

Impacts of Social Networking Sites on Brand Loyalty through Customer Engagement: Evidence from Cambodian Users

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Abstract

The investigation undertaken in this study focuses on the utilization of social networking sites (SNSs) as primary communication channels for interpersonal connectivity. The researchers introduce a novel framework describing the impact of social networking sites on brand loyalty via customer engagement, by examining the interplay among various factors: information acquisition, entertainment, economic incentives, trust, social influence, brand affinity, customer involvement, and brand loyalty. Additionally, this research formulates and validates a suitable conceptual model explaining the influence of social networking sites on brand loyalty through customer engagement, integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) in Cambodia context. The proposed model is empirically evaluated with a sample of 250 Facebook users in Phnom Penh. The findings affirm the validity of the proposed model, highlighting a significant positive relationship among the research constructs posited in seven hypotheses. Notably, the results underscore the crucial role of social influence in shaping customer engagement, serving as a facilitator in fostering brand loyalty, as evidenced by a substantial coefficient of 0.67 within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework.

Keywords

Information Seeking, Entertainment, Economic Benefit, Trust, Social Influence, Brand Love, Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the development of new information technologies since the late 20th century has signaled a globalized economy and introduced challenges for

society. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) serve as internet-based platforms that enable individuals to create personalized public profiles, facilitating connections and the exchange of comments, reactions, images, videos, and links with other users (Lin & Lu, 2011). SNSs have become a widespread online activity, both in Cambodia and worldwide. The rise in SNS users has created new ways for businesses to foster customer relationships through this digital medium. Platforms like Facebook offer businesses the opportunity to establish public profile pages to share information about their products or services, enabling users to interact with businesses and stay informed about relevant updates.

Facebook statistics indicate that approximately 60 million businesses maintain active Facebook pages globally (Cohen, 2016). The growing of users based on social networking platforms has led to the emergence of new business models to manage customer relationships in this evolving channel. Facebook, as the most widely used application, boasts a user base of 3.03 billion individuals globally (Brian, 2023), with around 13,575,700 Facebook users in Cambodia as of May 2023, representing 76.6% of its total population (NapolonCat, 2023). A significant portion of these users utilize Facebook pages as marketing tools by creating pages for their businesses to promote products and services.

Previous research has established a positive correlation between customer engagement and brand loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011). SNSs like Facebook brand pages have introduced new consumer behaviors in terms of communication, information-seeking, purchasing, sharing, interaction, and aiding other consumers in the decision-making process. However, empirical research on Facebook brand page loyalty and the factors influencing engagement remains limited (Azar et al., 2016; Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Interestingly, Hossain and Kibria (2024) have conducted a study that provides insights upon the changing dynamics of brand loyalty in the context of digital marketing, with a focus on social media. The study identifies the importance of engagement, authenticity, and personalized experiences in building brand loyalty on social media platforms. Although this study integrates a thorough review of existing literature and practical case studies, it still lacks consideration into the case of Cambodian fast-moving environment. Moreover, studies related to SNSs and brand loyalty in Cambodia are relatively scarce, particularly regarding the impact on customer engagement and brand loyalty with Facebook brand pages. Consequently, this study aims to explain the benefits derived by customers from developing loyalty to brand pages on Facebook.

The present study aims to investigate the effects of information seeking, entertainment, economic benefits, trust, social influence, and brand affection on customer engagement, as well as the relationship between customer engagement and brand loyalty.

This study is structured into five main parts: introduction, literature review and hypotheses development, methodology, results and discussion, implications, and conclusion, along with limitations and future research.

2. Literature Review

Online activities encompass a variety of endeavors facilitated by the Internet SNSs, representing a contemporary technological paradigm for accessing and disseminating information and communication without spatial constraints. Individuals can engage in online pursuits such as searching, learning, working, and communicating anytime and anywhere within the digital sector. The benefits of online engagement include reducing the time and cost associated with accessing information, as well as fostering robust global relationships through continuous connectivity with various groups, including friends, family, and other social circles. Importantly, the features of online platforms serve as crucial catalysts, enhancing citizen participation in politics by fostering diverse networks (Sung & Jang, 2020).

Prior research emphasizes the transformative influence of SNSs on communication patterns. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have emerged as dynamic tools for nurturing strong interpersonal bonds, facilitating collaborative endeavors, and maintaining connections with acquaintances. Among these, Facebook stands out as a leading SNS, boasting a massive user base exceeding 2.6 billion monthly active users globally, setting its status as the foremost social networking platform worldwide. Moreover, SNSs enable users to create personalized profiles, establish online communities, and engage in content sharing through various means such as posts, shares, comments, reactions, and likes, thereby fostering social interaction with peers, family, and other associates (Verduyn et al., 2020).

Table 1 provides a summary of relevant literature and models considered in various brand loyalty studies across different contexts and topics. After gathering information related to these theories, the research incorporates relevant models and literature adapted to the current study on social networking and its impact on brand loyalty in Cambodia through customer engagement.

2.1. Hypotheses Development

2.1.1. Information Seeking and Customer Engagement

Previous study has indicated that information seeking encompasses various aspects, including product-related information, pre-purchase inquiries, and the search for product reviews (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Notably, on Facebook brand pages, each post containing detailed brand or product information has the potential to stimulate consumer engagement with the brand on SNSs. Furthermore, information seeking behavior is notably prominent on Facebook and is positively correlated with customer engagement (Metallo et al., 2020). Consider a scenario where a consumer is browsing through a brand's Facebook page in search of information about a new product release. They come across a detailed post containing specifications, features, and user reviews. Intrigued by the comprehensive information provided, the consumer engages with the post by liking it, leaving a comment to inquire further, and sharing it with their friends who might also be interested. In this example, the consumer's information-seeking behavior

Table 1. Summary of preceding models and related literatures

Theories	Author(s)
Online & Social Networking Sites (SNSs)	Sung & Jang, 2020 and Verduyn et al. (2020)
Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)	Oluwatosin et al. (2020), Muasya et al. (2019) and Bueno et al. (2020)
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Davis (1989), Ayyagari (2006), Racero et al. (2020), and Drehlich et al. (2020)
Information Seeking (IS)	Meho & Tibbo (2003) and Asghar (2015)
Entertainment (EN)	Muntinga et al. (2011), Ogidi & Ojukwu (2020), Zhang et al. (2010), and Bates & Ferri (2010)
Economic Benefit (EB)	Song et al. (2017), Gironde & Korgaonkar (2014), and Muntinga et al. (2011).
Trust (T)	Bhattacharya et al. (1998), Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán (2005), Vizard (2016), and Jazaieri et al. (2019)
Social Influence (SI)	Tang et al. (2009), Hassan et al. (2019), Goldsmith & Goldsmith (2011), and Petersen & Short (2001)
Brand Love (BL)	Batra et al. (2012), Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), Machado et al. (2019), and Burnasheva et al. (2019)
Customer Engagement (CE)	Mohammad (2020), Busalim et al. (2019), Agyei et al. (2020), and Van Doorn et al. (2010)
Brand Loyalty (BRL)	Khan and Hussain (2019), Kim et al. (2020); Kaur et al. (2020), and Lin et al. (2019)

on the SNS directly influences their engagement with the brand's content, demonstrating the significant impact of information seeking attributes on consumer engagement behavior in Cambodia.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Information seeking has a positive influence on consumer engagement behavior.

2.1.2. Entertainment and Customer Engagement

Research indicates that SNSs function primarily as entertainment platforms, with engaging content significantly motivating user interaction (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). In terms of entertainment, four main activities have been identified: relaxation or escapism, inspiration and mood management, enjoyment, and time-passing (Muntinga et al., 2011). Users typically engage in these activities by watching funny videos, seeking inspirational content, enjoying local music and dance, and passing time during commutes or breaks. Additionally, empirical studies have shown a positive correlation between entertainment and customer engagement, identifying entertainment as a key factor influencing individuals to follow brand pages on SNSs (André, 2015). Therefore, the importance of entertainment in enhancing user engagement on SNSs is evident in Cambodia,

mirroring global trends noted in the cited research.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The positive effects of entertainment on consumer engagement behavior are significant.

2.1.3. Economic Benefit and Customer Engagement

Previous research findings indicate a positive correlation between economic benefits and customer engagement (André, 2015). As noted by Kujur and Singh (2018), users often anticipate some form of compensation in exchange for engaging in activities such as liking, reacting, commenting, and sharing brand posts on Facebook brand pages. This underscores the significance of economic benefits as a primary motivator for brand engagement behavior among users (Jayasingh, 2019). For instance, a user on Facebook sees a sponsored post from an online retailer offering a limited-time discount code. Intrigued by the savings opportunity, they click the link to explore further. After finding a product they like, they make a purchase using the discount code. They engage with the post by leaving a comment expressing satisfaction and sharing it with friends to inform them of the offer. In this scenario of Cambodia, the discount code's economic benefit drives user engagement, potentially boosting sales for the retailer.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Economic benefits have a positive impact on consumer engagement behavior.

2.1.4. Trust and Customer Engagement

In social media research, numerous studies have consistently indicated that one of the primary reasons for individuals refraining from engaging with Facebook brand pages is their apprehension regarding trustworthiness and privacy concerns, particularly concerning the handling of personal data (Kleine-Kalmer, 2016). Consumers tend to perceive SNSs as more credible and expedient sources of information regarding products and services compared to information directly disseminated by companies (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Consequently, it is anticipated by previous studies that trust plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer engagement (Jayasingh, 2019). For instance, consider a user browsing through Facebook and encountering a sponsored post from a travel agency showcasing glowing testimonials from satisfied customers. Trusting the authenticity of these testimonials, the user in Cambodia explores further into the advertised vacation package and ultimately decides to make a booking. Subsequently, they engage with the post by expressing enthusiasm about their upcoming trip. In this scenario, the user's trust in customer testimonials directly impacts their engagement behavior and contributes to driving sales for the travel agency.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Trust positively influences consumer engagement behavior.

2.1.5. Social Influence and Customer Engagement

Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014) and Muntinga et al. (2011) have highlighted the significant influence of friends, family, and social pressure on individuals' decisions to join and actively participate in brand-related communities. Additionally,

Wang and Sun (2016) observed that social influence plays a crucial role in shaping intentional customer engagement behavior. Based on these findings, Bolton et al. (2013) assert that social influence directly impacts customer engagement, emphasizing the tendency for individuals to align their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs with their social environment. In line with these research insights, it can be inferred that social influence exerts a direct influence on customer engagement behavior (Jayasingh, 2019). For instance, consider a scenario where a Cambodian customer comes across a post featuring a popular influencer endorsing a fashion brand in Facebook. Influenced by the influencer's style and influence, the user engages with the post by liking it, leaving a comment expressing admiration, and sharing it with their friends. In this example, the influencer's endorsement significantly influences the user's engagement behavior and prompts their friends to explore the brand as well.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Social influence positively affects consumer engagement behavior.

2.1.6. Brand Love and Customer Engagement

The concept of brand love varies among scholars and contexts, often referring to the intense emotional attachment consumers feel towards a particular brand or trademark (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Fetscherin and Heinrich (2014) characterizes brand love as extreme emotions, whether positive or negative, that consumers harbor towards brands. This relatively recent marketing concept has garnered attention due to its significant influence and strong correlation with customer engagement and brand loyalty on social networking sites (André, 2015; Kleine-Kalmer, 2016). Following previous studies, it can be inferred that brand love exerts a positive influence on customer engagement. For instance, imagine a Facebook user in Cambodia encountering a post from their favorite clothing brand showcasing a new collection. Motivated by their deep affection for the brand, the user engages with the post by liking, commenting, and sharing it with friends. In this scenario, brand love serves as the driving force behind user engagement, reinforcing their bond with the brand and potentially inspiring others to participate as well.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Brand love positively impacts consumer engagement behavior.

2.1.7. Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty

Numerous prior studies have conceptualized that highly engaged consumers tend to demonstrate increased brand loyalty (France et al., 2016). Research into online brand communities reveals that customers express their loyalty, satisfaction, and sentiments towards a brand by recommending it to their social circles (Brodie et al., 2011). Engaging in brand community activities on platforms like Facebook enhances consumers' perceived value, ultimately leading to higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty (Vivek et al., 2012; Jayasingh, 2019). In other words, imagine

a Facebook user who regularly interacts with posts from a local coffee shop, sharing photos and leaving positive comments. The coffee shop reciprocates by expressing gratitude and offering exclusive promotions. Over time, the user develops a sense of loyalty to the coffee shop, consistently choosing it over competing establishments. This also applies to Cambodia. This demonstrates how engagement on Facebook contributes to building and reinforcing brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Consumer engagement behavior positively influences brand loyalty towards the brand.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

From the literature reviewed and the formulated hypotheses, this study investigates the connections among several factors. These encompass independent variables such as information seeking, entertainment, economic benefit, trust, social influence, brand love, and customer engagement, alongside dependent variables, namely customer engagement and brand loyalty. Consequently, the research develops and validates a conceptual model (as shown in **Figure 1**) that explains the influence of social networking sites on brand loyalty in Cambodia through customer engagement, incorporating elements from the new Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT).

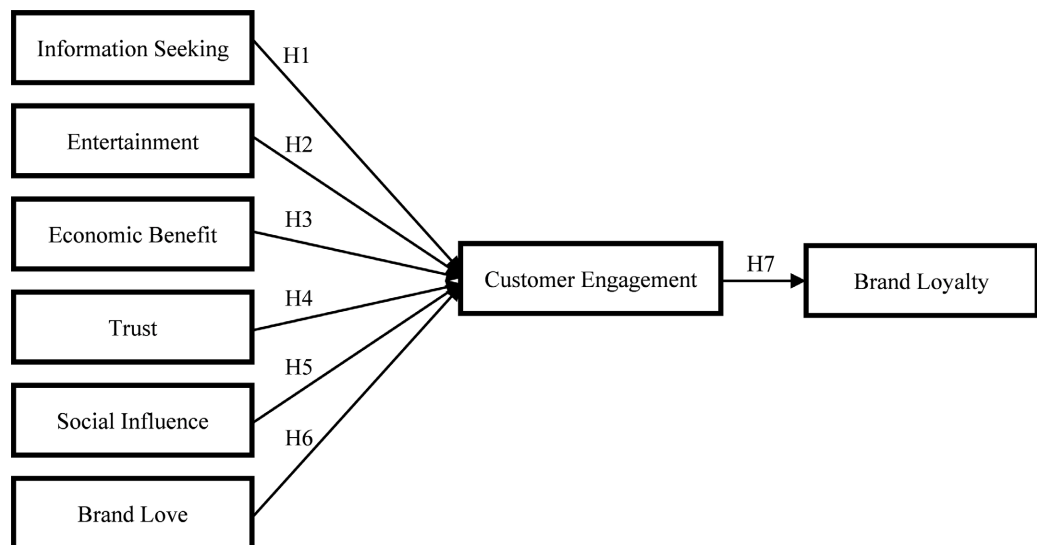


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To validate our proposed research framework concerning brand loyalty, we adopted a quantitative methodology, encompassing both data collection and analysis. Initially, we conducted an exploratory research design to gain insights into brand loyalty on brand pages and to delineate constructs and dimensions. The findings derived from this study are applicable to a broader context owing to the

collection of data from a substantial sample size. This research aligns with exploratory objectives, seeking to explore the impact of social networking sites on brand loyalty. In terms of the quantitative approach, we targeted respondents who have either purchased or engaged with products advertised on Facebook's brand pages. The selection of respondents for the survey questionnaire was based on the study's locale situated in Phnom Penh.

3.2. Sample Sizes and Data Collection

Following the recommendation from [Bowerman et al. \(2016\)](#), for an unknown population, at least 196 samples were required for a quantitative study to represent the whole population. To ensure the representativeness of findings, the research attempted to collect 400 samples for observations. In this paper, several research techniques can be utilized for data collection, including convenient sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling. Convenient sampling is utilized to collect data from readily available population members, snowball sampling involves participants identifying others to join the sample, and purposive sampling selects individuals based on population characteristics and study objectives. Data collection involves gathering information from target respondents on relevant variables. Both primary and secondary data collection techniques are employed, with primary data gathered through a survey questionnaire distributed to target respondents, and secondary data collected from previous research studies, journal articles, working papers, and relevant books.

3.3. Questionnaire Items

In this study, a self-administered survey questionnaire was developed and distributed through social media platforms like Messenger and Telegram to 400 target respondents, who are customers with experience purchasing products from brand pages on Facebook. The study's survey instrument comprising 34 measurement items was created. Information seeking was evaluated using 4 items (IS1:IS4) adapted from [Asghar \(2015\)](#). Entertainment was assessed with 4 items (EN1:EN4) sourced from [Asghar \(2015\)](#) and [Gummerus et al. \(2012\)](#). Economic benefit was measured using 3 items (EB1:EB3) adapted from [Azar et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Gummerus et al. \(2012\)](#). Trust was evaluated with 4 items (T1:T4) obtained from [André \(2015\)](#). Social influence was assessed using 4 items (SI1:SI4) adapted from [Azar et al. \(2016\)](#). Brand love was measured with 5 items (BL1:BL5) sourced from [André \(2015\)](#). Customer engagement was measured using 7 items (CE1:CE7) obtained from [André \(2015\)](#) and [Schivinski et al. \(2016\)](#). Finally, brand loyalty was assessed with 3 items (BRL1:BRL3) sourced from [Jahn and Kunz \(2012\)](#). All questionnaire items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, spanning from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." In addition, the study conducted a pilot study on 40 targeted respondents to ensure the validity of questionnaire items used in the study.

4. Research Results

4.1. Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 400 survey questionnaires delivered to targeted respondents who are Facebook users and have experienced of buying products online via Facebook's band pages. However, only 302 responses were received at the end of data collection. After data cleansing, 250 samples were feasible for data analysis. Among them, 168 respondents identified as female, constituting 67.1% of the sample, while 82 respondents identified as male, representing 32.9%. This suggests a higher representation of women in the study compared to men. Regarding income distribution, 17.5% of respondents reported earning more than \$501 - \$1000+ per month, followed by 19.5% earning between \$301 - \$500; 7% earned between \$201 - \$300; and 56% of them got earning less than or equal to \$200 per month. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fell within the 21 to 25 age range (50.2%), followed by those aged 18 to 20 (38.5%), and 26 to 30 (11.3%). Furthermore, the education level distribution of the respondents revealed that 86.7% had a bachelor degree, 8.1% got a high school certificate, and 5.2% graduated master's degree.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Standard deviations were computed to evaluate the extent of variability, while mean scores were computed for each statement corresponding to the eight research constructs. As displayed in **Table 2**, mean scores varied from 3.145 to 3.948, indicating diverse levels of concurrence among participants. This variance may stem from specific statements carrying favorable implications, prompting respondents to express agreement. Additionally, standard deviation values ranged from 0.752 to 1.033, indicating subtle differences in responses among participants.

4.3. Factor Analysis and Reliability Test

To ascertain the reliability and dimensionality of the research constructs, the collected data underwent analysis using SPSS 25 software. Specifically, the researcher utilized this software to conduct purification processes, including factor analysis and reliability testing. In **Table 3**, the study comprised 34 questionnaire items, of which 32 had a reliability coefficient equal to or greater than 0.60. However, two questionnaire items (IS1 and EN4) with reliability coefficients below 0.60 were excluded from the analysis.

4.4. Correlation Matrix

A correlation matrix was employed to determine the association between the mean value of each construct. The analysis result in **Table 4** revealed significant positive correlation coefficients ranging from 0.330 to 0.734. Notably, medium-strength correlations were observed between information seeking and customer

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistics.

Item Code	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information Seeking			
IS1	In order to know more about a brand or store, I feel that I have to like its page.	3.759	0.815
IS2	I think reading Facebook newsfeed is informative.	3.889	0.797
IS3	I use Facebook to get information, because Facebook users provide me with better information than an Internet search.	3.897	0.798
IS4	Facebook page provides me quick and easy access to information I seek.	3.881	0.776
Entertainment			
EN1	Reading Facebook brand page posts and comments is entertaining.	3.909	0.854
EN2	It is fun to go over Facebook brand page posts and comments.	3.866	0.818
EN3	I have a good time reading posts shared through Facebook brand pages.	3.866	0.752
EN4	I read Facebook posts to pass time when I am bored.	3.897	0.793
Economic Benefit			
EB1	I interact with brands on Facebook in order to access discounts and promotions.	3.948	0.801
EB2	I interact with brands on Facebook in order to participate in competitions and games to win prizes.	3.885	0.779
EB3	I interact with brands on Facebook in order to get reward/free gifts.	3.870	0.863
Trust			
T1	I believe it is safe to interact with brands on Facebook.	3.858	0.904
T2	I believe that brands respect my privacy when I interact with them on Facebook.	3.948	0.858
T3	I trust the information published by other consumers on Facebook on the brand page.	3.807	0.813
T4	I believe that brands will not provide the information that they have obtained about me, through Facebook, to other people or entities.	3.826	0.776
Social Influence			
SI1	I will share information about the brand with friends and family.	3.881	0.830
SI2	By interacting with the brand on Facebook, I feel I am part of a community.	3.893	0.853
SI3	I interact with the brand on Facebook to state my interests and preferences to my friends.	3.708	0.776
SI4	My interaction with the brand on Facebook allows me to increase my social involvement.	3.842	0.814
Brand Love			
BL1	This is a wonderful brand.	3.818	0.789
BL2	This brand makes me feel good.	3.822	0.831
BL3	This brand makes me feel happy.	3.878	0.812
BL4	This brand is delight.	3.878	0.850
BL5	I am passionate about this brand.	3.366	0.855

Continued

Customer Engagement			
CE1	I feel nice and happy when involving myself in Facebook pages.	3.437	0.912
CE2	I read posts related to brands on Facebook pages.	3.322	0.883
CE3	I express my reactions to brand posts and comments using Facebook buttons like, angry, etc.	3.433	0.862
CE4	Engaging in conversations on the brands Facebook page (e.g., commenting, asking, and answering questions).	3.291	1.033
CE5	Sharing the brands Facebook posts on my own Facebook page (e.g., videos, audios, pictures, texts).	3.311	0.907
CE6	I initiate new posts related to brand on Facebook pages.	3.236	1.025
CE7	I am very interested in any activities on Facebook page.	3.145	0.888
Brand Loyalty			
BL1	I am most likely to purchase this brand I follow.	3.437	0.876
BL2	I will recommend the brand to others.	3.338	1.030
BL3	I consider myself to be loyal to the brand.	3.496	0.948

Table 3. Results of reliability test.

Item code	Item-to-total correlation > 0.50	Cronbach's alpha (α) ≥ 0.60
Information Seeking		
IS4	0.892	0.741
IS3	0.892	
IS2	0.745	
IS1	Deleted (FL = 0.481 < 0.60)	
Entertainment		
EN2	0.854	0.772
EN1	0.836	
EN3	0.795	
EN4	Deleted (FL = 0.489 < 0.60)	
Economic Benefit		
EB3	0.909	0.797
EB2	0.898	
EB1	0.700	
Trust		
T2	0.880	0.835
T3	0.834	
T1	0.791	

Continued

T4	0.767	
Social Influence		
SI3	0.857	
SI4	0.853	0.835
SI2	0.838	
SI1	0.785	
Brand Love		
BL3	0.908	
BL2	0.905	
BL4	0.892	0.928
BL1	0.860	
BL5	0.845	
Customer Engagement		
CE2	0.817	
CE4	0.814	
CE5	0.810	
CE6	0.776	0.873
CE3	0.764	
CE7	0.720	
CE1	0.700	
Brand Loyalty		
BRL2	0.895	
BRL1	0.863	0.835
BRL3	0.846	

Table 4. Results of correlation among research variables.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	ISMean	ENMean	EBMean	BLMean	TMean	SIMean	CEMean	BRLMean
ISMean	3.4000	0.72564	1							
ENMean	3.2067	0.76832	0.512**	1						
EBMean	3.0773	0.95796	0.330**	0.337**	1					
BLMean	3.3880	0.73818	0.499**	0.538**	0.437**	1				
TMean	3.1640	0.74554	0.506**	0.459**	0.401**	0.592**	1			
SIMean	3.4140	0.72402	0.468**	0.471**	0.419**	0.697**	0.644**	1		
CEMean	3.2960	0.70943	0.504**	0.551**	0.483**	0.641**	0.610**	0.734**	1	
BRLMean	3.4067	0.86090	0.414**	0.365**	0.490**	0.639**	0.566**	0.708**	0.681**	1

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

engagement ($r = 0.504, p < 0.01$), entertainment and customer engagement ($r = 0.551, p < 0.01$), economic benefit and customer engagement ($r = 0.483, p < 0.01$), trust and customer engagement ($r = 0.610, p < 0.01$), social influence and customer engagement ($r = 0.743, p < 0.01$), brand love and customer engagement ($r = 0.641, p < 0.01$), and customer engagement and brand loyalty ($r = 0.681, p < 0.01$). These findings indicate a positive correlation among all variables, and no high inter-correlation among research variables is found. Therefore, the obtained data is favorable for further analysis.

4.5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS software to evaluate model fit and confirm the research variables, specifically examining questionnaires to ensure reliability coefficients exceeded 0.60. Initially, the study encompassed 34 questionnaires; however, two (IS1 and EN4) were eliminated during the reliability test due to reliability coefficients of Cronbach's alpha below 0.60 (0.481 and 0.489, respectively). Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the remaining 32 questionnaires, revealing reliability coefficients (or the Standardized loading), shown in **Table 5**, ranging from 0.603 to 0.922, all surpassing the threshold of 0.60, suggested by **Fornell and Larcker (1981)**. Furthermore, the model fit indices showed that a $\chi^2/d.f.$ ratio was 1.412, goodness of fit (GFI) was 0.920, adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI) was 0.903, normed fit index (NFI) was 0.901, comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.968, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.041 with significance ($p = 0.1000$). Note that all of these criteria meet the acceptable thresholds and passed the CFA guidelines of **Hair et al. (2019)**.

In addition, composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were analyzed and the results not shown here. These two index values passed the thresholds ($CR > 0.7$) and ($AVE > 0.5$) respectively. These findings indicate that the measurement model has good composite reliability and convergent validity. Furthermore, the discriminant validity (using heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)) was also applied. All the HTMT values (not shown) are also satisfied achieving below the threshold value of 0.85 (**Henseler et al., 2015**). Subsequently, all of the constructs are confirmed and ready for structural modeling analysis.

4.6. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modeling was conducted to evaluate the research hypotheses spanning from H1 to H7. The SEM analysis yielded a model achieved with a $\chi^2/d.f.$ ratio of 1.770. Additionally, goodness of fit index (GFI) was 0.941, adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was 0.912, normed fit index (NFI) was 0.920, comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.939, all meeting acceptable thresholds (above 0.7). Also, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.056, and the p-value was 0.120. Utilizing AMOS software for SEM, all seven hypotheses were fully supported. As per the guidelines of **Hair et al. (2019)**, the proposed hypotheses

Table 5. Result of confirmatory factor analysis

Item code		Research variable	Standardized loading	t-value	p-value
IS4	→	Information Seeking	0.757	9.912	***
IS3	→	Information Seeking	0.741	A	
IS2	→	Information Seeking	0.603	8.468	***
EN2	→	Entertainment	0.755	10.187	***
EN1	→	Entertainment	0.739	A	
EN3	→	Entertainment	0.692	9.623	***
EB3	→	Economic Benefit	0.922	A	
EB1	→	Economic Benefit	0.876	8.271	***
EB2	→	Economic Benefit	0.850	13.621	***
T2	→	Trust	0.819	A	
T3	→	Trust	0.771	13.401	***
T1	→	Trust	0.722	12.231	***
T4	→	Trust	0.669	11.193	***
SI4	→	Social Influence	0.830	A	
SI3	→	Social Influence	0.786	14.42	***
SI2	→	Social Influence	0.777	14.06	***
SI1	→	Social Influence	0.718	11.615	***
BL3	→	Brand Love	0.893	18.317	***
BL2	→	Brand Love	0.881	17.757	***
BL4	→	Brand Love	0.844	16.567	***
BL1	→	Brand Love	0.835	A	
BL5	→	Brand Love	0.774	14.432	***
CE7	→	Customer Engagement	0.852	10.247	***
CE2	→	Customer Engagement	0.828	12.170	***
CE1	→	Customer Engagement	0.768	10.005	***
CE4	→	Customer Engagement	0.766	11.22	***
CE3	→	Customer Engagement	0.716	10.668	***
CE5	→	Customer Engagement	0.703	A	
CE6	→	Customer Engagement	0.645	12.505	***
BRL1	→	Brand Loyalty	0.844	A	
BRL3	→	Brand Loyalty	0.827	12.935	***
BRL2	→	Brand Loyalty	0.791	13.794	***

Note: A is fixed at regression weight 1. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

received positive support, with critical ratios (t-values) of all constructs exceeding $|1.96|$ and p-values below < 0.05 , meeting the established criteria. In conclusion, the proposed conceptual model investigating the effect of social networking sites on brand loyalty via customers' engagement demonstrated a favorable model fit. Furthermore, based on the hypothesis testing results in **Table 6**, all variables of social networking sites (information seeking, entertainment, economic benefit, trust, social influence, and brand love) have a significantly positive impact on customer engagement. Meanwhile, customer engagement also yields a positive effect on brand loyalty of customers. Therefore, all hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7) are significantly accepted. **Figure 2** shows the confirmed structural model estimation.

Table 6. Results of hypotheses testing.

Path relationship	Standardized coefficient	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis testing
H1: IS \rightarrow CE	0.13	2.137	0.033	Supported
H2: EN \rightarrow CE	0.13	2.196	0.028	Supported
H3: EB \rightarrow CE	0.20	3.681	***	Supported
H4: T \rightarrow CE	0.09	2.050	0.041	Supported
H5: SI \rightarrow CE	0.67	5.636	***	Supported
H6: BL \rightarrow CE	0.16	2.085	0.037	Supported
H7: CE \rightarrow BRL	0.78	7.467	***	Supported

Note: A is fixed at regression weight 1. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

5. Discussions

From an SEM analysis of 250 samples, the results indicate a statistically significant positive association between information seeking and customer engagement ($\beta = 0.13$, t-value = 2.137, p-value = 0.033). That is, when a user in Cambodia actively seeks information about a new product launch on a local brand's Facebook page and interacts by asking questions or sharing opinions, it demonstrates a clear link between information seeking and customer engagement. This finding is in line with prior research (Metallo et al., 2020; Whiting & Williams, 2013), which underscores the direct impact of information seeking on customer engagement.

Similarly, entertainment exhibits a significant positive relationship with customer engagement ($\beta = 0.13$, t-value = 2.196, p-value = 0.028). For example, a user from Cambodia encounters a humorous video shared by a local brand on Facebook and engages with it by liking, commenting, and sharing, it illustrates the direct influence of entertainment content on customer engagement. This observation aligns with previous studies (André, 2015; Jayasingh, 2019; Muntinga et al., 2011; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), emphasizing the association between entertainment and customer engagement.

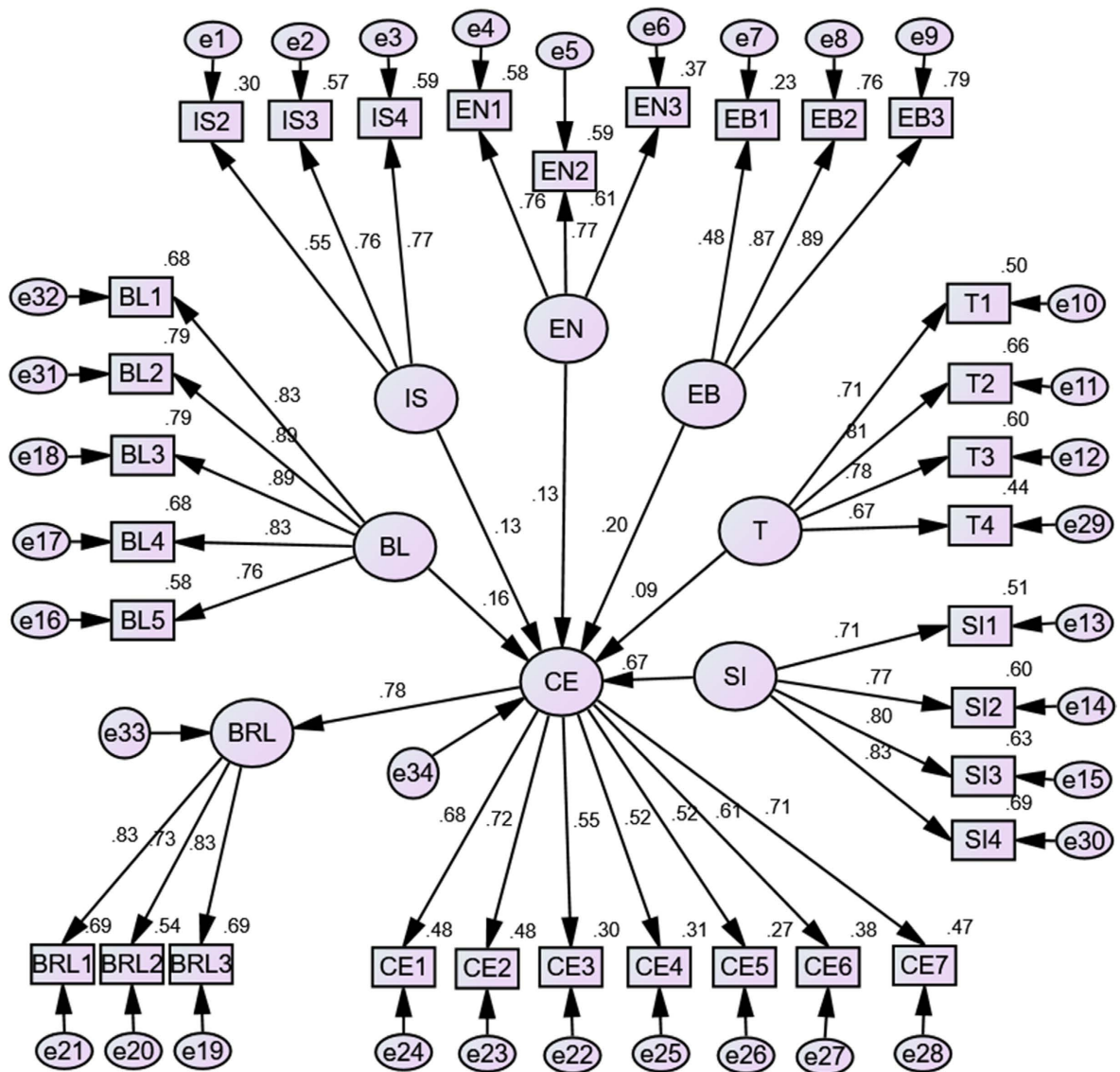


Figure 2. Structural equation modeling results.

Moreover, the study identifies a positive impact of economic benefit on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.20$, t-value = 3.681, p-value = 0.000). When a user in Cambodia encounters a promotional offer on a local brand’s Facebook page, such as a discount on products, and engages with the post by availing the discount or sharing it with friends, it demonstrates the direct effect of economic benefit on customer engagement. This finding is supported by existing literature (André, 2015; Kujur & Singh, 2018), emphasizing the connection between economic benefit and customer engagement.

Additionally, trust emerges as another significant factor positively influencing customer engagement ($\beta = 0.09$, t-value = 2.050, p-value = 0.041). For example, when a user in Cambodia trusts a local brand’s Facebook page to provide reliable information and quality products and actively engages with the brand’s content by commenting, sharing, and participating in discussions, it reveals the direct

correlation between trust and customer engagement. Previous studies (Jayasingh, 2019; Kleine-Kalmer, 2016; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) have also underscored the link between trust and customer engagement, reinforcing this finding.

Moreover, the study establishes a positive impact of social influence on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.67$, t-value = 5.636, p-value = 0.000). When a user in Cambodia is influenced by their social network's interactions with a local brand on Facebook and engages with the brand's content by liking, sharing, and commenting, it illustrates the direct impact of social influence on customer engagement. This result is consistent with prior research (Bolton et al., 2013; Girona & Korgaonkar, 2014; Muntinga et al., 2011; Wang & Sun, 2016), which emphasizes the effect of social influence on customer engagement.

Furthermore, brand love is identified as a significant driver of customer engagement ($\beta = 0.16$, t-value = 2.085, p-value = 0.037). For instance, when a user in Cambodia has a strong emotional attachment to a local brand on Facebook due to positive experiences and actively engages with the brand's content, it illustrates the direct relationship between brand love and customer engagement. Although Jayasingh (2019) found no connection between brand love and customer engagement, the current study's finding aligns with previous research (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; André, 2015; Kleine-Kalmer, 2016), which emphasizes the impact of brand love on customer engagement.

Finally, the study confirms a positive influence of customer engagement on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.78$, t-value = 7.467, p-value = 0.000). For example, when a user in Cambodia regularly engages with a local brand on Facebook, participates in contests, provides feedback, and shares experiences, it fosters a sense of loyalty towards the brand, leading to a preference for it over competitors. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Brodie et al., 2011; France et al., 2016; Hossain & Kibria, 2024), indicating the effect of customer engagement on brand loyalty.

5.1. Research Implications

The researcher aims to offer theoretical and practical insights along with recommendations to stakeholders, particularly those involved in similar research endeavors and business owners in Cambodia. Utilizing the findings of this study, adhering to the conceptual framework outlined herein is crucial for devising effective marketing strategies. This is especially important for entrepreneurs looking to establish or strengthen their ventures by understanding the factors influencing brand loyalty. Cambodian entrepreneurs should prioritize evidence-based marketing strategies to enhance brand loyalty, considering the unique and evolving landscape of the country.

Entrepreneurs are encouraged to utilize SNSs as platforms for promoting and advertising new products or services. Among SNSs, Facebook stands out as an effective channel due to its extensive user base. With approximately 13,575,700 users in Cambodia, constituting 76.6% of the total population, Facebook offers a significant avenue for businesses to engage with their target audience. Establishing

dedicated brand pages on Facebook is advisable to cultivate brand identity and foster community engagement. Utilizing Facebook for marketing not only reduces costs but also facilitates targeted outreach to potential customers in specific geographical areas. Cambodian businesses should invest in developing dynamic and captivating Facebook pages to connect with local consumers, thereby enhancing brand loyalty and market presence.

Given that social influence emerges as the primary driver influencing brand loyalty, businesses should prioritize initiatives that leverage social influence. Cambodian enterprises should focus on building strong relationships with social media influencers to leverage social influence and amplify brand loyalty among local consumers. The inclination to seek information plays a pivotal role in consumer engagement. Consumers turn to brand Facebook pages not only for official product details but also for user-generated content, including experiences and reviews. Encouraging interactions such as likes, comments, and opinions is crucial for brands. Regular consumer promotion campaigns on brand pages can foster engagement and expand the fan base. These campaigns may include sales offers, discounts, freebies, competitions, and interactive games. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of entertainment in driving consumer engagement on SNSs. Brand pages should regularly feature diverse and visually appealing content, such as jokes, puzzles, games, humorous videos, and cartoons, to captivate SNS users.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study faces several limitations that warrant further exploration. Firstly, it predominantly focuses on Facebook as the primary social networking platform, reflecting its popularity in Cambodia. Thus, caution is advised when generalizing findings to other platforms or contexts. Additionally, the study employs non-random sampling methods like convenient and snowball sampling due to the unknown population size, potentially impacting result representativeness. Moreover, the sample size of 250 respondents from Phnom Penh may not adequately represent the entirety of customers in Cambodia who purchase products in Facebook. Therefore, future research should consider larger and more diverse samples from various locations and employ robust data collection methods. Furthermore, the study primarily examines consumer-related determinants, neglecting brand-centric factors. Future investigations could focus on these unexplored areas. Additionally, the study fails to differentiate between positive and negative engagement, offering an opportunity for further investigation. Moreover, it adopts a broad approach without focusing on specific brands or product categories, aiming to comprehend engagement motivations and their influence on brand equity more broadly. Future studies could narrow their focus to specific brands or industries to gain nuanced insights. Additionally, exploring potential variations in engagement motivations across different product categories could yield valuable insights.

5.3. Conclusion

Over the past decade, the rapid advancement of information technology has reshaped global economies and introduced new societal challenges. SNSs have become indispensable tools for interpersonal communication and connectivity. Among various SNSs, Facebook stands out as the most popular platform, boasting over 2.6 billion users worldwide and more than 13 million users in Cambodia. Subsequently, this study underscores the importance of understanding the factors influencing customer engagement and brand loyalty, particularly within the context of Facebook usage. The SEM results demonstrated significant positive influences of information seeking, entertainment, economic benefit, trust, social influence, and brand love on customer engagement. Additionally, customer engagement exhibited a significant positive influence on brand loyalty of users in Cambodia. The findings also underscore the significance of social influence as the most influential factor shaping brand loyalty among Facebook users in Cambodia.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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