

The Effect of Customer Social Participation in Hotel Social Media Brand Communities on Consumer-Based Brand Equity and Advocacy

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Abstract

Brand equity brings about a plethora of positive outcomes for customers (e.g., customer brand advocacy, consumer preference, brand choice, and positive word-of-mouth) and for organizations (such as brand reputation, market success, and market share). Despite the importance of brand equity in hotels, there are few previous studies in the field that have examined hotel brand equity and the factors that influence it. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate brand equity in hotels and identify the factors that affect it, such as customer social participation (CSP). Additionally, the research aimed to examine the impact of brand equity on customer brand advocacy. For accomplishing these objectives and testing the study hypotheses, the questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The questionnaire forms were distributed to a convenience sample of 760 customers from 19 investigated hotels in Greater Cairo. However, 456 valid questionnaires were analyzed, with a response rate of 60 percent. The main results showed that CSP was found to positively influence all five dimensions of brand equity. Furthermore, the results showed that brand equity positively affects brand advocacy. Therefore, hotel practitioners should continue to work on improving the areas of CSP in social media brand communities (SMBC), brand equity, and customer brand advocacy by actively managing their own SMBC, focusing on various gratifications obtained in the context of social media (e.g., incentives), and enhancing the brand communities, which smooth the progress of customer brand advocacy.

Keywords: Brand equity; brand advocacy; brand community; customer social participation; social media.

Introduction

This research involves three variables, which are consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), customer brand advocacy, and CSP. Brand equity is defined as a group of intangible assets (such as perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and brand awareness) that add to or subtract from the value provided to the customer when selecting a branded product or service (Llopis-Amorós *et al.*, 2019; Phung *et al.* 2019; Huerta-Álvarez *et al.*, 2020). CBBE is based on how customers feel about and respond to the brand through social media (Chi *et al.*, 2020; Veloutsou *et al.*, 2020). CBBE refers to the effect of marketing on customers' knowledge of the brand from their point of view and their reactions to that knowledge (Deepa and Baral, 2021; Arya *et al.*, 2022).

High brand equity leads to better customer loyalty, word of mouth, and cross-selling (Rambocas and Arjoon, 2020). In addition, it achieves a kind of added value for products that contribute to the company's long-term interests and capacities (Girard and Pinar, 2020). Moreover, higher levels of brand equity improve the company's market reputation (Liu and Jiang, 2020), increase cash flow, and boost its competitive advantage (Marques *et al.*, 2020). It also creates competitive advantages for the company by decreasing its

exposure to competition and crises (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). Hence, it is important to increase the level of brand equity in hotels and identify the factors affecting it, such as CSP, which is a new concept that has appeared with the growth of social media (Lakmali *et al.*, 2021).

CSP is a behavioral construct. It is a concept that can be visualized in many different ways that involve unintentionally participating in brand communities, such as searching for information (Kamboj *et al.*, 2018), and deliberately engaging with the brand community, e.g., providing evaluation (Hwang *et al.*, 2018). CSP can achieve many benefits for both hotels and customers (Merz *et al.*, 2018). Concerning hotels, it influences the brand in different aspects, such as brand equity, brand loyalty, brand trust, and so on (Kamboj *et al.*, 2018). Besides, CSP in the activities of the online brand community helps reduce marketing costs. In terms of customers, CSP also brings many benefits; for example, customers can better control their experiences with the brand and improve relational communications (Carlson *et al.*, 2019). Besides, CSP strengthens customers' interactions with the organization (Algharabat *et al.*, 2020; Hurtak *et al.*, 2022; Alaei *et al.*, 2022).

Although CSP in SMBC brings many benefits to the organization and customers, there is still little research on this topic (Kumar, 2021; Huang *et al.*, 2022; Khan, 2022). Brand-related outcomes are the most important benefits caused by CSP on social media. However, the topic of CSP as a factor influencing online brand equity remains an understudied topic (Lim and Rasul, 2022).

Previous research (e.g., Carlson *et al.*, 2019; Barari *et al.*, 2020) has emphasized that there is a need for further exploration of causal relationships between CSP and other relevant constructs in SMBC. Few studies have investigated how CSP directly affects brand equity in the tourism and hospitality industries (Kamboj, 2020; Arya *et al.*, 2022; Shin and Perdue, 2022).

This study responds to the call of previous researchers (Gong, 2018; Nardi *et al.*, 2020; Kumar, 2021) who confirmed that the antecedents and outcomes of CSP on social media are understudied. Besides, Yi *et al.* (2021) and Lim and Rasul (2022) recommended that more studies examine the relationships between CSP and brand-related outcomes. In addition, Arya *et al.* (2022) stated that there is an urgent need for more comprehensive empirical research to examine the direct effect of CSP in online brand communities on brand equity.

As regards customer brand advocacy, it is defined as the degree to which clients endorse the company compared with other brands (Limbu *et al.*, 2020). Brand advocacy greatly helps in accelerating the acceptance and adoption of a new brand (Vashisht, 2019). It also leads to a well-established and strong customer-brand relationship that is characterized by high levels of trust and affection, and brand communities play an important role in strengthening this relationship (Endo *et al.*, 2019). Despite its importance, few studies have investigated brand advocacy and its antecedents (Sashi *et al.*, 2019). In addition, although previous research (e.g., Endo *et al.*, 2019; Vashisht, 2019) examined the relationship between customer brand advocacy and its antecedents, there is a need to conduct more studies to fully comprehend the phenomenon (Ahmadi and Ataei, 2022). Hence, this study includes five objectives: (1) to assess the five dimensions of brand equity (brand image, brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association) in five-star hotels; (2) to investigate the three dimensions of CSP

(informational, actionable, and attitudinal); (3) to examine the degree of customer brand advocacy; (4) to determine the impact of CSP on the five dimensions of brand equity; and (5) to identify the effect of brand equity on customer brand advocacy.

Literature review

Brand equity

Brand equity refers to the positive or negative attitudes and opinions that form and affect the customer's choice of brand (Liu *et al.*, 2020). Brand equity is intrinsic to a recognized brand name (Xie and Zheng, 2020). It is a combination of better loyalty, higher cash flows, and higher quality, as well as greater willingness to pay a premium and intent to buy the brand (Dalman *et al.*, 2020; Xi and Hamari, 2020). From a financial point of view, it can also be defined as an extra cash flow generated by branded products rather than corresponding unbranded products (Liu *et al.*, 2020; Liu and Jiang, 2020; Ren *et al.*, 2023). Brand equity has a positive impact on both customer and organizational outcomes. The first involves consumer preference, brand choice, purchase intention, consumer willingness to pay, brand preference, positive word-of-mouth, reduced switching intention, and acceptance of higher-priced premiums, and brand extensions (Marques *et al.*, 2020). The latter includes a positive effect on brand reputation, stock price, market success (Stockman *et al.*, 2020), market share, and ease of recovery from service failure (Ma *et al.*, 2020; Basu *et al.*, 2022).

Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE)

Previous studies indicated two different viewpoints regarding brand equity: financial and consumer-based brand equity (Köseoglu *et al.*, 2019; Iglesias *et al.*, 2019; Bose *et al.*, 2020). The financial-based equity approach measures the success of a brand by determining and measuring its financial value (Veloutsou and Guzman, 2017). Brand managers can use this approach to evaluate the brand more accurately. However, they cannot rely on it in developing strategic marketing plans; they must also depend on the CBBE method, which enables them to have insight into customer trends and responses (Phung *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2020; Veloutsou *et al.*, 2020; Deepa and Baral, 2021; Ertz *et al.*, 2022).

Brand equity dimensions

There are five dimensions of CBBE, which are brand image, brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association (Köseoglu *et al.*, 2019; Iglesias *et al.*, 2019; Bose *et al.*, 2020). These dimensions represent perceptual components of brand equity (Bose *et al.*, 2020). They can be divided into two parts: dimensions linked to customer perceptions (e.g., brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand image) and those related to customer behavior, such as the different ways brand loyalty is shown (Liu and Jiang, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2021; Xiong *et al.*, 2022).

(a) Brand image

The company's brand image is the direct mental picture that the customer has of the company (Foroudi *et al.*, 2019). It is a set of brand-related relationships in the minds of customers, which need clients to properly restore the brand from memory (Chi *et al.*, 2020). It also refers to the client's rational or emotional perception of certain brands

(Rodríguez-López *et al.*, 2020). Brand image plays an important role in building customers' brand awareness. Also, increased consumer experience with the brand leads to an increased brand image (Girard and Pinar, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2021).

(b) Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is the key factor in brand equity (Marques *et al.*, 2020). It relies on the customer's perception of the brand (Chi *et al.*, 2020). Brand loyalty expresses strong customer confidence in a particular product or brand (Algharabat *et al.*, 2020). It reduces the likelihood of brand change by determining and improving long-term relationships between customers and brands (Rodríguez-López *et al.*, 2020; Jun and Yi, 2020). Besides, brand loyalty has many advantages for organizations, such as maintaining and increasing sales revenues (Girard and Pinar, 2020) in addition to creating competitive advantages (Deepa and Baral, 2021; Wang *et al.*, 2021).

(c) Brand awareness

Brand awareness refers to a potential customer's ability to recognize or recall a brand (Girard and Pinar, 2020; Xi and Hamari, 2020). It also indicates how strong the brand is in the mind of the customer (Rodríguez-López *et al.*, 2020). It brings several benefits to both the company and the customer: enhancing CBBE, affecting customer decision-making, developing brand value, strengthening brand associations, and increasing clients' revisit intention (Chi *et al.*, 2020; Wesana *et al.*, 2020; Basu *et al.*, 2022).

(d) Perceived quality

Perceived quality refers to the customer evaluation of a product's performance and benefits (Phung *et al.*, 2019). It is how customers assess all their interactions with both the product or service and the brand. It relies on ostensible relationships, such as color, taste, appearance, or functionality (Tran *et al.*, 2020; Basu *et al.*, 2022).

Perceived quality has many advantages for any establishment, such as developing, and strengthening company brand equity (Šerić and Gil-Saura, 2019), as well as generating value for the brand by prompting the purchase of products (Wesana *et al.*, 2020). In addition, it has tangibility and responsiveness dimensions that have positive effects on brand loyalty (Pinar *et al.*, 2020; Ertz *et al.*, 2022).

(e) Brand association

Brand associations are important because a certain brand image consists of strong, distinctive, and positive brand associations. In addition, brand association affects the customer's purchase decision-making (Phung *et al.* 2019). Brand association refers to anything associated with a brand in customer memory. The more customers interacting with a brand, the stronger the brand association becomes (Pinar *et al.*, 2020). It denotes the customer's concept of characteristics, brands, or products (Marques *et al.*, 2020). Brand association features involve the complication of the various concepts, cases, and the interlinking of brand information networks (Pinar *et al.*, 2020; Basu *et al.*, 2022).

Customer social participation (CSP) in social media brand communities

The use of social media helps companies strengthen relationships with customers, increase brand visibility, improve customer service, etc. Businesses can use social media

for various purposes, for example, sharing user-generated information with the user's social community, searching and sharing information, advertising and promoting, branding, conducting market research, gathering customer feedback, and so on (Kamboj, 2020). Social media is a form of communication, grouping, or community creation (Bin-Hady and Al-Tamimi, 2021). Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the three largest social media platforms (Kemp, 2021; Haverila *et al.*, 2022; Zheng *et al.*, 2022).

Using social media, the growth of online communities has become one of the biggest trends worldwide (Lakmali *et al.*, 2021). A brand community refers to a niche community that is not geographically related, based on structured social relationships among brand supporters (Kamboj, 2020; Yuan *et al.*, 2020; Chapman and Dilmperi, 2022). It consists of a group of elements that share perspectives and interests, such as brand experts, customers, brands, and marketers (Wong and Lee, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2022; Haverila *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

SMBC is an amalgamation of the brand community and social media. It is part of the broader concept of online brand communities. It offers a popular platform to a large number of customers who share common interests related to the brand, thus differing from the traditional brand community (Kamboj, 2020). Many companies implement marketing strategies for brand communities based on social media (Sharma *et al.*, 2022), which helps them build and maintain long-term relationships with customers. They also provide a platform for companies to connect with existing and prospective customers (Huang *et al.*, 2022). In addition, companies can provide a range of information through their brand's social media community page (Zhao and Chen, 2022).

CSP in the online brand community ensures the success of this community (Kamboj and Rahman, 2017). CSP assesses the degree to which customers interact with other brand community members, give them important information, play a role in the activities of value co-creation, and engage in pro-brand community citizenship behaviors (Carlson *et al.*, 2019). CSP also includes stimulating the online community, posting and responding to messages, actively participating in the traditions, rituals, and activities of the brand community, and taking part in brand community life (Pedeliento *et al.*, 2020; Haverila *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

CSP enables the organization to reach out easily and conveniently to customers. It also enhances the processes that lead to obtaining new customers and positively influences customer satisfaction, retention, and profitability (Carlson *et al.*, 2019). In addition, CSP assists organizations with: (1) upgrading processes, services, or products; (2) informing the organization if problems arise regarding the quality of the services or products provided; (3) adding value to the production process; and (4) increasing the cognitive and emotional experiences related to the brand (Shiau, 2018; Algharabat *et al.*, 2020; Chan *et al.*, 2022).

CSP in SMBC is composed of three dimensions, which are informational, actionable, and attitudinal participation. Informational participation is the extent to which brand community members obtain information and achieve general interests that customers have in the brand (Zheng *et al.*, 2015; Yuan *et al.*, 2016). Actionable participation is the extent to which brand members participate in brand community activities and effectively communicate with others in the brand community (Kamboj and Rahman, 2017). Attitudinal participation is a positive or negative evaluation of the community

performance by the customer with a certain degree of preference or resentment (Kamboj *et al.*, 2020; Hong *et al.*, 2022).

The effect of CSP on brand equity dimensions

As for the brand image, in the context of education, student participation via the website brings about several benefits for the university, for example, a better university image and reputation (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Fyrberg, 2013; Foroudi *et al.*, 2019).

Regarding brand loyalty, several researchers (e.g., Habibi *et al.*, 2014; Kang *et al.*, 2014; Kamboj and Rahman, 2016) have emphasized that it is one of the main outcomes of customers participating in online communities. Besides, it was found to be positively influenced by CSP (e.g., Zheng *et al.*, 2015; Chae and Ko 2016; Leckie *et al.*, 2016; Algharabat *et al.*, 2020; Pedeliento *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the use of "likes" on Facebook brand pages could be an example of CSP in online brand communities. CSP in terms of the total number of "likes" and friends "likes" on Facebook brand pages was found to significantly affect brand loyalty (Phua and Ahn, 2016). Customer interaction with members of the online brand community and their interest in brand-related issues increases their brand commitment and emotions, which in turn leads to a high level of customer loyalty toward the brand (Kamboj *et al.*, 2018; Nardi *et al.*, 2020). In the context of education, students' active participation in the university's online social networks reflect that they are more committed to the university's brand (Howell *et al.*, 2017; Foroudi *et al.*, 2019).

Concerning brand awareness and association, customers who participate in SMBC seek social interaction with other customers, which promotes a sense of belonging (Eisenbeiss *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, customers can enhance brand knowledge by obtaining valuable information regarding the features and advantages of a specific brand through social media platforms, thereby assessing brand quality (Davis *et al.*, 2014; de Vries and Carlson, 2014; Carlson *et al.*, 2019; Algharabat *et al.*, 2020).

In terms of perceived quality, customer interaction with a brand helps to learn about its features, benefits, and associations, which greatly influence the customer experience of the brand (Ho and Wang, 2015; Carlson *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, several researchers (e.g., Leckie *et al.*, 2016; Nardi *et al.*, 2020) found that CSP has a positive impact on perceived quality.

Customer brand advocacy

Customer brand advocacy means that customers communicate positively about the brand, recommend it to each other, defend it when it is attacked or criticized (Wilk *et al.*, 2020; Wilk *et al.*, 2021), or make positive comments concerning the brand (Xie *et al.*, 2019; de Regt *et al.*, 2021; Ahmadi and Ataei, 2022; Wong, 2023).

Brand advocates are customers having a high level of commitment to the brand and emotional connections that reflect an intense level of psychological engagement. They may also enter into conflicts with members of other brand communities to defend their brand (Endo *et al.*, 2019). Customer brand advocacy also indicates the amount of time and effort customers devote to supporting and recommending a brand (Wilk *et al.*, 2021). It can be divided into two main elements: social advocacy (such a communication) and physical advocacy, e.g., utilizing the brand (Limbu *et al.*, 2020; de Regt *et al.*, 2021; Wong and Hung, 2022).

Both positive word-of-mouth and customer brand advocacy are effective brand communications leading to brand adoption. However, the first is an informal communication between customers while the second is a final test that measures the quality of the relationship between customers and the brand (Endo *et al.*, 2019; Limbu *et al.*, 2020). Brand advocacy is one of the most important elements of the loyalty ladder and a stronger indicator of customer loyalty than repeat purchase behavior. Therefore, brand advocates are loyal customers whose recommendations help attract new customers (Bhati and Verma, 2020; Vashisht *et al.*, 2021).

The effect of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) on customer brand advocacy

CBBE increases customer brand advocacy (Ladhari *et al.*, 2011). Strong CBBE, therefore, drives the customer to show brand advocacy behaviors, e.g., willingness to sacrifice and recommendation (Veloutsou *et al.*, 2013). The stronger the CBBE is, the stronger customer brand advocacy is. Therefore, CBBE as a relational factor is one of the main antecedents of customer brand advocacy (Baghi *et al.*, 2016). In addition, customer brand advocacy was found to be positively influenced by CBBE (Cheng *et al.*, 2019; Bhati and Verma, 2020).

Based on the current literature, CSP is expected to have a significant impact on the five dimensions of brand equity. In addition, brand advocacy is supposed to be significantly influenced by brand equity. Thus, the following six hypotheses have been proposed.

- Hypothesis 1. CSP positively affects brand image.
- Hypothesis 2. CSP positively affects brand loyalty.
- Hypothesis 3. CSP positively affects brand awareness.
- Hypothesis 4. CSP positively affects perceived quality.
- Hypothesis 5. CSP positively affects brand association.
- Hypothesis 6. CBBE positively affects customer brand advocacy.

Based on the previous research and the aforementioned hypotheses, a hypothesized model has been developed (see figure 1).

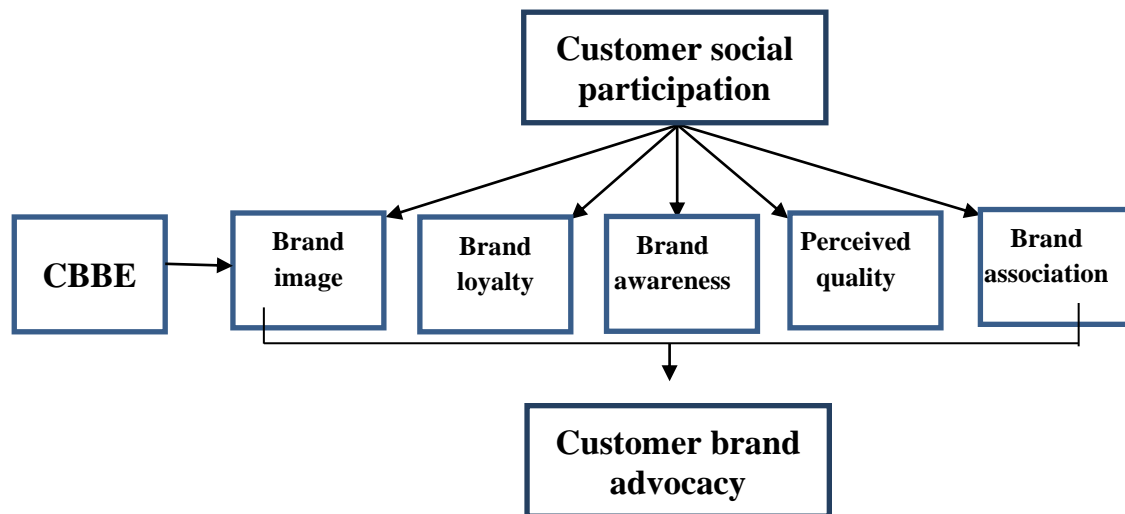


Figure (1): Hypothesized model

Research methodology

Based on the literature review, this study involves three variables in five-star hotels, i.e., CSP, CBBE, and customer brand advocacy.

Measurement and instrument

A questionnaire of four sections was designed for this study. The first section (demographics) consisted of three elements, i.e., gender, age, and educational level. The second section (CBBE) was composed of five parts: brand image (5 items), brand loyalty (4 items), brand awareness (3 items), perceived quality (11 items), and brand association (3 items) (Liu and Jiang, 2020). The third section (customer brand advocacy) included 8 items (Wilk *et al.*, 2020). The fourth section (CSP) comprised three parts: informational participation (3 items) (Zheng *et al.*, 2015), actionable participation (4 items) (Kang *et al.*, 2014), and attitudinal participation (3 items) (Agag and El-Masry, 2016). The respondents were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale in the last three sections of the survey (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree, and 5=strongly agree).

Population and sample

The population of this study was customers of all five-star hotels (28 hotels) in Greater Cairo (Egyptian Hotel Association, 2021). Five-star hotels were chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the primary reason is that the concepts of brand equity, customer brand advocacy, and CSP are applied and therefore measurable. Secondly, this category of hotels usually has well-established brand strategies for the activities of the brand community, while three and four-star hotels have almost no such strategies. Thirdly, five-star hotel customers are likely to be actively involved in a variety of five-star hotels' brand community activities compared to the other categories of hotels.

The 28 five-star hotels were contacted to explain the purpose of the research and to request permission to collect the data. However, only 19 hotels agreed to distribute the survey to their customers. Because the total number of consumers in the 19 hotels was unlimited, the sample size was calculated using Freund and Wilson's (1997) equation:

$$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 p(1-p)}{(d)^2}$$

Where:

n: The required sample size;

z: The value of the standardized normal variant corresponding to the level of the significance

α : Probability of type 1 error

p: Estimated prevalence

d: The rate of errors in the population

Using the above equation, a convenience sample of 760 customers can be selected. A convenience sample refers to a number of respondents that is easily accessible (Kowalczyk, 2015). Probability sampling was not used in this study as the study population could not be accurately determined. Throughout the period from January to March 2022, the questionnaires were distributed among the selected hotels. A total of 456 forms were analyzed, while 304 forms were excluded, representing a response rate of 60 percent which can be considered an acceptable percentage (Baruch and Holtom, 2008).

Validity and reliability of the study instrument

In terms of the validity of the survey scales, the questionnaire was piloted on a sample of 20 customers to check its content validity. The questionnaire was also pre-tested by handing it over to 5 marketing managers and 3 professors in the hotel studies department. Comments and suggestions obtained from the pre-test regarding content, measurement, wording, language, and design of the questionnaire were considered in the final form. In addition, all scales in this study were adopted from previous studies (e.g., Liu and Jiang, 2020) where they were used and tested. This empirical evidence also validates the instrument used in the study (Pallant, 2020). As regards reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to measure the internal consistency of the scales making up the survey. Cronbach's coefficient alpha reveals high credibility if its value is above .7 (Hair *et al.*, 2006). In this research, all values of Cronbach's coefficient alpha for all the three variables representing CSP, CBBE, and customer brand advocacy were more than .7 which pointed out that the data collection tool was reliable.

Data analysis

Data analysis depended on using the SPSS package (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version (25) to analyze the data. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for all items in the research instrument. Pearson correlation coefficient was used at a significance level of 5% to find the relationship among all variables in the study (i.e., CBBE, customer brand advocacy, and CSP). Besides, the hierarchal multiple regression was used to investigate the impact of CSP on CBBE dimensions as well as to identify the influence of CBBE on customer brand advocacy.

Results and discussion

Sample characteristics

The questionnaire involved three elements concerning the respondents' demographic characteristics, i.e., gender, age, and educational level. Regarding gender, 65.5 % of hotel customers were male and 34.5 % of them were female. With regards to age, about 45 % of the respondents were over 55 years old; approximately 40% of them were aged from 35 to 55 years; while about 15% of them were aged 18 to less than 35 years. Concerning educational level, the majority of customers (75%) graduated from university, 10% of them graduated from high school, and only 15 % of them were post-graduates.

A descriptive analysis of CBBE dimensions, CSP, and customer brand advocacy

The descriptive analysis was performed as shown in table 1 to determine customers' perceptions with regard to all variables of the study, i.e., CBBE, CSP, and customer brand advocacy. As regards CBBE, the total mean score was 3.6. Besides, its five dimensions (i.e., brand image, brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association) had mean scores of 3.8, 3.5, 3.5, 3.5, and 3.7, respectively. These results showed that all brand equity dimensions have average scores that are not very high (less than four), so hotel management should pay more attention to these dimensions. Similarly, these findings were emphasized by several preceding researchers (e.g., Phung *et al.*, 2019; Huerta-Alvarez *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, the results contradict with those of Liu *et al.* (2020) and Veloutsou *et al.* (2020).

Table 1: A descriptive analysis of brand equity, customer brand advocacy, and CSP items

Brand equity	3.6	
A. Brand image	3.8	
BI ₁ : This hotel is deluxe.	4.1	.82
BI ₂ : This hotel provides a very courteous service.	3.9	.83
BI ₃ : This hotel offers suitable accommodation for the high class.	3.7	.81
BI ₄ : This hotel provides comfortable accommodation.	3.7	.85
BI ₅ : This hotel has a clear brand image.	3.6	.87
B. Brand association	3.7	
BAS ₁ : I know the hotel brand.	4.1	.79
BAS ₂ : I have a great ability to remember the hotel logo.	3.5	.81
BAS ₃ : I have a great ability to know the hotel name of other hotels.	3.5	.82
C. Brand loyalty	3.5	
BL ₁ : I am content with the services provided in this hotel.	3.8	.85
BL ₂ : My next visit will be to this hotel.	3.6	.87
BL ₃ : I would suggest this hotel to everyone I know.	3.4	.84
BL ₄ : This hotel is my first choice relative to other hotels.	3.2	.85
D. Brand awareness	3.5	
BA ₁ : The hotel's reputation is high among peers.	4.2	.81
BA ₂ : I have the ability to identify the distinguished services in this hotel.	3.4	.81
BA ₃ : I immediately think of this hotel, when others choose hotels.	2.9	.83
E. Perceived quality	3.5	
PQ ₁ : This hotel does the things it promises on time.	4.2	.87
PQ ₂ : The services provided by this hotel are impeccable.	4.1	.85
PQ ₃ : The employees of this hotel are quick to serve their customers.	4.1	.84
PQ ₄ : Hotel staff act positively, which increases the confidence of their customers.	4	.83
PQ ₅ : Hotel staff serve their customers properly the first time.	3.8	.87
PQ ₆ : This hotel shows a real interest in solving the problems of its customers.	3.5	.86
PQ ₇ : This hotel provides its services to customers on time.	3.3	.81
PQ ₈ : The employees of this hotel are polite with their customers.	3.2	.83
PQ ₉ : Hotel employees have the ability to answer their customers' inquiries.	2.9	.87
PQ ₁₀ : Hotel employees have the ability to set the exact time of service for their customers.	2.8	.86
PQ ₁₁ : Hotel employees are not too busy to answer their customers' inquiries.	2.6	.83
Customer brand advocacy	3.3	
BR ₁ : My opinions are positive about the brand while talking to others.	4.2	.87
BR ₂ : When I recommend to others, this brand is the first thing I recommend.	4	.81
BR ₃ : I often suggest this hotel brand to others.	3.7	.84
BR ₄ : This hotel brand is the one I recommend others to support.	3.5	.87
BR ₅ : I stand up for this hotel brand if others criticize it.	3.1	.87
BR ₆ : When others contact me for advice, I recommend this hotel brand.	2.7	.81
BR ₇ : I give additional information about this hotel brand, such as prices, store locations, or website links.	2.6	.84
BR ₈ : My opinions are positive about this hotel brand.	2.6	.85
Customer social participation	3.2	
A. Informational	3.3	
IN ₁ : I often provide other members of the online brand community with beneficial data.	3.4	.81
IN ₂ : I follow the opinions of the online brand community members about the brand.	3.4	.83
IN ₃ : I often interact with the online brand community members by sending messages and responses.	3.1	.79
B. Attitudinal	3.2	
AT ₁ My participation in the online brand community is a positive thing.	3.4	.85
AT ₂ : My participation in the online brand community activities is a good thing.	3.3	.85
AT ₃ : My participation in the online brand community activities is helpful to me.	2.9	.83

C. Actionable	3.1	
AC₁ : I send comments through participation in the activities of the online brand community.	3.6	.81
AC₂ : I spend a long time participating in the activities of online brand community.	3.1	.81
AC₃ : I vigorously participate in the activities of the online brand community.	2.6	.83

Concerning CSP, the tabulated data indicated that the total mean score of CSP was 3.2. Besides, all three dimensions of CSP: (a) informational participation (Mean=3.3); (b) actionable participation (Mean=3.1); and (c) attitudinal participation (Mean=3.2) achieved low average scores, indicating that customers are not actively involved in social media brand communities. These results concur with those of several researchers (Kamboj and Rahman, 2017; Foroudi *et al.*, 2019; Pedeliento *et al.*, 2020) who found that there is a moderate level of social customer participation in online travel communities. In terms of customer brand advocacy, table 1 illustrates that the total mean score of brand advocacy was 3.3. This indicates that customers generally had unacceptable brand advocacy. Similarly, this result agrees with those of Ahmadi and Ataei (2022) and Choi *et al.* (2021). In contrast, this result is inconsistent with prior researchers (e.g., Abro *et al.*, 2020; Limbu *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2022) who found that customers strongly endorse the company.

Relationship between CBBE dimensions, CSP, and customer brand advocacy

The results in table 2 exposed that there are moderate positive relationships between CSP and all the five dimensions of CBBE: brand image ($r= 0.46$, Sig. <0.000); brand loyalty ($r= 0.49$, Sig. <0.000); brand awareness ($r= 0.42$, Sig. <0.000); perceived quality ($r= 0.43$, Sig. <0.000); and brand association ($r= 0.47$, Sig. <0.000). This means that if CSP increases, the dimensions of brand equity will increase.

Table 2: Correlation between CSP and CBBE dimensions

Variables		Brand image
CSP	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.46 .000 456
Variables		Brand loyalty
CSP	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.49 .000 456
Variables		Brand awareness
CSP	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.42 .000 456
Variables		Perceived quality
CSP	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.43 .000 456
Variables		Brand association
CSP	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) <i>N</i>	.47 .000 456

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

The results in table 2 concur with previous research which found that CSP is positively associated with the five dimensions of CBBE: brand image (e.g., Foroudi *et al.*, 2019),

brand loyalty (e.g., Chae and Ko, 2016; Nardi *et al.*, 2020; Pedeliento *et al.*, 2020), perceived quality (e.g., Leckie *et al.*, 2016; Carlson *et al.*, 2019), and brand awareness and association (e.g., Sharma *et al.*, 2016; Nardi *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, Laroche *et al.* (2012) found no relationship between CSP and brand loyalty for SMBC.

Table 3: Correlation between CBBE and customer brand advocacy

Variables		Brand advocacy
Brand equity	Pearson correlation	.48
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	456

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

As shown in table 3, there is a moderate positive relationship between CBBE and customer brand advocacy ($r= 0.48$, Sig. <0.000). This means that if CBBE increases, customer brand advocacy will increase. This finding is consistent with those of Veloutsou *et al.* (2013), Baghi *et al.* (2016), and Bhati and Verma (2020) who found that customer brand advocacy is strongly associated with CBBE.

Regression results of CSP with CBBE dimensions

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the degree of influence of CSP on the five dimensions of CBBE (see table 4). Regarding the brand image, it was found to be positively affected by CSP (R-square = .47, P-value=.000). This result is consistent with previous research (e.g., Foroudi *et al.*, 2019) which showed that CSP positively affects brand image. Concerning brand loyalty, it was also found to be positively influenced by CSP (R-square =.5, P-value=.000). This finding supports previous studies (e.g., Leckie *et al.*, 2016; Algharabat *et al.*, 2020; Pedeliento *et al.*, 2020) which found a positive relationship between CSP and brand loyalty. Besides, this finding is in agreement with Nardi’s *et al.* (2020) findings which showed that increased brand loyalty is likely to be a consequence of CSP. However, Laroche *et al.* (2012) found no direct effect of CSP on brand loyalty. In terms of brand awareness and association, they were also found to be positively influenced by CSP (R-square =.44, P-value=.000) and (R-square =.47, P-value=.000), respectively. These results coincide with the results of previously-published studies (e.g., Sharma *et al.*, 2016; Nardi *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, this result contradicts with Algharabat *et al.* (2020) who found that brand association and awareness are not influenced by CSP.

Table 4: CSP influencing CBBE dimensions

Variables	Un-standardized coefficients			Sig.	Model statistics
	B	Std. Error	R-square		
Constant	.200	.001		.000	<i>F: 14.8270</i>
Brand image	.159	.005	.47	.000	
Brand loyalty	.197	.091	.50	.000	
Brand awareness	.211	.001	.44	.000	
Perceived quality	.101	.004	.45	.000	
Brand association	.266	.009	.47	.000	

Regression equation can be formed as **CSP = .200 + .159 brand image + .197 brand loyalty + .211 brand awareness. + .101 perceived quality + .266 brand association**

Concerning perceived quality, it was also found to be positively affected by CSP (R-square =.45, P-value=.000). This finding is in agreement with previous scholars (e.g. Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Leckie *et al.*, 2016) who found positive direct relationships between CSP and perceived quality. Besides, this result coincides with those of Carlson *et al.* (2019) who found that CSP shapes customers’ brand experience. However, this finding is inconsistent with those of Algharabat *et al.* (2020) who found that perceived quality is not affected by CSP.

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 predicted that CSP would have a positive impact on the five dimensions of brand equity. These five hypotheses are supported. The results indicated that customers, who actively participate in social media brand communities, highly agree about all five dimensions of brand equity.

Regression results of CBBE with brand advocacy

As illustrated in table 5, customer brand advocacy was found to be significantly affected by CBBE (R-square=.49, P-value=.000), confirming hypothesis 6. This finding supports previous research (e.g., Veloutsou *et al.*, 2013, Baghi *et al.*, 2016; Bhati and Verma, 2020) which showed that CBBE is one of the major predictors of customer brand advocacy

Table 5: CBBE influencing customer brand advocacy

Brand equity	Un-standardized coefficients			Sig.	Model statistics
	B	Std. Error	R-square		
Constant	.165*	.022	.49	.000	F: 15.3269
Brand advocacy	.211*	.001		.000	

*Regression equation can be formed as **CBBE = .165 + .211 customer brand advocacy**

Conclusion and implications

The study aims at identifying the influence of CSP on CBBE dimensions (i.e., brand image, brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association) and the subsequent effect of brand equity on customer brand advocacy. The results certified that there are moderate positive effects of CSP on each of the brand equity dimensions as well as a moderate positive effect of CBBE on customer brand advocacy. Based on the results of the study, hotel practitioners should continue to work on improving the areas of CSP in social media brand communities, CBBE, and customer brand advocacy.

(1) As regards CSP, hotel practitioners should gather information about customer behaviour in their online brand communities to create a participatory customer base. Besides, they should actively manage their online brand community and motivate customers to like, interact with, and be emotionally attached to it. They should take advantage of social media to enhance customer engagement in online brand communities by posting what is important from customers’ viewpoints. They should send content related to customers’ needs, values, and interests. Additionally, marketing hotel managers should pay more attention to various gratifications obtained in the context of social media, such as incentives, information seeking, and brand likeability (Kamboj *et al.*, 2018). For example, they are suggested to provide incentives (such as bonuses, rewards, free samples, and discounts) to members of SMBC who send interesting messages or helpful suggestions to solve the problem of lack of customer participation in the online brand community.

In addition, marketing managers should make the customer brand experience more interactive by motivating customers to increase the number of likes as well as dealing

promptly with customer dissatisfaction. Moreover, hotels are recommended to enhance their feedback system to maintain constant contact with the members of the SMBC. Therefore, managers should respond to their comments promptly and deal wisely with negative feedback to enhance customer participation. Furthermore, marketing hotel managers should investigate which of the three CSP dimensions (informational, attitudinal, and actionable) might be the most appropriate. Therefore, if they decide to develop informational participation, they should provide more gratifications to the members of the brand community. For example, members can be allowed to communicate emotional information (such as individual sentiments) that is not directly related to the brand. Another example is that they may also be allowed to display their personal information (e.g., real-time location) to other members of the brand community. (2) Concerning brand equity, hotel practitioners should continue to work to improve all its five dimensions, particularly in terms of brand loyalty and perceived quality. They should benefit from the strategies of relationship marketing to promote these dimensions. In addition, the results indicated that increasing CSP in SMBC strengthens all the dimensions of BE.

Additionally, managers should intensify their efforts to keep customers engaged in SMBC and keep them more knowledgeable about the latest aspects by providing members with up-to-date information about the hotel brand through various posts containing news related to the hotel brand, new product or service introductions with the same brand, special offers, and so on. If this happens, the brand will be embedded in the mind of the customer, ultimately leading to increased brand awareness, increased positive brand associations, improved perceived quality, and increased brand loyalty, all of which make up customer-based brand equity (Weiger *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, to get a high level of brand loyalty for a hotel's social media page, marketing hotel managers are recommended to increase customer activation across the Facebook page by assessing their level of satisfaction with reward systems, incentives, network quality, speed, data allowances, downloads, etc. (Algharabat *et al.*, 2020).

In terms of customer brand advocacy, hotel practitioners should build high service quality and develop customer brand loyalty, which in turn may lead to better customer brand advocacy (Kamboj *et al.*, 2018). Besides, the antecedents of customer brand advocacy (i.e., CBBE and CSP) identified in this research can play an important role in promoting it, therefore practitioners should do their best to enhance them. Furthermore, it is suggested that hotels continue to work on enhancing the brand communities which smooth the progress of customer brand advocacy because of the social impacts associated with them. Providing clients with a social networking platform can create and stimulate advocates. In addition, hotels should direct their marketing efforts primarily at a particular customer segment (i.e., opinion leaders) to motivate them as future brand promoters rather than focusing on all segments of customers.

Limitations and future research

This research has certain limitations that lead to other avenues for further research. First, the scope of the research was limited to CSP in the brand community on the social media sites of hotels. Therefore, the social participation of customers in WhatsApp groups created by hotels or customers in the hospitality field can be examined by further research. Second, this research did not identify the factors that might influence the level of CSP in online brand communities, such as perceived benefits of participation. Hence,

future studies examining the positive and negative factors affecting CSP would be useful. Third, although CSP is a multidimensional construct in the literature, this research explored the effect of CSP as a composite construct on brand equity. Examining the impact of each dimension of CSP on brand equity could be very useful, specifically in the context of social media. Fourth, this study did not explore online brand advocacy. Thus, there is a need to undertake further studies to better understand online brand advocacy because of the digital revolution that has shifted customer communication and behaviors from offline to online contexts. Fifth, future studies could assess the impact of demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and educational level) as moderating variables on the relationship between CSP in the brand communities on social media and brand equity.

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تأثير المشاركة الاجتماعية للعملاء في مجتمعات العلامات التجارية للفنادق على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على قيمة العلامة التجارية المستندة إلى المستهلك وتأييد العملاء لها

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تحقق قيمة العلامة التجارية عددًا كبيرًا من النتائج الإيجابية للعملاء (على سبيل المثال، تأييد العملاء للعلامة التجارية، وتفضيلات المستهلك، واختيار العلامة التجارية، والكلام الإيجابي الشفهي) وللمؤسسات (مثل سمعة العلامة التجارية، ونجاح السوق، وحصة السوق). وعلى الرغم من أهمية قيمة العلامة التجارية في الفنادق، إلا أن هناك دراسات سابقة محدودة للغاية في مجال الفنادق عن قيمة العلامة التجارية والعوامل التي تؤثر عليها. لذلك، من الضروري تقييم قيمة العلامة التجارية في الفنادق وتحديد العوامل التي تؤثر عليها، على سبيل المثال المشاركة الاجتماعية للعملاء (CSP). بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يهدف البحث إلى دراسة تأثير قيمة العلامة التجارية على تأييد العملاء للعلامة التجارية. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف واختبار فرضيات الدراسة، تم توزيع استمارة الاستقصاء كأداة لجمع البيانات على عينة ملائمة من 760 عميلًا من 19 فندقًا في القاهرة الكبرى. ومع ذلك، تم التحليل الاحصائي لعدد 456 استمارة صالحة فقط، بمعدل استجابة 60 بالمائة. وفيما يتعلق بنتائج البحث، كانت للمشاركة الاجتماعية للعملاء تأثير إيجابي على جميع الأبعاد الخمسة لقيمة العلامة التجارية. علاوة على ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أن قيمة العلامة التجارية تؤثر بشكل إيجابي على تأييد العملاء للعلامة التجارية. وطبقًا لهذه النتائج، أوصت الدراسة الفنادق بمواصلة العمل على تحسين كل من المشاركة الاجتماعية للعملاء، وقيمة العلامة التجارية، وتأييد العملاء للعلامة التجارية من خلال إدارة مجتمعات العلامة التجارية الخاصة بالفنادق بفعالية، مع التركيز على الإرضاءات المختلفة التي يتم الحصول عليها من خلال وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (على سبيل المثال، الحوافز).

الكلمات الدالة: قيمة العلامة التجارية، تأييد العلامة التجارية، مجتمع العلامة التجارية، المشاركة الاجتماعية للعملاء، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.