

# THE ROLES OF BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND ASSOCIATIONS IN MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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## **Abstract**

*Consumer engagement is a crucial aspect of the relationship between consumers and brands, especially on social media platforms. The focus of this study is to better understand how brand image and brand associations impact Bangladeshi millennials' engagement on Facebook, the most popular social media platform in the country. The survey gathered primary data from 312 Bangladeshi millennials aged 20 to 40. The study developed and tested five hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM). The study's results confirmed that brand image and brand association significantly impact brand engagement among young consumers on social media. It also highlights the importance of brand association and consumer engagement in developing brand loyalty. However, the study also found that Bangladeshi young consumers' brand loyalty is unlikely to be influenced by brand image, which is a novel finding. The insights from this study can help marketers and practitioners develop strategies to improve brand engagement on social media, gain a competitive advantage, and ensure business sustainability.*

**Keywords :** Brand Image, Brand Association, Consumer Engagement, Loyalty, Bangladeshi Millennial

**JEL Classification :** M30, M31, O33

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

A company's brand is its most valuable asset and is widely recognized as a crucial factor in consumer decision-making. Brands help consumers to differentiate between products and understand their unique qualities, which in turn increases their trust and confidence when making purchasing decisions (Smith & Aaker, 1992). This helps alleviate some of the uncertainty and doubt associated with products that consumers cannot physically or objectively evaluate. Effective branding strategies can give firms a competitive advantage by building consumer loyalty and trust, which can translate into a willingness to pay a premium price for the brand. This trust also helps resist promotional pressures from competitors and creates barriers to entry. Ultimately, a strong brand can lead to successful extensions and long-term success for the company.

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Social media is essential for businesses looking to build and preserve long-lasting relationships with their clients. These days, most companies use social media platforms to build profitable relationships with their online audience, spark consumer interest, and raise brand awareness. People use social media to communicate, obtain information, make purchases, and maintain connections because of the quick development of ICTs (information and communication technologies) and social networking sites (Chetioui et al., 2021).

As of 2022, there are approximately 4.88 billion active social media users worldwide, and this number is expected to exceed 6 billion by 2027 (Statista, 2022). As of July 2023, Facebook has over 3 billion monthly active users globally, with 43.25 million active users in Bangladesh as of July 2023. At the same time, Facebook has over 3 billion monthly active users globally, with 43.25 million active users in Bangladesh as of July 2023 (Statista, 2023), which accounts for approximately 26% of the total population. Millennials, or Generation Y, comprise about 65% of all Facebook users in Bangladesh.

Recent studies have found that organizations increasingly use social media platforms, specifically Facebook, to engage with younger generations, promote their products, and communicate with their customers (Manik, 2016; Duffett, 2017). This is especially true for Bangladeshi millennials- the most information-driven generation on social media. They spend considerable time searching for brand-related information on social media platforms and follow brand pages on Facebook, which they find both rewarding and exciting (Rahman, 2015).

The concept of consumer engagement through social media has gained immense popularity among practitioners and academics alike (Santos et al., 2022). To that end, this research puts forth a unified consumer engagement model on the Facebook platform. The model in this study tested brand image and brand associations as antecedents of millennials' engagement on social media and brand loyalty as an outcome of the engagement.

Previous studies (Colicev et al., 2018; Godey et al., 2016; Jiao et al., 2018) have examined brand research in non-Asian countries, making it difficult to compare their results with Asian countries like Bangladesh. Additionally, little attention has been given towards investigating the factors that affect brand engagement on social media, especially among young consumers, such as brand loyalty, brand image, and brand associations. According to Duffett (2017) and Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015), young consumers are one of the most significant groups responsible for the rise in smartphone sales, are primary social media users, and are exposed to a wide range of product brands. They use their smartphones mostly to access social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and they visit websites on a regular basis. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how brand association and image affect young Bangladeshi consumers' social media brand engagement. The impact of these factors on brand engagement is integrated in this study, which fills a research gap by offering additional insights.

By testing the proposed conceptual framework on young Bangladeshi consumers, this study makes a novel empirical contribution and provides valuable insights. The study's scope was limited to examining how Bangladeshi millennials use social media in general, without regard for product category. The study looked at millennials' attitudes toward social media engagement, considering the impact of brand image and brand associations—two critical brand elements. The research begins with a thorough review of the relevant literature and the formulation of a model. The study's methodology is then described, followed by data analysis and a discussion of the findings. The final section of the research presents its findings and implications, as well as recommendations for future research directions.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social media has shifted marketing power from brands to consumers, who are now active creators and influencers (Bazi et al., 2020). Social media has provided consumers with a platform to connect and engage with their favorite brands as well as share messages with their friends, peers, and acquaintances. While there has been a long-standing interest in brand image and associations, their impact on social media engagement is a relatively new area of research that is gaining attention (Schivinski, 2021). In recent years, the influence of social media on consumer behavior has made it increasingly important for brands to engage with their audience (Santos et al., 2022). In order to successfully involve customers in social media activities related to a particular brand, it is crucial for marketers to comprehend the factors that drive customer engagement with brands online. Company leaders should acknowledge the elements of branding that encourage customers to actively engage with brands on social media. This research aims to examine how brand-related factors affect the social media engagement of millennials and the resulting brand loyalty.

### **2.1 Brand Image**

Research indicates that brand image is a set of perceptions that individuals have about a brand, both tangible and intangible (Godey et al., 2016). Brand image comprises a brand node, which includes brand evaluation, positive affirmations, images, and attributes, according to Keller (1993). Webster and Keller (2004) stated that brand image involves the benefits linked to a brand that differentiate it from others. Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015) suggested that young people develop favorable perceptions of brands in various industries due to exposure to brand-initiated signs.

Brand identity and brand image are closely related (Janonis et al., 2007). Brand identity is how a company wants to be perceived by its customers and it is communicated through various elements such as logo, tagline, packaging, etc. On the other hand, brand image is how customers perceive the brand based on their past experiences, interactions, and associations with the brand (Nandan, 2005). A strong and consistent brand identity can help create a positive brand image in the minds of customers, which can lead to increased brand loyalty and a sustainable competitive advantage. The study's conceptual framework considers the brand image to be the same as the corporate image (Khoirunnisa & Marlien, 2022). Creating an image

within the company or a group of associations establishes a positive reputation and greatly influences the audience or consumers' attitudes toward the brand. A favorable image in the public eye leads to more desirable effects that are quickly accepted.

In addition, brand image plays a crucial role in marketing as it has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions (Chinomona, 2016). It represents a consumer's perception of a particular product or service and serves as an external indicator to judge the quality of the product. Consumers rely on brand image to identify a product or service and to maintain their quality standards. It comprises a set of features such as unique localization, consistent quality assurance, and functional attributes that define the product or service (Alhaddad, 2015). This allows customers to evaluate their personal image and make well-informed purchasing decisions. Research has shown that a strong brand image can reduce consumers' cognitive risk and increase their evaluation of the product or service. Consumers tend to use their perception of brand image to assume the quality of a product or service and make purchasing decisions accordingly. Hence, the quality of the brand image indirectly affects consumers' perceptions of the product or service quality. Duffett (2017) concluded that a positive brand image has a favorable effect on consumer attachment, strengthening brand responses such as continued patronage and willingness to pay a premium for goods or services.

Moreover, according to Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015), if young consumers have a positive perception of a preferred brand, they are more likely to develop a strong emotional attachment to it. According to social science researchers, brand image is crucial in millennials' emotional attachment. In this study, brand image denotes how social media sites help young consumers identify brand reputation, develop a positive evaluation, and form a favorable opinion of a particular brand. Researchers have not yet examined the impact of online brand image on consumers' emotional attachment. Based on this, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Brand image has a positive impact on consumer engagement.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Brand image has a positive impact on brand loyalty.*

## **2.2 Brand Associations**

Brand associations are essential to both marketers and consumers. They help with brand differentiation, positioning, and extension. Brand associations refer to anything associated with a brand's memory, which can be assets or liabilities. According to Smith and Aaker (1992) and Keller (1993), brand associations are informational nodes that relate to the brand node in memory and contain the brand's meaning for consumers. Essentially, brand association refers to any information that is linked to memory nodes, primarily the brand name and brand image (Keller et al., 2019).

The strength of brand association is crucial as it determines the likelihood of consumers recalling the brand and becoming loyal to it. Additionally, brand associations help consumers process, organize, and retrieve information in their memories while making wise purchasing decisions. On the other hand, negative brand associations can cause harm to the brand's image and reputation (Keller, 1993).

Furthermore, brand association is a tool for gathering information, allowing for brand differentiation and extension, particularly on social media (Severi & Ling, 2013). Consumers now interact with brands on social media regularly, which significantly impacts their purchasing decisions and aids the development of a strong relationship with the brand. Brand engagement on social media platforms is an excellent way for customers to interact with other people who share their interests and increase their sense of belonging and brand association. According to Vo Minh et al. (2022), brand engagement encourages consumers to associate more with the brand because of their positive perceptions, emotions, and actions.

In essence, the association between a brand and its customers is a critical factor in determining the success of a brand. A positive brand association fosters brand loyalty and consumer engagement, whereas negative associations can cause significant harm to the brand's reputation. Social media platforms provide brands with a powerful tool to engage with their customers and build a strong relationship, leading to increased brand association. This study highlights the impact of brand association on consumer attitudes and emotions, ultimately resulting in consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Thus, the discussion led to the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Brand associations have a positive impact on consumer engagement.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Brand associations have a positive impact on brand loyalty.*

### **2.3 Customer Engagement on Social Media and Brand Loyalty**

Consumer-brand engagement on social media refers to the interactions between consumers and a brand on social media platforms (Santos et al., 2022). This can include a range of activities, such as commenting, liking, sharing, following, subscribing, and posting content related to the brand. These engagement metrics are used to measure the level of interaction between consumers and the brand, which can help increase the brand's visibility and reach on social media. Additionally, engagement within an online brand community can lead to increased brand loyalty among consumers (Colicev et al., 2018; Jayasingh, 2019).

Brand loyalty refers to a consumer's positive attitude towards a particular brand, resulting in repeat purchases (Smith & Aaker, 1992). It is a crucial aspect of marketing strategies and research, consisting of two components: behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioral loyalty is the repetition of brand purchases (Jai et al., 2022) while attitudinal loyalty means that a consumer has a favorable attitude towards a brand and is likely to recommend it to others. Customers with high attitudinal loyalty are more likely to become brand advocates and ambassadors (Haudi et al., 2022). Creating brand loyalty is crucial for the growth and longevity of a company. Loyal customers tend to make repeat purchases and have a strong emotional connection with the brand. To achieve this, marketers often design loyalty programs to attract and retain customers, which increases the company's market share and sustainability.

Previous studies have shown that customer engagement in social media brand communities significantly impacts brand loyalty. Consumers who engage more on social

media platforms are more likely to develop strong brand relationships spontaneously (Santos et al., 2022). Future studies should investigate the concept of customer engagement with other constructs, particularly on social media platforms. However, while customer engagement has been studied in relation to brand loyalty (Colicev et al., 2018; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Li et al., 2020), the direct impact of customer engagement on loyalty on various social media platforms remains inconclusive. It is important to conduct a more empirical analysis of other factors to fully comprehend how customer engagement and brand loyalty are connected. It is imperative to establish whether social media engagement contributes to increased brand loyalty. Thus, this research proposes a hypothesis to address this gap in the literature:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Consumer engagement has a positive impact on brand loyalty.*

#### **2.4 Theoretical models on Consumer Brand Engagement**

The Uses and Gratifications (UGT) Theory, introduced by Katz and Foulkes (1962), is the foundation of consumer engagement with any brand. It seeks to understand why and how people actively seek specific media to satisfy specific needs. Since UGT is an audience-centered approach, it works under the premise that viewers are active participants in media. Rather, audience members take an active part in interpreting and incorporating media into their lives and have control over how much media they consume. According to UGT, people consciously select media to fulfill their needs, which enables them to experience satisfactions like identity formation, social interaction, entertainment and relaxation, and knowledge enhancement. Because internet media is inherently interactive and user-directed, UGT has been used in several new media studies, which makes it a good fit for researching internet usage among consumers. Unlike in more conventional mass-marketing communication, consumers have substantial control over the information they seek out and receive. Prior research has employed users' reasons for using social media as a predictor of particular social media site behaviors. Recent research examining consumer choices of online and social media has examined constructs based on the theoretical foundations of UGT, such as the need for social interaction, the need for entertainment, the need for information seeking and sharing, and the desire for reward or remuneration.

Consumer Engagement Behavior Theory, defined as understanding how and why customers behave in a specific way regarding engagement, was created by van Doorn et al. (2010). They developed a model to understand these behaviors and utilized the knowledge to create strategies to promote long-term benefits for the organization. van Doorn et al. (2010) suggested that clients who are engaged tend to maintain relationships with their peers. This creates opportunities for brand building and equity creation, including brand image and brand loyalty. Recent literature on social media brand engagement has extended and revised these consumer engagement theories, highlighting the importance of brand elements. To explain social media engagement and loyalty as the outcome of positive social media engagement, the impact of brand elements on developing consumer engagement on social media is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 : Summary of Recent Research on Consumer-brand Engagement on Social Media and Brand-related factors considered

Objective of the Research	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Source (Adapted from)
Consumer brand engagement in virtual brand communities (Facebook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand Community Identification</li> <li>• Reward</li> </ul>	Consumer Brand Engagement and Brand Loyalty	(Kaur et al., 2020)
Consumer brand engagement in social networking sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand Love</li> </ul>	Consumer Brand Engagement and Brand Loyalty	(Jayasingh, 2019)
Antecedents of consumers' engagement with brand-related content on social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand Self Expressiveness</li> <li>• Brand Community Identification</li> <li>• Brand Image</li> </ul>	Consumer Brand Engagement and Brand Loyalty	(Febrian & Ahluwalia, 2021)
The effect of brand engagement, brand image, and brand awareness on customer loyalty on social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand Engagement</li> <li>• Brand Image</li> <li>• Brand Awareness</li> </ul>	Consumer loyalty on social media	(Khoirunnisa & Marlien, 2022)

Thus, following conceptual framework has been developed (Figure 1).

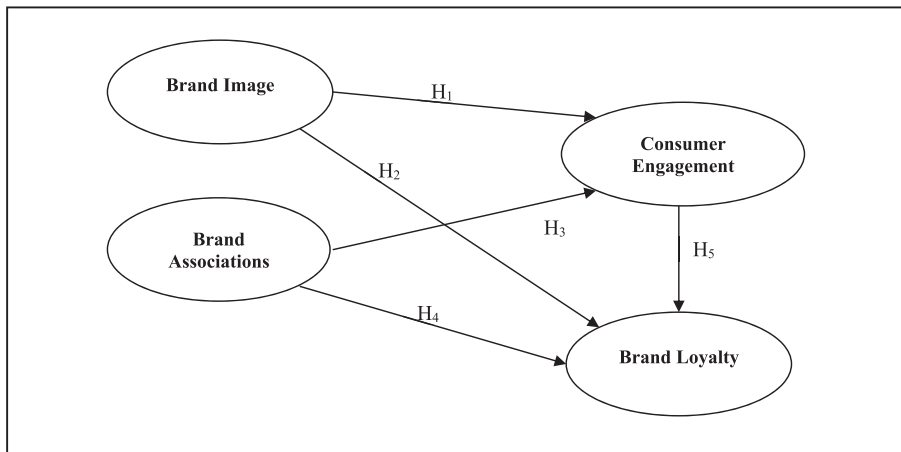


Figure 1 : Proposed Research Model



## 2.5 Millennials and the Social Media

Managers and academics have shown a fascination with the Millennial generation, also known as Gen Y. This group was born between the mid-1980s and early 2000s (Gale et al., 2021) and represents the largest generational group since the Baby Boomers. Millennials have significant buying power and are distinguished from other generations by their extensive use of internet and social media from a very young age. Social media has become an integral aspect of the lives of many people who use it to interact with others (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021). This can have a significant impact on their identity formation, their engagement with businesses, their brand loyalty, and their purchasing behavior (Soares et al., 2017). As a result, marketers have prioritized connecting with this demographic to gain their trust, build brand loyalty, and influence their purchasing decisions.

In addition, being digital natives, they are proficient in handling technology and are active social media platform users. They enjoy spending time online, seeking information, entertainment, and social relationships. Brands that match their personalities are highly favored. This group is the most active on social media, using it to review product performance, search for innovation, compare brands, and purchase preferred products (Moreno et al., 2017). Compared to older generations, Generation Y consumers use Facebook features such as messaging, uploading photos, and providing reactions and reviews (Smith, 2011). They are both producers and consumers of information, so understanding their social media behavior, particularly their engagements with brands on Facebook, is crucial. Some argue that millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, are a more important consumer group than Generation Alpha, born after 2010 (Duffett, 2017; Munsch, 2021). One reason is that millennials have higher purchasing power as they are more established in their careers and have had more time to accumulate wealth compared to the younger generations like Generation Z and Generation Alpha (Manik, 2016; Valentine & Powers, 2013). It is worth noting that Generation Alpha is the first generation born after the massive use of social media, making them more tech-savvy and more challenging to reach through traditional advertising methods (Gartshore, 2018; Kaplan-Berkley, 2022). However, the millennial generation in Bangladesh is a more important consumer group than Generation Z or Generation Alpha. Bangladeshi millennials are known for their brand loyalty and are likelier to stick with a brand they trust (Khan & Islam, 2017). They are also more likely to advocate for a brand on social media and influence their peers' purchasing decisions (Wada, 2019).

Social media has become integral to Millennials and Generation Z's lives (Curtis et al., 2019; Mude & Undale, 2023). However, there are some differences in their social media habits. These differences are due to the fact that the two generations are at different stages of life. Most Millennials have completed their college education and have been in the workforce for almost two decades, while most of Generation Z and Gen Alpha, are still in college and do not have financial independence (Fan et al., 2023). Nevertheless, they have a significant influence on their parents' decisions,



especially when it comes to family vacations. The experiences shared by each of these generations have shaped their beliefs, attitudes, and views, which are different from those of other generations. Furthermore, the social changes that occurred during their formative years have also influenced their values and preferences regarding consumption (Fan et al., 2023). This research focused on the Millennial generation over Generation Alpha because this generation has gained significant influence over older as well as younger generations, set new trends across all industries and markets, and concentrated considerable purchasing power in their hands (Wada, 2019).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Sample and Data Collection Method**

To better understand how millennial consumers engage on social media, this study takes a user-oriented approach, focusing on the individual customer as the unit of analysis. Chahal et al. (2020) noted that Generation Y relies heavily on technology for entertainment, social interaction, and emotional regulation. Additionally, Gen Y actively creates, shares, searches for, and consumes content on social media platforms. Furthermore, their brand preferences are significantly influenced by friends and peers on social media (Smith, 2011). These factors make Generation Y's social media behavior an ideal context for testing our hypotheses. The variables used for the study were gathered from a literature review and adjusted to suit the study's context. Each variable was measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The study included 312 Bangladeshi respondents between the ages of 20 and 40. The sample was selected through non-probability sampling, primarily using social media platforms. The questionnaire was designed on Google Forms, targeting millennials with active brand engagement experience on social media to participate and provide data through structured questionnaires. Prior to analysis, the response samples were evaluated for completeness and reliability.

#### **3.2 Analytical Methods**

The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). Descriptive statistics was used to describe the research sample and the reliability of the scale in the theoretical model was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method. The impact of brand engagement, brand awareness, and brand association on purchase intention was evaluated through a structural equation model (SEM) analysis. It is important to have a reliable number of samples for SEM to produce accurate estimates and different researchers have varying sample size requirements. According to Hair et al. (2014) and Homer and Kahle (1988), the SEM path model requires at least 200 samples, while Bagozzi and Yi (1990) suggested that the number of samples should be greater than 100 and ideally greater than 200. Several specialists argue that a sample size between 300 and 400 is sufficient for SEM and Hair et al. (2014) recommended a minimum sample size of 200 and a maximum sample size of 400. Therefore, a sample size between 200 and 400 is considered optimal for effective SEM.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part collects demographic information such as age group, gender, monthly income, and educational level. The second part collects respondents' opinions on their engagement and brand loyalty behavior on Facebook. The questionnaire contains four constructs and 15 items. The constructs include brand image, brand association, consumer engagement, and brand loyalty. Each construct is measured using three to four items, and variables under the four constructs are scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1= "strongly agree" to 5= "strongly disagree").

The brand image was measured using the scale demonstrated by Chinomona (2016), while the brand association and brand loyalty were measured using items demonstrated by Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015). The items of consumer engagement were adapted from Jayasingh (2019) and the items used to explain consumer loyalty were adapted from Hsieh and Li (2008). The selected respondents had a personal Facebook account since 2017 and a minimum of five years of continuous user experience.

### 3.3 Data Description

Table 2 presents the demographic information of the survey participants. The data shows that approximately 60% of the respondents were male. Furthermore, 51.9% of the participants belonged to the age group of 21-30 years, which is the highest age range of online consumers. Moreover, the majority of the respondents held master's or higher degrees (54.2%).

Table 2 : Demographic Profile (N= 312)

Variable	Options	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male (1)	176	56.4	56.4
	Female	136	43.6	100.0
Age	Under 20 (1)	16	5.1	5.1
	21-30 years old (2)	162	51.9	57.1
	31-40 years old (3)	120	38.5	95.5
	Over 40 years old (4)	14	4.5	100
Education	Higher Secondary (College) or lower (1)	35	11.2	11.2
	Bachelor's Degree (2)	108	34.6	45.8
	Master's Degree or Higher (3)	169	54.2	100
Occupation	Student (1)	63	20.2	20.2
	Business (2)	51	16.3	36.5
	Job (3)	180	57.7	94.2
	Other (4)	18	5.8	100

### 3.4 Reliability and Validity of the CFA Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and SEM are used to test correlations among ordinal data. SEM is particularly helpful in estimating connections among a group of constructs represented by multiple variables. This study used SPSS 22 and AMOS 21 to conduct first-order CFA and subsequent second-order SEM. The CFA involved a path diagram with four latent constructs, including observed variables and error terms, as was shown in Figure 1. Pahlevan Sharif et al. (2018) suggested that in SEM, all constructs should be measured with Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) or omega ( $\omega$ ), composite reliability (CR), and maximum reliability (max (H)) where all results should have values greater than 0.70. According to Table 3, the tested model is moderately reliable based on the composite values of the constructs. The maximum reliability was moderately acceptable, with a value of more than 0.70. To test the validity of SEM, the average variance extracted (AVE) is generally assessed, which should be more than 0.50 (MacKinnon et al., 2004). In this research, the reliability and validity were assessed using the Master Validity Tool, an Amos™ plugin developed by James Gaskin and John Lim respectively (Gaskin & Lim, 2016).

Table 3 : Analysis of Model Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Image	Association	Engagement	Loyalty
Image	0.865	0.615	0.659	0.867	0.784			
Association	0.832	0.623	0.813	0.840	0.812***	0.789		
Engagement	0.875	0.637	0.784	0.876	0.785***	0.885***	0.798	
Loyalty	0.787	0.564	0.813	0.845	0.778***	0.901***	0.872***	0.751

\*\* Values are statistically significant at p level < 0.010

\*\*\* Values are statistically significant at p level < 0.001

The composite reliability in this research is greater than 0.70 and AVE is estimated to be higher than 0.50, which assures that the measurement model has passed strong convergence validity, as supported by MacKinnon et al. (2004).

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Model Fitness of CFA model in (SEM)

After the first CFA run, one variable (association 2) was removed because of its weak factor loadings (<.50). In the second run, the CFA results show that all the structures meet the requirements. The proposed structural model fits well with the observed data (see Table 4 and Figure 2). Before assessing the relationship between variables, it is important to ensure that the model is well-fitted and able to reproduce the existing linkage with other data tested under similar conditions. A well-fitted model helps to maintain consistency and prevents the need for reworking. Kline (2016) suggested that CFA and SEM should meet certain thresholds for goodness-of-fit index (GFI), root-mean-square error approximation (RMSEA), normal chi-square per degree of freedom (Cmin/df), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

Table 4 : CFA Model Fit Measures

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	2.726	<5	Excellent
CFI	0.956	>0.95	Excellent
SRMR	0.047	<0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.074	<0.08	Acceptable
GFI	0.919	>0.9	Excellent

The threshold values for these indicators are adapted from Shi et al. (2019). The statistical interpretation of the indexes presented in the above table is discussed below:

The CMIN/Df (normed/relative Chi-Square) calculates the difference between the fitted and sample covariance matrix by minimizing the impact of sample size on the model. The threshold value for this index is less than 5. The GFI determines the model’s ability to replicate the observed covariance matrix. The threshold value for this index is greater than 0.90. The RMSEA measures the model’s efficiency to fit the population covariance matrix with optimal chosen parameters. The threshold value for this index is less than 0.10. Considering the sample size, the CFI computes the difference between the hypothesized model and data. The threshold value for this index is greater than 0.90. The SRMR should be less than or equal to 0.05 for an acceptable fit. From the table above, we can see that all the index values approximately meet the required criteria for absolute fitness. Therefore, the model is suitable for building linkages between factors and determining the contribution of variables in the research model.

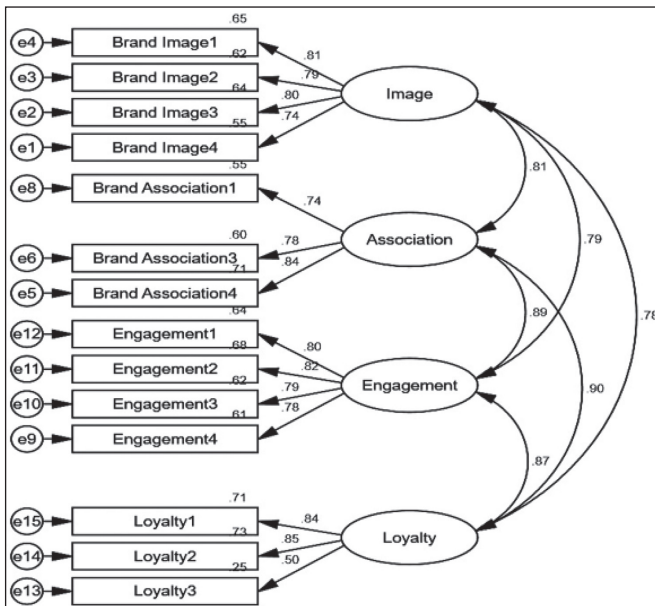


Figure 2 : Variables with Significant Factor Loadings

### 4.2 Hypothesis Testing

The results in Table 5 provide support for four hypotheses out of five. The research results found that consumer engagement is significantly influenced by both brand image and brand associations (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>3</sub>). Thus, a higher level of brand image and brand association can generate a higher level of consumer engagement. The result also suggests (see Figure 3) that brand loyalty is significantly associated with brand association and consumer engagement (H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub>). Surprisingly, there is little association found between brand loyalty and brand image. Therefore, H<sub>2</sub> can be rejected because of a higher p-value (>.05).

Table 5 : Regression Estimation

Hypotheses	Path	P	Comment
H <sub>1</sub>	Brand image → Consumer engagement	.037	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub>	Brand image → Brand loyalty	.409	Rejected
H <sub>3</sub>	Brand association → Consumer engagement	***	Accepted
H <sub>4</sub>	Brand association → Brand loyalty	***	Accepted
H <sub>5</sub>	Consumer engagement → Brand loyalty	.014	Accepted

\*\*\* Values statistically significant at p level < 0.001

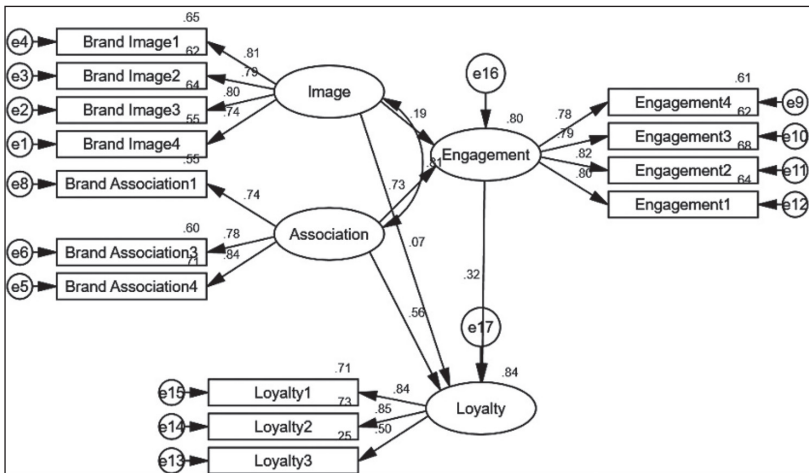


Figure 3 : Results of SEM

Source: Authors' construct

### 5. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Researchers have paid significant attention to the impact of brand and social media engagement. However, their influence on millennials' attitudes in developing countries is still not fully understood. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining two crucial components of brand- brand image and brand associations- regarding social media engagement and developing brand loyalty.

This research examines how brand-related factors affect consumer engagement in the Bangladeshi market. The study offers new insights into social media engagement by establishing a strong correlation between brand image, brand associations, and loyalty. Specifically, the study focuses on online brand attachment, a previously overlooked aspect of social media research. The results of the study highlight the importance of brand image and brand associations in predicting consumer engagement on social media. Interestingly, brand associations have a greater impact on brand loyalty than brand image. Essentially, consumers are more likely to prioritize brand associations when building loyalty towards a brand. This study also has important implications for generational research because it demonstrates that millennial consumers place a high value on brand engagement on social media. They are more likely to interact with other customers, leave feedback on brand pages, and seek recommendations. In general, a strong brand image can encourage consumer interactions with the brand on Facebook.

## **6. MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Social media has become an essential communication channel for consumers to share their consumption habits, preferences, opinions, likes, and experiences. This widely used communication channel provides many opportunities for product and brand communication. Many businesses create social media brand profiles and engage customers by sharing content such as product information, discounts, advertisements, and promotions.

When engaging with millennial customers on social media, brands should consider providing relevant information. Consumers often visit a brand's Facebook page to learn more about its products and services and read reviews from other customers. To encourage engagement, brands should leverage their brand image and associations. Companies can adopt several strategies to increase their brand image on social media. The first step is to create a consistent brand image across all social media platforms. Companies should also ensure that their brand messaging is consistent across all platforms.

Another way to increase brand image is to engage with customers and promptly respond to their comments and queries. This shows that the company values its customers and is committed to providing excellent customer service. Companies can also run social media campaigns and contests to increase engagement and attract new followers.

Additionally, companies can use brand associations to create social media campaigns and contests to encourage customer engagement. Moreover, leveraging brand associations can be a powerful way for companies to increase customer engagement on social media by creating content, collaborating with influencers, and running campaigns that align with their brand image and values.

Finally, companies should track their social media metrics to measure the success of their campaigns and adjust their strategies accordingly. By monitoring engagement

rates, reach, and conversions, companies can refine their social media strategies and continue increasing their brand image. In conclusion, developing customized content for different customer groups, particularly Generation Y who are more active on social media, influence other consumers, and are more tech-savvy than previous generations, is essential in the social media context.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

Business competition is increasing globally and creating a loyal consumer base is becoming essential for survival. Both academics and marketing experts are now emphasizing the importance of consumer engagement in managing brand-consumer relationships. Brands targeting millennials, particularly those using social media as their primary communication channel, are gaining popularity. This study examines brand image and brand associations' effects on consumer engagement. The study focuses on brand loyalty as an outcome of consumer-brand engagements on Facebook. The research model tested how brand image and brand associations influence consumer engagement in the context of social media, particularly Facebook, and then validated the model empirically. Based on the research, the findings suggest that brand image and brand associations are strongly associated with consumer engagement, confirming earlier research on the relationship between brands and consumers on social media. The study also found that brand associations and consumer engagement significantly impacted brand loyalty, while brand image had little influence. This research's result contradicts the previous research indicating the significant impact of brand image on developing brand loyalty (Dewindaru et al., 2022; Hsieh & Li, 2008; Islam & Rahman, 2016). One possible reason for this could be that Bangladeshi millennials prioritize personal experiences and emotional connections with brands over just image and reputation (Akhter, 2019; Ghosh, 2019; Yamin, 2017). The study's main limitation is that further research is needed to evaluate the mediating effects of trust and risk issues inherent in social media use. This study did not consider gender differences among millennials, which is a significant limitation. Finally, future studies should compare demographic differences between urban and rural millennials.



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## APPENDIX

### Survey Questionnaire

#### The roles of brand image and brand associations in millennial consumers' engagements on social media

##### Section-A: Demographic information

- Gender: a) Male b) Female
- Age: a) Under 20 years b) 21-30 years c) 31-40 years d) Over 40 years
- Education: a) Higher Secondary (College) or lower b) Bachelor's Degree  
c) Master's Degree or Higher
- Occupation: a) Student b) Business c) Job d) Other

##### Section-B: How brand image and brand association influence your social media engagement and brand loyalty

Please share your agreement or disagreement level with the following statements. Here, (1) indicates 'Strongly Agree' and (5) indicates 'Strongly disagree'.

Items	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Brand Image 1	This particular brand's unique personality sets it apart from its competitors.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Image 2	This brand has better characteristics than competitors.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Image 3	This brand represents high-quality	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Image 4	This brand has a strong presence and reputation in the market.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Association 1	The particular brand that appeared on social media is familiar to me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Association 2	The brand is trustworthy.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Association 3	There are reasons to buy from this brand	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Association 4	The brand is different	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Consumer Engagement 1	I read posts related to this Brands on Facebook pages	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Consumer Engagement 2	I express my reactions to brand posts and comments using Facebook buttons Like, angry, etc.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Consumer Engagement 3	Engaging in conversations on the brand's Facebook page (e.g., commenting, asking, and answering questions)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Consumer Engagement 4	Sharing the brand's Facebook posts on my own Facebook page (e.g., videos, audios, pictures, texts)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Loyalty 1	I regularly recommend this brand through the social media	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Loyalty 2	I usually use this brand as my first choice.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Loyalty 3	I will not switch to another brand	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Thank you for participating in the survey.