An integrated model of social media brand love: Mediators of brand attitude and consumer satisfaction

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Mediators of Brand Attitude and Consumer Satisfaction

Increasing acceptance of social media among users show that consumers are making deep emotional connections with them. The purpose of this study is to apply the concept of brand love to social media as a brand and investigate its antecedents and outcomes via examining the mediating effect of consumer satisfaction and attitude in social media brand love that eventually leads to positive brand outcomes. In total, 461 valid questionnaires were collected from Turkish students who have an active account on social media (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter). Structural equation modeling (SEM) and Hayes Process macro were conducted to assess the hypothesizes. Findings supported the conceptual model and confirmed the significant relationships between focal variables. The study suggested that social media managers can use communication strategies to increase brand identification, brand image, and consumer satisfaction to improve their attitudes towards social media and develop brand love and positive brand outcomes.

Keywords: Brand identification; Brand image; Satisfaction; Brand attitude; Social media brand love (SMBL)

Introduction

The increasing of social media popularity and importance in marketing, advertising and consumer behavior have attracted scholars' attention to them. These platforms can create desirable experiences for consumers in virtual environments that are not possible without them. A report has shown that the monthly active users of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn are approximately 1.6 billion, 400 million, 320 million, and 100 million, respectively (Adweek, 2016). Another study reported that 70 percent of Facebook users logged in it at least once a day and more than 45 percent of users logged in countless times throughout the day (Duggan et al., 2015). In an era where consumers are more

interested in brands that make desirable and adorable experiences for them in both fields of consumption and services, social media brands are in a unique position to provide emotional attachment and enjoyable experiences for their users (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Therefore, social media as a brand can create positive emotional feelings in users that lead to passionate emotional attachment with social media brands (i.e. social media brand love).

Some prior studies have investigated love concept for brands that use these platforms for marketing processes. The study's results have shown a brand's social media communications are critical factor in the branding process (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2020; Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). For instance, Jahn and Kunz (2012) showed that Facebook fan pages have a positive effect on brand loyalty. Wallace et al. (2014) suggested that self-expressive nature of brands "liked" has a positive impact on brand love. Kudeshia et al. (2016) indicated a positive relationship between the "liked" brands on Facebook fans page and brand love. Another study showed that users make positive electronic word-of-mouth on social media such as Facebook that affects brand attitude and consumer purchasing intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Other studies tried to recognize antecedents and consequences of brand love in online or offline content (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Palusuk et al., 2019).

Despite important of these contributions, the love concept on social media as a brand has rarely been noticed. Besides, rare research has examined the relationship between brand attitude and brand love (Han et al., 2019) as well as the mediating role of brand attitude and consumer satisfaction on brand love construct has not been investigated yet. Thus, this study filled this gap and considered social media platforms as virtual third places where users gather there and spend a meaningful amount of time (McArthur &

White, 2016), developed a new conceptual framework of brand love structure in social media and highlighted the significant role of consumer satisfaction and brand attitude in this mechanism.

Consumers' satisfaction and positive attitude towards a brand are two primary factors in consumer-brand relationships. Prior studies have shown that positive brand attitude and consumer satisfaction enhanced brand loyalty (Abimbola et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2020), brand love (Al-Haddad, 2019; Hegner et al., 2017), as well as positive word-of-mouth communication (Anwar Mir, 2013; Chu & Sung, 2015). Our results suggested that customer satisfaction and attitude towards the social media brand affect SMBL and mediate the relationship between brand image, brand identification, and SMBL. On the other hand, the proposed mediation model showed that the effect of brand image and brand identification on SMBL is achieved through consumer satisfaction and brand attitude, sequentially. Findings have provided new insights into the brand love literature in services and contributions for social media managers.

This study presents some theoretical, managerial and societal contributions for managers and researchers. First, we introduced a mechanism that shows how brand love shapes on social media platforms. This mechanism helps social media practitioners to understand the importance of expanding social identity theory (i.e. increasing brand identification and brand image) that creates satisfied consumers who have positive attitudes towards these brands and eventually leads to SMBL and positive brand outcomes. Second, this study provides an effort to extended the attachment theory by Bowlby (1980) on social media platforms by describing new nomological relationships in brand love mechanism and contributes to developing literature on brand love. Finally, this study showed that improve brand image and brand identification create satisfied users

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who have positive evaluations of social media brands. This helps social media managers to reduce the negative attitudes towards social media through developing brand identification and more attention to users' satisfaction.

The remaining of this study is structured as follows. First, we introduced the underlying theory (i.e. social identity theory and attachment theory), followed by the literature review and hypotheses development. Then, we present research methodology along with results and conclusions. Finally, we finished this paper with implications, limitations and future research.

Literature review

Brand love

Nowadays, the importance of brand love role in marketing and consumer behavior is understood well by managers and scholars. Brand love is a strategic tool in brand management that refers to a deep and passionate emotional attachment among consumers and brands (Aro et al., 2018) that can involve both the heart and mind of consumers (Bagozzi et al., 2017). Brand love is a significant driver of consumer-brand communication (Batra et al., 2012) and is not immediately obtained but achieved over time (Langner et al., 2016). In this regard, we defined social media brand love as a passionate emotional attachment between consumers and a social media brand.

A review of the research literature shows that there are two different approaches to brand love research on social media. The first approach examines love concepts for the brands that use these emerging platforms to carry out their marketing activities. For instance; Algharabat (2017) suggested the "heart-shaped icon" or customers' "liking" activities in social media is considered as a tool for stating brand love that leads to a positive emotional relationship between customers and brands. Another study illustrated

that consumers' "liking" activities on Facebook affect customer engagement, expand consumers' perceived self-congruence and create a passionate emotional relationship between consumers and brand that leads to positive word-of-mouth (Wallace et al., 2017). In line with their argumentation, Coelho et al. (2019) showed that online brand communities help to strengthen the relationships between brands and customers through brand love. Another study that investigated college students' Facebook habits indicated self-expressive nature of brands "liked" significantly influences brand love (Wallace et al., 2014). Social media has settled a new dynamic in marketing, allowing customers to make deep emotional, cognitional and behavioural relationships with favorite brands in a variety of ways (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018). Machado et al. (2019) demonstrated that consumer engagement and brand love mediate the relationship between brand gender and consumer-based brand equity on Facebook.

The second approach examines brand love concept on social media as a brand. Studies in this field are rare and only a few researchers studied social media platforms as a brand. For instance, Dwivedi et al. (2019) showed that social media emotional attachments have a positive influence on consumer-based social media brand equity. Another study showed that consumers make a positive electronic word-of-mouth on social media such as Facebook that affect brand attitude and consumer purchasing intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Given the significant role of social media in human communities, this study aims to consider social media platforms as a "brand" and introduce SMBL mechanism through investigating the mediating role of consumer satisfaction and brand attitude on the relationship between brand identification and SMBL as well as brand image and SMBL.

Brand Identification

Brand identification defined as the degree of overlap between consumers' identity or self-image with the brand's image that people can interpret (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Lam et al., 2010). Brand identification depends on self-identity of consumers and perceived identity of brands which explain a wide range of positive consumer behavior (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Brand identification is positively related to brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Pontinha & do Vale, 2019) through intensity of emotional bond (Dalman et al., 2019), which leads to a higher level of brand loyalty (Batra et al., 2012; Maignan et al., 2005). Customers who have a higher level of brand identification about a specific brand are more likely to be satisfied with it (He & Li, 2011; Popp & Woratschek, 2017). Prior studies showed that brand identification increases consumer satisfaction via a more suitable overall judgment related to the affective brand attachment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Rather & Hollebeek, 2019). The extant literature also presents evidence on the link between brand identification and consumer attitude toward brand (Augusto & Torres, 2018; Bartsch et al., 2016). Therefore, we hypothesized that consumers are more likely to shape a favorable attitude towards a brand and satisfied with it if they have strong brand identification that leads to brand loyalty. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{1a}. Brand identification has a positive impact on satisfaction.

H_{1b}. Brand identification has a positive impact on brand attitude.

H_{1c}. Brand identification has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

Brand Image

Brand image as a key concept in marketing plays an important role in brand management (Keller, 2013). Brand image reflected consumer's feelings about a specific brand (Roy & Banerjee, 2007) that arises from consumers' knowledge and memory about a brand (Koubaa, 2008). Brand image includes symbolic meanings, subjective and emotional representations and descriptive information in which consumers can easily communicate with a brand (Iversen & Hem, 2008). Consumers who have a positive brand image understood their brand as unique from others (Faircloth et al., 2001) and have a favorable attitude towards them (Kim, 2000). Brand image contains an overall evaluation of a brand (Hsieh et al., 2004) that significantly affects brand attitudes (Ansary & Hashim, 2018; Yu et al., 2018). Prior studies have shown that consumers with a positive brand image more likely to experience brand love (Ismail & Melewar, 2015; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Brand image also has an important role in achieving customer satisfaction. Brand knowledge is one of the resources that shape customer satisfaction. The results of a study showed that consumers couldn't be satisfied with a brand unless they have a high brand image or brand awareness in their memory (Esch et al., 2006). Prior studies have illustrated that brand image positively influenced customer satisfaction (Mohammed & Rashid, 2018; Song et al., 2019). Consequently, the following hypothesis emerges:

H_{2a}. *Brand image has a positive impact on consumer satisfaction.*

H_{2b}. *Brand image has a positive impact on brand attitude.*

Consumer Satisfaction

Satisfaction as a dimension of services refers to general consumer evaluation of the performance at a given time (Giese & Cote, 2000). Consumers' satisfaction contains both

cognitive and emotional arbitration that can vary from person to person (Roy et al., 2013). The benefits of previous services along with a high level of consumer satisfaction, perceived value and quality of service lead to consumer love for the service company (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012). Brand love is more significant factor in consumer-brand relationships than satisfaction (Karjaluoto et al., 2016). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) argued that consumer satisfaction and brand love are various concepts for three reasons. First, brand love is an affective concept, while satisfaction is a cognitive concept. Second, satisfaction can understand in the first consumer experience, while love has shaped in long-term relationships between consumers and brands. Third, brand love reflects the consumer's emotional commitment, which is integrated into the consumer's self-identity and is not necessary for customer satisfaction. Prior studies showed that high levels of satisfaction lead to brand love (Al-Haddad, 2019; Bigne et al., 2020; Unal & Aydin, 2013). Therefore, we expect consumers who have had a high satisfaction with social media are more likely to have more passionate emotional attachments with them. Consequently, the following hypothesis emerges:

H3. consumers 'satisfaction has a positive impact on brand love.

Brand Attitude

Creating favorable attitudes towards a brand is a fundamental factor in brand management (Ansary & Hashim, 2018). Brand attitude reflects customers' favorable evaluations about a specific brand, which shows to what extent this brand is liked by customers (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007). Batra et al. (2012) argued that the strength of an attitude towards loving is related to brand love. This study results showed that brand love is a complex structure that includes seven dimensions: passion-driven behaviors, positive emotional relationship, self-brand integration, long-term connection, overall positive

attitude, attitude valence, and anticipated separation distress. Hegner et al. (2017) illustrated that attitude towards loving a brand has a significant impact on brand love for both low- and high- involvement consumers. A recent empirical study conducted by Han et al. (2019) suggested a positive relationship between brand attitude and brand love that can differ among various services levels (e.g. full-service and low-cost airlines). Ajzen (1991) argued that people who have a positive attitude towards objects are more likely to develop desirable behaviors toward them. Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002) revealed that attitude has a basic role in forming behavioural intentions. In line with their argumentation, Lien and Cao (2014) showed that the higher level of attitude towards brand creates the higher the level of positive word-of-mouth communication. Therefore, we expect satisfied consumers who have a positive attitude towards social media more likely to have an emotional connection with them and disseminate positive word-of-mouth communication. Consequently, the following hypotheses emerge:

H$_{4a}$. Brand attitude has a positive impact on brand love.

H$_{4b}$. Brand attitude has a positive impact on word-of-mouth communication.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the core of brand value that influences the consumer's decision to usage the same brand and decrease shifts to rival brands (Yoo et al., 2000). It refers to the profound commitment to the use of the same brand that will be considered by future purchases (Liu, 2007). We defined social media brand loyalty as the repeated use of a particular social media platform by users. Some studies have discussed the factors associated with brand loyalty and identified its structure (e.g. Abimbola et al. (2012); Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)). Coelho et al. (2019) showed that brand love is significantly related to brand loyalty as a consequence that is beneficial for brands and

companies. Huang (2017) argued that brand love is the fundamental mechanism in developing customers' loyalty behavior that plays a mediating role in the relation between brand experience and brand loyalty. Algharabat (2017) showed that social media marketing activities significantly influence self-expressive brands, which in turn affect brand love, and positively enhance brand loyalty. Besides, prior studies reported a positive link between brand love and brand loyalty (Bairrada et al., 2018; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Pontinha & do Vale, 2019). Therefore, extending the literature on this issue, we are providing empirical evidence from social media platforms to prove that loving social media brands significantly influence social media brand loyalty. Consequently, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H₅. Brand love has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

Word-of-mouth Communication

Word-of-mouth communication is an informal discussion between consumers about benefits, performance, specifications, or use of specific goods, brands and services (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Consumers tend to share their negative and positive experiences with others that allow them to reduce their doubts about decisions (De Valck et al., 2009). Aaker (2014) explained that brand loyalty encourages consumer to recommend brand to others and has a positive impact on word-of-mouth communication. Prior studies indicated that loyal consumers like to share their positive experiences of brands with others (Caruana, 2002; Fetscherin et al., 2014; Wolter & Cronin, 2016). Kim et al. (2001) showed that word-of-mouth communication has a significant direct effect on brand loyalty. Prior studies have also demonstrated that brand love positively impacts on word-of-mouth communication (Karjaluoto et al., 2016; Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Therefore, we expect consumers who have a deep

emotional connection with social media more likely to disseminate the positive word-of-mouth communication that can increase social media brand loyalty. Consequently, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H6. Brand love has a positive impact on word-of-mouth communication.

H₇. Word-of-mouth communication has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

The conceptual model for the study, including the hypotheses, is presented in Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model of this study is basically drawn from two conceptual approaches: Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980). Social identity theory explains consumers' motivations and consumer's sense of belonging with a brand that encourages people to relate to brands or companies (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Attachment theory recommends that attachment is a specific and purposeful emotional relationship between a person and object (e.g. individual, brand and company). This theory determined the degree to which a person is completely attached to a brand and defines him/her level of commitment and involvement in a relationship (Bowlby, 1980). Brand attachment indicates a person's closeness to a brand in terms of strong cognitive and emotional perception in the minds of consumers (Park et al., 2008). This study attempts to develop a new model using both the social identity theory and attachment theory to investigate cognitive and emotional aspects of social media brand love.

Mediating effect of brand satisfaction and brand attitude

Prior studies are suggested the mediating roles of brand attitude and customer satisfaction to customers' behavior. For instance, Han et al. (2019) indicated that brand attitude, brand image, brand trust and brand love significantly have a mediating impact on the relationship between core-product and service-encounter quality on consumers repurchase intention. Liu et al. (2020) showed that brand attitude has a mediating role in the relationship between brand knowledge and brand performance. Nam et al. (2011) has investigated the mediating role of customer satisfaction on the relationship of brand loyalty to brand equity. Another study suggested satisfaction and trust mediates the effect of brand image on brand loyalty (Song et al., 2019). Dwivedi and McDonald, (2020) suggested that brand attitude and brand trust have fully mediated affect the relation between consumer evaluation of brand social media communication and consumer willingness to pay a price premium. Despite these studies implicitly discussed the mediating role of satisfaction and brand attitude. Consumers' satisfaction and brand attitude mediation role between brand image and brand identification on brand love has not been investigated yet; extensive consumer-brand relationships studies highlight the importance of brand attitude and satisfaction in consumers' behaviors. Therefore, we suggested the relation between brand identification and SMBL as well as brand image and SMBL occurs via the mediating role of consumer satisfaction and attitude towards brand sequentially, which results in positive brand outcomes. Consequently, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H_8. Brand satisfaction and brand attitude have a sequential mediating effect on brand identification and social media brand love relationship.

H_9. Brand satisfaction and brand attitude have a sequential mediating effect on brand image and social media brand love relationship.

The conceptual model of mediating effect for this study, including hypotheses, is shown in Figure 3.

Research design

Research context

Social media position in Turkey shows that these platforms are popular among users. According to Johnson (2020); YouTube is the most popular social media in Turkey with (90%) penetration rate, followed by Instagram (83%), WhatsApp (81%), Facebook (76%), Twitter (61%), and LinkedIn (32%) while (79.5%) of users are aged between 16-30. Another survey conducted by GFK and Cereyan research companies showed that 84% of Turkish people have an account on social media and spend four hours daily with them. This survey also illustrated that 91% of Turkish users have an active account on Facebook, 72% on Instagram, and 44% on YouTube (Mentes, 2019). Turkish social media users primarily prefer to use social media for following others to learn and to interact socially (Kurtuluş et al., 2015). They would like to share technological-related, funny content and music by social media (Erdogmus & Tatar, 2015). All of the above points indicate that habits and statistics of use social media in Turkey are very similar to other countries that actively use social media. Therefore, Turkey provides a reliable platform for studying social media and come up with generalizable results.

Data collection

We collected data through a paper-based survey from Turkish students. Students are specific age groups of people that more engaged in information and communication technology in daily life (Prensky, 2010). Turkish Internet users who used all social media platforms have aged between 25 to 34 and most of them are students that spend a lot of

time with them (Simon, 2018). Data collection was completed over two months. Five-hundred respondents from college students at Istanbul University participated in this survey. Istanbul University is the biggest university in Turkey with a very large number of students from all over the country. After data cleaning because of suspicious patterns in the data, 461 questionnaires were used in final analysis. The survey began with some questions about participants' social media habits such as time of social media use, purpose of using social media, most used social media platform, and duration of membership in social media. Next, we asked them to recall a social media brand that they used most recently, from a listed four options (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn) that are the most popular social media platforms in Turkey include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Simon, 2018). In order to avoid biases, we ignored WhatsApp on this list because WhatsApp is a mobile app, which allows its users to do instant messaging, whereas the other four apps allow its users to post, share their photos, videos and emotions and liked and comment on them in addition to messaging. Then, they answered all research questions based on their popular social media brand on several scale items related to study variables by using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The measures to assess each variable were prepared and adapted from previous studies (See Table 1). Finally, survey ended with some demographic questions.

Sample profile

The sample is (56.4%) male and (43.6%) female, indicating that both sexes are practically balanced in this research. About (72.8%) are 19-24 years old, (22.3%) are 25-30 years old. Regarding respondent education levels, (66.4%) are Bachelor students, (24.1%). Regarding income, (70.5%) have an income of under 2000 Turkish liras. Major of the

respondents used social media a few times a day (75.7%). Most of the respondents (58.8%), however, declared that they had been members of their social media for 3 to 5 years. The majority preferred to use Instagram (62%). The respondents indicated that their motives for using social media were entertainment (52.7%), search for information (20.8%), sharing information (12.6%), and social interaction (13.9%).

-----------Insert Figure 1 about here-------------

Results

We applied structural equation modeling (SEM) by utilizing AMOS 24 software to examine the research hypothesis. SEM is a valid analysis technique that test conceptual models derived from previous researches and evaluates how well this theory fits in with the collected data (Hair et al., 2017). SEM helps researchers to assess the relationships between multiple dependent and independent variables (Kline, 2015). For mediation analyses, we used Hayes Process macro (version 3.5) that is downloadable (https://processmacro.org/index.html). Multiple mediation analyses allow researchers to determine whether mediational processes are conditional on study variables (Hayes, 2017). We used SPPS. 23 software to run a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 samples through the process plug-in by Hayes (2017; Model 6) for testing the mediated effect. This multiple mediation model allows us to test a set of potential mediators and examine competing theories. The present study is a predictive study with multiple independent variables, mediator variables and dependent variables, SEM and Hayes methods are suitable for evaluating the proposed hypotheses.

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Preliminary data analysis

We investigated Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Average Variance Extracted (AWE) and Consistency Reliability (CR) to evaluate the measurement model. For evaluating factor loadings, we used the maximum-likelihood method for extraction and the "Promax" method for rotation on the items of seven constructs used in the research. This analysis showed that all factor loadings were higher than 0.60 and observed variables were statistically significant excepted in three items. Therefore, we removed these items due to low factor loadings (less than 0.60) result in a satisfactory fit to data. All of the constructs percentage variances were greater than 50% as well as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were greater than 70%. Besides, we ran Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) that the results were greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). We also used Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to evaluate convergent validity. This criterion shows the correlation of a variable with its indexes and its value should be above 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results showed that all CR values were greater than their respective AVE values, and the lowest AVE was 0.517. The results of all these indicators are shown in Table 1 along with the factor loads and the appropriate reliability of the variables.

-----------Insert Table 1 about here-------------

Assessment of Common method bias

In this study, we used a survey that includes dependent and independent variables that are answered by same participants, so there may be systematic measurement errors due to misleading conclusions. Therefore, we investigated common variance to ensure that the data are free from non-response bias. Herman's one-factor analysis is a common method

that allowed researchers to distinguish the common variance among all observed variables in the model (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The single-method-factor approach showed that majority of the covariance among the measures that are estimated by a single factor is 28.94 %, suggesting that common method bias does not be an issue in this paper.

Evaluation of the measurement model

We ran Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess the validity of the constructs. All factor loadings were greater than .60 resulted in satisfactory fit to the data. The analyses results indicated the goodness of fit: the model's chi-squared statistic was significant (χ^2 (532) = 1365.05, P < 0.000), the normed chi-square (χ^2 /df= 2.566), that is below the 3.0 level recommended by (Hair et al., 2017). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.058, standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR)=0.076, comparative fit index (CFI)=0.93, incremental fit index (IFI) =0.93, normed fit index (NFI)=0.89, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI)=0.86 were all within the recommended levels for a good model fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Besides, each of the regression values was statistically acceptable and significant (p < .001). These results showed that proposed model is accepted. For divergent validity, correlation matrix criterion is used. This criterion represents the further interaction of a variable with its own indicators relative to other indicators. Convergent and divergent convergent results are presented in Table 2 and show variables have high validity.

-----------Insert Table 2 about here-------------

Assessment of the structural model results

We used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the maximum likelihood estimation method to examine the hypothesized relationships. Results showed that the model fit is

acceptable (χ^2 /df= 2.676; CFI = 0.92; IFI= 0.92; RMSEA = 0.06; SRMR = 0.08). This shows that the model fits logically with data (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). SEM analyses results reported in Table 3.

-----------Insert Table 3 about here-------------

The standardized results from the structural model is shown in Figure 2.

As indicated in Table 3, H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1c} test the effect of brand identification on consumer satisfaction, brand attitude and brand loyalty, respectively. The results showed that brand identification had a significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction (β=.15, t-value=4.52, $p < 0.001$), brand attitude (β=.51, t-value=9.35, $p < 0.001$) and brand loyalty (β=.33, t-value=7.44, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, all three hypotheses are supported. These results also demonstrated that brand identification is a strong predictor of brand attitude.

-----------Insert Figure 2 about here-------------

To examine H_{2a} to H_{2b}, the results indicated brand image had significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction (β=.50, t-value=7.88, $p < 0.001$) and brand attitude (β=.32, t-value=4.03, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H_{2a} and H_{2b} are supported. Consumer satisfaction (β=.50, t-value=7.83, $p < 0.001$) and brand attitude (β=.27, t-value=8.05, $p < 0.001$) had significant positive effects on SMBL. Therefore, H_{3a} and H_{4a} are supported. The results showed that satisfaction is a stronger factor than attitude to trigger SMBL. Brand attitude also positively impact consumer positive word-of-mouth communication (β=.30, t-value=6.90, $p < 0.001$), so H_{4b} is supported. Finally, results suggested that brand love had a strong effect on brand loyalty (β=.17, t-value=2.88, $p < 0.001$) and consumer positive word-of-mouth communication (β=.35, t-value=5.73, $p < 0.001$) and word-of-mouth communication (β=.10, t-value=2.05, $p < 0.05$) positively affect brand loyalty. Therefore,

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H_5, H_6 and H_7 are supported. None of the control variables (i.e., age, gender, and social media usage frequently) have a significant effect on SMBL (see Table 3).

Mediating effects

We tested hypotheses (H_8, H_9) via Hayes multiple mediators' analysis (Hayes, 2017; Model 6). First, we examined the direct effect of brand identification on SMBL without adding the mediator variables and attained a positive direct effect ($\beta = 0.22$, $t = 6.54$, $p < 0.001$). Then, we added consumer satisfaction and brand attitude as two mediates in the model to evaluate direct and indirect effects. When these constructs were included in the model, the direct effect of brand identification on brand love became less significant ($\beta = 0.08$, $t = 2.84$, $p < 0.001$). This showed that both consumer satisfaction and brand attitude have sequential partial mediation effect on the relation between brand identification and SMBL. Then, we repeated the same analysis to investigate consumer satisfaction and brand attitude roles as two sequential mediators in the relationship between brand image and SMBL. The results indicated that the direct effect of brand image on SMBL without adding two mediators is supported ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 5.98$, $p < 0.001$). In the second stage, we included both consumers' satisfaction and brand attitude in the model to assess the direct and indirect impacts. When these constructs were introduced in the model, the direct effect of brand image on SMBL became non-significant ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 1.68$, $p = 0.093$). This showed that satisfaction and brand attitude have fully mediation effect on the relationship between brand image and SMBL.

Table 4 and Figure 3 illustrate the summary of multiple mediation analysis results. The consequence of the indirect influence of both satisfaction and brand attitude were evaluated via a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 samples.

-----------Insert Figure 3 about here------------

-----------Insert Table 4 about here------------

Findings based on the (Hayes, 2017; Model 6) showed that indirect path (Brand identification $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude $\rightarrow$ SMBL), is mediated with confidence interval without the presence of zero (0), and with significant relationships (95% CI = 0.1146 | 0.2393), confirming that satisfaction and brand attitude have partially mediated effect the relationship between brand identification and SMBL, providing support for H_8. Similarly, indirect path (Brand image $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude $\rightarrow$ SMBL) is moderated with confidence interval without the presence of zero (0), and with significant relationships (95% CI = 0.1556 | 0.2855), confirming that satisfaction and brand attitude have fully mediated effect the relationship between brand image and SMBL, providing support for H_9.

Discussion and implications

This paper concluded with the following findings. First, brand identification and brand image are two significant drivers for creating positive attitudes towards social media brand as well as consumer satisfaction. The results showed that brand identification is a strong driver of brand attitude while brand image is a stronger factor of consumer satisfaction. Second, brand attitude and consumer satisfaction are two important antecedents of social media brand love. Our results indicated that consumer satisfaction is a strong driver of SMBL, while brand attitude is a weak driver. In particular, findings showed that consumer satisfaction and brand attitude have a sequential partial mediation role on the relation between brand identification and SMBL as well as a sequential full mediation effect on the relation between brand image and SMBL. Finally, brand love is

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a fundamental mechanism in developing positive customers' behavior towards social media such as positive word-of-mouth communication and brand loyalty.

Findings showed that consumers join social media for supporting their social identity, improving their self-image and sense of belonging. Brand identification is a specific situation that users can express their social identity through social media platforms. It has the strongest effect on social media brand attitude. Therefore, consumers who have positive brand identification more likely to positively evaluated these brands. Findings supported that brand identification is a strong driver of brand attitude, rarely is discussed in prior marketing literature, though some have argued that brand attitude positively influenced brand identification (Augusto & Torres, 2018; Bartsch et al., 2016). Besides, brand identification also has a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty. Indicating consumers with high brand identities are more likely to be loyal to the social media brands. Today's companies, especially in service brands, face many challenges in increasing brand loyalty, improving brand identification helps them to cope well with these challenges.

Findings supported that brand image as consumers' beliefs and values about social media brand affect their attitudes and satisfaction. Therefore, a favorable brand image formed positive attitude towards social media brands and enhances consumer's satisfaction with these brands. It implies that social media managers should emphasize the management of the brand image because of the relationship between brand image, brand attitude and consumer satisfaction makes a vital contribution to develop social media brand love and positive consumer behavior that is consistent with prior studies (Ansary & Hashim, 2018; Song et al., 2019).

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In particular, the results showed that brand attitude and satisfaction are two significant drivers of social media brand love. It suggested that consumer satisfaction is stronger than brand attitude in predicting social media brand love. Therefore, from a conceptual perspective, SMBL can arise from the customer's satisfaction with these brands. Based on attachment theory, SMBL in turn causes brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth communication and guarantee users long term relationship with social media. Furthermore, findings indicated that increasing brand attitude is crucial in boosting positive word-of-mouth communication, whereas enhancing consumer satisfaction is fundamental in SMBL. These findings support that satisfied customers are more likely to experience love in their relationships with brands (Gumparthi & Patra, 2020).

Besides, we examined two sequential mediation effects of consumer satisfaction and brand attitude in the link between brand identification and brand love as well as brand image and brand love; these proved to be significant for social media users and provided a new insight into the literature. Previous studies rarely report these roles of consumer satisfaction and brand attitude in brand identification, brand image and brand love, though consumer satisfaction and brand attitude have been identified as the linking, not mediating role, in some prior research (Bigne et al., 2020; Han et al., 2019). In summary, this study introduces a new brand love model, initiated by brand identification and brand image, mediated by consumer satisfaction and brand attitude that results in SMBL and positive brand outcomes. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by developing our knowledge about the process of forming consumer attachment behavior in social media as a brand compared to previous studies.

Theoretical contributions and managerial implications

Findings suggest some theoretical, managerial and societal contributions. From the first theoretical perspective, we propose a mechanism that explains how brand love shapes social media. It showed when consumer perceived that a special social media has high brand identification that helps them to support their social identity and has a strong brand image that allows them to develop their self-image, they start to use it. Social media helps people to expand their identity (Fujita et al., 2018). After consumers experiencing a specific social media, thus an overall judgment takes place; that essentially asks whether we got what we wanted. Positive answering to this question enhances favorable attitude towards social media in consumer mind and forms a deep emotional relationship between the consumers and social media brand (i.e. SMBL) that eventually triggers brand loyalty. As the nomological structure of the brand love concept is still getting in its infancy (Palusuk et al., 2019). This study tried to describe profound nomological relationships via distinguishing the antecedents, mediations and consequences of brand love in a novel category and contribute to developing brand love literature.

Second, we showed consumer satisfaction and positive attitude are two significant bridges to SMBL. In particular, the results demonstrated satisfaction is a centre of gravity in the brand love mechanism. Therefore, we conclude the majority of satisfied consumers with favorable attitudes towards brand can experience brand love. Finally, while satisfaction is a strong predictor of consumer emotional responses (brand love), attitude is a strong driver in consumer behavioural responses (word-of-mouth communication). On the other hand, positive attitudes fully mediate the relationship between brand image and brand love and can change the impact of brand image on brand love. Attitude towards social media is an important driver of social media continuation intention that leads to user engagement (Hussein et al., 2020). Therefore, brand managers could strengthen

consumer attitudes towards brands by increasing brand awareness, brand identification and brand image and satisfaction that could enhance consumer positive emotional and behavioural attachment.

Nowadays, social media practitioners and managers try to retain consumer that are caught among a range of similar services. Developing effective strategies that can engage consumers with social media brands for a long time is a great challenge for them. From a managerial perspective, this study suggested social media brand love is a suitable solution to this issue that can strengthen positive brand outcomes (i.e. word-of-mouth and loyalty). Findings indicated consumers with high SMBL tend to spread positive words of mouth, spend a lot of time there and are more willing to use these platforms for entertainment, social activities, or virtual experiences that result in brand loyalty. Besides, the results confirmed that brand identification is a significant driver of brand loyalty and high brand identification help consumers to be loyal to the social media brand. Therefore, social media managers can create different communication strategies to increase brand identification for these brands that enhances social media brand loyalty (Batra et al., 2012) and encourage them to use more of these platforms.

From a socialistic perspective, our results can help social media managers to reduce negative attitudes towards social media (Razmerita et al., 2016; Van der Schyff et al., 2020) by developing brand identification, brand image and consumer satisfaction. Findings indicated brand identification and brand image are critical drivers on consumer satisfaction (Popp & Woratschek, 2017; Song et al., 2019) as well as brand attitude (Augusto & Torres, 2018; Yu et al., 2018). Therefore, social media managers should strengthen brand identification and brand image by regularly communicating with customers and receiving their opinions and ideas. They can rely on the power of their

social media information to expand the level of advertising related to their brands, distribute distinctive advertising messages through these networks, deepen the sense of support for the customer's social identity and attract more people at the same time. All of these methods help these companies to develop positive brand image and brand identity widely among the people, which will increase customer satisfaction and improve attitudes towards social media.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study examines the mediating role of consumer satisfaction and brand attitude in SMBL. Other studies can consider this role in variables such as brand trust, brand personality and brand equity. In this study, we focused on four social media platforms that were the most popular social media in Turkey. Future studies could study other social media platforms in other countries, assess differences and similarities, and thus supports the external validity of the model. This study considers young people as a research sample, future studies can examine this model with other age groups of consumers. Our findings can help companies associated with using social media platforms to promote their brands by making better decisions about choosing social media platforms for their marketing activities. It seems the companies that choose a popular social media platform for themselves marketing processes, their brands will be more likely to be seen and loved. It is possible that SMBL could influence the brand love of the company that uses these networks for its marketing activities, a subject that is suggested to be explored in future.

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Table 1. Reliability of the confirmatory factor analysis

Items	Factor Loadings	CA	AWE	CR
Brand Identification (Kim *et al.*, 2001)		0.90	0.66	0.90
This social media brand's success is my success.	0.78			
I am interested in what others think about this social media.	0.72			
When someone praises this social media, it feels like a personal compliment.	0.90			
When I talk about this social media, I usually say "we" rather than "they".	0.89			
When someone criticizes this social media, it feels like a personal insult.	0.74			
Brand Image (Kim *et al.*, 2003; Unal & Aydin, 2013)		0.79	0.52	0.80
This social media is consistent and strong.	0.73			
This social media has a brand value.	0.83			
This social media pioneers innovations and technology.	0.70			
This social media brand has a long history. [a]	0.54			
This social media has a different image than others.	0.60			
Consumer Satisfaction (Oliver, 1997)		0.8	0.51	0.84
I am satisfied with my decision to use this social media.	0.81			
My choice to use this social media was a wise one.	0.76			
I think that I am doing the right thing when I use this social media.	0.67			
I am not happy that I use this social media[*].	0.68			
I truly enjoyed my usage of this social media.	0.67			
Brand Love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006)		0.89	0.58	0.89
This social media is a perfect brand.	0.77			
This social media makes me feel good.	0.77			
This social media is completely a wonderful brand.	0.76			
This social media makes me happy.	0.81			
I am passionately attached to this social media.	0.72			
This social media makes me feel whole.	0.73			
Brand Attitude (Low & Lamb, 2000; Shimp *et al.*, 1991)		0.94	0.66	0.94
This social media is pleasant	0.88			
This social media is credible	0.88			
This social media is famous	0.87			
This social media has positive attributes.	0.85			
This social media is favorable.	0.81			
This social media is attractive.	0.76			
This social media is good.	0.72			
This social media is enjoyable.	0.70			
		(continued)		

Items	Factor Loadings	CA	AWE	CR
Brand Loyalty (Yoo *et al.*, 2000)		0.81	0.59	0.81
I feel this is the only brand of this social media I need. [a]	0.55			
This is the one brand I would prefer to use. [a]	0.50			
If this social media were unavailable, it would be difficult if I had to use another brand.	0.70			
I consider myself loyal to this social media.	0.79			
I use this social media whenever I can.	0.80			
Word of Mouth (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006)		0.92	0.75	0.92
I encourage others to use this social media.	0.86			
I recommend this social media to many people.	0.93			
I praise this social media to the people around me.	0.89			
I try to spread nice words about this social media.	0.78			

Not[1]: CA= Cronbach's Alpha; CR= Composite Reliability;

Not[2]: * Reversed items; [a]Items were dropped during the scale purification process

Not[3]: All questions are 5 levels (1. Disagree Strongly, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Agree

Strongly

Table 2. Validity measures, and correlation matrix of the confirmatory factor analysis

	BAT	BLO	SMBL	WOM	CSA	BIM	BID
BAT	**0.662**						
BLO	0.511	**0.585**					
SMBL	0.473	0.338	**0.579**				
WOM	0.500	0.322	0.466	**0.750**			
CSA	0.286	0.188	0.503	0.368	**0.517**		
BIM	0.098	-0.173	0.288	0.094	0.473	**0.518**	
BID	0.427	0.495	0.281	0.314	0.141	-0.173	**0.656**

Not₁: Bold elements display average variance extracted (AVE) values; values below the bold elements display squared phi correlation values

Not₂: BAT= Brand Attitude, BLO= Brand Loyalty, WOM= Word-of-Mouth, CSA= Consumer Satisfaction, BIM= Brand Image, BID= Brand Identification
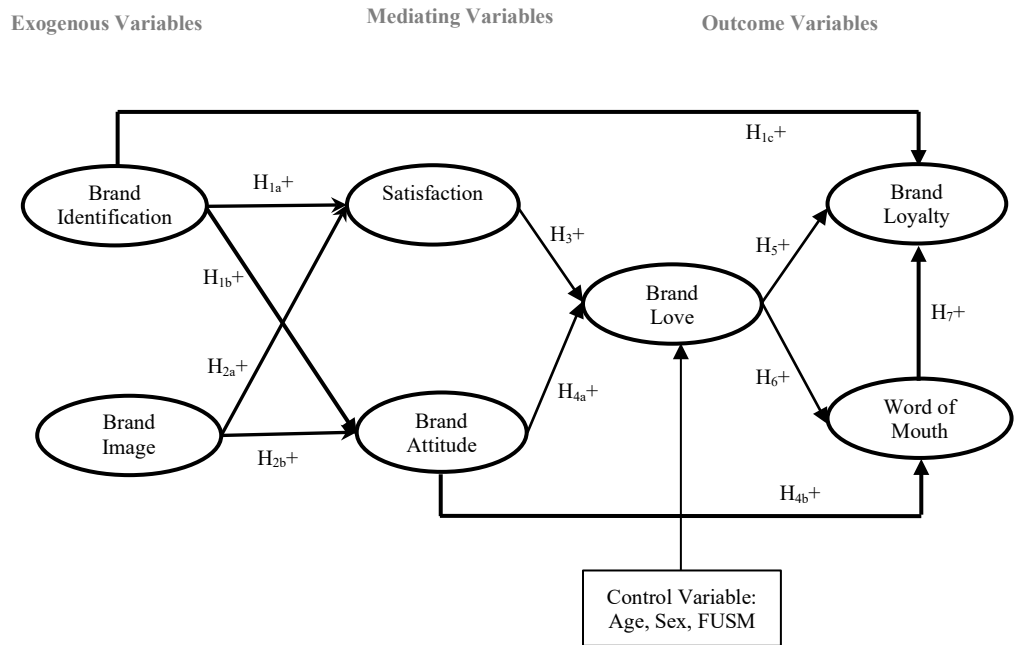
Table 3. Structural parameter estimates

Paths			MODEL			
			β	S.E.	t-Value	Result
Brand Identification	→	Brand satisfaction (H_{1a})	0.143***	0.032	4.521	Supported
Brand Identification	→	Brand attitude (H_{1b})	0.512***	0.055	9.349	Supported
Brand Identification	→	Brand loyalty (H_{1c})	0.337***	0.045	7.440	Supported
Brand image	→	Brand satisfaction (H_{2a})	0.499***	0.063	7.885	Supported
Brand image	→	Brand attitude (H_{2b})	0.322***	0.080	4.035	Supported
Brand satisfaction	→	Brand love (H_3)	0.502***	0.064	7.838	Supported
Brand attitude	→	Brand love (H_{4a})	0.265***	0.033	8.058	Supported
Brand attitude	→	Word of mouth (H_{4b})	0.302***	0.043	7.078	Supported
Brand love	→	Brand loyalty (H_5)	0.177***	0.059	2.981	Supported
Brand love	→	Word of mouth (H_6)	0.357***	0.062	5.732	Supported
Word of mouth	→	Brand loyalty (H_7)	0.098*	0.048	2.055	Supported
Control variables						
Age	→	Brand love	0.988			Not Supported
Sex	→	Brand love	0.216			Not Supported
FUSM	→	Brand love	0.806			Not Supported

Not: FUSM= Frequent Use of Social Media

**Table 4.** Mediating effect from process plug-in by hayes (Model 6)

Path	β	LLCI	ULCI	Result
Brand identification → Satisfaction → Brand love	**0.052*****	[.0191]	[.0909]	
Brand identification → Brand attitude → Brand love	**0.108*****	[.0672]	[.1576]	**Partial**
Brand identification → Satisfaction → Brand attitude → Brand love	**0.013*****	[.0046]	[.0247]	**Mediating**
Total indirect effect Model 1	**0.174*****	[.1146]	[.2393]	
Brand image → Satisfaction → Brand love	**0.125*****	[.0780]	[.1784]	
Brand image → Brand attitude → Brand love	**0.059*****	[.0237]	[.1005]	**Fully**
Brand image → Satisfaction → Brand attitude → Brand love	**0.034*****	[.0176]	[.0554]	**Mediating**
Total indirect effect Model 2	**0.220*****	[.1556]	[.2855]	

Not: LLCI lower limit confidence interval, ULCI upper limit confidence interval, *** p < 0.001.

Exogenous Variables   Mediating Variables   Outcome Variables

$H_{1c}+$

Brand Identification $H_{1a}+$ Satisfaction H_3+

$H_{1b}+$

$H_{2a}+$

Brand Love H_5+ Brand Loyalty

H_7+

Brand Image   Brand Attitude $H_{4a}+$ H_6+ Word of Mouth

$H_{2b}+$

$H_{4b}+$

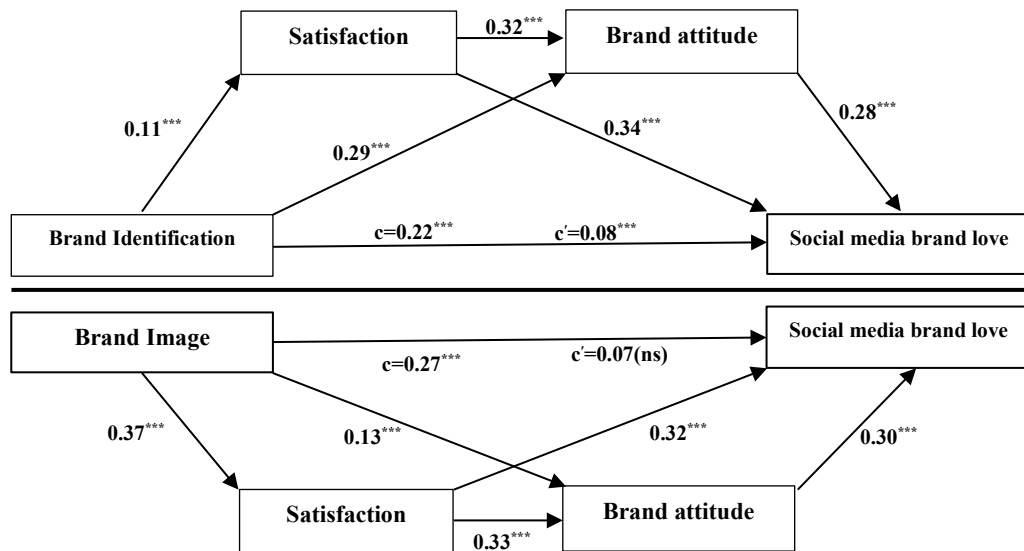Control Variable: Age, Sex, FUSM

Note: FUSM= Frequent Use of Social Media,
Mediating effects of H_8 and H_9 are not portrayed here

Figure 1. Conceptual model and hypotheses

Figure 2. Model Output
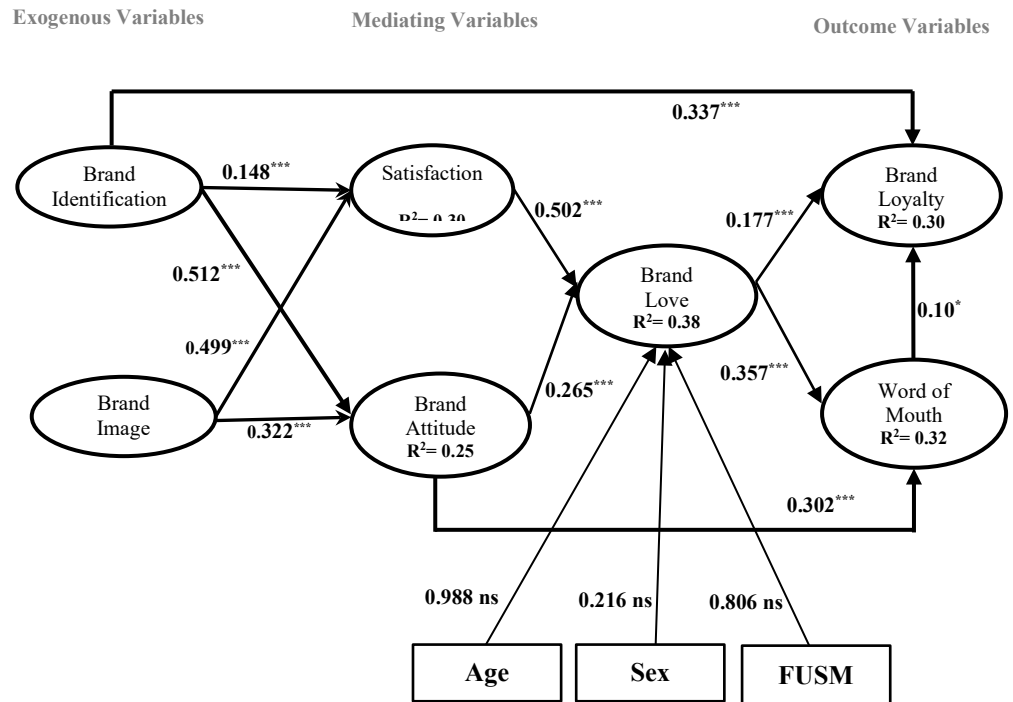
Note: ***Significant at the 0.001 level based on 5,000 bootstraps; ns Not significant

Figure 3. Two mediating effects results