consistent with Keller (2010;2016): brand awareness and brand image are usually used as standards when measuring customer brand knowledge and brand-related value.

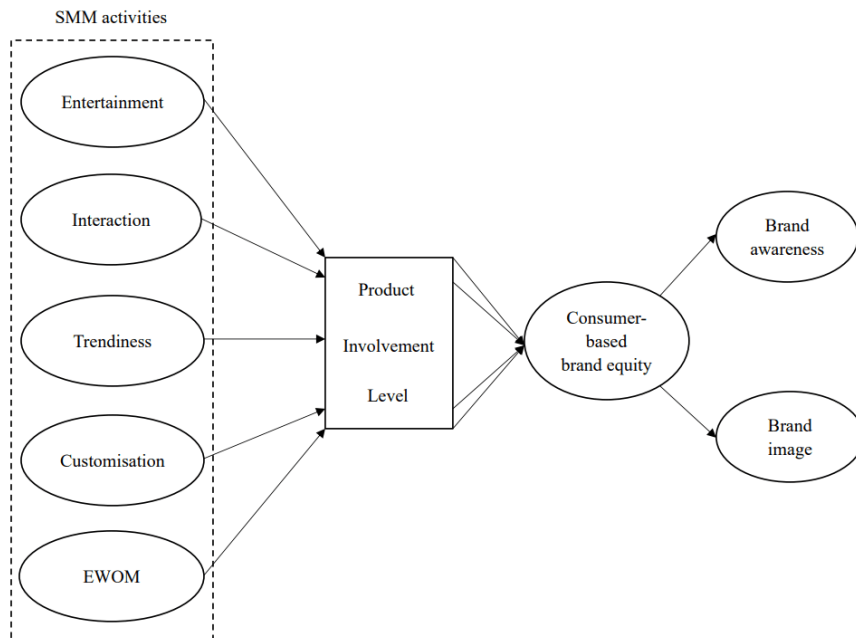


Figure 1 Five SMM Dimensions Model

1.5.2 CBE Framework (Hollebeek et al.,2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Islam et al., 2018; Jarvis et al., 2003; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016)

CBE is usually explained as consumers' unique cognitive level behaviors with emotions when they interact with marketing activities held by the brand (Hollebeek et al.,2014). It is believed to be a key factor in promoting brand equity, which refers to consumer behaviors that stem from motivational factors other than purchases (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Given its significance, CBE is operationally related to, affection, activation, and cognitive processing (Islam et al., 2018; Jarvis et al., 2003). Adapted from Schivinski and Dabrowski, brand attitudes are closely correlated with brand equity and purchasing intention (2016).

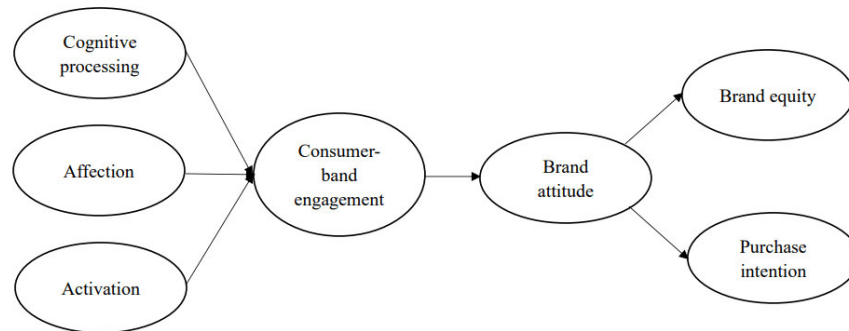


Figure 2 CBE Framework Model

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Thus, we combine the SMM dimensions mentioned in the previous section with the CBE framework to obtain our theoretical framework which show in figure.3 below:

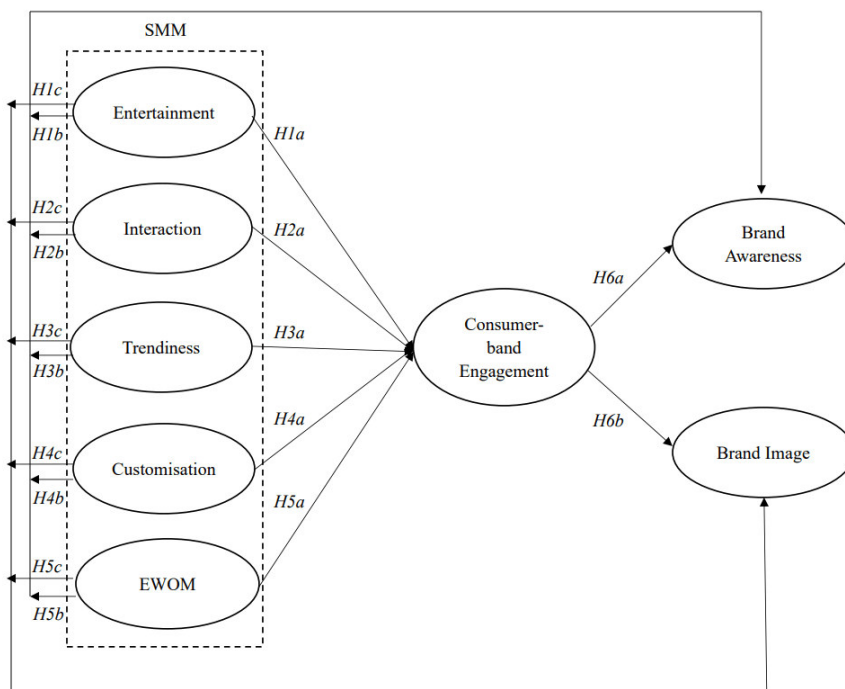


Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

H1a: Entertainment is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).
 H1b: Entertainment is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).
 H1c: Entertainment is positively associated with brand image (BI).
 H2a: Interaction is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).
 H2b: Interaction is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).
 H2c: Interaction is positively associated with brand image (BI).
 H3a: Trendiness is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).
 H3b: Trendiness is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).
 H3c: Trendiness is positively associated with brand image (BI).
 H4a: Customization is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).
 H4b: Customization is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).
 H4c: Customization is positively associated with brand image (BI).
 H5a: Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).
 H5b: Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).
 H5c: Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is positively associated with brand image (BI).
 H6a: Consumer-brand engagement (CBE) is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).
 H6b: Consumer-brand engagement (CBE) is positively associated with brand image (BI).

2 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a set of applications developed on the Internet, which provides a strong technical basis to support the process of communication, and cooperation, as well as distributing user-generated content (UGC) among users (Berthon et al., 2012). Compared to traditional channels such as advertising on television, paper, etc., social media can be considered as a more interactive way and thus can build a strong social network, which can be used as a channel to have a larger community reach (Bowen, 2015; Ebrahim, 2019). Therefore, social media has the potential to provide good opportunities when business marketing campaigns want to establish connections with individual consumers (Kelly et al., 2010). The most common forms of social media are review sites including consumer experiences, Wikis, forums containing UCGs (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014), as well as interpersonal networking sites, which can create private profiles such as Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger (Tess, 2013). These platforms enable companies to establish relevant brand awareness for users using social media marketing activities, such as uploading content, celebrity endorsement, and running brand communities, to reach the goal of establishing contact with consumers and other stakeholders (Phan et al., 2011; Keller, 2013; Yu & Yuan, 2019).

2.2 The Social Media Marketing on TikTok in China

According to Statista (2022), there are 302.25million social media users in China. As a market with a large number of social media users, much of the research on social media marketing (SMM) has been conducted in China. Shih et al. (2014) examined the SMM effect focusing on Xiaomi's marketing experience, pointing out that a fan-centric social media business model through multiple channels is an easier way for companies to gain a competitive advantage and increase profitability. High-frequency interactions with fans on social media to identify consumer needs, and solve consumer problems, can lead to more active consumer participation in creating marketing content, thus positively impacting brand loyalty and contributing to the co-creation process (Shih et al., 2014). There are also studies that point to social media as a new channel for establishing brand associations with customers (Gao & Feng, 2016). Different social media choices to deliver created content, and adopting different brand content strategies along with the different quality of brand-consumer communication will result in differences in Chinese users' gratification (Gao & Feng, 2016). The Chinese version of TikTok (Douyin) is number one of the top 10 most used social networks in China reaching 75% of the user share (Statista, 2022). Based on these previous studies of SMM, many unrevealed parts about the influences of content on social media need to be considered, and therefore relevant in-depth studies are needed. (Rowley & Keegan, 2019)

2.3 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The following discussion revolves around the theoretical framework of SMM activities and links it with customer-brand Engagement (CBE) behavior. Furthermore, this paper will discuss the impact of SMM and CBE on consumer-perceived brand equity.

2.3.1 Customer-brand Engagement in Social Media Marketing

A previous study defined consumer brand engagement (CBE) as a psych-behavioral theory that links the relationships between customers and brands to the intensity of consumer engagement activities (Hollebeek, 2011, p. 790). In past definitions, consumer engagement was considered during the brand communication process, and this engagement was often examined by the specific states of three aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Hollebeek, 2011), but according to past research, it remains controversial whether this ultimately affects consumer behavior (Bowden, 2009). In the relevant literature, both the interactions between users on online social media platforms and brand knowledge, are usually linked to consumer brand engagement (Cheung, 2020). In previous studies, Schulz and Peltier (2015) suggest that social media is a good channel for consumers who are already engaged in brand interactions to increase the intensity of their communication with the brand. Based on the potential of social media, Barger et al. (2016) further suggested that scholars should focus more on the important role played by content on social media,

which should focus on multi-sensory and have rich interactivity (De Vries et al., 2012). Barger et al. (2016) also affirmed that consumer distribution of posts across social-media-based brand communities can positively affect CBE, which was later improved by Simon & Tossan (2018), who emphasized more on emotional associations such as a sense of belonging, as well as intimacy of the brand-related community, can have a significant impact on CBE. In summary, the prevailing view on CBE is to encourage a variety of SMM activities to increase communication between users and brands (De Vries et al., 2012) and to promote brand-related experiences in consumers' perceptions (Barger et al. 2016).

2.3.2 The Effect of Social Media Activities on Brand Equity

According to the prior literature reviews, brand equity is the additional meaning attached to the name of brands or certain brand-related symbols, usually in the form of incremental value or additional loss, and is closely related to consumers' brand purchase preferences (Aaker, 1996). Keller (1993) explains that consumer-based brand equity is composed of brand awareness and consumer-perceived brand image, arguing that brand equity is a unique value based on consumer awareness that goes beyond the materiality of the product itself. In the process of exposure to a variety of marketing activities, consumers will depend on brand equity to differentiate the positioning of different products, thus creating a unique social phenomenon that gives symbolic meaning to different brands in the memory of consumers (Seo & Park, 2018; Keller, 1993; 2003). Furthermore, consumers show different tendencies to pay product premiums depending on brand equity, this finding links the company's economic benefits to establishing positive brand equity (Lassar et al., 1995). Extensive research has explored the relationship between SMM activities on social media and brand equity from the luxury industry, the airline industry, social media users, etc. (Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2018; Ebrahim, 2019). As a two-way communication platform, social media encompasses company- and user-created brand-related content and building consumer-based brand equity through SMM activities (Bruhn et al. 2012). Sasmita & Mohd Suki (2015) indicated that the young generation will change brand equity perceptions through exposure to SMM activities, particularly in terms of brand awareness. Also, previous scholar Godey et al. (2016) pointed out that SMM activities on social media would significantly affect brand awareness and image. Therefore, this paper will follow the previous study and explore whether SMM activities are still validated factors that will affect brand equity among the younger generation in China, which can enrich the findings in this area.

2.3.2.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to consumers can recognize a specific brand among different brands and remember the brand name or its characteristics (Percy & Rossiter, 1992; Keller, 2009). Previous literature states that consumers are more likely to buy brands they recognize (BİLGİN, 2018). Therefore, the creation of brand awareness increases the likelihood that consumers will purchase the brand's

products, reduces the perceived risk to consumers, and makes the product more likely to be selected among products of the same category for potential consumers to make a purchase (Keller, 1993; Verbeke et al., 2005; Aaker, 1996). Past research corroborates that social media marketing is an effective factor in the creation of brand awareness (BİLGİN, 2018; Rimadías et al., 2021; Ebrahim, 2019).

2.3.2.2 Brand Image

Brand image includes the sum of the consumer-perceived direct impression of their products and the related indirect associational connections (Keller, 1993). Consumers tend to use the brand image of the brands they use as a symbol of self-expression, which contains all the evaluations of this brand and associate them with celebrities (Lau and Phau, 2007; Iversen and Hem, 2008). Previous scholars have pointed out that a good brand image can help a company earn higher profits and gain an advantage over the competition by increasing its market share (Park et al, 1986). For young consumers today, brand image also positively impacts brand equity (Ebrahim, 2019).

2.3.3 Five Social Media Marketing Dimensions

Kim and Ko (2012) defined social media marketing (SMM) in terms of five attributes and explored the impact of each dimension on consumer equity and brand equity, as well as related derived consumer behavior. These five perspectives have been widely applied to social media marketing in various industries, and various conclusions have been drawn (eg. Godey et al., 2016; Rimadías et al., 2021; Seo & Park, 2018; Cheung et al., 2020). This paper will also use the five dimensions of SMM as a theoretical framework to explore the impact of each dimension on consumer brand engagement and brand equity.

2.3.3.1 Entertainment

The entertainment dimension mainly refers to the fact that the content posted on social media should be interesting and make the user feel pleasant emotionally during social media usage (Kang, 2005; Ebrahim, 2019). This entertainment sharing can encourage users to be continuously active on the brand as well as generate positive emotions and feelings in their minds (Manthiou et al., 2013). In order to retain users continuously, companies should encourage the creation of interesting content and turn this continuity into a competitive advantage, which has been proven to be powerful when holding SMM activities (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Shuang et al., 2021).

H1a: Entertainment is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).

H1b: Entertainment is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).

H1c: Entertainment is positively associated with brand image (BI).

2.3.3.2 Interaction

Social media platforms with interactive properties need to create a two-way communication channel between consumers, which allows for the free exchange of ideas between consumers for the purpose of spreading marketing content (Kim and Ko, 2012, Muntinga et al., 2011) With social media as a more powerful communication method than traditional media, current SMM campaigns can be based on consumers' with social media, a more powerful communication method than traditional media, current SMM activities can push relevant marketing messages based on consumers' personal profiles and encourage discussions among users about them, which can help build connections between brands and consumers (Manthiou et al., 2013; Bowen, 2015).

H2a: Interaction is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).

H2b: Interaction is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).

H2c: Interaction is positively associated with brand image (BI).

2.3.3.3 Trendiness

In previous literature, trendiness has been defined as the ability to be up-to-date with information, often containing the most recent descriptions of products and services (Bruno et al., 2016). Kim and Ko (2012) argue that the trendiness characteristic carried by social media can be beneficial in strengthening the connection with consumers. Additionally, Manthiou et al. (2016) argue that such SMM activities that can show the trend can build positive consumer perceptions of the brand. For example, in a brand's SMM activities, trendiness is usually associated with brand-related information updates, which are usually led or encouraged by marketing practitioners, to produce the latest reviews of products or services, and spread the latest ideas about the brand, ultimately helping to build brand image in the minds of consumers and establish brand trust (Godey et al., 2016). Therefore, this paper will continue to validate the impact of trendiness on brand perception as well as CBE, formally stating that:

H3a: Trendiness is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).

H3b: Trendiness is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).

H3c: Trendiness is positively associated with brand image (BI).

2.3.3.4 Customization

Customization refers to a strategy that attempts to connect with individual users to meet their personal preference needs with individually optimized information, allowing individual users to receive customized services and personalized information, which helps to increase user satisfaction and generate positive perceptions, further building brand trust and increasing potential consumers' propensity to purchase (Ding and Keh, 2016; Godey et al. 2016; Martin and

Todorov, 2010). Past literature states that companies use social media customization to deliver brand messages and reflect brand uniqueness to consumers for the purpose of increasing brand perception and brand loyalty (Martin and Todorov, 2010). There is no consensus on the facilitating role of customization in consumer engagement behavior: some scholars argue that marketing strategies can facilitate consumer engagement, but the role of customization is not significant for CBE aspects (Bleier et al., 2017; Rimadiaz et al., 2021). This paper will dig more into the impact of customization and arrive at the following hypotheses:

H4a: Customization is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).

H4b: Customization is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).

H4c: Customization is positively associated with brand image (BI).

2.3.3.5 Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM)

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM) refers to content posted on social media platforms by potential, past, and current consumers about products and services, including the overall range of positive and negative statements, which can be viewed by other users (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Compared to word-of-mouth, which contains relatively credible information, electronic word-of-mouth is considered to be a more efficient way to communicate because it reaches more consumers and is more accessible (Gruen et al., 2006; Chatterjee, 2001). Regarding the communication of brand-related information, negative comments can dilute brand equity and adversely affect the brand (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011). Given the importance of EWOM, it also has a significant effect on CBE regardless of the category of product (Srivastava & Sivaramakrishnan, 2020). This paper will further examine the relationship between EWOM and brand equity which contains brand image and brand awareness as well as extend it to CBE behavior.

H5a: Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement (CBE).

H5b: Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).

H5c: Electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) is positively associated with brand image (BI).

2.3.4 Effect of Consumer–brand engagement (CBE) with Brand Equity

Brand equity is often tied to a unique connection between the consumer and the branded product, which can generate different responses and increase consumers' purchase intention towards a branded product over an unbranded product (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996; Ailawadi et al., 2003; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Consumers' involvement behaviors are interactions with branded products that can increase the bond with the brand and thus build a better connection with it (Dwivedi, 2015;

Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996). At the same time, CBE can serve well as a predictor of high-level consumer involvement behaviors as well as self-expression, which is thought to increase perceived brand equity (Algharabat et al., 2020; Hepola et al., 2017). This paper will use brand awareness and brand image as the stand-in of brand equity (Keller, 1993).

H6a: Consumer–brand engagement (CBE) is positively associated with brand awareness (BA).

H6b: Consumer–brand engagement (CBE) is positively associated with brand image (BI).

3 Research Method

3.1 Summary Statistics

The questionnaire data collection was conducted online and the theme was to study consumer perceptions of the Jitterbug platform and the impact of the social media platform's SMM activities on consumer perceptions related to the brand. Over a two-month period, 321 questionnaires were collected, including 132 males and 189 females. More than half of the respondents use TikTok frequently (twice a week or more) and for more than an hour per day. Also, nearly 93.46% of respondents would pay attention to the brand of the product when purchasing, further pointing out the importance of studying brands related concepts for consumer behavior research. Table 1 below shows the basic characteristics of the online survey participants.

Table 1 Demographics Overview

Demographics	Frequency %
Gender	
Male	41.12
Female	58.88
Age	
≤17	1.87
18-27	60.43
28-37	14.33
38-42	4.98
≥43	18.38

Occupation	
Students	49.84
Unemployed	5.3
Part-time	7.48
Full-time	37.38
Monthly income	
Less than 1500 RMB	11.53
1500-3000 RMB	36.76
3001-4500 RMB	12.15
4501-6000 RMB	12.77
6001-7500 RMB	9.97
More than 7500	16.82
Frequency of using TikTok	
Never	14.02
Sometimes (Use once a week or less)	33.96
Usually (Use 2~3 times a week or more)	22.12
Always (Used almost every day)	29.91
Total time spent on TikTok per day	
Less than 1 hour	49.53
1-2 hours	30.84
2-3 hours	13.08
More than 3 hours	6.54
Whether pay attention to the brand when purchasing products	
Never	6.54
Sometimes	43.3
Usually	33.02
Always	17.13

3.2 Measures and Reliability Tests

This article will apply the widely used Cronbach's alpha as a measure of reliability for each variable analyzed in this study (Taber, 2017). Taber (2017) stated that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a value ranging from 0 to 1 when reaching and larger than 0.7 means that the data is acceptable in terms of reliability. Table 2 below calculates the Cronbach's alpha values for each variable and all of them show a high level of confidence (>0.7).

Table 2 Reliability Test - Cronbach's Alpha (α)

Variables	No. of Items	α
Entertainment (ENT)	5	0.900
Customization (CUS)	5	0.924
Interaction (INT)	5	0.915
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)	5	0.941
Trendiness (TRE)	5	0.938
Consumer-brand Engagement (CBE)	5	0.943
Brand Awareness (BA)	5	0.957
Brand Image (BI)	5	0.939

3.3 Correlation Test

This article uses Pearson correlation matrix to explore the correlation between independent variables and dependent variables. The correlation coefficient, r , fluctuates between -1 and 1, with values closer to 0 indicating an approximately low correlation between the two variables, and closer to -1 and 1 indicating a stronger correlation, representing negative and positive correlation, respectively (Benesty et al., 2009). The Pearson correlation coefficients of the variables in this study are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Correlation analysis – Pearson Correlation

Variable	ENT	CUS	INT	EWOM	TRE	CBE	BA	BI
ENT	1							
CUS	.750**	1						
INT	.688**	.726**	1					
EWOM	.654**	.729**	.703**	1				
TRE	.602**	.688**	.656**	.674**	1			
CBE	.616**	.663**	.663**	.700**	.746**	1		
BA	.620**	.653**	.624**	.661**	.747**	.798**	1	
BI	.566**	.639**	.653**	.607**	.682**	.731**	.774**	1

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

Schober (2018) pointed out that if the r-value is above 0.7 and below 1, it represents a relatively strong correlation between the two examined variables. If the r-value is greater than 0.4 and less than 0.69, respectively, it represents a moderate correlation relationship. In conclusion, all the variables have at least a moderate correlation relationship (0.566), which shows significance at the 0.01 level.

4 Results

4.1 Evaluation of Measurement Results

This paper will use multiple linear regression analysis to conduct the result and test the interactions between the X and Y. It will also use the mediating effect regression analysis model proposed by Hayes (2013), which will include the effect of X on Y without the mediating variable and the effect of X on Y with the mediating factor, called direct effect and indirect effect, respectively.

In this paper, entertainment, customization, trendiness, interactions, and electronic word-of-mouth will be used as independent variables, brand awareness and brand image will be used as dependent variables, and consumer brand engagement will be introduced as a mediating variable to explore the ultimate impact of the five different dimensions of social media activity on brand equity and to discuss the extent to which consumers' brand engagement behaviors affect their connection.

4.2 Hypothesis Analysis

Table 4 shows the regression results for each pathway among each previous hypothesis, the third column shows the value of the regression coefficient (β), and the fifth column shows the p -value of each hypothesis, which represents their significance.

Most of our hypotheses can be supported. H3a shows a regression coefficient (β)=0.129 and p -value=0.020<0.05, so customization has a moderately significant positive effect on consumer engagement behavior. For H4a, since β =0.240 and p -value=0.001<0.01, we can conclude that electronic word-of-mouth has a highly significant influence relationship on consumer engagement behavior. Having H5a with β =0.420, p -value=0.001<0.01 allows us to conclude that a high score on the trendiness dimension will positively influence consumers to engage in brand engagement behavior. We can similarly conclude H1b, H4b, and H5b that the entertainment dimension, EWOM, and trendiness have a significant effect on brand awareness (β =0.147, p -value=0.009<0.01; β =0.169, p -value=0.003<0.01; β =0.470, p -value=0.001<0.01). while for brand image, only Customization, Interaction, and Trendiness, can have moderate and highly significant influential effects respectively (β =0.144, p -value=0.045<0.05; β =0.256, p -value=0.001<0.01; β =0.345, p -value=0.001<0.01). Based on CBE's regression coefficient of two dimensions of brand equity: brand awareness and brand image β =0.820 0.689, and p -value=0.001; 0.001<0.01, we can draw a conclusion that the behavior of consumers participating in brand activities can significantly affect their brand awareness and brand image of the brand. The summary information about the assumptions will be listed in Table 6 below.

Table 4 Hypothesis Analysis

Hypotheses	Path	Coefficient	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> -value
H1a	ENT→CBE	0.088	1.639	0.102
H2a	CUS→CBE	0.038	0.623	0.533
H3a	INT→CBE	0.129	2.347	0.020*
H4a	EWOM→CBE	0.240	4.381	0.001**
H5a	TRE→CBE	0.420	8.324	0.001**
H1b	ENT→BA	0.147	2.641	0.009**
H2b	CUS→BA	0.056	0.880	0.380
H3b	INT→BA	0.056	0.984	0.326
H4b	EWOM→BA	0.169	2.977	0.003**
H5b	TRE→BA	0.470	9.031	0.001**
H1c	ENT→BI	0.031	0.492	0.623
H2c	CUS→BI	0.144	2.011	0.045*
H3c	INT→BI	0.256	3.971	0.001**
H4c	EWOM→BI	0.066	1.156	0.249
H5c	TRE→BI	0.345	6.310	0.001**
H6a	CBE→BA	0.820	23.622	0.001**
H6b	CBE→BI	0.689	19.115	0.001**

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

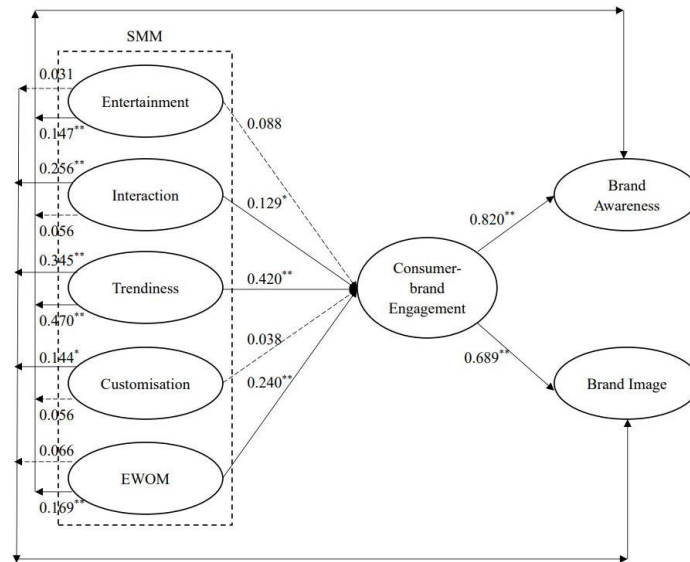
The Table 5 below shows the outcome of mediation analysis using Hayes regression process. For the total effect, it shows the impact of independent variables' impact on dependent variables ignoring the mediator. All pathways show that the *p*-value are less than 0.01, representing a significant effect of X on Y. For indirect effects, all LLCI > 0, we can conclude that there is a strong association from X to the mediating variable CBE and CBE to Y. Thus, we can conclude that CBE has a strong mediating effect between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 5 Mediation analysis

Path	Effect	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> -value	LLCI	ULCI
ENT→CBE→BA	Total	0.6923	0.0490	14.1239	0.0000**	0.5959	0.7888
ENT→CBE→BI	Total	0.5797	0.0473	12.2625	0.0000**	0.4867	0.6727
CUS→CBE→BA	Total	0.7364	0.0478	15.3953	0.0000**	0.6423	0.8305
CUS→CBE→BI	Total	0.6614	0.0446	14.8423	0.0000**	0.5738	0.7491
INT→CBE→BA	Total	0.7067	0.0495	14.2759	0.0000**	0.6093	0.8041
INT→CBE→BI	Total	0.6784	0.0440	15.4069	0.0000**	0.5918	0.7650
EWOM→CBE→BA	Total	0.6702	0.0426	15.7424	0.0000**	0.5865	0.7540
EWOM→CBE→BI	Total	0.5645	0.0414	13.6376	0.0000**	0.4830	0.6459
TRE→CBE→BA	Total	0.7860	0.0392	20.0650	0.0000**	0.7089	0.8630
TRE→CBE→BI	Total	0.6581	0.0396	16.6357	0.0000**	0.5803	0.7359
Indirect effect	Effect	Coefficient	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCL		
ENT→CBE→BA	Indirect	0.4606	0.0554	0.3541	0.5708		
ENT→CBE→BI	Indirect	0.3886	0.0471	0.2985	0.4844		
CUS→CBE→BA	Indirect	0.4867	0.0585	0.3729	0.6026		
CUS→CBE→BI	Indirect	0.3758	0.0494	0.2829	0.4775		
INT→CBE→BA	Indirect	0.5134	0.0565	0.4048	0.6257		
INT→CBE→BI	Indirect	0.3655	0.0475	0.2742	0.4598		
EWOM→CBE→BA	Indirect	0.4659	0.0532	0.3610	0.5705		
EWOM→CBE→BI	Indirect	0.3906	0.0484	0.2977	0.4879		
TRE→CBE→BA	Indirect	0.4259	0.0676	0.2989	0.5641		
TRE→CBE→BI	Indirect	0.3612	0.0494	0.2676	0.4616		

Table 6 Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Results
H1a: Entertainment is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement.	Rejected
H1b: Entertainment is positively associated with brand awareness.	Supported
H1c: Entertainment is positively associated with brand image.	Rejected
H2a: Interaction is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement.	Rejected
H2b: Interaction is positively associated with brand awareness.	Rejected
H2c: Interaction is positively associated with brand image.	Supported
H3a: Trendiness is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement.	Supported
H3b: Trendiness is positively associated with brand awareness.	Supported
H3c: Trendiness is positively associated with brand image.	Rejected
H4a: Customization is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement.	Supported
H4b: Customization is positively associated with brand awareness.	Supported
H4c: Customization is positively associated with brand image.	Rejected
H5a: Electronic word-of-mouth is positively associated with consumer-brand engagement.	Supported
H5b: Electronic word-of-mouth is positively associated with brand awareness.	Supported
H5c: Electronic word-of-mouth is positively associated with brand image.	Supported
H6a: Consumer-brand engagement is positively associated with brand awareness.	Supported
H6b: Consumer-brand engagement is positively associated with brand image.	Supported



*Assumptions accepted are marked with solid line

**Rejected guesses are marked with dotted line

5 Conclusion

5.1 Main Conclusion

According to the regression result, most of our hypothesis are supported. SMM five dimensions such as entertainment, trendiness, customization, and EWOM can increase brand awareness, while interaction does not have a significant impact. Only interaction and EWOM are positively associated with brand image building, while entertainment, trendiness, and customization do not have a significant impact on brand image, which are in line with previous literature (Bruhn et al., 2012, Pham & Gammoh, 2016; Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2015). Consumer-brand engagement is positively associated with trendiness, customization, and EWOM, and is not significantly associated with entertainment and interaction (Kim & Ko, 2012; Seo & Park, 2015; Godey et al.; Cheung et al., 2020). Also, it is positively associated with brand awareness and brand image, which is in line with the previous study. Additionally, CBE has a strong mediating effect between five SMM dimensions and brand equity, which in general affects the overall association (Cheung et al., 2020).

From this we can conclude that when we aim at brand image building and raising brand awareness, EWOM are both important influencing factors. If we are to work on building brand equity, increasing the probability of brand engagement behavior among consumers will have a positive impact. Moreover, the five dimensions of social media activity can be linked to influencing brand equity by increasing the impact of consumer brand engagement behavior (Kim & Ko, 2012).

For these conclusions, the possible reasons are: young Chinese consumers pay more attention to brands when buying, but pay more attention to brand reputation on social media cautiously. Therefore, their brand engagement behavior which ultimately changed brand equity concept are also closely related to electronic word-of-mouth. At the same time, for brand awareness, the interest features and popularity of SMM activities, including personal preferences, will have a significant impact, while the interactive requirements for the activities are not required. At the same time, building a good brand image is more challenging on social media, because only interaction and word-of-mouth can have a positive impact on it. Word-of-mouth and comments are still the key to brand image.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

Combining data from respondents helps to understand the brand equity perceived by social media users in social media marketing activities, enriching the potential meaning of commercial applications of brand building. Scholars can further

investigate the important influences on consumer brand perceptions to reveal more intrinsic connections. Moreover, this study fills the gaps in the SMM five-dimensional model and the CBE model applied in Chinese regional studies, and expands the sample types to which the model applies (Hollebeek, 2011; Keller, 1993, Cheung, 2020a; Cheung, 2020b). Meanwhile, the conceptual model in this article is a combination of the SMM five dimensions and an adapted CBE model, which provides a new perspective for predicting consumer brand-related knowledge of social media users. This combination allows scholars to better investigate the factors and channels that influence consumer brand perceptions, generating new insights on which to build further.

5.2.2 Managerial Implications

This research provides new insights for marketing practitioners in the brand sector, pointing to important factors in social media marketing campaigns that influence brand awareness and brand image. At the same time, the study points out the importance of guiding consumers to engage in brand engagement behaviors. Under the condition of brand engagement behavior, brand equity in consumer perceptions will be more susceptible to social media marketing behavior. This study provides insight into the social media habits and brand perception preferences of China's Generation Z, helping market practitioners and academics gain insight into the lifestyles and cognitive behaviors of this specific group. Finally, the study outputs some key findings such as the interactive nature of the campaign is not significantly effective in order to increase brand awareness. For brand image building, interaction and electronic word-of-mouth are important positive factors. Therefore, marketing campaigns can focus on different strategies for different purposes.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

We will explore further to make our findings more reliable and create more value through deal with the following limitations: First, the sample collected in this study is not sufficient to cover most of China, and most of the sample is from Generation Z. Therefore, the findings may have some limitations, and we will try to find out more from the uninformed groups in the survey afterwards. We will then try to further verify the reliability and generalizability of the findings by surveying the inaccessible groups, and summarize the responses of different market segments to the exposure of brand-related knowledge in SMM activities. Second, we used TikTok as the main social media platform for our empirical study this time, and only investigated the impact of SMM activities on this platform, after which we can improve the generalizability of the current findings in terms of the impact of different types of social media platforms. Third, no specific examples are given for SMM activities in this study, thus there is no way to distinguish the different consumer responses to different product categories, after which we can delve into the social media marketing behaviors of specific categories to draw more specific

and practical conclusions. Meanwhile, during the previous literature review, we found that other scholars have used Trust as a mediating variable to study the impact of the five SMM dimensions on brand-related attributes (Chahal & Rani, 2017; Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Ebrahim, 2019). We will later also consider introducing additional mediating variables to improve our understanding of developing consumer relationships.

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