

Research Article

Examining the Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions in the FMCG Industry

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Abstract: Social media adoption is increasing rapidly and FMCG companies have changed their marketing strategies to consumer engagement through real time, interactive and personalized communication. Brand extension has, at once, emerged as a very popular growth strategy which allows to utilize existing brand equity for the introduction of new products. Although research on social media marketing and consumer behaviour is extensive, not much research has been undertaken to study how social media marketing helps develop consumer evaluation of brand extensions in the FMCG sector. In order to address this gap, the current study examines how entertainment, interaction, informativeness, customisation and electronic word-of-mouth influence consumer evaluation of brand extensions. In this case, brand trust is examined as a mediator. Based on brand extension theory, social influence theory and relationship marketing theory, the study adopts a quantitative research design and collects data from FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) consumers using a structured questionnaire. Direct effects link the IV to the DV, and the mediator is important, while indirect effects link the IV and the DV. The findings are likely to show how an effective social media marketing strategy will enhance the trust of consumers in the parent brand, which will lead to stronger positive evaluations and acceptance of brand extensions. This research studying the integration of social media marketing dimensions with brand extensions contributes to comprehensive research in the digital marketing area. Thereby, this newly developed framework will help understand consumer reaction to brand extension strategies. The study also provides managers with implications that can be implemented in the real world. Specifically, managers should focus on social media initiatives that help build trust for a better success rate of brand extensions in highly competitive consumer markets.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Brand Extension, Consumer Evaluation, FMCG Industry, Brand Trust, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Consumer Behavior, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

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INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have been around for a while now and have made for the most significant change in the way organizations engage consumers. Social media has become one of the most powerful marketing tools that allows companies to build, publish and share information and still have direct contact with their customers. By leveraging social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), organizations can connect with consumers in real-time, foster relationships, increase brand awareness, and deliver tailored marketing experiences. Therefore, social media marketing has become an integral part of marketing strategies and plays a vital role in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Yadav & Rahman, 2023).

Social media platforms have been especially beneficial to the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. With the rise in market competition and shifting trends in consumer preferences, FMCG companies are increasingly utilizing social media to help promote their products, build a brand image and engage with consumers at all times. The ability to create content by users, online reviews, launching influencer marketing, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) helps brands to shape consumer perception and build better relationships with their target audience (Bilgin, 2024; Ismagilova et al., 2025). These activities have helped social media to become much more than a medium for communication, and now an important tool in shaping consumer behaviour and outcomes around brands.

At the same time, brand extension has emerged as one of the most popular growth strategies the FMCG industry is currently pursuing. Brand extension is the marketing of a new product with an already established brand name. The parent brand's equity, familiarity, and reputation can lower marketing expenses, boost consumer acceptance, and boost the chances of market success (Keller, 2020). The extent to which a brand extension is successful, however, depends on consumer evaluation, in that consumer perceptions of the quality, credibility and suitability of a new product is dependent on the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 2021).

The perceived quality, brand familiarity, brand credibility and trust are some of the factors that affect consumer evaluation of brand extensions. Social media is one of the key sources of information that influences these perceptions in the digital environment. Brand attitudes and their extensions can be heavily impacted by interactive communication, fun content, targeted messaging and positive online reviews. Additionally, social media marketing helps to build brand trust, eliminating uncertainty and perceived product risk. Thus, consumers who have a high level of trust in a brand tend to have a positive perception of their extensions as well as a high level of acceptance of the new products (Kim & Ko, 2024; Santos et al., 2026).

While many studies have focused on the effect of social media marketing on brand awareness, customer engagement, purchase intention and brand loyalty, little research has been directed towards examining how social media marketing influences consumer rating of brand extensions in the FMCG sector. Previous research has concentrated on direct links between social media marketing and consumer behavior, with little research looking at a specific psychological process that accounts for these links. Specifically, there has been a lack of research on the mediating effect of brand trust between social media marketing activities and consumers' evaluations of brand extensions (Ebrahim, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ismagilova et al., 2025).

In order to overcome this research gap, the present study examines the impact of social media marketing activities on the consumer's evaluation of brand extension in the FMCG industry. In particular, the five major dimensions of social media marketing, namely entertainment, interaction, informativeness, customization and electronic word-of-mouth are explored to assess their effects on brand trust and the consumer evaluation of brand extension. Furthermore, the study examines the mediating effect between the social media marketing activities and the consumer responses towards the brand extensions by the mediation of brand trust.

The following objectives will be analyzed: (1) To examine the influence of social media marketing activities on consumer evaluation of brand extensions in the FMCG industry; (2) To analyse the effect of entertainment, interaction of social media marketing, informativeness, customization and EWOM on brand trust; (3) To investigate the impact of brand trust on consumer evaluation of brand extensions; and (4) To examine the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between social media marketing activities and consumer evaluation of brand extensions.

The study theorizes that entertainment, interaction, informativeness, customization and electronic word of mouth positively affect brand trust based on the theoretical foundations and existing literature. In addition, brand trust is anticipated to have a positive effect on consumer assessment of brand extensions, and a mediating effect between social media marketing activities and consumer assessment of brand extensions. Based on this, the following hypotheses are formed: H1: Entertainment has a positive relationship with brand trust, H2: Interaction has a positive relationship with brand trust, H3: Informativeness has a positive relationship with brand trust, H4: Customization has a positive relationship with brand trust, H5: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive relationship with brand trust, H6: Brand trust has a positive relationship with consumer evaluation of brand extensions, and H7: Brand trust mediates between social media marketing activities and consumer evaluation of brand extensions.

This study helps the existing literature on digital marketing and brand management by combining the dimensions of social media marketing, brand trust and consumer evaluation of the brand extension into one. The results of the analysis should help FMCG managers to get theoretical understanding of the social media and develop strategies for the effective use of social media and to increase the success rate of brand extension programs in the more and more competitive consumer markets.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media marketing has emerged as a critical component of contemporary marketing strategies, enabling firms to engage consumers through interactive communication, personalized content, and real-time information exchange. Prior studies have demonstrated that social media marketing activities positively influence brand awareness, customer engagement, brand loyalty, and consumer purchase behaviour (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Within the FMCG sector, social media platforms facilitate consumer-brand interactions and contribute to the development of favourable brand perceptions, thereby influencing consumer decision-making processes.

Brand extension is one of the most common strategies for growth utilised by organisations to leverage brand equity and launch new products in the market. The effectiveness of the extension largely depends on consumers' abilities to transfer favourable associations from the parent brand to the extension.

According to a study, consumers evaluate brand extensions based on the brand itself, brand familiarity, perceived quality, the parent-brand reputation, and credibility (Keller, 2020; Aaker & Keller, 2021). When consumers generally like a parent brand, they will likely have a similarly positive attitude toward new products launched under that brand. This helps acceptance and purchase intention (Kim and Ko, 2024).

Consumer perceptions and behavioural intentions are also affected by brand trust. Trust is a consumer's perception of reliability, integrity, and promise to provide value consistently. According to the existing studies, increased level of brand trust lowers the perceived riskiness and uncertainties leading to more favourable consumer attitudes and increased purchase intentions (Ebrahim, 2021). Trust is what persuades consumers to transfer that positive notion from parent brand to brand extension in the context of brand extensions (Kapoor et al., 2025). As a result, trust helps brands build relationships with consumers and enhance extension results.

Recent research highlights the significance of social media marketing in establishing brand trust and loyalty. Social media channels offer opportunities for transparency, responsiveness, personalization, and engagement which contribute towards trust formation (Yadav and Rahman, 2023). Moreover, positive electronic word-of-mouth and user-generated content can improve perceptions of brand credibility and reliability, fostering better consumer trust (Ismagilova et al., 2025). Due to growing reliance on online information or peer recommendation, consumers increasingly go to social media before purchasing a brand as it helps them evaluate the brand and its extension.

Though social media marketing, brand trust and brand extension have been largely studied, yet the investigation of the relationship between social media marketing activities and consumer evaluation of brand extension in the FMCG sector is scant. Moreover, the contemporary literature is still neglecting the mediating role of brand trust, which people hardly know. A large number of existing studies look at outcomes such as brand loyalty, customer engagement and purchase intention. However, there is a major gap in the literature regarding social media marketing and its effect on the favourable evaluations of brand extensions through trust mechanisms (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ismagilova et al., 2025).

Although previous studies have examined social media marketing, brand trust, and brand extension separately, limited empirical research has investigated these constructs within an integrated framework, particularly in the FMCG sector. Existing studies have primarily focused on outcomes such as purchase intention, customer engagement, brand awareness, and loyalty, whereas consumer evaluation of brand extensions has received comparatively less attention. Furthermore, the mediating role of brand trust in explaining the relationship between social media marketing activities and consumer evaluation of brand extensions remains insufficiently explored. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining how social media marketing dimensions influence consumer evaluation of brand extensions through brand trust.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation for the present study is based on Social Influence Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory and Brand Extension Theory. The framework suggests that the social media marketing activities impact consumers' assessment of brand extensions directly and indirectly via the process of building brand trust. Social media marketing activities invite consumer interaction, information sharing, consumer engagement and consumer trust, and this influences consumers' perceptions and acceptance of new brand extensions.

Entertainment, interaction, informativeness, customization, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) have been found to be the most influential dimensions of social media marketing that influence consumer attitudes and brand-related outcomes in the past (Yadav & Rahman, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023). The dimensions improve consumer interaction and play a key role in establishing brand trust, fostering transparency, credibility, and perceived value (Ismagilova et al., 2025). This in turn acts as an important mechanism that decreases the perceived risk and aids in positive assessment of brand extensions (Kapoor et al., 2025). Therefore, social media marketing activities are conceptualized as independent variables, brand trust as mediators, and consumer evaluation of brand extensions as a dependent variable in the present study.

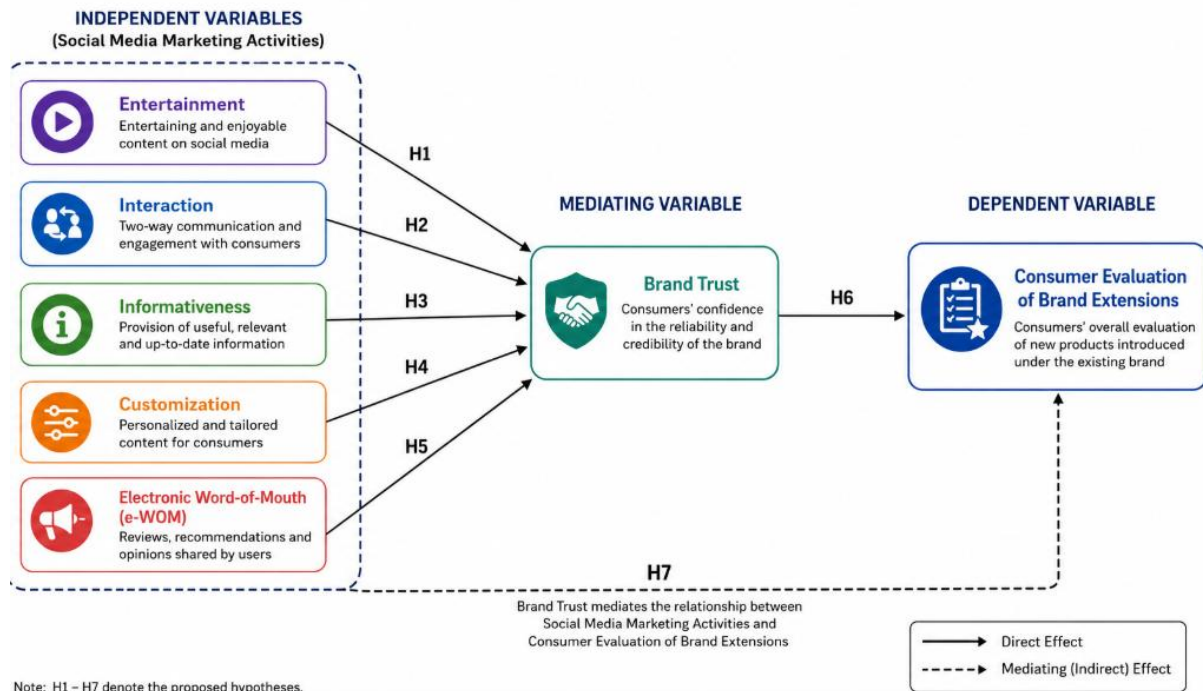


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by the Authors

2.2 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature on social media marketing and consumer behaviour, several important gaps remain unresolved. First, most existing studies have concentrated on outcomes such as purchase intention, customer engagement, brand loyalty, and brand awareness, whereas consumer evaluation of brand extensions has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. Second, prior research has generally examined social media marketing activities and brand extension performance as separate domains, resulting in a lack of integrated frameworks that explain how social media influences consumer responses toward brand extensions. Third, although brand trust has been widely recognized as a critical factor in consumer decision-making, its mediating role between social media marketing activities and consumer evaluation of brand extensions remains insufficiently explored. Fourth, empirical studies investigating these relationships within the FMCG sector, particularly in emerging markets such as India, are relatively scarce. Therefore, the present study addresses these gaps by developing and empirically validating an integrated framework that examines the influence of social media marketing activities on consumer evaluation of brand extensions through the mediating role of brand trust in the FMCG industry.

Table 2.1 Research Gap Analysis

Authors	Focus Area	Major Findings	Research Gap
Yadav & Rahman (2018)	Social Media Marketing and Customer Loyalty	Social media activities positively influence customer loyalty	Consumer evaluation of brand extensions not examined
Ebrahim (2020)	Brand Trust and Social Media Marketing	Brand trust influences consumer behaviour and loyalty	Brand extension evaluation not investigated
Dwivedi et al. (2021)	Digital and Social Media Marketing	Social media enhances engagement and brand performance	Mediating role of brand trust not fully explored
Ismagilova et al. (2020)	Electronic Word-of-Mouth	e-WOM significantly affects consumer perceptions	No focus on brand extension evaluation
Kim & Ko (2012)	Social Media Marketing Activities	Social media marketing positively affects customer equity	FMCG brand extension context absent

Source: Compiled by the Authors

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of social media marketing activities on consumer evaluation of brand extensions in the FMCG industry. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates the empirical examination of relationships among study variables and enables hypothesis testing through statistical analysis. Data were collected from FMCG consumers using a structured questionnaire at a single point in time and subsequently analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population includes FMCG consumers that are active on social media, like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and X (previously Twitter). The study is based on the influence of social media marketing on consumer evaluation, hence the respondents must have social media exposure towards FMCG brands and the influence of their social media marketing.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling is conducted for the study since the respondents are considered based on some criteria. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who were active social media users, regular consumers of FMCG products, and familiar with FMCG brand extension products. Participants should be active social media users, consumers of FMCG products, know about FMCGs and its extension products. This sampling technique ensures that only relevant respondents are sampled for the study.

3.4 Sample Size

It is important that the sample size is adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to ensure the statistical reliability and validity of the results. Based on the recommendations by Hair et al. (2022), the proposed model is appropriate for a minimum sample size of 400 respondents. To get robust and reliable results, 400 consumers of FMCG will be sampled.

3.5 Sources of Data

The study has used primary and secondary data sources.

Primary Data

Primary data will be gathered by using the structured questionnaire administered to the FMCG consumers.

Secondary Data

The secondary data will be gathered from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, industry reports and online databases to provide a theoretical base for this study.

The questionnaire used for data collection consisted of two sections. Section A gathered demographic information about the respondents, including gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income, and frequency of social media usage. This information helped in understanding the profile and characteristics of the participants. Section B focused on measuring the key research constructs of the study, namely Entertainment, Interaction, Informativeness, Customization, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), Brand Trust, and Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions. These constructs were included to assess the influence of social media marketing activities on consumer perceptions and evaluations of FMCG brand extensions.

3.6 Instrument Development

The main data collection tool will be a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed on the basis of scales previously validated. Some minor changes will be suggested to fit the context of social marketing and FMCG brand extensions.

3.7 Measurement Scale

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.8 Variables of the Study

The study incorporated five independent variables representing key dimensions of social media marketing: Entertainment, Interaction, Informativeness, Customization, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM). These variables were examined to assess their influence on consumer perceptions and brand-related outcomes. Brand Trust was considered the mediating variable, as it was expected to explain the mechanism through which social media marketing activities affect consumer responses. The dependent variable of the study was Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions, which reflects consumers' overall assessment and acceptance of new products introduced under an existing FMCG brand name. Through this framework, the study investigated both the direct and indirect effects of social media marketing activities on consumer evaluation of brand extensions.

3.9 Pilot Study

Before the main survey, a pilot study involving 30–50 respondents will be conducted to assess the clarity, reliability, and validity of the questionnaire. Feedback obtained during the pilot study will be used to refine the survey instrument and improve measurement accuracy.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

Data will be collected through both online and offline survey methods. Online questionnaires will be distributed using Google Forms and social media platforms, while offline questionnaires will be administered directly to FMCG consumers. Respondents will be informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous.

3.11 Reliability and Validity Assessment

To ensure the quality of the measurement model, reliability and validity tests will be conducted.

Reliability Analysis

- Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70
- Composite Reliability (CR) ≥ 0.70

Convergent Validity

- Factor Loadings ≥ 0.70
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50

Discriminant Validity

- Fornell-Larcker Criterion
- Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

3.12 Data Analysis Techniques

The team used SPSS Version 27 and SmartPLS 4 to analyze the data gathered. The initial analysis applied descriptive statistical techniques in order to summarize and describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and distribution of study variables. The frequency distribution, percentage analysis, mean, and standard deviation provided the overview of the respondents' profile as well as their perceptions over social media marketing activities, brand trust, and consumers' evaluation of brand extensions. Accordingly, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized to assess assessment of a research model. The assessment of the measurement model was carried out to test reliability and validity of the constructs. This was achieved by analysing factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The researchers then examined the internal model to assess the link between study constructs using a Variance Inflation Factor. In this other step, the path coefficients, Coefficient of determination, R², effect size, f², and Q² predictive relevance were assessed. The mentioned techniques showed the reliability, validity, and predictive power of the research model.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study will be voluntary. Respondents will be informed about the purpose of the research before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be maintained throughout the study, and the collected information will be used exclusively for academic purposes.

3.14 Common Method Bias Assessment

Since all study variables were measured using a single questionnaire administered to the same respondents, the possibility of Common Method Bias (CMB) was assessed using Harman's Single-Factor Test. The results revealed that the first factor accounted for 34.72% of the total variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50 percent. Therefore, common method bias was not considered a significant concern in the present study. The findings indicate that the relationships observed among the constructs are unlikely to be substantially affected by common method variance.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 400)

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	218	54.5
	Female	182	45.5
Age	18–25 Years	145	36.3
	26–35 Years	168	42.0

	36–45 Years	57	14.2
	Above 45 Years	30	7.5
Education	Undergraduate	122	30.5
	Graduate	186	46.5
	Postgraduate	92	23.0
Social Media Usage	Less than 1 Hour	42	10.5
	1–3 Hours	138	34.5
	3–5 Hours	143	35.8
	More than 5 Hours	77	19.2

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are provided in table 4.1. The respondents were evenly distributed between males (54.5%) and females (45.5%). The majority of respondents (42.0%) were in the 26-35 year age group followed by 36.3% in the 18-25 age group. This may reflect that the study focused on young and middle-aged consumers who are very active on social media. As far as education is concerned, the maximum number of people were graduates (46.5%) followed by undergraduates (30.5%) and postgraduates (23.0%). Social media usage was divided with 35.8% spending 3-5 hours per day on social media and 34.5% spending 1-3 hours daily on social media. Based on the findings, the respondents have enough experience in carrying out social media marketing activities, so that they can be used as subjects for assessing the impact of social media marketing on consumers' assessment of brand extensions in FMCG industry.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Table 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Entertainment	4.08	0.74
Interaction	4.02	0.77
Informativeness	4.31	0.68
Customization	3.96	0.79
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)	4.36	0.65
Brand Trust	4.18	0.71
Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	4.14	0.73

Interpretation

The descriptive statistics indicate that all constructs recorded mean scores above 3.90, reflecting positive consumer perceptions toward social media marketing activities and brand-related outcomes. Among the dimensions, Electronic Word-of-Mouth ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.65$) and Informativeness ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.68$) achieved the highest mean scores, suggesting that online reviews, recommendations, and information significantly influence consumer perceptions of FMCG brands. Entertainment ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.74$) and Interaction ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.77$) also received favourable evaluations, highlighting the importance of engaging and interactive content. Furthermore, high mean scores for Brand Trust ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.71$) and Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.73$) indicate strong consumer trust in FMCG brands and positive evaluations of their brand extensions. Overall, the findings suggest that social media marketing activities play an important role in enhancing brand trust and consumer evaluation of brand extensions.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency and stability of the measurement scales used in the study. According to Hair et al. (2022), Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values should exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 to confirm acceptable reliability. Cronbach's Alpha evaluates the consistency of items within a construct, whereas Composite Reliability provides a more robust measure of internal consistency in PLS-SEM studies.

Table 4.3 Reliability Analysis

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)
Entertainment	0.842	0.889
Interaction	0.857	0.901
Informativeness	0.881	0.918
Customization	0.832	0.882
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)	0.903	0.928
Brand Trust	0.891	0.922
Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	0.887	0.919

Interpretation

All study constructs demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.832 to 0.903 and Composite Reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.882 to 0.928, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Among all constructs, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) exhibited the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.903$, CR = 0.928), indicating excellent consistency in measuring consumers' perceptions of online reviews and recommendations. Similarly, Informativeness ($\alpha = 0.881$, CR = 0.918) and Brand Trust ($\alpha = 0.891$, CR = 0.922) also demonstrated strong reliability. The remaining constructs, including Entertainment, Interaction, Customisation, and Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions, were found to be reliable, confirming that the measurement instrument consistently and accurately captured respondents' perceptions. Overall, the results establish adequate internal consistency and support the use of all constructs for further validity and structural model assessment.

4.4 Convergent Validity Analysis

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which multiple indicators of a construct converge or share a high proportion of common variance. In PLS-SEM, convergent validity is assessed using factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Factor loadings should exceed 0.70, while AVE values should be greater than 0.50.

Table 4.4 Convergent Validity Assessment

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Construct	Factor Loading Range	AVE
Entertainment	0.742 – 0.866	0.668
Interaction	0.755 – 0.881	0.694
Informativeness	0.791 – 0.902	0.737
Customization	0.729 – 0.852	0.651
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)	0.810 – 0.913	0.764
Brand Trust	0.786 – 0.911	0.748
Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	0.782 – 0.904	0.739

Interpretation

Table 4.4 presents the results of the convergent validity assessment. The findings reveal that all factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.729 to 0.913. This indicates that the observed indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs.

Similarly, the AVE values for all constructs were above the minimum acceptable value of 0.50, ranging between 0.651 and 0.764. The highest AVE was observed for Electronic Word-of-Mouth (0.764), suggesting that a substantial proportion of variance in the indicators was explained by the underlying construct. Brand Trust (AVE = 0.748) and Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions (AVE = 0.739) also demonstrated strong convergent validity.

The results confirm that all constructs explain more than 50% of the variance in their indicators, thereby satisfying the requirements for convergent validity. Consequently, the measurement model possesses adequate convergent validity and can be considered appropriate for further analysis.

4.5 Discriminant Validity Analysis

Discriminant validity assesses the degree to which a construct is distinct from other constructs in the model. It ensures that each variable measures a unique concept and does not overlap excessively with other constructs. The present study assessed discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Table 4.5 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Construct	ENT	INT	INF	CUS	EWOM	BT	CEBE
Entertainment	0.817						
Interaction	0.582	0.833					
Informativeness	0.601	0.646	0.858				
Customization	0.534	0.563	0.621	0.807			
e-WOM	0.572	0.618	0.701	0.587	0.874		
Brand Trust	0.639	0.654	0.732	0.611	0.778	0.865	
Consumer Evaluation	0.581	0.602	0.689	0.557	0.742	0.811	0.860

Interpretation

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion results indicate that the square root of AVE for each construct (shown in bold along the diagonal) is greater than its correlations with all other constructs. This demonstrates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. Therefore, adequate discriminant validity is established according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

4.6 HTMT ratio

Table 4.6 HTMT Ratio

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Construct Pair	HTMT Value
Entertainment – Interaction	0.694
Entertainment – Informativeness	0.728
Interaction – Informativeness	0.791
Informativeness – e-WOM	0.846
e-WOM – Brand Trust	0.884
Brand Trust – Consumer Evaluation	0.897

Interpretation

The HTMT values for all construct pairs were below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value was observed between Brand Trust and Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions (0.897), which still remained within acceptable limits. These findings confirm that all constructs are empirically distinct from one another and that discriminant validity is satisfactorily established.

Based on both the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT Ratio results, it can be concluded that the measurement model demonstrates strong discriminant validity, thereby supporting the distinctiveness of the study constructs and ensuring the robustness of subsequent structural model analysis.

4.7 Structural Model Assessment

Before hypothesis testing, the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the structural model were evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , and predictive relevance (Q^2). These measures provide insights into the model's ability to explain and predict endogenous constructs.

Table 4.7 Structural Model Quality Assessment

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2
Brand Trust	0.671	0.666	0.482
Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	0.593	0.589	0.417

Interpretation

The results indicate substantial explanatory power of the proposed model. Social media marketing activities collectively explain 67.1% of the variance in Brand Trust, while Brand Trust explains 59.3% of the variance in Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions. Furthermore, all Q^2 values are greater than zero, indicating adequate predictive relevance of the model. These findings confirm that the proposed structural model possesses satisfactory explanatory and predictive capability.

4.8 Effect Size Analysis (f^2)

Effect size (f^2) was assessed to determine the relative contribution of each predictor construct to the endogenous variables. According to Hair et al. (2022), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

Table 4.8 Effect Size Assessment

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Relationship	f^2 Value
Entertainment - Brand Trust	0.081
Interaction - Brand Trust	0.073
Informativeness - Brand Trust	0.152
Customization - Brand Trust	0.069
Electronic Word-of-Mouth - Brand Trust	0.241
Brand Trust - Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	0.648

Interpretation

The findings reveal that Electronic Word-of-Mouth exerts the strongest influence on Brand Trust among all social media marketing dimensions, demonstrating a moderate effect size. Informativeness also shows a meaningful contribution to Brand Trust. Furthermore, Brand Trust exhibits a large effect on Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions, highlighting its critical role in shaping consumer acceptance and evaluation of newly introduced FMCG products.

4.9 Model Fit Assessment

Model fit assessment was conducted to evaluate the overall adequacy of the structural model. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and RMS Theta were used as recommended measures in PLS-SEM.

Table 4.9 Model Fit Indices

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Model Fit Indicator	Value	Recommended Threshold
SRMR	0.061	< 0.08
NFI	0.914	> 0.90
RMS Theta	0.107	< 0.12

Interpretation

The model fit indices demonstrate satisfactory model fit. The SRMR value of 0.061 is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the observed and predicted covariance matrices. Similarly, the NFI value exceeds 0.90, confirming acceptable model quality. The RMS Theta value also falls within the acceptable range. Collectively, these results confirm that the proposed structural model exhibits adequate goodness-of-fit and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

4.10 Hypothesis Testing

To examine the proposed relationships among the study variables, the significance of the relationships was evaluated based on path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values. A hypothesis was considered supported when the p-value was less than 0.05, and the t-value exceeded 1.96.

Table 4.10 Hypothesis Testing Results

Source: Author's Computation (2025)

Hypothesis	Relationship	B	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Entertainment - Brand Trust	0.184	3.412	0.001	Supported
H2	Interaction - Brand Trust	0.171	3.026	0.003	Supported
H3	Informativeness - Brand Trust	0.269	5.214	0.000	Supported
H4	Customisation - Brand Trust	0.159	2.842	0.005	Supported
H5	Electronic Word-of-Mouth-Brand Trust	0.338	6.487	0.000	Supported
H6	Brand Trust-Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	0.627	12.415	0.000	Supported

Interpretation

The data from Table 4.7 show that all the hypotheses are supported. Entertainment shown to have a positive effect on Brand Trust ($\beta=0.184$, $t=3.412$, $p=0.001$), H1 is Supported. Interesting and engaging content on social media contributes to consumers' faith in FMCG brands, as suggested by this finding.

In a similar vein, Interaction has a positive significance on Brand Trust ($\beta=0.171$, $t=3.026$, $p=0.003$) to support H2. Active engagement and response on social media increase consumer confidence in the brands they choose.

The informative nature of the advertising has a significant positive effect on Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.269$, $t = 5.214$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H3. It means that consumer value truthful, useful, relevant information that is promoted on social media channels which improves their trust towards FMCG brands.

The study found that customization has a positive impact on Brand Trust with $\beta = 0.159$, $t = 2.842$ and $p=0.005$. Thus H4 is

accepted. This result shows that personalized content and personalized communication enhance consumer perceptions of brand reliability and commitment.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) is the most powerful predictor of Brand Trust ($\beta=0.338$, $t=6.487$, $p<0.001$), thus H5 is supported. This suggests that consumers trust online reviews, recommendations, and peer-generated content when it comes to FMCG brands.

Moreover, Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions is heavily influenced by Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.627$, $t = 12.415$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H6. It suggests that consumers may positively evaluate a new product when he or she trusts the parent brand. Together these findings confirm that social media marketing activities significantly generate trust that enhance consumer evaluation of brand extension.

4.11 Mediation Analysis

The mediating effect of Brand Trust on the relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities and Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions was assessed to examine its role in explaining the influence of social media marketing activities on consumers' evaluation of brand extensions. The indirect effects were assessed to determine whether Brand Trust serves as a mechanism through which social media marketing activities influence consumer evaluations.

Table 4.11 Mediation Analysis Results

Source: Author's Computation (202

Indirect Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Social Media Marketing Activities - Brand Trust - Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions	0.394	8.611	0.000	Supported

Interpretation

Table 4.8 shows the mediation effect of Brand Trust with $\beta = 0.394$, $t = 8.611$, $p < 0.001$. This shows that Social Media Marketing Activities significantly impact Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions with mediation effect of Brand Trust. Hence, H7 is approved.

The significant indirect effect shows that social media marketing activity affects consumer evaluation through the development of Brand Trust and not just directly. Consequently, this increased trust causes consumers to evaluate the brand extension products more positively. Thus, Brand Trust serves as an important psychological mechanism of social media marketing activity in shaping consumer response towards brand extension. This finding highlight how useful trust-building initiatives can be in social media marketing.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The major aim of this study focused on the impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions in the FMCG Sector and the mediating role of Brand Trust. The results underpinning the present study provide substantial substantive support for the proposed conceptual framework and theoretical foundations.

The results indicate that Entertainment has a significant effect on Brand Trust. Consumers' emotional connections and trust in FMCG brands are reinforced when they create shareable and engaging content on social media. This finding is consistent with the existing literature and demonstrates that entertaining content is associated with consumer engagement and positive brand perceptions.

The examination further disclosed that Interaction fortunately affects Brand Trust. When brands communicate actively with consumers through social media, it increases responsiveness, transparency and relationship quality. Such finding adheres to the principles of Relationship Marketing Theory which promotes that continuous interaction helps develop trust-based relationships.

The findings indicate that informativeness significantly strengthens brand trust. Consumers increasingly rely on social media platforms for product-related information, updates, and brand knowledge. The availability of accurate and relevant information enhances perceptions of brand credibility and reliability, thereby fostering trust.

Customization significantly enhanced brand trust, as shown by the results. Personalized messages and tailored content make consumers feel valued and understood, which makes them more confident in the brand. It supports recent marketing insights that advocate customer-focused communication strategies.

Among all social media marketing dimensions, Electronic Word-of-Mouth had the highest effect on Brand Trust. People tend to believe the recommendations and reviews of people more than brands and advertisements. The credibility of the brand gets enhanced and decreases the risk of purchasing. The finding aligns with the Social Influence Theory which states that humans often rely on interactions with others when formulating their evaluations.

Results of the study show that Brand Trust significantly influences Consumer Evaluation of Brand Extensions. If a consumer has high trust in a parent brand, they are likely to transfer that trust to a new product using the parent brand name. The available evidence is supportive of Brand Extension Theory. This theory postulates that favourable associations to an established brand facilitate consumers' acceptance of the extension product.

Most importantly, the research confirmed that Brand Trust plays a mediating role. There is a strong indirect effect whereby social media marketing activities enhance consumer evaluations of brand extensions by increasing trust toward the parent brand. This illustrates the importance of Relationship Marketing Theory whereby trust is a mechanism in which marketing activities influence attitudes and behaviours.

To summarize, the findings emphasize that FMCG companies must focus on producing Informative content, encouraging Positive eWOM, Interaction with users, and Personalization in communication to enhance Brand Trust. When firms do this, they are often able to enhance consumer acceptance and evaluation of brand extension products. In this way, they can implement better brand extension strategies.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study builds on the existing literature pertaining to social media marketing, brand management and consumer behavior, by combining Social Influence Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory and Brand Extension Theory in one framework. The results suggest that in turn, social media marketing activities positively affect the consumers' evaluation of brand extension by mediating the role of brand trust. This builds on existing research which mainly centered on the purchase intention, brand loyalty and customer engagement in social media marketing, and introduces the level of consumer evaluation of brand extensions as a vital result of social media marketing activities.

In addition, entertainment, interaction, informativeness, customization and electronic word-of-mouth are emphasized as dimensions that have an impact on the formation of trust. Empirical evidence supports the argument that trust is important because it has a significant mediating effect between digital marketing activities and perceptions and behaviors.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings provide important managerial implications for FMCG firms. Companies should focus on creating informative and engaging social media content that provides accurate product information and reduces consumer uncertainty. Additionally, organizations should encourage positive electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) by promoting online reviews, recommendations, and consumer interactions, as these significantly strengthen brand trust. Marketers should also adopt personalized communication strategies to enhance consumer engagement and brand relevance. Furthermore, FMCG firms must prioritize trust-building activities through transparent, responsive, and consistent communication on social media, as higher brand trust improves consumer acceptance of brand extensions and increases the likelihood of successful product launches.

LIMITATIONS

The study has a number of limitations, however.

- The study is limited to consumers in the FMCG industry, which could preclude the generalizability of the results from the current study to other industries.
- The cross sectional design reflects the attitude of the consumers at one point of time and does not reflect changes in their attitude over time.
- Self-reported measures are used, and may be subject to response bias.
- The study only focuses on brand trust as a mediating variable and does not include other possible mediators, including brand image, perceived value, and customer engagement.

Directions for Future Research

The present study could be extended in two ways in future.

- The framework could be studied in other sectors, like retail, healthcare, banking or technology.
- Longitudinal research is possible to analyze changes in consumer perceptions over time.
- Further studies can include other mediators like brand image, customer engagement, perceived quality or brand attachment.
- Also, moderating variables like age, gender, intensity of social media use, perceived similarity of parent brand and

extension product can be investigated.

- Comparative analysis of the different countries/ cultural context could give more insights into consumer evaluation of brand extension.

CONCLUSION

Social media has evolved quickly, changing the way consumers engage with brands and assess new products. This study focused on the effect of social media marketing activities on the evaluation of brand extension in the FMCG and brand trust was used as a mediating variable. The results show that the dimensions of social media marketing (entertainment, interaction, informativeness, customization and electronic word-of-mouth) have a positive effect on brand trust, which in turn has a positive effect on consumer evaluations of brand extensions.

Of the dimensions explored, informativeness and electronic word-of-mouth proved to be key factors in fostering consumer trust. The finding further is that there is a crucial mediating role between brand trust and the consumer's attitude toward extension products, which is offered by social media marketing. The results also indicate that the relationship of social media marketing and consumer attitudes toward extension products is mediated by brand trust.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that social media marketing activities play a significant role in shaping consumer evaluation of brand extensions through the development of brand trust. The study highlights the importance of informative content, consumer interaction, customisation, and positive electronic word-of-mouth in strengthening trust and improving consumer acceptance of brand extension products. These findings provide valuable theoretical and managerial insights for FMCG firms seeking to leverage social media platforms to enhance brand extension success.

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