# Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Customer-based Brand Equity with Mediation Role of E-Brand Experience:

## Applied Study on International Programs in the Egyptian Private Universities

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact that social media marketing activities (SMMAs) have on customer-based brand equity (CBBE), within the context of international programs at private universities in Egypt, using e-brand experience (EBE) as the mediating variable. This study aims to develop a model to examine the interrelationship between variables through structural equation modeling. The research employs quantitative analysis through a questionnaire to collect necessary data. The results were analysed employing by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Analysis Moment of Structures (AMOS) software. The results reveal substantial correlations among social media marketing activities (SMMAs), e-brand experience (EBE), and customer-based brand equity (CBBE) providing important insights for marketing strategies within the context of higher education. This study enhances the literature by investigating the mediating effect of EBE in the link between SMMAs and CBBE within the context of international programs in Egyptian private universities. By understanding the significant impact of social media marketing activities and e-brand experience on customer-based brand equity, Egyptian private universities can optimize their digital marketing efforts to strengthen their brand image, foster student engagement, improve their competitive edge and attract more students to their international programs.*

***Keywords**: Social Media Marketing Activities, E-Brand Experience, Customer-Based Brand Equity, International Programs.*

## Introduction

Higher education is becoming more competitive, as more students are enrolled from different backgrounds. Universities are establishing themselves amidst this trend context through effective marketing strategies, which help in building brand strategies and meeting institutional objectives set forth. (Perera et al., 2022). In this regard, social media has gained prominence as a valuable weapon in the marketing of higher education with several avenues for universities to connect with their students both prospective and existing (Masa'deh et al., 2021).

Egyptian private universities offering international programs face intense competition in attracting and retaining students (Barsoum, 2017). In this highly competitive landscape, effective branding and marketing

strategies are crucial for success. Social media marketing activities (SMMAs) have become an essential tool for universities to engage with prospective students and enhance their brand equity (Rutter et al., 2016). However, many Egyptian private universities struggle to effectively implement SMMAs and measure their impact on brand equity (El-Tazy & Elbeltagi, 2022).

This problem is compounded by the fact that many institutions rely on generic content and engagement strategies that do not resonate with their target audience, particularly international students who may have different expectations and perceptions of brand value. Additionally, in order to position their brands both locally and globally, private universities that provide international programs confront unique challenges. They need to strike a balance between the requirements and standards of international accrediting bodies and partner institutions and the expectations of Egyptian students. Many universities lack the knowledge and resources to create such specialized social media strategies, which is necessary for this dual market approach (Kapferer, 2008). As a result, they neglect opportunities to improve their global brand presence and are unable to attract the high-quality students they need to sustain and expand their brand.

The practical challenge is the development and implementation of social media marketing strategies that not only enhance brand awareness but also positively impact brand equity in the context of international programs. Universities frequently lack the knowledge and tools necessary to develop a cohesive e-brand experience that resonates with their target audience (Foroudi et al., 2019). Inefficient resource allocation and missed opportunities for brand enhancement may result from this gap in practical understanding. Moreover, many private universities in Egypt have adopted social media equity platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn as part of their marketing efforts, but there is a lack of understanding about how these social media efforts translate into tangible improvements in brand equity. There is a risk of a disconnect between the resources spent on social media activities and the actual return on investment in terms of brand awareness, loyalty, and student recruitment (Ismail et al., 2018).

The relationship between brand equity and social media marketing (SMM) has been investigated in a variety of contexts; however, there is a dearth of research that specifically examines this relationship within the higher education sector, particularly for international programs (Phau-Ilardi, 2016). The educational sector's unique characteristics and challenges have been largely ignored in studies that have concentrated on consumer goods or services. There is also a dearth of empirical studies that investigate the specific SMM activities that have the greatest impact on the e-brand experience and, as a result, brand equity. The majority of research has adopted a comprehensive perspective, failing to identify the critical components of SMM that are responsible for brand success.

This paper investigates the relationship of SMM activities with CBBE through EBE as a mediator in the context of international programs in Egyptian private universities specifically. We examine five key dimensions of SMM activities: interactivity, informativeness, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth. (Amalia et al., 2021) The theoretical framework draws upon established marketing theories, including the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, and uses and gratifications theory. (Dwivedi, 2021; Athwal, 2019). The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a unique context — international programs in Egyptian private universities — and by explicitly examining the mediating role of EBE. Based on the above, the research questions will be as follows:

1- What is the impact of SMM activities on CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities?

2- What is the impact of SMM activities on EBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities?

3- What is the impact of EBE on CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities?

4- Does EBE mediate the relationship between SMM activities and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities?

## Literature Review

The variable SMM activities is considered as the independent variable, EBE is considered as the mediator variable and CBBE is considered as the dependent variable. In the following subsections we will discuss:

### The Relationship between SMM activities and CBBE

The literature suggests a strong positive relationship between SMM activities and EBE (Dananjoyo, 2024; Godey et al., 2015). Studies have shown that effective SMM activities can enhance brand awareness, build positive brand image, foster trust, and increase customer satisfaction (Sohaib et al., 2022; Phan et al., 2022). These positive effects, in turn, can lead to increased purchase intentions and brand loyalty (Shuyi et al., 2022; Faisal & Ekawanto, 2021). However, the strength and nature of these relationships may be influenced by several mediating and moderating variables.

Social media marketing (SMM) can be described as a social media promotion of a brand aiming to appeal to specific audiences (Amoako et al., 2019). Interactivity (mutual communication), informativeness (valuable content), personalization (messages on specific needs), trendiness (message that uses current trends), and word-of-mouth (user content and review) are among the Tactics of SMM (Godey et al., 2015). These activities have been seen to have an effect on Brand Equity (BE) which is a notable intangible asset that measures the value of the brand and the perception of consumers. (Amoako et al., 2019; Sadek 2021). Differentiated under CBBE are brand equity dimensions including but not limited to brand recall, brand imagery, brand recognition and fixative growth (Sadek, 2021). Studies have shown that SMM activities and brand equity dimensions have a positive relation (Amoako et al., 2019; Ebrahim, 2020; Godey et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the degree and strength (and nature) of those links are not the same for all industries or in all cases and contexts (Miller, 2024).

The existing literature extensively explores the impact of SMM activities on various marketing outcomes, including brand equity (Kapoor, 2018; Dwivedi, 2021). Several studies have investigated the influence of individual SMM activities on brand equity, often focusing on specific industries or contexts. For instance, research on the hospitality and tourism sectors has shown a strong correlation between branding activities on SMM and brand building (Moro, 2018). Similarly, studies in the technology sector have explored the relationship between SMM activities and willingness to pay a premium price for portable tech gadgets, finding that trendiness, customization, and WOM positively influence brand awareness and image (Malarvizhi et al., 2022). However, the findings regarding the impact of interactivity have been mixed, with some studies showing no significant effect.

### SMM Activities and EBE

Marketing techniques have been altered for good in the presence of social media as it provides marketers with 'never seen before options to connect with consumers (Sharmin et al., 2021). Many researchers have examined particular social media activity and its consequences on the brand. It has been established that interactivity, which allows consumers to talk back and communicate with the brand, is a key driver of a more favorable brand image and brand equity (Sharmin et al., 2021). This engagement activity fosters a sense of community and belonging, which affects brand experience. Similarly, content designed to furnish valuable and engaging information significantly impacts consumers' comprehension of the firm's brand and fosters brand loyalty (Sharmin et al., 2021). Tailored communication that addresses the unique requirements of individual consumers enhances engagement and satisfaction (Sharmin et al., 2021).

The trendiness of social media content, reflecting current trends and cultural relevance, can also positively influence brand perception and consumer loyalty (Sharmin et al., 2021). Finally, electronic word-

of-mouth (e-WOM), facilitated by social media platforms, significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions (Sharmin et al, 2021). Positive e-WOM can significantly boost brand equity, while negative e-WOM can severely damage it.

### The relationship between EBE and CBBE

The literature suggests a strong positive relationship between EBE and CBBE (Pinar et al., 2020). A university's online experience is improved by factors deemed to be positive by users, such as effective websites and social media platforms and this translates into a higher education brand perception among students (Neeraja et al., 2019) More brand equity will result in enhanced brand loyalty and positive recommendations through WOM (Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016).

Several studies have explored the mediating role of various constructs in this relationship. For instance, brand trust has been shown to mediate the relationship between EBE and brand equity, suggesting that positive online experiences build trust, which translates into higher brand equity (Ali, 2021). Similarly, brand image often acts as a mediator, with positive e-brand experiences shaping a favorable brand image which ultimately contributes to enhanced brand equity (Neeraja et al., 2019).

However, the literature also highlights the importance of considering the specific context when examining this relationship. The effectiveness of different EBE elements may vary across different countries and cultures (Shamy et al., 2023). Moreover, the relative importance of different dimensions of brand equity may also differ depending on the specific target audience and the nature of the university (Pinar et al., 2020).

Few studies delved into the dynamics between EBE and brand equity in different domains (Koay et al., 2020). Some researchers employed surveys alongside SEM to measure, for example, the relationship between some elements of EBE (website, online communication, and social media), and brand equities such as brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (Pinar et al., 2020). Some more studies included qualitative approaches by conducting interviews and focus groups to get more detail about how students experienced and perceived these situations (Shamy et al., 2023). The research has also enriched the available literature on the investigated relationship between EBE and brand equity by presenting more empirical evidence but also contended the complexity of the relationship and the need to study it in context (Neeraja et al., 2019).

### Mediation Role of EBE between SMM activities and CBBE

E-brand experience (EBE) refers to the overall sensory, emotional, and cognitive responses consumers have when interacting with a brand online (Beig & Khan, 2018). It plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and brand loyalty (Anggraheni & Haryanto, 2023). This study posits that EBE mediates the relationship between SMM activities and BE. Positive e-brand experiences, arising from engaging SMM activities, can lead to enhanced CBBE (Miller, 2024). The dimensions of EBE relevant to this study include sensory (visual and auditory aspects), affective (emotional responses), behavioral (actions taken by consumers), and intellectual (cognitive processing) (Beig& Khan, 2018). Research suggests that SMM activities can directly influence e-brand experience, which, in turn, impacts CBBE (Anggraheni & Haryanto, 2023).

New perspectives in the field have emerged regarding how SMM activities impact CBBE through the mediation of EBE (Lesmana et al., 2023; Moghimi, 2022; Moghimi, 2022; Mirbabaei, 2023). CBBE is viewed as indirectly influenced by SMM activities and as being linked to customer engagement by EBE in some studies (Lesmana et al., 2023; Moghimi, 2022; Moghimi, 2022). The study established that thanks to the promotional SMM content active online conversations as well generated favorable e-brand experience and loyalty leading to greater e-brand value (Lesmana et al., 2023; Moghimi, 2022; Moghimi, 2022). This mediation effect emphasizes the importance of creating positive online experiences to maximize SMM's impact on brand equity (Mirbabaei et al., 2023).

However, the strength of this mediating effect may vary depending on factors such as the nature of the SMM activities, the target audience, and the specific industry (Mirbabaei1 et al., 2023). Further research is needed to examine the mediating role of EBE in the context of Egyptian private universities, considering the unique characteristics of the student population and the competitive higher education landscape (Mirbabaei1 et al., 2023). Studies exploring the mediating role of brand trust and brand love have also contributed to this understanding (Hafez, 2021; Ebrahim, 2020), indicating that positive online interactions and SMM activities can foster trust and love for the brand, positively impacting brand equity. However, the relative importance of EBE compared to brand trust and brand love in mediating the relationship between SMM and brand equity warrants further investigation.

## Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

This study draws upon the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Sharma et al., 2022) to explain the relationship between SMM activities, EBE, and CBBE. The S-O-R model posits that stimuli (SMM activities) influence an organism's (student's) internal state (EBE), which then leads to a response (CBBE).

The study hypotheses were formulated based on the conceptual framework, the hypothesized model, and a review of relevant studies and theories as follows:
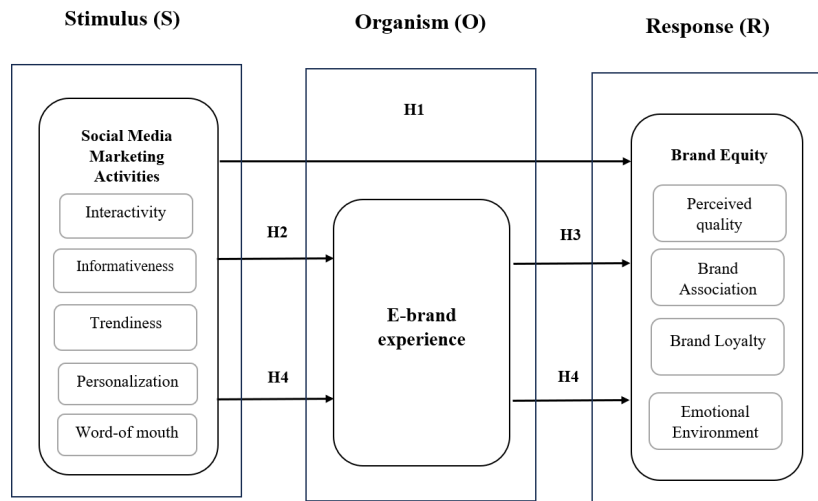


**Figure 1 Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework**

- **H1:** It is expected that SMM Activities have an impact on CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.
- **H2:** It is expected that SMM Activities have an impact on EBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.
- **H3:** It is expected that EBE has an impact on CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.
- **H4:** It is expected that EBE mediates the relationship between SMM Activities and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.

## Research Objectives

1- To investigate the relationship between SMMA and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.
2- To test the relationship between SMMA and EBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.
3- To examine the relationship between EBE and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.
4- To examine the mediation role of EBE between SMMA and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design using SEM to test the hypothesized relationships between SMM activities, e-brand experience, and CBBE (Ebrahim, 2020; Amoako et al., 2019). SEM is suitable for examining complex relationships among multiple variables and testing mediating effects (Ebrahim, 2020).

### Sample and Data Collection

The target population comprises students presently enrolled at private universities in Egypt. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different universities and student demographics. Data was collected through an online survey distributed to the selected sample. The survey instrument included validated scales measuring SMM activities, e-brand experience, and CBBE dimensions (Amoako et al., 2019; Godey et al., 2015). The survey was pilot tested to assess its reliability and validity.

Each participant received a research questionnaire, out of which 700 participants answered the questionnaire and 441 questionnaires, about 63% were completed, 39 questionnaires a 5.6% were filled in the incomplete or ineligible or refusals category and 259 37% were not reached. In total: 402 usable responses, with 57.4% as the response rate which is quite commendable considering the type of research.

### Measurement Instruments

The study utilized established scales to measure the key variables. For SMM activities, scales assessing interactivity, informativeness, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth were adapted from prior research (Koay et al., 2020). EBE was measured using (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013; Chen & Qasim; 2021). Finally, CBBE was measured using scales assessing: Perceived quality, Brand Association, Brand Loyalty, and Emotional Environment (Khoshtaria Tornike et al., 2020; Musa et al., 2013).

## Data Analysis

The data was further evaluated using SEM to validate the proposed correlations (Hair et al., 2019). SEM may concurrently assess both direct and indirect interactions among multiple variables, hence facilitating the examination of the mediating influence of EBE. The model fit was evaluated using standardized fit indices, and the significance of the relationships was analyzed utilizing AMOS software.

Several hypotheses on the connections between CBBE, EBE, and SMMA were tested in this study. On the basis of previous research and the theoretical framework, these hypotheses were developed. Each hypothesis was supported or refuted by the SEM analysis's findings. The results were examined concerning the body of current literature besides the specific setting of private universities in Egypt.

The results (Table 1) confirm that:

1- The direct effect between Informativeness and CBBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$= 0.215 CR (Critical Ratio) = 4.197, p = 0.000).

2- The direct effect between Interactivity and CBBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.407 CR (Critical Ratio)=32.704, p=0.000).

*Table 1: The Hypothesized Path of the Final Structural Equation Model*

| Hypothesized Path | | | Estimate | Critical Ratio (C.R) | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EBE | ← | Interactivity | .525 | 13.883 | .000 |
| EBE | ← | Informativeness | .410 | 9.715 | .000 |
| EBE | ← | Personalization | .118 | 4.197 | .000 |
| EBE | ← | Trendiness | .541 | 10.888 | .000 |
| EBE | ← | Word of Mouth | .182 | 4.949 | .000 |
| CBBE | ← | Interactivity | .407 | 32.704 | .000 |
| CBBE | ← | Informativeness | .215 | 4.197 | .000 |
| CBBE | ← | Personalization | .511 | 32.704 | .000 |
| CBBE | ← | Trendiness | .260 | 4.949 | .000 |
| CBBE | ← | Word of Mouth | .237 | 2.739 | .006 |
| CBBE | ← | EBE | .692 | 8.148 | .000 |

3- The direct effect Trendiness and CBBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.260 CR (Critical Ratio)=4.949, p=0.000).

4- The direct effect between Personalization and CBBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.511 CR (Critical Ratio)=32.704, p=0.000).

5- The direct effect between WOM and CBBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.237 CR (Critical Ratio)=2.739, p=0.006).

6- The direct effect Informativeness and EBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.410 CR (Critical Ratio)=9.715, p=0.000).

7- The direct effect between Interactivity and EBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.525 CR (Critical Ratio)=13.883, p=0.000).

8- The direct effect between Trendiness and EBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.541 CR (Critical Ratio)=10.888, p = 0.000).

9- The direct effect between Personalization and EBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.118 CR (Critical Ratio)=4.197, p=0.000).

10- The direct effect between WOM and EBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.182 CR (Critical Ratio)=4.949, p=0.000).

11- The direct effect between EBE and CBBE is statistically significant. ($\beta$=0.692 CR (Critical Ratio)=8.148, p=0.000).

According to the analysis, At the 5% significance threshold, all are considered significant. The estimated structural model corroborated all hypotheses, as the Social Media Marketing Activity (Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalization, Trendiness, Word of Mouth) construct explained 49.1% of EBE variance ($R^2$=0.491), Besides, Social Media Marketing Activity (Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalization, Trendiness, Word of Mouth) through EBE explained 69.1% of CBBE variance ($R^2$=0.691).

CFA is conducted utilizing AMOS 25 as part of the measurement model testing framework. The measurement model consists of 10 latent factors: Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalization, Trendiness, Word of Mouth, Perceived Quality, Brand Association, Brand Loyalty, Emotional Environment, and Customer-Based Brand Equity. A total of 36 observed variables were utilized to assess the 10 latent variables mentioned above. The standardized loading of measurement items is utilized to evaluate the internal consistency of the constructs within the measurement model. The internal consistency for each construction was deemed acceptable, with standardized loadings ranging from 0.552 to 0.901, surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.50.

One way to evaluate a measurement model construct's dependability is with composite reliability (CR). The research found that the CR for the following factors: (Interactivity=0.838, Informativeness=0.822, Personalization=0.796, Trendiness=0.813, Word of Mouth=0.806, Perceived Quality=0.906, Brand Association=0.843, Brand Loyalty=0.852, Emotional Environment=0.918, and EBE = 0.937).

Always the average variance extracted AVE should be more than 0.50. Hair et al. 2019. The (AVE) of the constructs (Interactivity=0.633, Informativeness =0.607, Personalization=0.567, Trendiness = 0.593, Word of Mouth=0.584, Perceived Quality= 0.708, Brand Association= 0.574, Brand Loyalty= 0.596, Emotional Environment=0.737 and EBE = 0.750) are more than 0.500 overall. The generally good measurement findings suggest that one may evaluate the structural model.

## Measurement Model Result

Using the AMOS program, the ten factors were analyzed by CFA. The value of DF was 552, which is not the expected value, and the value of N2/DF is 1.808, which is below the expected value of 3.0. (It ought to be less than 0.08), the RMSEA came out at.041. A score of 1.0 implies a perfect fit, and the TLI index

was.950, which is quite near to that. The CFI value was.956. There is strong support for the factor structure found using CFA in the measurement models, as all indices are close to 1.0 in CFA.

### Structural Model

The structural model was subsequently evaluated to examine the proposed links among the variables. This entailed assessing the direct impacts of SMM operations on EBE and the direct and indirect influences of EBE on CBBE. The mediating function of EBE was evaluated by analyzing the indirect impacts of SMM activities on CBBE via e-brand experience. The importance of the path coefficients was evaluated by t-tests. The comprehensive model fit was assessed utilizing multiple fit indices.
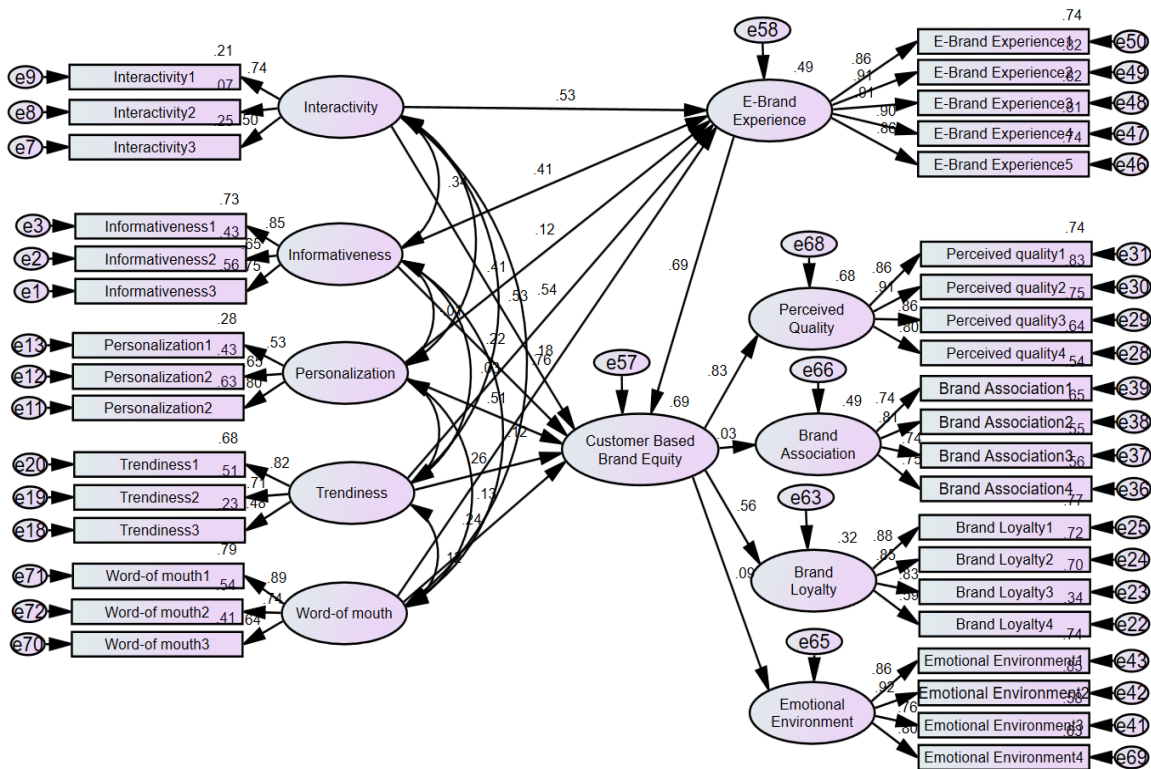


**Figure (2) Structural Model**

### Structural Model Validity

the outcomes obtained from the structural model utilizing AMOS software reveal that DF was 574, which deviates from the anticipated value, and that $N2/DF$ is 2.601, falling short of the projected value of 3.0. The RMSEA was calculated at 0.058, which is below the threshold of 0.08. A TLI value of 0.900 is close to 1.0, signifying an excellent fit. A CFI of 0.909 was identified. Table 2 indicates that all CFA indices approximate 1.0, signifying that the measurement models corroborate the factor structure discovered by CFA.

### Results and Findings

The findings and hypothesis testing revealed that the independent variable (SMM activities) has a significant positive effect on CBBE (dependent

*Table 2: Structural Model - Final Result*

| Goodness of Fit Measures | Name of Index | Level of Acceptance | Model Result | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | $c^2$ | $> 0.05$ | 1493.249 | Accepted |
| Degrees of Freedom | DF | $\geq 0$ | 574 | Accepted |
| Chi-Square/ Degrees of Freedom | $c^2/DF$ | $\leq 3$ | 2.601 | Accepted |
| Comparative Fit' Index | CFI | $\geq .90$ | .909 | Accepted |
| Tucker Lewis Index | TLI | $\geq .90$ | .900 | Accepted |
| Root Mean Square Error of Approximation | RMSEA | $<.08$ | .058 | Accepted |

variable) in the International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities, SMM activities have a positive effect on CBBE, SMM activities have a positive effect on E-Brand Experience. EBE has a positive effect on CBBE Finally, in the International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities., EBE mediates the relationship between SMM activities and CBBE in the following ways:

**The first objective is** to investigate the relationship between SMM activities and CBBE and **H$_1$:** it is expected that SMM activities have an impact on CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities. The findings reveal that SMM activities have a substantial direct association with CBBE. This is consistent with (Dananjoyo, 2024; Sohaib et al., 2022; Phan et al., 2022; Shuyi et al., 2022; Faisal & Ekawanto, 2021; Haudi et al. (2022; Malarvizhi et al, 2022; Ebrahim, 2020; Amoako et al., 2019; Godey et al., 2015). Studies have shown that brands that actively engage with their social media followers experience increased brand awareness, improved brand image, and stronger brand loyalty (Ibrahim et al., 2021). This engagement fosters a sense of community and strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and the consumer, ultimately leading to increased brand equity (Gómez et al., 2019). However, the effectiveness of interactivity depends on the quality of the interaction. Superficial or insincere interactions can negatively impact brand perception (Gómez et al., 2019).

Further, studies have found a positive correlation between the informativeness of SMMA and brand awareness, brand image, and brand equity (Poturak et al., 2019). However, the effectiveness of informative content depends on its relevance and quality. Irrelevant or poorly presented information can be detrimental to brand equity (Poturak et al., 2019). Hence, this research postulates that effective social media marketing activities are more likely to drive consumer-based brand equity.

In the same vein, personalized communication enhances the student experience by making them feel valued and understood (Malarvizhi et al., 2022). This can involve using targeted advertising, segmenting audiences based on interests and demographics, and tailoring content to specific groups. Personalized messages and offers can improve engagement and loyalty, resulting in stronger brand equity (Wang, 2019). In addition to that, staying current with social media trends is important for attracting the attention of the target audience (Amoako et al., 2019). This involves using popular hashtags, participating in relevant challenges, and adapting content formats to match current trends. Trendy content increases visibility and appeal, positively influencing brand awareness and image (Koay et al., 2020).

Furthermore, E-WOM, generated by current students and alumni, plays a significant role in shaping brand perceptions (Aji et al., 2020; Poturak et al., 2019). Positive eWOM can influence prospective students' purchase intentions and build trust in the university. Encouraging student reviews and testimonials can be a valuable tool for improving brand equity.

**The second objective is** to test the relationship between SMM activities and E-Brand Experience in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities and **H$_2$:** it is expected that SMM activities have an impact on EBE in the International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities. The findings reveal that SMM activities have a significantly positive effect on the E-Brand Experience. This result is in the same vein as (Sharmin et al., 2021; Appiah et al., 2019; Smilansky, 2017; Sprosen, 2014; Sahin et al., 2011; Brakus et al., 2009). Moreover, the literature provided a strong positive relationship between SMMAs and e-brand experience (Dananjoyo, 2024; Godey et al., 2015). Studies have shown that effective SMMAs can enhance brand awareness, build positive brand image, foster trust, and increase customer satisfaction (Sohaib et al., 2022; Phan et al., 2022). These positive effects, in turn, can lead to increased purchase intentions and brand loyalty (Shuyi et al., 2022; Faisal & Ekawanto, 2021).

**The third objective is** to examine the relationship between EBE and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities. **H$_3$:** it is expected that EBE has an impact on CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities. The findings show that in International

Programs in Egyptian Private Universities., EBE has a significant direct relationship with CBBE. This finding is consistent with (Ali, 2021; Varsha, et al., (2021; Pinar et al., 2020; Koay et al., 2020; Neeraja et al., 2019; Hepola et al., 2017; Altaf et al. 2017; Xie et al. (2017; Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016). E-brand experience encompasses all aspects of a brand's online presence, including website design, user interface, customer service interactions, and the overall online brand image (Alwi, 2013). A positive e-brand experience leads to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, brand equity. Conversely, a negative e-brand experience can lead to dissatisfaction, reduced loyalty, and damage to brand equity (Alwi, 2013).

A favorable brand experience, according to the S-O-R model, generates favorable brand reactions from consumers. One study that indicated that brand experience significantly affects brand image and awareness was Altaf et al. (2017). Premium price is more subservient to consumers who have a favorable brand experience. Brand engagement increases the possibility that consumers will buy a product if they form an emotional connection with the brand (Dwivedi, 2015).

Additionally, satisfaction, brand trust, and brand loyalty were all found to be significantly positively impacted by brand experience (Sahin et al., 2011). Positive brand experiences lead to better brand relationships, which in turn encourage more civic behavior on the part of customers (Xie et al., 2017). According to Chen and Lin (2019), social media marketing campaigns have the added benefit of encouraging ongoing engagement and potential sales.

**The fourth objective is** to examine the mediation role of EBE between SMM activities and CBBE in the context of International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities and **H**$_{4:}$ EBE is anticipated to mediate the link between SMMA and CBBE within the framework of International Programs at Egyptian Private Universities. The findings demonstrate a ***partial mediating effect*** of the EBE on the link between SMM activities and CBBE within the International Programs at Egyptian Private Universities. This conclusion aligns with the studies conducted by Mirbabaei et al. (2023), Anggraheni & Haryanto (2023), Lesmana et al. (2023), and Moghimi (2022), as well as Beig & Khan (2018). Zollo (2020) asserts that E-brand experience is a vital mediating variable connecting SMMAs to brand equity. An affirmative e-brand experience, characterized by intuitive navigation, compelling content, and tailored interactions, substantially amplifies the influence of SMMAs on brand equity. An unpleasant experience can diminish the beneficial impacts of SMMAs. Research by Ibrahim et al. (2021) indicates that positive e-brand experiences improve consumers' perceptions of the brand, resulting in heightened brand loyalty and advocacy.

Moreover, various studies have investigated the mediation role of EBE in the connection between SMMA and CBBE (Algharabat, 2020). Positive EBE, defined by high usability, perceived value, engagement, and satisfaction, enhances the link between SMMA and CBBE (Sharmin et al., 2021). A favorable interaction with a brand's website or social media platforms can enhance brand awareness, elevate brand image, and strengthen brand loyalty (Sharmin et al., 2021). Negative e-brand experiences can diminish or negate the positive impacts of SMMA on CBBE (Sharmin et al., 2021).

The Egyptian Higher Education sector has yielded significant insights regarding the mediating function of e-brand experience, as demonstrated by Sadek (2021), who studied 399 undergraduate students from private and international universities in Egypt. The findings indicate that online brand experience substantially mediates the relationship between Social Media Brand Communication and the dimensions of brand equity.

## Authors' Contributions

The theoretical and practical aspects of this paper are both strengthened. For the theoretical contribution: This study adds to the body of knowledge by offering evidence from a unique setting - international programs in Egyptian private universities - and by focusing on the mediating role of EBE.

*For the practical contribution*:   The fruitful insights this study provides regarding how well SMMA shapes EBE at private universities in Egypt. The findings show a strong positive correlation, mediated by EBE, between several SMMA and CBBE. In order to create strong CBBE and cultivate student loyalty, the findings emphasize the significance of investing in creating interesting and interactive online experiences. For marketing managers at private universities in Egypt, these findings offer significant practical insights. According to the study, a strategic approach to social media marketing (SMM) that emphasizes creating interactive, educational, and user-generated content can greatly aid in developing a strong brand image and attracting potential students.

## Practical Implications

This paper raises several concrete implications for professionals in marketing in higher education institutions:

- **Foster Engagement**: It is recommended that universities communicate with their students on different social media handles while paying attention to comments and constructive feedback. That creates room for Two-way communication which enhances relationships and trust (Aggarwal & Mittal, 2022; Al-Abdallah et al., 2024).

- **Create Meaningful Programs**: It is a requirement that universities translate commendable information on their global programs putting their outstanding values, advantages and opportunities into narrative. Once such useful information is exposed Brand credibility will be heightened and more students shall be attracted (Sohaib et al., 2022; Masadeh, 2021).

- **Client Targeting Message**: The students of different segments are to be created with content that presumed that they would address their issues in the case of each University social media. Communication strengthens the bond between students and the university thereby boosting participation (Aggarwal & Mittal, 2022; Al-Abdallah et al., 2024).

- **Stimulate New Business**: Students who are hired for international programs are supposed to be activated so that through their social networks they can communicate the highlights of their impressions as well as the testimonials through social media. Positive word of mouth is a forecastable phenomenon that greatly affects the views and choices of potential students (Dhewi & Kurnianto, 2023; Amalia et al., 2021).

## Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered. *First*, the sample is limited to students enrolled in international programs at Egyptian private universities. The findings may not be generalizable to other contexts or student populations. Future research should explore the generalizability of these findings across different geographic regions, university types, and program types. *Second*, the study employs a cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between SMM activities and CBBE, as well as the mediating role of EBE in the International Programs in Egyptian Private Universities. As a consequence of this, the study only offers a picture of a single instant in time. This suggests that the findings of this paper are only useful under certain conditions, including when external factors such as governmental regulations, economic activity, the competitive climate, and so on are unaffected. *Third*, the study focuses on a limited set of SMM activities. Future research could explore the impact of other SMM activities, such as influencer marketing and paid advertising. *Finally*, the study did not consider the role of other factors, such as institutional reputation and program quality, that might influence CBBE. Future research should incorporate these factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of CBBE.

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