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SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS IN TELECOMUNICATIONS SECTOR OF NIGERIA: MODERATING ROLE OF BRAND LOVE

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Abstract

The frenzy with which the online shopping took over the world is unmatched by any other phenomena in recent times. The objective of this study is to examine the moderating role of brand love on the relationship between social media and purchase intentions. The research is quantitative in nature employing both survey and cross-sectional research designs, the population of the study is infinite and the sample size is 422. The study utilised purposive sampling techniques to administer copies of questionnaire to respondents. The study utilised structural equation modelling to ascertain the hypothesised relationship. The results indicated that firm created content has significant impact on purchase intention, like wise user generated content. The findings also revealed that brand love moderates the relationship between social media and purchase intention. The study recommends that brand managers ought to leverage social media to produce content that can be used as a source for learning more in-depth details about consumer preferences, buy intentions, and patterns.

Keywords: Social media; Firm created content; User generated content; Brand love; Purchase intention

JEL Codes: M30, M31, M37

Introduction

Online shopping has been greatly helped and made possible by the expansion of the telecommunications sector and the adoption of the internet in Nigeria. Consumers are using the internet more frequently and investing more time in information research, which has a significant impact on their purchase intentions. Given these possibilities, businesses and

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their brands have embraced social media marketing, which has become the most well-liked and successful marketing and communication medium (Poturak & Softic, 2019). To influence buying intentions, social media marketing calls for extra care and strategy creation. Relationship marketing and social media marketing are related; in relationship marketing, businesses must switch from "trying to sell" to "building connections" with customers (Gordhamer, 2009).

As can be seen in the current marketing environment, social media uprising has significantly changed the communication landscape and altered marketing communication. Due to the change, there are now connections between marketers and other customers. The change has quickly changed the current marketing industry (Majeed, Owusu-Ansah & Ashmond, 2021). As more consumers have access to a variety of brands of goods and services, this evolution has created fresh potentials and opportunities within trade and commerce that are changing how consumers react to purchases (Shaw, 2012). Brands and merchants can use social media as a tool to interact with and sway their customers. Mersey, Malthouse, and Calder (2010) pointed out that social media gives businesses a chance to engage and communicate with potential customers, encourage an increased sense of intimacy with consumers, and build relationships with potential consumers.

The proliferation of business and marketing initiatives on social media has influenced consumers' purchase intentions. Permatasari and Kuswadi (2018) assert that social media has altered customer behavior dynamics by speeding up the purchasing process. Consumers move through several stages of the purchasing process in a sequential manner.

In light of the foregoing, the study aims to examine the effect of social media from a holistic point of view. Therefore, the model of social media by Poturak and Softic (2019) was adopted. Poturak and Softic (2019)'s model has two determinants of social media namely, user generated content and firm created content.

Firm Created content occurs as a result of Web 2.0 technologies which enables people from all walks of life to connect online through a variety of digital sources of information that are produced, launched, shared, and consumed by internet users as a way to educate one another about goods, services, people, and issues. This phenomenon is known as firm created content (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013). Companies are now conscious of the need to concentrate on creating personal, two-way relationships with customers to promote interactions (Bernoff & Li, 2011). Marketing managers anticipate that their use of social media will help them build relationships with devoted customers, change how people view their products, share knowledge, and understand their audience (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). This is made feasible by the novel and alluring methods that businesses and clients can continue to maintain interactions with one another.

User generated content (UGC), on the other hand, is created by the general public as opposed to marketing experts, focuses on the consumer dimension, and is predominantly distributed online, according to the content classifications presented by Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007) provides a more thorough definition, defining it as i) a content that is made publicly available over the internet, ii) content that reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) content created outside of professional routines and practices. User-generated content is defined as "the total of all ways that people utilize social media, typically used to represent the numerous types of media material that are made by end users and made publicly available" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

Consumer purchase intention is the willingness of a person to purchase a specific good or service (Yoong & Lian, 2019). Purchase intent is a useful indicator of the buying process. The consumer's buying intention demonstrates the anticipated outcome of a particular behavior (Lilima, 2020). According to Alnsour, Ghannam and Al-Natour (2018), purchase intention is also described as the likelihood that a consumer would buy a good or a service in the future and is correlated with attitude and preference. Alnsour et al. (2018) argued that, this means that customer purchase intention indicates a strong likelihood that someone will buy the product and a readiness to do so the next time a need for it arises. Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that customers will intend to buy a specific good or service in the future. In other words, the demonstrated purchasing behavior is driven by the intention to make a purchase (Martins, Costa, Oliveira & Branco, 2019). According to earlier research, rising buying intentions are a reflection of rising likelihood of purchase. Favorable brand commitment results from the consumers' positive purchasing intentions, which encourages them to actually make the purchase (Wu, Yeh & Hsiao, 2011).

It has been established by a plethora of studies (e.g., Hasan & Sohail, 2020; Sharma, 2018; Maoyan, Zhujunxuan, & Sangyang, 2014; Chafidon, Margono, & Sunaryo, 2022; Aileen, Gaberamos, Bernarto, & Pasaribu, 2021; Manzoor, Baig, Hashim, & Sami, 2020; Alhadid & Alhadeed, 2017) that social media has a positive impact on consumer purchase intentions. However, other studies (e.g., Ceyhan, 2019; Suprapto, Hartono, & Bendjeroua, 2020; Savitri, Hurriyati, Adi, & Hendrayati, 2022) have also established that social media has an insignificant impact on purchase intentions. This informed the decision to introduce brand love that may strengthen the relationship that already exists.

One of the strongest brand alliances is thought to be brand love, which goes beyond the idea of simple brand preference (Ferreira, Rodrigues, & Rodrigues, 2016). The renowned definition of brand love given by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) is the level of intense emotional attachment a happy consumer has for a specific brand name. Brand loyalty is crucial because brand managers can improve the relationship between consumers and their

brands by creating appropriate purchase and post-purchase experiences and programs and by paying attention to consumer preferences. This prevents consumers from switching brands and promotes favorable purchase intentions (Mustapha, Bashir, Umar & Abdullahi, 2022). Brand love does in fact adopt brand-loyal customers and transform them into brand champions or influencers (Le, 2021).

Although not all interactions with brands on social media result in positive buy intentions, the existence of an emotional connection to the brand can prompt consumers to reevaluate their purchase intentions, which may result in real purchases. Without a love-chain for the company, social media may not be able to influence a consumer's intention to buy (Majeed et al, 2021).

Despite its significance as a sign of consumers' ongoing interest in a product or service, brand love hasn't been extensively studied in the context of the telecommunications industry in connection to the interaction between social media and purchase intention. Researchers and practitioners can use this concept to generate brand love because there is no moderating influence of brand love between social media and purchase intention (Ceyhan, 2019).

The amount to which social media is influencing purchase intention with the moderating influence of brand love, however, is limited, despite all the efforts made by stakeholders in the telecommunications industry to promote value through social media. The prevalence of unfavorable social media posts that are published practically everyday makes the impact of social media marketing more apparent. Another issue is the speed at which individuals create postings on social media platforms. According to Ndurura (2020), more than 10,000 social media messages are posted everyday on average by users of telecommunications. These messages have a significant impact on how other consumers behave, both favorably and unfavorably. Amongst the unresolved issues in social media marketing in the telecommunication industry in Kaduna, is the problem of how to turn "likes" into purchases. This study therefore seeks to examine how social media can be used effectively in the telecommunication industry so as to enhance desirable purchase intention towards brands loved by consumers.

Even though there is huge number of studies also on social media and purchase intention (Majeed, Owusu-ansah, & Ashmond, 2021; Choedon & Lee, 2020; Subasinghe & Weerasiri, 2020; Laksamana, 2018), there is inadequate research investigating social media, purchase intention and (moderated by) brand love of Twitter users. Consequently, the focus of this study is to investigate the moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between social media and purchase intention in the context of telecommunication industry in Kaduna. Similarly, based on the research objective, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

 \mathbf{H}_{01} : Firm-created content does not have significant effect on purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

 \mathbf{H}_{02} : User-generated content does not have significant effect on purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

H₀₃: Brand love does not have significant effect on purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

H₀₄: Brand love does not moderate the relationship between firm-created content and purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

H₀₅: Brand love does not moderate the relationship between user-generated content and purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

Uses and Gratification Theory

This study's theoretical framework is based on Katz and Blumler's Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) (1974). This theory is mostly used to traditional media in an effort to understand customer behavior. However, the same theory has also been heavily applied to social media studies since the introduction of the internet and new venues for interactions including Twitter, emails, instant messaging, blogging, skyping, whatsapp, and several other kinds of communication (Ngai, Taoa, & Moon, 2015). The application of the UGT in the context of this study is predicated on the idea that the consumer actively and consciously contributes to media choice and is motivated by personal goals rather than the effect of the media. This hypothesis therefore presupposes that customers will look for media that satisfies their wants and, consequently, their fulfillment. Consequently, repeat media use would result from the consumer's satisfaction. Therefore, it is believed that consumer media choices are value-driven and objective (Dahl, 2014).

One of the earliest theories to examine the dynamic role of the audience in media selection was UGT, which advocated for individuals to actively seek out, identify with, and use media to satisfy particular demands for fulfillment. This viewpoint acknowledges that users of social media, such as Twitter, are engaged participants rather than only passive consumers of media. This study specifically examines the UGT's utilization of Twitter users with a moderator variable operating in the background.

Businesses that provide services and goods are rethinking their marketing tactics and practices in an effort to capture the interest of users of social networks. One shift that is intended to project their goods, services, and brands to the outside world is the approach of using social media into their marketing plan in order to arouse purchase intention among customers.

Research Model

The model in figure 1 represents the research framework. The predictor variables are user generated social media communication and firm created social media communication influencing the criterion variable which is purchase intention while brand love is moderating the relationship.

Firm Created
Content (FCC)

Purchase Intention
(PI)

User Generated
Content
(UGC)

Brand
Love

Figure no.1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' systemization

Research Methodology

The study took a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis, employing statistical tools to investigate the correlations between two or more variables (Ojeleye, Abu-Abdissamad, Umar, & Usman, 2022). Survey and cross-sectional research designs were used in this study. Because the study requested responses from respondents using a well-structured questionnaire, the survey research technique was used. The use of a questionnaire is quick, reduces bias, and is less costly (Ojeleye, Bakare, Umar, & Ojeleye, 2021). The current study was carried out in the Kaduna State city of Zaria. Social media (firm-created content and use-generated content) is the predictor variable, brand love is the moderating variable, and purchase intentions is the criterion variable. The respondents are the customers of the four main telecommunication firms (MTN, Globacom, Airtel and 9Mobile) in Zaria Metropolis. The period for data collection was two weeks in order to seek the perception of the respondents. The population of the study are the customers of telecommunications outfits in Zaria metropolis in Kaduna state. And accordingly, due to pervasive nature of the customer, the population is infinite and the study have utilized the formula for infinite population to arrive at the sample size of 384. Using the infinite sample size of 384, and the sample was added by 10 percent Israel (2013) to take care of non-response bias,

making the sample to be 422. This study as well utilized purposive sampling techniques in administering the questionnaires to the respondents. Purposive sample was used because it gives the researcher the opportunity to rely on their own judgement when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys. In terms of sampling, the target group of respondents for this research included active social media users in Kaduna. The largest age group among social media users is 18-24, followed by age 25-34.

Measures

Factors measuring the effects of Firm-Created Content were adapted from Schivinski and Dabrowski (2013) with four (4) items. Samples of the items include: "I am satisfied with the company's social media communications" with a potential answer of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.87 to 0.93 which demonstrates the consistency of the scale and its appropriateness for this study. For this study, the Cronbach alpha is 0.821. Also, factors measuring the effects of User Generated Content (UGC) were adapted from Schivinski and Dabrowski (2013) with four (4) items. Samples of the items include: "I am satisfied with the content generated on social media sites by other users about the services provided" with a potential answer of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.82 to 0.92 which demonstrates the consistency of the scale and its appropriateness for this study. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.834. Measurement scales for the purchase intention were adapted from Yoo, Donthu and Lee, (2000) with three (3) items. Samples of the items include: "I am willing to recommend that others buy this brand or product" with a potential answer of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.94 which demonstrates the consistency of the scale and its appropriateness for this study. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.815. Measurement scales for Brand love were adapted from Heinrich, Albrecht & Bauer, (2012) with three (3) items. Samples of the items include: "The brand makes me very happy" with a potential answer of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.84 to 0.91 which demonstrates the consistency of the scale and its appropriateness for this study. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.759.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS 24, preliminary analysis and data screening on the obtained data were carried out, including the verification and treatment of missing values, outliers, normality tests, common method variance tests, and multicollinearity tests. These tests were run to ascertain the data's type and to ensure that it had been cleansed and ready for further examination. The measurement model and structural model of partial least square (PLS) path modelling were computed by the study using structural equation modelling, namely Smart-PLS 3.2.8. This is utilised because it can be adjusted for distribution and study population, and it calculates

mediation and moderating effects accurately since it corrects errors that might deflate or inflate putative correlations (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017).

Research Findings

The study's findings are discussed under the two basic models of structural equation modelling (SEM); the measurement and structural models used below:

Measurement Model

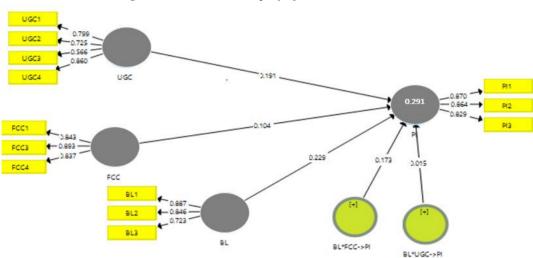


Figure no. 2 Pictorial display of measurement model

Source: Authors' systemization of Smart-pls output

The measurement model explored factor loadings, reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), and validity (convergent and discriminant). Only items that loaded over 0.4 were maintained, as advised by (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, Danks, & Ray, 2021), whereas those that loaded below the specified threshold were discarded (i.e., FCC2). Furthermore, the constructs' reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, and they all met the stated criterion of 0.700, as recommended by (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Cronbach's alpha values vary from 0.759 to 0.834, whereas composite reliability values range from 0.861 to 0.893. In the same vein, average variance extracted (AVE) was analysed to establish the convergent validity of the constructs, and as advised by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the values were all above 0.5 prescribed limit.

Table no. 1 - Study(n=422): Factor Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity
(AVF)

					(AVL)
Construct	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Love	BL1	0.887	0.759	0.861	0.675
	BL2	0.846			
	BL3	0.723			
Firm-Created					
Content	FCC1	0.843	0.821	0.893	0.736
	FCC3	0.893			
	FCC4	0.837			
Purchase					
Intention	PI1	0.870	0.815	0.890	0.730
	PI2	0.864			
	PI3	0.829			
User-Generated					
Content	UGC1	0.799	0.834	0.891	0.556
	UGC2	0.725			
	UGC3	0.566			
	UGC4	0.860			

Source: Authors' systemization of Smart-pls output

Furthermore, the discriminant validity was also evaluated using Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio as provided by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) employed to ascertain the degree to which a test is not related to other tests that measure a different construct. Henseler et al. (2015) stated that when the constructs are conceptually dissimilar a conservative threshold of 0.85 should be picked while when constructs are conceptually similar a more relaxed threshold of 0.900 be utilised. Hence, since the constructs are conceptually comparable, 0.900 was used. In the table 2 below the values of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio are less than the chosen threshold. The study therefore concludes that discriminant validity has been established.

Table no. 2 - HTMT Ratio of Correlations for Discriminant Validity

Construct	BL	FCC	PI	UGC
BL				
FCC	0.503			
PI	0.397	0.346		
UGC	0.146	0.385	0.256	

Source: Authors' systemization of Smart-pls output

Structural Model

The structural model was studied in order to test the two hypotheses. To figure out the relationship between the predictor, moderator, and criterion variables, 5000 bootstrapping was used. The study also calculated the effect size (f^2) , predictive relevance (Q^2) and coefficient of determination (R^2) .

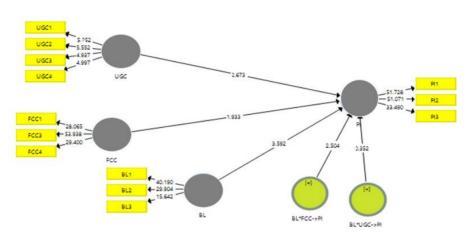


Figure no. 3 Pictorial display Structural model

Source: Authors' systemization of Smart-pls output

Table no. 3 - Test of direct and moderating effect

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	Standard Error	T- value	P-value	Decision
H_{01}	FCC-> PI	0.229	0.064	3.592	0.000**	Rejected
H_{02}	UGC->PI	0.104	0.054	1.933	0.054*	Rejected
H_{03}	BL->PI	0.191	0.071	2.673	0.008**	Rejected
H_{04}	BL* FCC- >PI	0.173	0.069	2.504	0.013**	Rejected
H_{05}	BL* UGC- >PI	0.015	0.044	0.352	0.725	Fail to be Rejected

Source: Authors' systemization of Smart-pls output

Decision Rule: **P-value Significant at 5%; *P-value Significant at 10%

Discussions

The study formulated five hypotheses (three direct and two indirect) to guide the study. Analysing the first hypothesis the study found that firm-created content has positive and significant effect on purchase intentions. The positive beta figure indicated that a 1%

increase in firm-created content will result into a 0.23% increase consumer purchase intention in telecommunication sector of Nigeria. Consequently, the first hypothesis that states that firm-created content does not have significant effect on purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria is rejected. The finding is in congruence with previous studies (e.g., Poturak & Softić, 2019; Kim, 2019; Sidharta, Syah, & Saptaningsih, 2021). The finding is contrary to the finding of Tardin, Pelissari and Braga (2020) which reported that firm-created content was not a significant predictor of consumers' purchase intention. In the same vein, second hypothesis outcome showed that user-generated content has positive and significant effect on consumers' purchase intentions. The beta value depicted that a 1% increase in user-generated content will result into a 0.10% increase in consumer purchase intention in telecommunication sector of Nigeria. Thus, the second hypothesis that states that user-generated content does not have significant effect on purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria is also rejected. The finding is in tandem with previous studies (e.g., Maksimova, 2018; Kim, 2019; Poturak & Softić, 2019; Sidharta et al., 2021). It is however in contrast with the study of Tardin et al. (2020). Similarly, the third hypothesis which states that brand love does not have significant effect on purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria is also rejected. The positive beta in table 3 above showed that brand love has positive and significant effect on consumers' purchase intention. A 1% increase in brand love will lead to a 0.19% increase in consumers' purchase intention intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

The moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between firm created content and purchase intention was assessed in hypotheses four. Specifically, hypothesis four assessed the moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between firm created content and purchase intention in telecommunication sector of Nigeria and found it to be positive and significant. The study therefore concluded that, brand love significantly moderated the relationship between firm-created content and consumer purchase intentions. Gardner, Harris, Li, Kirkman and Mathieu (2017) posited that when the moderating effect is positive, it is called strengthen effect which describe instances in which the conditional predictor and criterion variables relationship becomes stronger as moderator increases. Contrarily, the fifth hypothesis which states that brand love does not moderate the relationship between user-generated content and purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria failed to be rejected. Although the beta value is positive, however, the moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between usercreated content and consumers' purchase intentions was not significant. As such, the study concluded that brand love does not significantly moderate the relationship between usergenerated content and purchase intentions in telecommunication sector of Nigeria.

Furthermore, the R^2 which explains the variance in the criterion variable consumers' purchase intentions that is caused by the predictor and moderator variable variables i.e., firm-generated content, user-generated content and brand love was reported to be 0.291 (29%) shown in the measurement model. While the remaining 71% is explained by other variables not included in the research model.

Effect Size and Predictive Relevance

The study investigated the effect size (f^2) of the predictor and moderator variables on the criterion variable. This is undertaken to ascertain which among the predictor and moderator variables best explain the criterion variable. Cohen (1988) suggested that f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, to represents small, medium, and large effects respectively. Analysing table 4 below it can be derived that firm-created content, user-generated content, brand love and the moderating effect of brand love on firm-created content and consumers' purchase intention have small effect. While moderating effect of brand love on user-generated content and consumers' purchase intention has no effect. Furthermore, predictive relevance Q^2 was used to determine the practical utility of the exogenous variable. Hair et al. (2021) is of the opinion that Q^2 value of 0 or negative showed that the model is irrelevant in predicting the endogenous variable the results are presented in table 4 revealed that the model has practical utility since value of 0.167 is greater than zero (0).

Table no. 4 - Effect Size (f^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Construct	f^2	Effect size
FCC	0.050	Small
UGC	0.019	Small
BL	0.040	Small
BL* FCC->PI	0.028	Small
BL* UGC->PI	0.000	No Effect

 $Q^2 = 0.167$

Source: Authors' systemization of Smart-pls output

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the moderating effect of brand love on the relationship between social media and purchase intentions. The social media-purchase intention-brand love relationship which has not gotten much attention in research was tested. When the brand love is strong the intention to purchase the brand also becomes stronger. In literature, brand love has a considerable impact on purchase intention. Stronger brand love leads to stronger purchase intention. This study proves that the stronger the brand love, the intention to purchase also increases, this is because social media leads to a higher intention to purchase

when the brand is loved by consumers. It is by creating brand love that telecommunication firms can assure a higher purchase intention through the use of social media. Telecommunication firms must concentrate on creating relationship and passion with the customer in order to survive the dynamic market. Purchase intention is paramount for the success of a brand. The study concluded that firm created content and user generated content both have a significant impact on purchase intention. Also, the study adds to knowledge by determining and validating the function of brand love in moderating the social media-purchase intention relationship. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The result shows that firms created content plays a great role in enhancing purchase intention. Therefore, brand managers ought to leverage social media to produce content that can be used as a source for learning more in-depth details about consumer preferences, buy intentions, and patterns.
- ii. Going by the positive impact of user generated content on purchase intention, it is recommended that firms should enhance the adaptability and feedback capabilities of their social media pages to enable consumers to participate in online communities by liking, commenting, posting, and creating content. This will help marketers learn more about users and their preferences and create more effective marketing tools.
- iii. The results shows that brand love positively and significantly moderates the relationship between social media and purchase intention. In light of this conclusion, brand managers are hereby exhorted to concentrate on developing their marketing plans that would foster consumer-brand interaction on social media in order to build a strong emotional connection to the brand, which will lead to favorable purchase intention, which will in turn improve the financial prospects of the brand's company.
- iv. The findings, however, demonstrate that brand love moderates the association between firm-created content and purchase intention in a meaningful way. However, it is advised that corporate representatives actively engage with social media as part of their marketing strategy, comprehend how prospective customers behave online, and recognize the client as a strong ally.
- v. Finally, it has been determined that the association between user generated content and purchase intention is not considerably moderated by brand love. This can be because businesses are unaware of the value of user-generated content. Brand managers are advised to be aware that user likes, shares, and comments, as well as the posts the brand promotes on social media sites, have a significant impact on the dissemination of information about the specific brand, leading to an increase in brand love and subsequently generating purchase intention. Consumer purchase selections are greatly influenced by online recommendations and suggestions from other customers.

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