



## Have Brand Love Will Travel: IT's Role between Brand Equity and Attitude Toward Online Review

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyse the impact of brand equity on attitudes toward online reviews of customers by mediating the role of brand love. The study collected data from the students of various universities in Pakistan. The hypothesized relationships of the study were evaluated using structural equation modelling (SEM) based on covariance, and mediation analysis was conducted using Preacher and Hays's (2008) approach. The findings revealed a favourable association between brand equity and online reviews. In addition, the results indicated that brand love played a partial mediating role in the relationship between brand equity and online Review. This research is designed to expand the body of knowledge in the e-commerce industry. It will accomplish the need to understand better brand equity, brand love, and online reviews by the academician, practitioner, and consumers. There is rare research regarding the connections between brand equity, brand love, and online Review.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management, Workplace spirituality, Teachers, critical thinking, Pakistan

### 1. Introduction

Recently over the past decades or so, marketing practice and research have given careful consideration to the procedures connected with building a solid relationship in the middle of brand and consumer, and it is regularly contended that the brand is the essential resource for any organization (Aaker, 1991; Abratt & Bick, 2003; de Heer & Tandoh-Offin, 2015; Kapferer, 2012; Khairi & Rahman, 2022; Rather et al., 2022; Vukasic, 2015).

Organizations' branding efforts rotate around the goal of ensuring that products have a positive effect on their future purchasers. It is famous that brands with sophisticated brand equity have greater loyalty for the specific brand (Arya, Paul, & Sethi, 2022), can get premium prices (Rajavi, Kushwaha, & Steenkamp, 2023; Steenkamp, Van Heerde, & Geyskens, 2010), and encourage the retailers to provide valuable shelf space for the brands (Ailawadi & Harlam, 2004; Koll & Plank, 2022). The previous research describes the wide variety of advantages brands enjoy, with more significant brand equity (Ahmad & Guzman, 2021; Zelenskaya & Elkanova, 2021).

The idea of brand equity is of specific significance to consumer decisions. For the consumer, this additional worth emerges from the brand's part as a marker of attractive properties and as the premise for building a passionate bond (Aggarwal Sharma, Rao, & Popli, 2013). Although brand equity has been extensively researched in various products and service markets, promotions of sales and advertising (Buil, De Chernatony, & Martínez, 2013), relatively less consideration has been dedicated to the comprehension of the idea in connection to online marketing and reviews of the customers about the brands. For example, the effects of brand equity encourages consumers to write the positive reviews regarding the sales and purchase of the online brands. The online shopping trend is at an increasing rate in Pakistan. State Bank of Pakistan claims that changing the payment methods from conventional to electronic enhances online trade and consumption. This is helping the country's economy by as much as seven percent, boosting the country's GDP by \$36 billion by 2025 and thus creating four million jobs. Initially, the digital industry of Pakistan remained in its embryonic stage, but later, a steady rise in e-commerce was observed. Further, it has been observed an increase in the sale of international and national merchants to Rs 40.1 billion in 2018 compared to the last year, 2017, which was Rs 20.7 Billion. In this digital market, consumers' purchasing decision depends on the brands' positive reviews (Ma et al., 2022; Zhang, Zhao, Cheung, & Lee, 2014; Zhao, Butt, Murad, Mirza, & Saleh Al-Faryan, 2022). Researchers and practitioners expect that the number of online consumers will be increased shortly, and managing customers' online reviews have become a critical factor in brand management. Many studies have urged that online Review influences enhancing brand equity. Still, more research needs to study the effect of brand equity on the consumer's online reviews relevant to the firm's brands. This research makes the following contributions by observing the growth of online spending of the consumers, the decision-making styles of the consumers, and the frequency of writing online reviews about the brands.

Firstly, given the high confidence in consumers' online reviews to decide to purchase a product or service (El-Said, Elhoushy, & Al Bulushi, 2022; Su, Yang, Swanson, & Chen, 2022), the effectiveness and understanding of the branding process have become very critical (Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). Companies continuously try to build a solid brands to gain a competitive advantage in the market. Therefore, the companies must focus on understanding the potential factors that are not controllable by companies, such as writing online reviews that show the consumers' perceptions of the brands (Alemu & Zewdie, 2022; Keller & Brexendorf, 2019; Leung et al., 2022). Therefore, the study's first objective is to analyse the influence of brand equity on online reviews.

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Secondly, Academic literature describes that for a competitive and unique position in customers' minds, emotional attachments can play a vital role between customers and the brand by strengthening the bond (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). The development of this bond with the brand and its impact on brand equity has high significance. In contrast, evaluating the brand before consuming a product/service is difficult (Keller, 2016). Recent literature has stressed the importance of brand love to foster the brands (Lee & Hsieh, 2022; Salehzadeh, Sayedan, Mirmehdi, & Heidari Aqagoli, 2023; Wallace, Torres, Augusto, & Stefurn, 2022). Regardless of the developing significance of profound, passionate involvement in brand equity and consumer reviews about the brand, more research needs to try such connections. Among illustrations of exact exploration of the theme, Le (2021) have analyse the positive impact of brand love influence on behavioural/attitudinal loyalty. Zhang et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand love. To add to this sparse writing group, the present study incorporates brand love as a profound emotional experience while testing the impact of brand equity and online reviews. Therefore, another objective of this research is to analyse the mediating effect of brand love between brand equity and online Review.

This research is designed to expand the body of knowledge in the e-commerce industry. It will accomplish the need for a better understanding of brand equity, brand love, and online reviews by the academician, practitioner, and consumer.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

It is frequently proposed that marketing in e-commerce is generally challenging because of the unique attributes of online selling and purchasing and the predominance of credence qualities and experience (Bruwer & Kelley, 2015; Le, Carrel, & Shah, 2022; Plötner, Lakotta, & Jacob, 2013; Audi et al., 2021). In this circumstance, the brand and brand equity can assume an essential part as a risk reliever; it gives the consumers more important trust in their choice-making and expanding trust (Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Mourad, Ennew, & Kortam, 2011; Audi et al., 2021). The brand gives consumers a sign or a guarantee about the organization that will be conveyed, consequently alleviating a percentage of the issues connected with experience and belief qualities (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998; Vukasovic, 2015; Audi et al., 2021). And additionally, a risk reliever, because the brand is a wellspring of data, it can likewise serve as an apparatus for separation and facilitate the consumer decision process by making distinctiveness (Mboya, 2015; Resnick, Foster, & Woodall, 2014; Audi et al., 2016). Subsequently, brand equity has been progressively perceived as a critical determinant of consumer decisions (Echchakoui, 2015; Vukasovic, 2015).

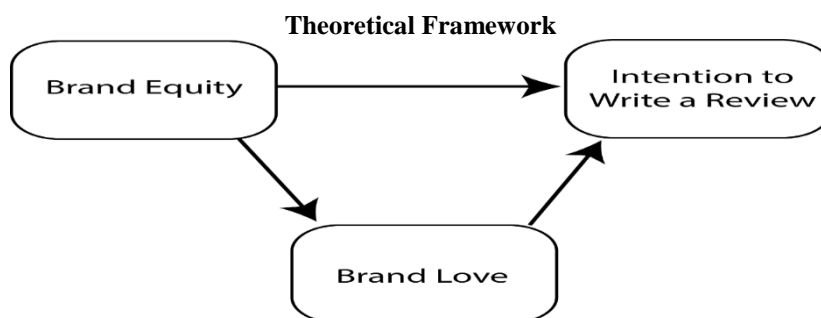
Literature shows how brand equity enhances the possibility of successfully developing a brand extension (Chun et al., 2015; Childs et al., 2018). Similarly, Urde (1999) describes how the advancement of brand orientation influences to build of the most influential brands. However, the literature needs to provide more evidence about the role of brand equity in writing online consumer reviews for specific brands. Researchers have argued that online reviews positively and significantly influence the formation of consumers' attitudes toward famous brands and are helpful in the final stage of purchasing a product or service (Lis and Fischer, 2020). Generally, the activity of social media and the presence of online reviews enhances brand equity (Lim et al., 2020). Numerous studies have explored the factors that encourage consumers to write online reviews for brands (Alzate, Arce-Urriza, & Cebollada, 2022; Ding, Gao, & Liu, 2022; Ordabayeva, Cavanaugh, & Dahl, 2022). The influence of online consumer reviews on the enhancement of the sales of a brand (Sparks and Browning, 2011), the relationship between brand equity, and writing online reviews (McGriff, 2012; HoDac et al., 2013). A further sense of belongingness, the reputation of the brand, and helping behavior encourage consumers to write positive online reviews (Cheung and Lee (2012). The brands with the highest brand equity always have a stronger emotional attachment and loyalty (Keller, 2001). Therefore, more substantial brand equity can be claimed to encourage consumers to write positive online reviews g. Therefore, this study proposes that

**H1:** Brand equity significantly influences consumers to write online reviews about a brand.

Suppose brand equity positively and significantly influences writing online reviews regarding the bards. In that case, an underlying reason can be responsible for the consumer's differential responses. Emotional attachment, such as brand love, can be one of the potential reasons, along with other reasons, to write positive online reviews brand. Therefore in the subsequent section, brand love is argued as a potential mediator between brand equity and online reviews about a brand. In recent decades specifically, marketing practice and marketing research have given careful consideration to the procedures connected with building a solid relationship in the middle of brand and consumer, and it is regularly contended that the brand is the essential resource for any organization (Aaker, 1991; Abratt & Bick, 2003; de Heer & Tandoh-Offin, 2015; Kapferer, 2012; Vukasovic, 2015). Brand love is characterized as a solid affection or profound enthusiastic connection customers have for a specific brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Bauer, Heinrich, & Albrecht, 2009; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Cho, 2011). Customers find the loved brand key and feel tense upon the brand's withdrawal (Batra et al., 2012).

According to Merunka and Alber (2013), the chances of giving a positive word of mouth increase if the consumer feels positive towards the brand. Furthermore, the likelihood of recommending the brand to friends, family, and acquaintances increases (Rageh & Spinelli, 2012). This scenario is based on the WOM definition by Westbrook (1987), who defined WOM as the flow of communication initiated by the consumer while giving his views on any product or service. In keeping view of all this, the hypotheses mentioned below are proposed.

**H2:** Brand love mediates between brand equity and online Reviews about a brand.



**Figure 1: Proposed relationship between brand equity, brand love, and attitude toward online Review**

### 3. Sample & Procedure

The researcher collected the data from undergraduate students of universities like Khawaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology Rahimyar Khan, The Islamia University, and National College of Business Administration and Economics Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan. The language used for questionnaires was English, an official language while teaching and communicating in Pakistani Universities and Offices. Moreover, this language has been used in previous empirical studies conducted in Pakistan (Sarki, Qureshi, & Rukhman Solangi, 2022; Wang, Khan, Sajjad, Sarki, & Yaseen, 2023). Collect data from students; initially, the student information was collected from the concerned department of their university. Each questionnaire is accompanied by a cover letter at the top. The researcher distributed a total of 415 questionnaires to concerned students, and a total of 402 questionnaires were returned. After excluding incomplete questionnaires, 399 were analysed and further reduced to 394 after excluding 05 outliers. The student sample was 62% male and 38% female.

### 4. MEASURES

The study questionnaire included brand equity, brand love, and attitude toward online reviews. All measures were based on a Likert scale of 5-point, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), except for demographic variables. Brand equity was measured by a 10-item scale developed by Yoo and Donthu (2001). Attitude toward online Review was measured by a 6-item scale developed by Park, Lee, and Han (2007), and brand love was measured by a 10-item scale developed by Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2008).

### 5. Findings of the Study

#### 5.1. Initial Data Screening Analysis Results

This research used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) for data screening and hypothesis testing. The researcher discovered some aberrant values outside the specified response ranges during the initial data screening tests. Thus the researcher eliminated them from the data as a result. The researcher eliminated all multivariate outliers, and a normality test was also conducted to ensure the dataset's normal distribution.

#### 5.2. Test for Common Method Variance (CMV)

The validity of results is impacted by CMV (Common method variance). In earlier studies, various approaches were used by various researchers to reduce the CMV effect, which could impair the validity of the results drawn from cross-sectional and derived data. The researcher made sure the questions in the questionnaire were straightforward by adhering to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) recommendations. Additionally, the researcher steered clear of probing queries. Additionally, a cover letter outlining the purpose and goals of the study to the responders was included with the questionnaire. The confidentiality of the responses and the researcher's use of the data alone for the research project was assured. Additionally, respondents knew this poll had no correct or incorrect responses. The researcher used Harman's single-factor test to confirm no CMV in the data obtained. The results of a single factor were noteworthy; data variance was 22%, much less than the 50% cut-off. The researcher recovered one factor under duress and used principal component analysis. By adhering to the eigenvalue requirements (i.e., eigenvalue > 1), the researcher allowed SPSS to extract the factors freely. The findings indicate that three components, which accounted for 26% of the variance, were retrieved. The results and analysis confirmed that the dataset was free of the threat posed by CMV.

#### 5.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The 26 items from each of the variables employed in this study, including Brand Equity (B.E.), Brand Love (BLV), and Attitude toward Online Reviews (ATWR), are evaluated using principal component analysis in SPSS 24v. A correlation matrix was also examined, and the researcher discovered numerous coefficients bigger than the .030 criterion. Eigenvalue identified the number of factors, demonstrating that each factor is related to the degree of variance. For this investigation, we kept factors with values greater than 1.0. The Kaiser Meyer Oklin value was discovered to be 0.862, and since the KMO threshold value is 0.60, the results are superior to those predicted by Kaiser (1974). The three components can be easily interpreted via direct Oblimin rotation. After the factors were rotated, a different picture of the components was generated, as shown in Table 1. The researcher discovered some cross-loading after running the EFA and eliminated each item that was cross loaded individually. The researcher eliminated one item of brand equity, two pieces of attitude toward

writing online reviews, and four elements of brand love while removing cross-loaded items. Even though brand equity has three aspects, including perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness, the EFA only extracted two. The four elements or factors that this investigation discovered are

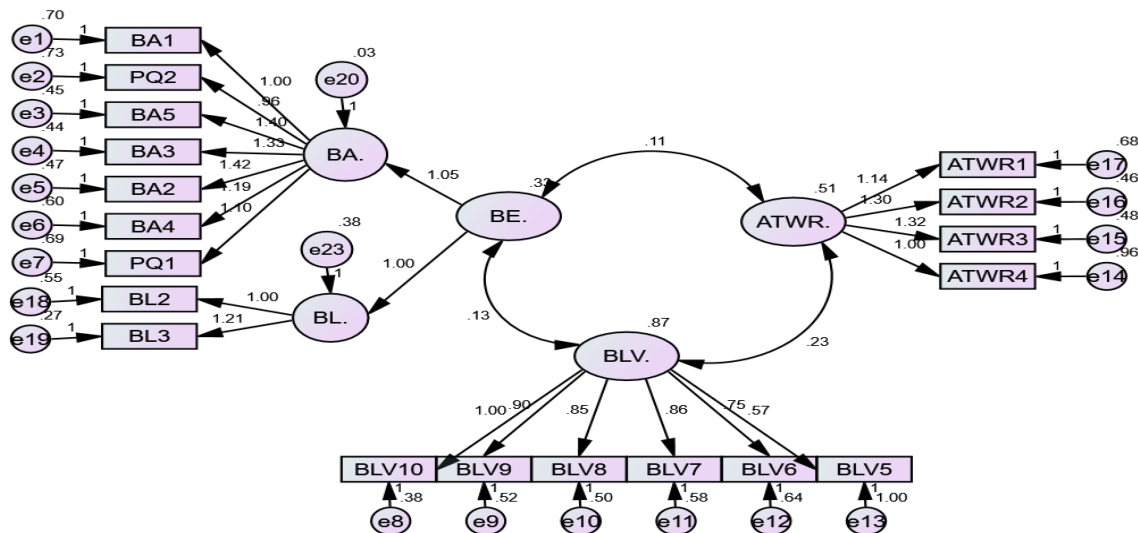
**Table 1: Pattern Matrix**

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
BA1	.811			
BA5	.718			
BA4	.711			
BA2	.710			
PQ2	.702			
BA3	.698			
PQ1	.641			
BLV10		.854		
BLV9		.820		
BLV8		.816		
BLV7		.796		
BLV6		.670		
BLV5		.511		
ATWR 3			.840	
ATWR 2			.840	
ATWR 1			.789	
ATWR4			.693	
BL2				.848
BL3				.811

BLV= Brand Love; ATWR = Attitude toward writing a review; B.L. = Brand Loyalty; P.Q. = Perceived Quality; B.A. = Brand Awareness; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

**5.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

The constructs were improved by the researcher using confirmatory factor analysis. The researcher also evaluated the convergent and discriminant validity of these constructs. The fit indices, which include RMSEA (.054), TLI (.937), and CFI (.946), show that the measurement model fits the provided data well.



**Figure 01: Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

**5.5. Reliability and Validity**

Hair et al. (2011) state that a scale is deemed reliable when its C.R. (composite reliability) is more than 0.70. Additionally, it should have convergent validity (when the average variance extracted is more significant than 0.50) and discriminant validity (when the maximum shared squared variance and average shared squared variance are less than AVE). The values of the constructs used in this study's convergent, discriminant, and reliability validity are shown in the table below.

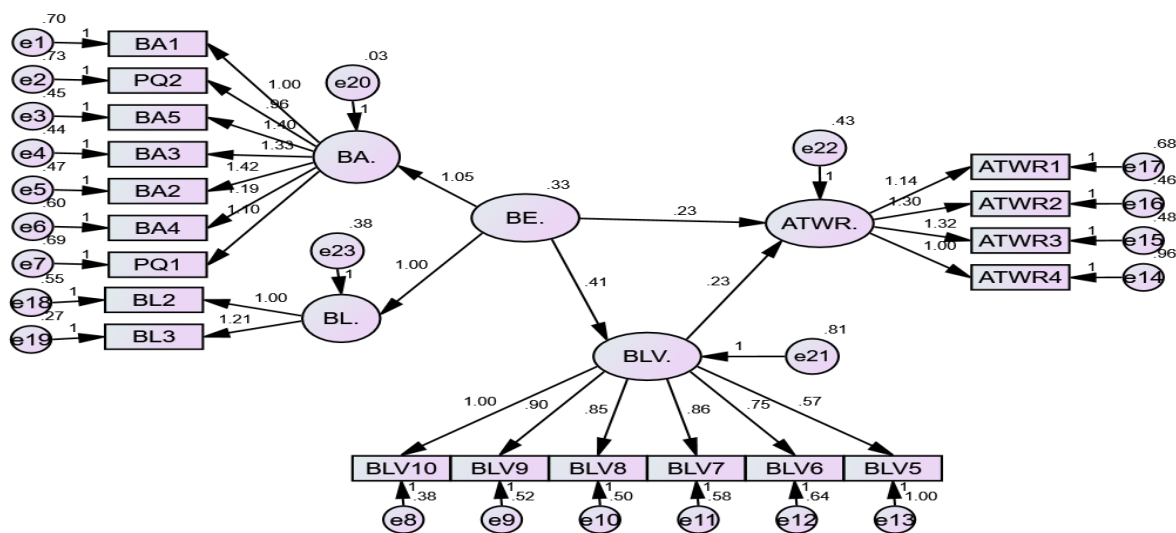
**Table 2: Reliability and Validity**

Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3
1. Brand Love	0.855	0.502	0.123	0.709		
2. Intention to write a review	0.819	0.535	0.123	0.351	0.731	
3. Brand Equity	0.818	0.698	0.068	0.254	0.260	0.835

CR = Composite Reliability; Extracted; MSV = Maximum Shared Variance; BLV = Brand Love, BE= Brand Equity, ATWR = Attitude towards online Review, AVE = Average Variance

**5.6. Tests of Hypotheses**

The researcher took a novel technique and used SEM for confirmatory factor analysis and testing hypotheses through structural regression. The most significant benefit of SEM is its capacity to reduce the likelihood of model inaccuracy, unlike multiple regression, which cannot accomplish this. Testing of study hypotheses was done using the structural model shown in Figure 2. It was clear from the fit indices that the model and the data fit each other well. Fit indices like RMSEA (.054), TLI (.937), and CFI (.946) are all below the advised level.



Brand equity is favorably associated with attitude towards submitting online reviews, according to the analysis of the standardized regression and its weights. (H1 is supported by  $\beta = 0.228$ ; S.E. = 0.078;  $p = 0.004$ ), as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Structural Regression Weights**

Independent to dependent variable	Estimate	S.E.	P
H1: Brand Equity to intention to write a review	0.228	0.078	0.004

The mediating role of brand love between the attitude towards submitting online reviews and brand equity was estimated using the bootstrapping method. Because brand equity's direct impacts on attitudes towards online reviews are also significant, the structural model's indirect effects of brand love partially mediate the relationship between brand equity and attitudes toward online reviews. ( $B = 0.077$ ; S.E. = 0.030;  $p = 0.001$ ), which validates H2. The outcomes are displayed in the subsequent table 4.

**Table 4: Mediation Results**

	Attitude toward writing online Review		
	B	S.E.	P
The total effect of BE	0.260	0.006	0.001
Direct Effect	0.183	0.064	0.004
The indirect effect of brand love	0.077	0.030	0.001

Mediator: Brand love

## 6. Discussion

The studies have described the role of brand equity while explaining the consumers (Buil, Martínez, & De Chernatony, 2013; Raji, Mohd Rashid, Mohd Ishak, & Mohamad, 2020). The current study contributes by empirically examining the effect of brand equity on the intention to write a review by testing the mediating effect of brand love. The study's results visibly show brands with brand equity got higher chances of persuading consumers to write a review regarding them. This study contributes to the knowledge stock of an emerging area by arguing that the need for positive online reviews for brands proliferates with increased online sales and recognition of the importance of online reviews by the concerned brands. Brands with substantial brand equity are now enjoying multiple benefits; one among them is an increase in brand equity due to the increase of positive online reviews. Our results are also in line with previous findings that found the relationships between brand equity on the stream of positive online reviews about the brands (Ahmad & Guzmán, 2020; Chakraborty, 2019; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018a, 2018b).

Furthermore, our study adds to the literature by incorporating brand love as a marketing strategy to explore the underlying mechanism of brand equity and intentions to write a positive review about the brands, as suggested by previous research (Ahmad & Guzmán, 2020). The results show that brand love mediates the relationship between brand equity and intentions to write positive reviews. These results are consistent with the previous research (Ahmad & Guzmán, 2020; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018a), which examined the relationship between brand equity and online reviews through different marketing strategies.

Alternatively, the brands which are enjoying high brand equity and this brand equity leads their consumer to give online reviews about them; this may result in increasing online reviews through the indirect effect of brand love, thus leading to an increase in the importance of reviews through an online platform for the brands. A consumer who is emotionally attached to the brand is more inclined to communicate and recommend brands to others via writing a positive review about the brand using online review channels. In addition, the consumer's brand love plays more role in post comments and writing reviews regarding the brand (Loureiro, Gorgus, & Kaufmann, 2017). Brand love is the consumer's passion for the brand; the consumers who are satisfied with the services and product of the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) consistently shows that there is a more substantial impact of an emotional attachment than just the satisfaction of consumers. Consumer recommends the brand to their contacts if they feel that they love the brand. So, many people show their intentions to write positive reviews to inform others about brands.

### 6.1. Theoretical and managerial implications

There are many contributions to this study. One is its contribution to the literature on branding; it provides evidence that writing online reviews is positively triggered by brand equity. In past literature, there needs to be more work on the brand capabilities of persuasion and using these abilities, encouraging consumers to write an online review. Furthermore, the second contribution of this study is its contribution to the literature on brand love, specifically on the role of brand love as a mediator. This study is a mediator between intentions to write a review about a brand and brand equity. This study ensures that there is much evidence that consumers may recommend the brand they love by using online reviews.

This research also provides evidence regarding the positive linear relations between brand love and brand equity. There are many managerial implications of this study. One is the provision of evidence that the more the brand equity is, the higher the chances that consumers will write a positive review about the brand, thus, motivating the brand to put higher efforts into building substantial brand equity. Brand managers using this study may request the consumer to write an online review about the brand. This study found that consumers will respond to managers' requests to write an online review and may write a review for the brand. However, this also depends on the consumer's emotional attachment to the brand; the more consumer is attached, the more likelihood.

Therefore, brands need to establish brand love in the consumer's mind because consumers having love for their brand are more likely to share positive information with the other consumer using online reviews. Thus, the development of strategies that are oriented toward the improvement of brand love in consumers they are helpful in the creation of long-term loyalty, as well as it increases the customer portfolio when they make recommendations.

### 6.2. Limitations and future research

Considering the view of the extension of this study, a few limitations should be noted. One is testing the model, which is tested entirely in Pakistan, only one country, to ensure external validity, and the researcher recommends testing this study in other countries. Another area for improvement of this study is the absence of a longitudinal perspective, as consumer choices may change over time, and this study's focus is on the brands the consumer is currently in love with. It may also cause concern about the temporal stability of results. There is another direction for researchers who may want to

investigate a similar topic; they may investigate brand love's other outcomes, including customer value and other perceptual and brand-related issues.

Furthermore, this model can be tested in other fields, i.e., marketing research (place marketing). The fourth limitation of this study is its narrow focus, i.e., consumer reviews are influenced by which sources? There are many scenarios in which consumers may not write a review or may write a negative review. This study does not focus on the negativity or positivity of reviews, as negative reviews may bring adverse outcomes for brands. Future research may investigate the negative review effects.

Fifth, there is a significant customer satisfaction issue between online reviews and brand equity. It is not out of the question that consumers may not write a review or may write even a negative review about some message which may come from the brand having high brand equity. Further studies may investigate this influence on the intention of writing a review on customer satisfaction.

Regardless of the limitations, this study made many contributions and mentioned some growing phenomena that may be explored by researchers in the future. Furthermore, the results and contribution of this study prove its benefits for these managers and academics.

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