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EXAMINING KEY DRIVERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA WOM – A SEM APPROACH

Abstract. *Due to technological progress, consumers are impacted by social media interactions at various stages of their decision-making process. Thus, social media WOM plays a critical role in influencing consumer behaviour. This study aims to investigate the impacts of consumer satisfaction, brand familiarity, and active participation on social media word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. A 310-respondent sample was employed in an online survey that was directed toward social media users. Using confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modelling, a mediation analysis, and multi-group analysis, the relationships proposed in the research model were examined. The results revealed the positive impact of customers' satisfaction on driving social media WOM and expanding the brand on these popular socialising digital platforms. This study contributes to a better understanding of customer satisfaction and improves comprehension of WOM in strategic social media marketing frameworks.*

Keywords: *Social media marketing, Word-of-mouth, Customer satisfaction, Brand familiarity, Active participation*

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1. Introduction

In recent business practices, here has been a swift change in the direction of digital transition and social media marketing. This change has impacted the way customers engage with brands. To this effect, in modern marketing studies, scholars and practitioners focus on grasping the dynamic interactions of customer-to-customer contacts and creating value in social media settings. Based on rapid technological and digital advances, consumers can now connect with a brand in a variety of ways that were not previously possible, such as on social media sites (Paruthi et al., 2022). Of all social media sites, Facebook has become the most popular social media platform based on monthly active users (Park et al., 2021). In time, Facebook has proven to have better informational and overall value because it is a crucial tool for users to satisfy their demands for knowledge, socialisation, and enjoyment (Sanz-Blas et al., 2017; Park et al., 2021). These characteristics drive consumers' positive sentiments about using Facebook (Sanz-Blas et al., 2017). Additionally, brands use Facebook as a promotional platform. Users can learn about brands' announcements, special offers, events, and other important details (Sanz-Blas et al., 2017). Furthermore, Facebook enables users to voice issues about a brand, seek guidance from the brand, and learn what other customers think of the brand.

In social media marketing, it is important to recognise the importance of the information that customers obtain from interpersonal sources in affecting their brand responses. Consumer information available on social media platforms shapes customer attitudes and behavioural intentions (Park et al., 2021). Thus, word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing is of strategic importance for social media marketing. WOM reflects a set of beneficial results based on an unpaid marketing strategy to attract people to a business. The most convincing online information sources are those that rely on word-of-mouth (Park et al., 2021). WOM has expanded to electronic WOM (or eWOM) generated via online settings and social media WOM highlighted in social media settings.

As consumers evolve, it is important to continue to address this topic and explore WOM's potential in additional studies (Paruthi et al., 2022). It is crucial to comprehend the major antecedents of the social media WOM. Therefore, this study attempts to determine whether WOM in social media will have an impact on brand responses, based on the familiarity of the consumers with the brand, active participation in brand-related initiatives, and consumer satisfaction. This study seeks to add to the body of knowledge on consumer satisfaction in word-of-mouth and social media marketing.

This article is divided into different sections. The theoretical framework is provided based on relevant research on consumer interaction. Following the presentation of the research methodology, data analysis, and discussion of the results are provided. After addressing certain restrictions and potential future study avenues, we complete the paper by offering a review of the conceptual and practical consequences that have emerged from this research.

2. Theoretical Conceptualisation and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Self-congruency Theory

As a theoretical framework, self-concept congruence is the expression of consumers' self-images through the purchase of specific goods and brands (Leung, 2020). Customers experience pleasure when they use and/or buy their preferred and familiar products and brands (Sirgy, 1982). Customers typically buy goods, brands, and services from companies that are familiar to them to ensure compatibility. In other words, they are drawn to items and services that they believe are compatible with their personal self-concept (Paruthi et al., 2022; Leung, 2020).

Due to varying degrees of self-congruence, consumers also exhibit varying preferences for various brands and demonstrate varying outcomes in terms of brand interactions (Leung, 2020; Sirgy, 1982), including social media WOM. In the present study, the self-congruency theory is used to evaluate the connections between brand familiarity, active participation in brand-related social media initiatives, satisfaction, and consumers' propensity to generate positive social media WOM.

2.2. Key Concepts in Social Media Marketing – Social Media WOM and Satisfaction

Since they serve as significant indicators of profitability, companies are becoming more and more aware of the significance of WOM and customer satisfaction. More specifically, Acharya (2020) defined WOM as 'oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver about a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale'. WOM is typically characterised as communication that is either written or spoken and that is intended to spread non-commercial information (Acharya, 2020).

In the current digital era, traditional WOM has changed into eWOM. With the introduction of new technological instruments, eWOM – also known as online reviews, online suggestions, or digital opinions – has gained importance (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018). The extent of the evaluations' impact (number of individuals who can be persuaded) and the speed of interaction are where WOM and eWOM diverge most. Furthermore, Park et al. (2021) proposed examining social media WOM, as an extension of eWOM focused on social networks and social media platforms. However, word-of-mouth (WOM) on social media is a part of eWOM.

Social media WOM is a type of communication that has been acknowledged as one of the most significant and important information sources on social media platforms (Park et al., 2021). Considering the digital transformation, Leung (2020) appreciated the value of social media WOM in online settings, as it helps reduce consumer resistance, "promote new customer acquisition, … reduce advertising costs, enhance marketing, efficiency and drive online sales" (Leung, 2020). Thus, this study considers this approach of examining social media WOM. Due to the importance of WOM in social media settings, it is essential to address and examine the main antecedents of this construct. One concept that is investigated in existing WOM studies is consumers' satisfaction (Anastasiei and Dospinescu, 2019).

In defining, consumer satisfaction, research shows that when the assessed performance surpasses the customers' expectations, they are satisfied, and when the expectations exceed the evaluated performance, they are unsatisfied (Leung, 2020). In other words, consumers psychologically assess a product or service's performance through the process of satisfaction. Thus, customer satisfaction is determined by comparing the level of service that was anticipated (before the purchase) with the actual quality of service (after the purchase or consumption) (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018). Consumers' level of satisfaction would impact their predisposition to share positive recommendations (WOM) on social media (Park et al., 2021).

2.3. Proposed Hypotheses

Brands create a variety of cognitive representations in the minds of consumers (Karpinska-Krakowiak, 2021). The degree of a consumer's 'direct and indirect contact with a brand is referred to as brand familiarity' (Acharya, 2020). Brand familiarity is a crucial concept that can affect how consumers receive information (Sun et al., 2022). It depicts the components of brand information that are stored in the consumers' mind. Chae et al. (2021) described brand familiarity as a unidimensional concept that is closely related to the amount of time spent computing information about a particular brand. After the consumer interacts with a particular brand, the familiarity of the brand develops. Thus, brand familiarity reflects the level of brand knowledge that the consumer possesses (Choi, 2017).

In this study, brand familiarity has been defined as a repository of positive knowledge about a brand that Facebook users interact with over the course of their usage. A customer's familiarity with a brand is frequently created based on their habituation, connectedness, and knowledge of it (experience) (Chae et al., 2021). It stands to reason that a high level of brand familiarity might result in emotions of greater satisfaction (Ha and Perks, 2005) and word-of-mouth marketing. Familiarity with the goods and brand beforehand lowers the perceived risk of purchasing the brand (Karpinska-Krakowiak, 2021).

Thus, studies have identified brand familiarity as a determinant of word-of-mouth marketing (Sun et al., 2022; Rahman and Mannan, 2018; Ha and Perks, 2005) and satisfaction (Shen et al., 2022). Based on a wide range of studies, we aim to examine the following hypotheses associated with brand familiarity:
H1: Brand familiarity has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction.
H2: Brand familiarity has a positive and significant impact on consumers' positive WOM in social media settings.

Social media sites serve as platforms where users can freely share, create, and upload content at their discretion (Park et al., 2021). Thus, social media provides the basis for active participation of consumers. Based on the service logic, the extent to which consumers actively participate in the manufacturing and delivery process – whether through effort, preference, expertise, or other resources – is known as active participation (Hinson et al., 2019; Casaló et al., 2007)). The same elements of active participation occur in social media settings where consumers can interact with

brands and engage with them via social networks. Customer participation is a crucial component of relationship marketing, since it illustrates how customers become 'active co-producers' when they decide to take part in the creation of a service (Vinerean and Opreana, 2021). Kim and Park (2013) identified three different types of social media participation: intentional participation (such as providing a certain sort of evaluation on social media), unintentional participation (such as information seeking), and resultant participation (i.e., intention to purchase).

To this effect, this paper aims to examine the impact of consumers' active participation with brands' social media pages on generating positive WOM and satisfaction. The perception of satisfaction has been viewed as a favourable response to environmental stimuli (Hsieh et al., 2022). Thus, interactions with brand-related social media posts can represent environmental stimuli in social networking frameworks. Additionally, Park et al. (2021) note that consumers tend to showcase a higher level of motivation to actively participate in social media WOM.

Since recruiting new members to the brand-controlled social media pages can assist businesses in growing their consumer database, advocacy (promotion of the brand through WOM) can generate an organisational impact (Hsieh et al., 2022). Consequently, the following theories are established for empirical testing:

H3: Active participation of customers reflects a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction.

H4: Active participation of customers reflects a positive and significant impact on consumers' positive WOM in social media settings.

Customer satisfaction has historically been a focus for businesses. When consumers are happy and satisfied with a particular product, they continue to buy it (Anastasiei and Dospinescu, 2019). Additionally, consumers are more likely to tell other people about those goods, which affects how others view the company and what they decide to buy in the future.

In a social media context, satisfaction is a causal factor in both repurchase intention and recommendation (San-Martín et al., 2015). Consumers are influenced by social media WOM at various phases of the decision-making process. According to previous studies, customers who are highly satisfied tend to tell other customers about their pleasant experiences (Hsieh et al., 2022), thus reflecting positive word-of-mouth. Positive word-of-mouth might be even more important in the digital space because it spreads quickly and may impact vast audience members, especially in social media settings. Various authors have examined and empirically verified the link between customer satisfaction and positive WOM (Leung (2020; Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018). Therefore, this study aims to expand existing knowledge, by reconfirming this relationship based on the following hypothesis:

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant impact on positive social media WOM.

Based on these hypotheses, the examined model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model hypotheses

Expanding the research model with mediation and multi-group analysis

Based on the proposed theoretical framework (Figure 1), this research aims to examine the role of customer satisfaction as a mediator in two related relationships. Thus, the following additional hypotheses are established:

H6a: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand familiarity and social media WOM.

H6b: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between active participation and social media WOM.

To further the study and improve our understanding of the impact of brand familiarity and consumers' active participation on social media, this study aims to expand the research based on respondents' gender. Therefore, this research recommended evaluating the female and male respondents' opinions on their customer satisfaction, considering the following hypotheses:

H7a: Male respondents' perceptions of brand familiarity reflect a stronger positive effect on their customer satisfaction than female respondents' perceptions.

H7b: Male respondents' active participation in social media brand-related initiatives reflects a stronger positive effect on their customer satisfaction than female respondents' perceptions.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Instrument Development

This study aimed to examine the impact of the brand familiarity, active participation in brand-related social media initiatives, and satisfaction on consumers' propensity of positive WOM on Facebook. Thus, the variables included in the research instrument reflected the hypotheses described in the literature review.

To emphasise a relevant research tool, the survey's questions were created using existing items and evaluated using five-point Likert scales (Table 1). To better reflect the study's context, the survey items were slightly modified. The questionnaire's items and their associated sources are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey instrument

Latent variables and corresponding survey items		**Sources**
Brand Familiarity	BF1: "I am familiar with this brand"	Acharya (2020)
	BF2: "I am experienced with this brand"	
	BF3: "I am knowledgeable about this brand"	
	BF4: "I easily observe this brand on social media"	
Active Participation	AP1: "I actively participate in brand-related activities on Facebook."	Casaló et al., (2007)
	AP2: "In general, I frequently and with great passion write remarks on Facebook about this brand."	
Social Media WOM	SM-WOM1: "I tell other people positive things about this brand on social media."	San-Martín et al. (2015)
	SM-WOM2: "I encourage people to use this brand I like on Facebook"	
	SM-WOM3: "I don't hesitate to tell other people on social media about this brand that I like on Facebook."	
	SM-WOM4: "I will recommend this brand purchasing to anybody who seeks my advice."	
Satisfaction	SAT1: "I think I made the right decision by using brand I like on Facebook."	San-Martín et al. (2015)
	SAT2: "I am happy with the products/services I have bought from this brand I like on Facebook."	
	SAT3: "I am generally happy with this brand."	

3.2. Data Collection and Sample Profile

Considering the goal of this empirical research, we identified Facebook as the social media site that leads to WOM by highlighting the respondents' relationships with their chosen preferred brands. For a quantitative marketing research, we employed a cross-sectional online survey approach to characterise and assess the relationships between the proposed latent variables. Due to Facebook's widespread use, we decided to base our study on a sample of respondents from several countries.

We used a self-administered survey to collect information via a convenience sample. Respondents were contacted by mail, social media communications, and Facebook groups (with a focus on shopping and brand communities specifically). 389 responses were initially collected and the study participants provided their consent. The final valid dataset consisted of 310 observations after removing biased and shallow responses. Table 2 presents reflects information on the sample's profile.

Of the 310 respondents, most of the participants were male, with a graduate level of education. Additionally, based on the scale questions, the respondents' average age was 36.25 (st. dev.=10.58) and they tend to spend, on average, 6.27 hours/week on Facebook.

Table 2. Respondent profile (N=310)

Variable		**Percentage**
Sex of respondents	Male	71%
	Female	29%
Education level	Highschool diploma	2%
	Bachelor Diploma	89%
	Master Diploma	10%

4. Empirical Analysis and Discussion of the Results

4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

For the first step in the empirical investigation, confirmatory factor analysis (henceforth CFA) was performed in AMOS to verify the measurement model.

The model fit, the convergent validity, and the discriminant validity were examined. The CFA was initially evaluated for relevance, based on goodness-of-fit indicators and standardised estimates higher than 0.5. (Hair et al., 2010). All the goodness-of-fit indicators met the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2010): $\chi^2 = 95.677$ $(\mathrm{p-value} < 0.001), \mathrm{df} = 59, \chi^2/df = 1.622,$ NFI=0.955(>0.90), TLI=0.976(>0.90), CFI=0.982 (>0.90), GFI=0.956 (>0.90), RMSEA = 0.045 (<0.08).

Further, the CFA validation involved investigations of convergent validity (Table 3) and discriminant validity (Table 4). For convergent validity, we considered the standardised factor loadings (higher than the 0.5 threshold proposed by Hair et al., 2010), Cronbach's alpha coefficients (higher than the 0.7 cut-off value according to Hair et al., 2010), composite reliability indices (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values. All these conditions were met to attest to the convergent validity criteria. Table 4 shows that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients met the minimum value of 0.7, since the lowest value was 0.708. Furthermore, for CR, the existing literature recommends a minim of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010) and this condition was achieved because the lowest level of CR was registered for Active participation (AP) with a score of 0.710. Moreover, the convergent validity analysis continued with AVE to achieve a minimum of 0.5. The lowest value of 0.550 was calculated for Active participation (AP).

Furthermore, the values of AVE were the basis for the AVE's square roots, which provided the foundation for investigating discriminant analysis. As a result, the square roots of the AVE values were greater than the correlations between each pair of components, suggesting that the observations used in this study exhibited discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, all prerequisites for CFA were met.

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Latent variables and items	Standardised Estimates	Sig. level	Mean	St.dev.
Brand Familiarity (Cronbach's α = 0.877)				
BF1	0.788	***	3.639	1.0358
BF2	0.821	***	3.403	0.9797
BF3	0.815	***	3.452	0.9464
BF4	0.784	***	3.452	1.0220
Active Participation (Cronbach's α = 0.708)				
AP1	0.759	***	3.297	0.9114
AP2	0.724	***	3.335	0.8535
Social Media WOM (Cronbach's α = 0.856)				
SM-WOM11	0.803	***	3.652	0.9794
SM-WOM2	0.783	***	3.565	0.9691
SM-WOM3	0.753	***	3.597	0.9219
SM-WOM4	0.753	***	3.645	0.8867
Satisfaction (Cronbach's α = 0.841)				
SAT1	0.771	***	3.745	0.8792
SAT2	0.802	***	3.729	0.8725
SAT3	0.825	***	3.845	0.9218

Note: *** indicates a level of significance < 0.001.

Table 4. Convergent validity and discriminant analysis for CFA

	CR	AVE	SM-WOM	BF	AP	SAT
SM-WOM	0.856	0.598	**0.773**			
BF	0.878	0.643	0.585	**0.802**		
AP	0.710	0.550	0.596	0.533	**0.742**	
SAT	0.842	0.639	0.740	0.588	0.590	**0.800**

Note: The bold values displayed on the diagonal reflect the square-root of AVE. The off-diagonal values reflect the pairwise correlations between the constructs.

Moreover, common method bias was investigated to study the data in more detail. After the data collection process, the common method bias was examined based on the Harman's test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). According to the results, a single retrieved component explained only 42.06% of the variation of extracted sum of squared loadings, which is less than the suggested limit of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This conclusion demonstrated that one factor could not, by itself, account for the preponderance the model's variance. Thus, SEM analysis is appropriate.

4.2. Structural Equation Modelling and Discussion of Results

To investigate the proposed relationships between the four components that were considered in this model, structural equation modelling was developed. We established a structural equation model (SEM) to test the propositions of the model in AMOS 21, using maximum likelihood estimation. SEM evaluates the model fitness and the interaction among the components (Hair et al., 2010). To evaluate the model, we examined relevant indicators, such as $\chi^2 = 95.677$, df = 59, TLI = 0.976, CFI = 0.982, GFI=0.956, RMSEA = 0.045. All the indicators surpassed the suggested threshold of 0.9 (Collier, 2020), indicating the model's relevance. Table 5 and Figure 2 display the SEM results.

Table 5. SEM results

Hypothesis	Standardised Regression Estimates (β)	t-value	P-value	Result
H1: BF → SAT	0.382	5.156	***	Supported
H2: BF → SM-WOM	0.174	2.527	0.012	Rejected
H3: AP → SAT	0.386	4.568	***	Supported
H4: AP → SM-WOM	0.195	2.444	0.015	Rejected
H5: SAT → SM-WOM	0.522	6.357	***	Supported

Note: *** indicates a level of significance p<0.001; n.s. indicates not significant

Out of five SEM proposed hypotheses, three hypotheses were confirmed. However, the other two hypotheses need to be explored further in a mediation analysis (associated with hypotheses 6a and 6b). The first hypothesis (H1) aimed to examine the impact of brand familiarity on customer satisfaction with a brand that respondents interact with on social media platforms. H1 was supported and confirmed based on the positive, direct, and significant result of β=0.382 (t-value = 5.156, p<0.001). This finding offers support for previous studies that examined this relationship in online settings (Shen et al., 2022; Ha and Perks, 2005).

Further, Hypothesis 2 explored the direct influence of brand familiarity on word-of-mouth initiative of the respondents of this study. However, H2 was rejected in the context of this database, due to an insignificant result (β=0.174; t-value = 2.527, p-value = 0.012). A marginally inconsequential result leads us to further examine this relationship in a mediation test, associated with hypothesis 6a.

The proposed model also examined a positive relationship between active participation of respondents on social media and their satisfaction with a particular brand. H3 presented a significant result of β=0.386 (t-value = 4.568, p<0.001), showcasing support and acceptance of H3. This finding corroborates earlier research (Hsieh et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021; Kim and Park, 2013).

Hypothesis 4 investigated the influence of active participation in social media brand-related activities on positive word-of-mouth with regard to consumers' preferred brand. Nonetheless, H4 was rejected in the context of this study, due to an

insignificant result (β=0.195; t-value = 2.444, p-value = 0.015) that should be explored further in a mediation analysis, associated with hypothesis 6b.

This model also aimed to provide empirical evidence for a renowned and important relationship in the marketing literature, namely the impact of customer satisfaction on generating positive word-of-mouth. This relationship was associated with hypothesis 5, and the results of the model led to the acceptance of this popular hypothesis in the context of this study. Based on the significant results (β=0.522; t-value = 6.357, p-value< 0.001), this study offers additional support to previous reports on this essential hypothesis in marketing literature (Leung, 2020; Serra-Cantallops et al., 2018).

With regard to the model's results, it is important to address the explained variance in the dependent variables. The model helped explain 45.3% of the variance in consumers' satisfaction with their preferred brand that they interact with on social media. Moreover, the model explained 60.4% of the variance in consumers' word-of-mouth initiatives regarding their preferred brand.

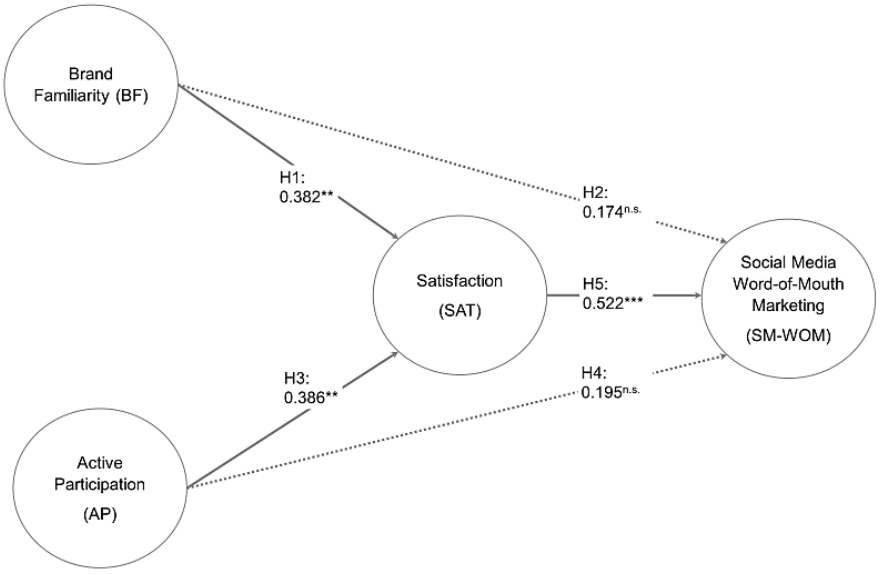

Figure 2. SEM results of model hypotheses

Taking into account the proposed hypotheses of our model, we can establish customer satisfaction as a mediator for two relationships: 'Brand familiarity' and 'WOM' (H6a) and 'Active participation' and 'WOM' (H6b). In line with recommendations made by Collier (2020), this study evaluated indirect effects using a bootstrapping approach on 5000 samples with a 95% confidence level. The mediation results are presented in Table 6.

The indirect effect value of Brand familiarity on WOM via customer satisfaction was 0.172, significant at a p<0.001 level. Similarly, the indirect effect value of Active participation in WOM via customer satisfaction was 0.196,

significant at a p<0.001 level. This crucial finding in our study which showed a sizable indirect influence on satisfaction. Based on the insignificant paths associated with H2 and H4, this model showcases a full mediation based on customer satisfaction in the relationships associated with the relationships that examine brand familiarity and WOM, as well as active participation and WOM. Based on these computations, hypotheses H6a and H6b were confirmed. In other words, we can conclude that Brand Familiarity has a significant indirect effect on social media WOM through the construct of Customer Satisfaction. Also, Active participation has a significant indirect effect on social media WOM through the construct of Customer Satisfaction.

Table 6. Mediation results

Paths	**Direct Effect**	**Indirect Effect**	**Confidence Interval**		**p-value**	**Conclusion**
			Low	High		
BF → SAT →SM-WOM	0.150 (2.527)	0.172	0.078	0.301	0.001	Full mediation
AP → SAT →SM-WOM	0.196 (2.444)	0.202	0.113	0.336	0.001	Full mediation

Note: Unstandardised coefficients reported. Values in parentheses are t-values Bootstrap sample= 5,000.

As an enhancement of the model, we aimed to create an invariance analysis based on a multi-group assessment of female and male respondents. The chi-square difference test was compared as part of the invariance test, which offered the chance to evaluate differences in relationships between groups. By focusing the multi-group analysis in AMOS on the relationship between "brand familiarity" and "customer satisfaction" (H7a) we were able to investigate the differences between the associated groups of female and male respondents. Table 7 presents the results.

Table 7. Multi-group analysis for Hypothesis 7a

Hypothesis		**Standardised Regression Estimates (β)**	**t-value**	**P-value**
H7a: BF → SAT Chi-square= 6.418 (1 df)	Male respondents:	0.464	5.353	*
	Female respondents:	0.056	0.376	0.707

Note: * indicates a p-value of 0.010

Hypothesis 7a aimed to examine the difference in perception of male and female respondents with regard to their assessment of brand familiarity and satisfaction. A chi-square test of 6.418 (1 df) and a p-value of 0.010 indicated a notable contrast between the female and male respondents' perceptions related to

brand familiarity and their perception of customer satisfaction. As presented in Table 7, the results reflect a significant and strong estimate for male respondents (0.464, $p < 0.001$) and an inconsequential estimate for female respondents (0.056, $p = 0.707$). Thus, Hypothesis 7a was confirmed. Our findings demonstrated that male respondents perceived brand familiarity as a critical component when considering their assessment of satisfaction.

Further, hypothesis H7b assumed that male respondents' active participation in social media brand-related initiatives would reflect a stronger positive effect on their customer satisfaction than female respondents' perceptions. However, a chi-square test of 4.341 (1 df) and a p-value of 0.037 indicated that there was no difference between the female and male respondents. Therefore, H7b cannot be accepted in the context of this study.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the body of knowledge and has several theoretical implications. From a theoretical perspective, as social media WOM communication influences purchasing decisions in a significant manner, this paper adds to existing knowledge on this topic by examining the key drivers and moderators of this concept. Researchers and marketers agree that encouraging positive WOM is essential to brand health, since it has a substantial impact on consumers' purchasing decisions and shields the brand from competitors.

Additionally, this study improved understanding of brand familiarity and active participation of consumers in social media activities and demonstrated their positive impact on customer satisfaction. Thus, this study amplified the existing literature on customer satisfaction and emphasised the need to further examine two new antecedents of satisfaction on social media outlets. Moreover, while brand familiarity has been intensively investigated in the field of consumer behaviour and marketing (Park et al., 2021), there has been minimal research on this topic in the field of social media marketing, and this paper helped improve this knowledge gap.

Additionally, this study contributes to the existing literature by investigating the role of customer satisfaction as a mediator in suggested connections. Satisfaction had a full mediating effect on the relationship between brand familiarity and social media WOM, as well as on the connection between active participation and social media WOM. As brand familiarity and active participation did not reflect significant impacts on WOM, these results show the important role of satisfaction as a moderator in driving social media WOM.

5.2. *Practical Implications*

The results of this study reflect certain managerial implications that are discussed in this section. As consumers spend more time in the online and interactive ecosystem, marketers must focus their marketing strategies on developing interesting, engaging, and impromptu social media experiences to stimulate positive

emotions for their brands. Considering this study's findings, managers should consider the importance of social media WOM and the key role of customer satisfaction in driving positive recommendations. The simplicity of accessing reviews and the extent of social media WOM can have a significant impact on a company's success. Therefore, businesses should make an increased effort to understand the variables that affect the use of WOM as well as the effects that it brings about.

Additionally, this study emphasised the need for companies to be present on social media networks in a manner that increases the awareness and familiarity with the brand to increase consumers' perceptions of satisfaction. These initiatives will have a direct and important impact on customer satisfaction. To this effect, brand managers can benefit from social media analytics by better understanding how their target market reacts to social media initiatives (posts, stories, live events, etc.).

Regarding the consumers' active participation in brand-related social media initiatives, based on the findings of the study, we can establish the importance of this construct. Customers are willing to assist businesses in improving their market offerings, and managers must lay the groundwork for strong connections with their core markets. The customer-brand relationship will become more intense after repeated contacts. Thus, it is important to develop engaging initiatives on social media to stimulate consumers' participation, which leads to satisfaction, and further expedites positive WOM in social media settings.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Future Research Opportunities

Although the current study contributes to the body of literature on social media WOM, we acknowledge some limitations that provide opportunities for additional study. First, this study focused solely on Facebook as the main social media platform for this research. As customers frequently utilise numerous social media platforms, more studies into different platforms are required. Second, because this study involved quantitative research, the multiple-country random sample represents a significant constraint, and the outcomes' generalisability cannot be expanded outside of this sample. Thus, additional studies are required to amplify the proposed model in different settings. Additionally, the results of this research could potentially be extended in user-generated content studies based on social-media listening analysis and web mining (Smeureanu and Bucur, 2012).

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