IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON SELF-IDENTITY AND BRAND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY: THE MODERATING ROLE OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

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Article Info	Abstract
Corresponding Author maliha.sameeni@gmail.com 0092-333-8753166 **Keywords:** Brand relationship, Product involvement, Self-identity, Social media marketing.	The current study aims at investigating the impact of social media marketing on self-identity and brand relationship quality with moderation of product involvement in the relationship between variables of interest. The study is carried out for the cosmetics sector. Using cluster sampling technique, a sample of 181 senior business students were selected to participate in the survey research. The results reveal that social media marketing has a positive significant impact on self-identity and on brand relationship quality. Further, self-identity has also positive impact on brand relationship quality. Moreover, the moderating role of product involvement in all the three direct relationships has been found significant. For practitioners, the findings will be helpful for understanding the importance of social media marketing in establishing two-way communication, designing appropriate strategies for developing self-identity and ultimately leading to improved brand relationship quality. This study opens a new horizon for identifying ways in which brand outcomes can be improved. Theoretically it measures the empirical significance of product involvement by linking it to self under theory of identification.

1. Introduction

The market trend is changing in the current era. Companies and brands are using *social media marketing* for engaging their consumers into many activities (Lee, 2017) that are favorable for the brand and even small companies are performing well via social media plate-forms (Safko and Brake, 2009). The success of these social media marketing activities is dependent upon how properly the strategies have been developed for using media options (Kim, 2017). The consumers in the present century are very busy, they are more likely to buy from quick options and also get quick information through forums like Facebook, Twitter and blogs (Gordhamer, 2009). Consumers who have better familiarity and association with brands are likely to form a close bond with them, as they help them develop and express their *self-identity* (Kuenzel and Halliday, 2008;

McEwen, 2005; Rodhain, 2006). This bonding may be seen in the form of consumer's sense of community, engagement and attachment, ultimately leading to a long-term persistent and improved *brand relationship quality* between the consumer and the brand. This brand relationship quality is an indication of how deep or strong is the link between the consumer and the brand (Smit et al., 2007). Fournier (1998) has done much work from the consumer-brand relationship perspective. The findings state that relationship is of many types that exists between the consumer and the brand and the degree of intensity changes the bonding type. This self-identification and bonding depends upon how much the consumer exhibits *product involvement*. Consumers who exhibit more loyalty seemed more involved in the product (Bruwer and Buller, 2013). Social media

marketing is playing its role in this perspective; companies hire the relevant expertise that can help them connect to their consumer through this fast media way so that loyal customers can be attained (Coon, 2010). Consumer-brand interactions have a direct effect on the consumer's emotional state and also on the word of mouth created as a result of this emotional state (Hudson et al., 2015). Social media has different forms and applications; brands on the basis of their target market use appropriate combination of these forms for interacting with consumers to emphasize brand loyalty and engagement (Kim and Adler, 2011; Leggett, 2016). Social media helps in better communication, and also facilitates a sense of community which leads to positive impact on brand awareness and loyalty (Gunelius, 2011). Consumers and brands, through social media, are crafting new products, services and value creation, which enhances the relationship quality between consumers and brands (Kim, 2006; Park and Kincade, 2010; Seo and Park, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the point that social media users are increasing, there is insufficient work available for measuring the quantitative effects of social media. Considering this, there is need to investigate how people identify themselves with various brands by using social media and how this media is used efficiently for managing and enhancing the consumer-brand relationship quality (Do et al., 2015).

Therefore, the main objective of the study is to measure how various marketing activities on social media play their role in influencing consumer self-identity and brand relationship quality. In addition to this, the study also investigates the moderating role of product involvement in the relationships established in the research model. This study is based on the data collected from youth; they will be the future consumers, their familiarity and usage of various brands is more as compared to other age group categories. Marketers are focusing on their future needs and how those needs are shaping as a whole; therefore this study would provide knowledgeable insights in the area of interest. The next section explains the literature review, and then methodology is discussed followed by the results and discussion section.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social Media Marketing

The activities, behaviors and certain practices in communities who come online and share their experiences, opinions and knowledge about brands or topics come under description of social media actions (Lee, 2017; Safko and Brake, 2009). Consumer is knowledgeable today and uses quick forums for collecting/comparing relevant brand related information

such as descriptions, promotional messages and deals (Leggatt, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009); they not only collect but also share it with their friends and colleagues through social media (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Stileman, 2009). So it is important for companies to make themselves available at communication forums like Twitter, Facebook and Blogs (Gordhamer, 2009) and promote themselves by online using various prominence strategies (Broeck et al., 2017) for instant support and create brand communities using various networks (Weinberg, 2009; Zarrella, 2010). Social media is strongly related to sports, entertainment (Rothschild, 2011) and relationship marketing; companies can leverage the social media advantages in shaping the consumer discussions (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009; Mangold and Faulds, 2009) and designing appropriate strategies for measuring success of their marketing campaigns (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

2.2 Self-Identity

Self-identity refers to how consumers identify themselves and relate to different brands for expressing their self (McEwen, 2005). This is explained by theory of identification (Lasswell, 1935, 1965) which states that consumer considers the sameness between brand and him/herself in symbolic terms. There are two approaches to consumer identification: sociological & psychological. Sociological approach is concerned with the structure in which the process of identification takes place and psychological approach is processes corresponding to those structures, at individual level (Ravasi and Van, 2003); the former explains strong link of consumer behavior while self-construction process is going on. Relating to the research in consumer society and culture (Warde, 2008), marketing researchers indicate that brands are signifiers of goods and play important role in creating & expressing consumer identity (Brakus et al., 2009; Kuenzel and Halliday, 2005). Consumers are found attached to the brands that help them in their identification process (Sen et al., 2008).

2.3 Brand Relationship Quality

Brand relationship quality refers to the depth and strength of relationship between the consumer and brand (Smit et al., 2007) as indicated by the consumer. When consumer and brand interacts, they form a relationship similar to what consumers can form with their friends. In this perspective (Fournier, 1998) work is most cited and conceptualized for brand relationship quality framework. She identified that consumers through brand personification, develop partner relations with the brand. Brand relationship quality is based on combination of marketing and social psychology and the concept provides insights into the part played by brands in shaping consumer needs (Breivik and Thorbjornsen,

2008; Fournier, 1998). Previous literature on brand relationship depicts that some brands have more potential and are suitable for relationship establishing process, as compared to other brands (Smit et al., 2007).

2.4 Social Media Marketing and Self-Identity

Companies hire experts from the social media field so that the right content, including offer and other engaging activities, can be designed for capturing the minds and hearts of consumers, that affect their brand awareness & brand image (Bruno et al., 2016), ultimately forming loyal consumers (Coon, 2010). Interacting with the brand using social media has a direct effect on emotional attachment and emotional attachment affects word of mouth (Hudson et al., 2015). It also facilitates expanding social networks and exercising the role of an expressive actor by updating statuses, creating profiles by actively writing about their self and exhibiting it to others (Bechmann and Lomborg, 2012). Dijck (2013) finds that social media profiles do not reflect the true identity of a user rather that consumers shape it according to what they want their friends, employers and society to perceive about them. The above discussion leads to test the following hypothesis:

H1. Social media marketing has a positive impact on self-identity.

2.5 Social Media Marketing and Brand Relationship Quality

Many forms of social media such as mobile applications and favourable experiences (Hosany et al., 2013). When a consumer has a strong feeling of identification with the brand, he/she tends to get in strong commitment with the brand and generates positive word of mouth for it (Tuskej et al., 2013). The value a brand provides to its consumers has positive association with the brand commitment; brand identification has full mediation in this relationship (Tuskej et al., 2013). When there is a fit between the personality of brand and the identification aspect of consumer, the result will be a deep and rich self-brand association (Giroux and Grohmann, 2015). Individuals use brands for depicting their unique self-concept; the brands which have distinguishing characteristics and meanings for their users. Independent construal has more dominating effect than interdependence construal when it comes to continuance intentions (Wang et al., 2015). This discussion leads to the need for investigating the following hypothesis:

H3. Self-identity has a positive association with brand relationship quality.

(Bruwer and Buller, 2013). It may be possible that some product categories are more involving, as compared to 2009; McCutcheon et al., 2009). More interest leads to a that consumers used this product knowledge in decision making (Barber et al., 2007). Product involvement may play its role in the self-identification process and

are facilitating consumer-brand engagement through regular interactions and positively impacts brand loyalty (Kim and Adler, 2011). Social media is helping marketers in better customer communications (Kang and Kim, 2017) and loyalty creation as compared to traditional methods (Akhtar, 2011; Jackson, 2011). These interactions between company and peers facilitate community development and promote brand awareness, recognition, recall and increase loyalty (Gunelius, 2011; McKee, 2010). The social media campaigns that qualify for driving attachment and loyalty are on the basis of relevancy (Ding and Keh, 2016), popularity and availability on multiple forums and applications (Erdogmus and Cicek, 2012). Social media helps people in getting rid of their harsh realities for some time, provides entertainment, sharing and fun (Erdogmus and Cicek, 2012). The brands which has its equity and conduct meaningful consumer interactions on social media observe positive impact on bottom line profits (Bruno et al., 2016; Dholakia and Durham, 2010) and information sharing has a moderating effect in this regard (Adjei et al., 2010). The above discussion sets the ground for establishing the following hypothesis:

H2. Social media marketing has a positive association with brand relationship quality.

2.6 Self-Identity and Brand Relationship Quality

The higher the similarity between self-concept and perceived image, the more will be the congruity effects

2.7 Product Involvement and its Moderating Role

Product involvement is related to ego involvement which occurs when the product relates with those unique self attributes and values that are of central importance to the consumer (Houston and Rothschild, 1978). Product involvement is said to have its impact on brand attitude and memory nodes (Vashisht, 2018); it is used for explaining consumer behavior (Lesschaeve and Bruwer, 2010) and this type of involvement is often stated as personal or product class involvement. The product class and purchase involvement is said to have its effects on meeting specific consumer goals and decision choices (Cox, 2009). It indicates how personal relevance exists in the purchased item. It is assumed that consumers who exhibit a high loyalty level also have a high awareness (Seo and Park, 2018) and involvement level

others, because of more pleasurable values and associated risk as well (Lacey et al., higher degree of product knowledge and findings reveal consumer brand relationship quality. Less significant work is available on understanding the role of product involvement among the association of variables taken in

the study which sets ground for investigating the following hypotheses:

H4a. Product involvement moderates the relationship between social media marketing and self-identity such that the relationship is stronger for more involvement than for less involvement.

H4b. Product involvement moderates the relationship between social media marketing and brand relationship quality such that the relationship is stronger for more involvement than for less involvement.

H4c. Product involvement moderates the relationship between self-identity and brand relationship quality such that the relationship is stronger for more involvement than for less involvement.

3. Methodology

This is a descriptive and correlational study, based on responses from individual consumers. The sample consists of female consumers who are users of multiple brands in their routine life, including cosmetics brands. Four institutes were selected randomly from the list of institutes in Lahore with established business administration departments. Then by cluster sampling technique, the data was collected by surveying senior sections of business students (female students) in the form of clusters through self-administered questionnaires. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaires during the last 15 minutes of their routine lectures. The researcher asked the respondents to think of the cosmetics brand they use and like most in their routine life and then fill their responses for the questions, keeping in mind certain cosmetics brands. Out of 410 filled questionnaires, 29 were discarded due to

incompleteness and a total of 381 complete responses were obtained.

There are four variables involved in the study i.e. social media marketing, self-identity, brand relationship quality and product involvement. Social media marketing was measured by 18 items adopted from Kim and Ko (2010). The self-identity is measured by four items adopted from Escalas and Bettman (2005) and Einwiller et al. (2006). The items for brand relationship quality are 22 and taken from Do et al. (2015). Finally the product involvement is measured by adopting five items from Van et al. (1996) and Malar et al. (2011). All the variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale in which 1 indicates Strongly Disagree and 5 indicates Strongly Agree.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics of the study variables are shown in Table 1. Also the reliability of variables can be observed from Table I. All the variables have Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.7, which indicates the internal consistency of the variables.
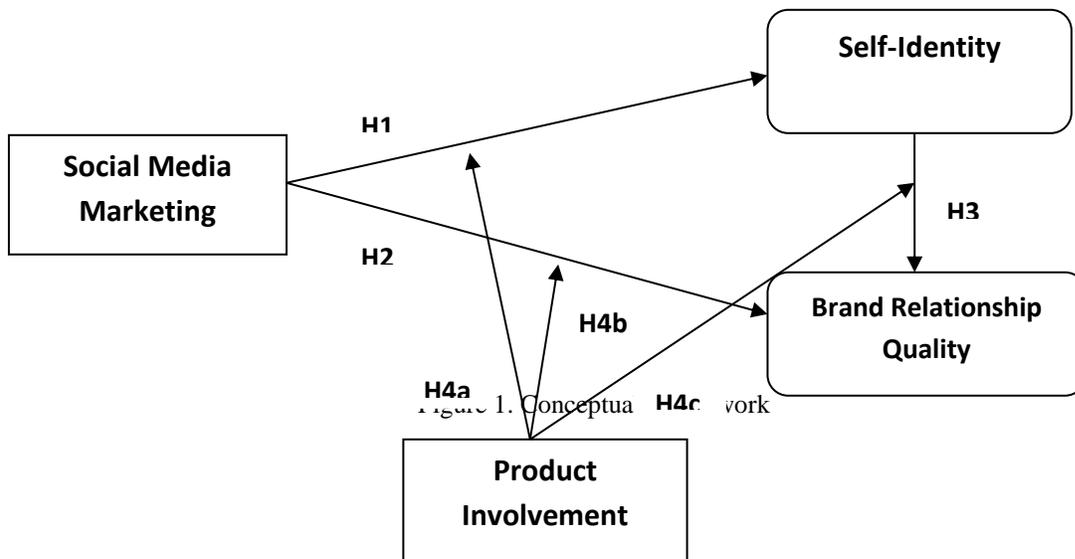

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Table I. *Descriptive statistics and reliability*

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha
1. Social media marketing	3.81	0.370	0.757
2. Self-identity	3.60	0.694	0.720
3. Brand relationship quality	3.64	0.517	0.904
4. Product involvement	3.77	0.583	0.764

Next, the correlation among the study variables is observed. All the variables have significant positive correlation with each other at $p < 0.01$. The correlations are shown in Table II.

Table II. Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Social media marketing	1			
2. Self-identity	0.467**	1		
3. Brand relationship quality	0.384**	0.573**	1	
4. Product involvement	0.240**	0.413**	0.680**	1

**$p < 0.01$

4.1 Hypotheses Testing

H1. Social media marketing has a positive impact on self-identity.

For testing hypotheses, hierarchical linear regression has been used. In hierarchical linear regression, the hypotheses are tested by adding variables in blocks. From Table III, it is observed that when the independent variable social media marketing is regressed over the dependent variable self-identity (step 1), it gives a positive significant value of the beta coefficient (coefficient = 0.467, $p < 0.01$). The R^2 value is 0.218, which means that 21.8% change occurs in the dependent variable due to the independent variable, thus we can say that H1 is supported.

Table III. Regression analysis: Self-identity

	Step 1	p-value	Step 2	p-value
Constant	0.269		0.744	
Independent Variable				
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	0.467**	0.000	0.200*	0.015
Moderator				
Product Involvement (PI)				
Two Way Intersection				
SMM X PI			0.411**	0.000
R2	0.218		0.316	

Adjusted R2	0.214	0.308
ΔR^2		0.094

n = 381, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

H4a. Product involvement moderates the relationship between social media marketing and self-identity such that the relationship is stronger for more involvement than for less involvement.

For testing the moderation effect of product involvement in the relationship between social media marketing and self-identity, the intersection term is added in the model (step 2), which gives a significant beta value for self-identity (coefficient = 0.411, p < 0.01). The R^2 value is 0.316, which means that when product involvement is also added in the model, the change in dependent variable caused by the independent variable is now 31.6%, ΔR^2 is 9.4%, and this indicates that H4a is supported. The same is exhibited in Table III.

H2. Social media marketing has a positive association with brand relationship quality.

Table IV indicates that when social media marketing is added in the model (step 1) to observe its effect on brand relationship quality, the beta coefficient is significant (coefficient = 0.384, p < 0.01). The rate of change i.e. R^2 value is 0.148, which means social media marketing has caused a 14.8% change in brand relationship quality, hence H2 is supported.

H4b. Product involvement moderates the relationship between social media marketing and brand relationship quality such that the relationship is stronger for more involvement than for less involvement.

Next, for testing moderation effect of product involvement in the relationship between social media marketing and brand relationship quality (Table IV), the intersection term of social media marketing and product involvement is added in the model (step 2), it give positive beta value (coefficient = 0.811, p < 0.01). The R^2 is now 0.528, which means that the after the moderation effect, the independent variable causes a 52.8% change in the dependent variable. ΔR^2 is 0.38 or in other words, a 38% change occurred after adding a moderator in the model, hence H4b is supported.

Table IV. Regression analysis: Brand relationship quality

	Step 1	p-value	Step 2	p-value
Constant	1.596		2.294	
Independent Variable				
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	0.384**	0.000	-0.142*	0.037
Moderator				
Product Involvement (PI)				
Two Way Intersection				
SMM X PI			0.811**	0.000
R2	0.148		0.528	
Adjusted R2	0.143		0.523	
ΔR^2			0.38	

n = 381, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

H3. Self-identity has a positive association with brand relationship quality.

Table V shows that self-identity is regressed over brand relationship quality (step 1). In this case a positive significant value of the beta coefficient is obtained (coefficient = 0.573, p < 0.01). The R^2 value is 0.329 indicating that a 32.9% change is caused in brand relationship quality by self-identity, thus H3 is supported.

H4c. Product involvement moderates the relationship between self-identity and brand relationship quality such that the relationship is stronger for more involvement than for less involvement.

	Step 1	p-value	Step 2	p-value
Constant	2.103		2.615	
Independent Variable				
Self-Identity (SI)	0.573**	0.000	-0.285**	0.006
Moderator				
Product Involvement (PI)				
Two Way Intersection				
SI X PI			0.983**	0.000
R2	0.329		0.557	
Adjusted R2	0.325		0.552	
ΔR^2			0.227	

n = 381, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

For testing the moderation effect of product involvement in the relationship between self-identity and brand relationship quality (Table V), the intersection term is added in the model (step 2), which gives positive beta coefficient, significantly (coefficient = 0.983, p < 0.01). The R^2 value is 0.557, indicating that a 55.7% change is caused in brand relationship quality by self-identity. The rate of change i.e. ΔR^2 is 0.227 or in other words, a 22.7% change is increased after adding the moderator, product involvement in the model, thus H4c is supported.

5. Discussion
There are six important results of the study. First, the result is the positive significant association of social media marketing with self-identity. This is consistent with previous work which states that when consumers interact with their favorite brand or company on social media, it evokes their emotional and cognitive feelings and in turn their attachment to the brand is affected (Hudson et al., 2015). That is why companies hire experts when it comes to designing their interactive strategies on social media, because one way or the other, social media has become a necessary part of consumer's life and that's why brand carry certain activities on such forums to cater and create awareness, image and hence loyal consumers (Coon, 2010; Seo and Park, 2018). This study also indicates the same, that through social media usage, consumers establish their self-identity; it can be said that social media marketing is a means of helping consumers in identifying the important aspects of their personality by continuous interactions with the brand, which also shape their usage habits and helps them relate socially. The second result is the positive significant confirmation of the impact of social media marketing on consumer-brand relationship quality. The previous literature confirms that consumer communication is better through social media as compared to traditional media, and hence loyalty can be better created by social media forums (Akhtar, 2011; Jackson, 2011). The two-way communication that is facilitated by social media forums links to brand awareness, recognition, recall and brand equity (Bruno et al., 2016; McKee, 2010). Not only does it provide product related information, but it creates clutter in traditional message delivery method by creating some fun, entertainment, relevance and customization through different forums (Ding and Keh, 2016; Erdogmus and Cicek, 2012). These positive consumer interactions and communications effect the firm's profits (Dholakia and Durham, 2010) and consumer reach. Thus, we can say that through social media marketing companies are in a better position to engage consumers in positive activities and pass on the relevant information and offers in a better way. This in turn leads to better consumer-brand relationship and with the passage of time, the quality of this relationship improves through constant interaction and responsiveness. The third result confirms that self-identity has a positive significant impact on consumer-brand relationship quality. Consistent with prior research, the more the consistency between perceived image and self-concept, the more will be congruity (Hosany et al., 2013). When consumers have self-identification with the brand, he/she is likely to relate positive word of mouth for the brand (Tuskej et al., 2013) and this increases as the identification become strong. Giroux and Grohmann (2015) demonstrate that the appropriate fit between the brand's personality and the consumer personality will lead to rich consumer-brand associations. Thus it can be said that when the brand and consumer characteristics match, such that the self-

identification process takes place, it would lead to many positive consumer behaviours in the favour of the brand, ultimately improving the relationship quality. The more the consumer identifies with the brand; the better shall be the consumer-brand relationship quality. The fourth result indicates that product involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between social media marketing and self-identity. This finding matches with the previous investigations. Product involvement and ego involvement is on the same page, which occurs when there is match between product attributes and self- attributes (Houston and Rothschild, 1978); this involvement is the best way for explaining consumer behaviours like brand attitude and memory nodes (Lesschaeve and Bruwer, 2010; Vashisht, 2018). As social media marketing has been identified as an important source of self-identification, it is said that product involvement plays an important role in consumer goals fulfillment and choice decisions (Cox, 2009). So, it indicates that companies which use social media marketing can better help consumer with their self-identification process by highlighting their promotion message in the main stream (Broeck et al., 2018) and this is possible only if the consumer considers that brand an important one for his/her life goals and is involved in it.

The fifth result is the significant positive confirmation of the moderating role of product involvement in the relationship between social media marketing and brand relationship quality. The product relevance is always of concern when the purchase decision is taken (Brennan and Mavondo, 2000). Consumers, who are very loyal to the brand, also have product involvement (Bruwer and Buller, 2013). It seems that the social media forums help in close consumer-brand interactions, if these communications with consumers are carried out when they have deep involvement in the product category or brand, this communication then becomes more effective and leads to the improved quality of relationship between the brand and consumer. The sixth result indicates that there is a moderation effect of product involvement in the relationship between self-identity and consumer-brand relationship quality. Consumers use product knowledge for decision making (Barber et al., 2007), and this knowledge seeking intention is backed by their interest or involvement in the brand. Product involvement is found to have its impact on consumer attitudes more towards brands and their brand preference (Schiffman et al., 2008) compared to other elements like brand prominence (Vashisht, 2018). It can be depicted that when a consumer has self-identity with the brand and also

his/her product involvement level is high, and it will lead to a better relationship quality between the consumer and the brand.

Overall the study contributes in many ways. First, previous studies investigate the impact of social media marketing on purchase intention, actual purchase and trust; this study measures the impact of social media marketing on self-identity and brand-relationship. Second, the study would be helpful for understanding the prediction role of social media marketing for a long-term desirable and profitable relationship between the consumer and the brand. Third, the study investigates the moderating role of product involvement in the relationship between variables of interest.

5.1 Implications and Future Directions

From the academic point of view, this study adds to the existing knowledge on improving brand outcomes and relationship quality. The brand managers and practitioners are recommended to use the findings of this study for understanding the crucial role of social media in developing one's self-identity. It is now understood that marketers can use social media to stay in touch with their consumer and provide them with latest product knowledge and any deals. Moreover they can take consumer suggestions and in many cases, marketers make a visual dummy of their product and it interacts with consumers through social media. This way they make their product behave like a human being and consumers feel more involved in the product as they communicate with it through website or any social media forum. When interacting with their consumers. This way marketers can build their consumer identification system through social media. Also, the findings would be useful in particular consumer segment for developing their brand strategies by using social media. If managers can devise strategies that can use social media in improving the involvement of consumers in brands, then their consideration set will become narrower and the chances of selection of a more involved brand would increase. This study provides the tool for better brand results by investigating one of the most important sectors in the country, cosmetics. Also the findings can help managers understand and predict the future moves of their consumers by investigating the relationship quality between the brand and the consumer.

The study has many limitations which lead to future research directions. First of all, due to time and money barriers, the study is conducted only in a limited area and so future study must focus on collecting data from a wider range of the population. Secondly, the data is collected from

female university students only and who are no doubt young and are active users of cosmetics, but collecting data from a diverse set of sample i.e. including working women, the self-employed and housewives would give more clear results. Next, the self-identity is studied as a whole, yet there are two aspects of self-identity, individual identity and social identity, and studying these two dimensions separately with other variables of the study would provide significant insights.

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