

# THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CRM ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND BRAND LOYALTY: AN S-O-R MODEL APPROACH

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of Social Customer Relationship Management (Social CRM) on customer engagement and its subsequent effects on brand consciousness, value consciousness, and brand loyalty. Utilising the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, Social CRM and customer engagement were positioned as external stimuli, brand consciousness and value consciousness as internal states, and brand loyalty as the response variable. Data were collected from 290 active social media users and analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to determine the relationships between these constructs. The findings indicate that Social CRM efforts significantly enhance customer engagement, which in turn positively influences brand consciousness and value consciousness. Additionally, brand loyalty is significantly influenced by customer engagement, brand consciousness, and value consciousness. Among these, brand consciousness emerged as the strongest predictor of brand loyalty, highlighting its crucial role in shaping consumer commitment to a brand. However, contrary to expectations, brand consciousness and value consciousness did not mediate the relationship between customer engagement and brand loyalty, suggesting that their influence operates in a direct rather than an intermediary capacity. This research contributes to the existing literature by expanding the application of the S-O-R model to Social CRM and digital consumer engagement. It underscores the necessity for businesses to integrate Social CRM strategically, not only to enhance engagement but also to cultivate brand-related perceptions that drive long-term loyalty. The study also offers practical implications for marketers, emphasising the need to foster interactive and personalised digital experiences to strengthen customer relationships and brand commitment. Future research should explore cross-cultural differences and platform-specific variations to further refine the understanding of Social CRM's role in digital consumer behaviour.

**Keywords:** Social CRM; Customer Engagement; Brand Loyalty; Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media represents a technological innovation that is extensively utilised in contemporary communication industries. According to a report delineating the fundamental aspects of social media, 5.06 billion individuals worldwide engage with social media platforms, and 73.9% of these users employ social media to interact with brands (Wearesocial, 2024). Research has demonstrated that social media exerts significant influence in establishing relationships with consumers. This underscores the critical importance of social media for organisations in meeting customer expectations (Hill, 2023). Customer relationship management (CRM) is defined as the capacity of companies to enhance the value they provide to consumers, maintain positive relationships with them, and convert them into loyal customer bases (Dyché, 2002). Consequently, CRM must adapt to evolving communication trends. Accordingly, it is imperative for businesses to utilise a multitude of communication channels to connect with consumers and assess the potential for fostering positive interactions with their customers.

There is evidence suggesting that the paradigm shift, which necessitates the implementation of novel approaches to client engagement in order to add value, requires the efficient integration of social media and CRM. There are grounds to assert that the change in mindset that necessitates exploring new ways to interact with customers to provide value (Goldenberg, 2015) demands the effective utilisation of CRM and social media in conjunction. To maintain currency and relevance, it is essential to remain informed of the latest developments in the field of social media. It is conceivable that a bidirectional flow of benefits may emerge, advantaging both consumers and businesses. These benefits may encompass the resolution of consumer issues, enhanced understanding of consumer needs, and the maintenance of consistent communication (Marolt et al., 2015). Similarly, the advent of social CRM may facilitate the management of customer relationships in conjunction with social networks, enable interaction and multi-directional communication, and enhance the customer relationships of businesses (Almunawar & Anshari, 2014).

As Pilav-Velic et al. (2015, p. 61) assert, the analysis and utilisation of social networks affords organisations the opportunity to establish a more intimate relationship with consumers in a cost-effective manner. Consequently, it is imperative to identify the efficacious motivation factors that propel consumers to engage with the brand and to ascertain the relevant variables that facilitate consumer engagement. Analogously, it is also valuable to categorise consumers and implement customisations by considering their expectations, desires and needs. Although social CRM can be employed as a strategy for businesses to foster customer engagement through the utilisation of social media to reinforce customer trust and brand loyalty (Greenberg, 2010a), it has been observed that the extant studies in this domain are limited (e.g., Perez-Vega et al., 2022; Wan & Xie, 2018). Moreover, it has been acknowledged that the antecedents warrant further investigation within the framework of social CRM (Malki et al., 2024). As posited by Dewnarain et al. (2021), the relationship between customer engagement and brand in the context of social CRM necessitates further exploration. In this respect, the following questions can be posed:

- What is the relationship between Social CRM and customer engagement?
- What is the relationship between Social CRM and customer engagement, brand consciousness, value consciousness and brand loyalty?
- Does customer engagement with Social CRM affect brand value, brand consciousness and brand loyalty?

To address the research questions and investigate the relationships between the variables, the S-O-R (stimuli-organism-response) theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) is considered in this study. The S-O-R theory is one of the theories frequently employed in studies in this area (i.e. Banerjee et al., 2024; Saha & Ali, 2024; Yasin et al., 2024). The study expands the S-O-R framework to social CRM, customer engagement, brand consciousness, value consciousness and brand loyalty. It is hypothesised that social CRM functions as a stimulus for consumers, eliciting customer engagement (stimuli), which subsequently engenders brand loyalty (response) through brand consciousness and product value (organism).

Despite the increasing popularity of social CRM, there remains a dearth of studies in this field (Al-Omouh et al., 2021). This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on the subject matter. Firstly, the study considers research conducted on social CRM from the perspective of the consumer. Secondly, it addresses the effect of social CRM on customer engagement, and elucidates its impact on brand consciousness and value consciousness through customer engagement. Finally, the study offers enhanced understanding of the relationships between social CRM and brands, elucidating the impact of social CRM on brand loyalty through customer engagement. While the study primarily examines social CRM, it is of considerable importance given the paucity of empirical research in this field. Conversely, the majority of empirical studies on social CRM are conducted on businesses, which differentiates this study from the consumer perspective. The scarcity of studies that address social CRM and customer engagement together, coupled with the absence of any other study that examines brand and value consciousness perceptions and brand loyalty together from the perspective of social CRM and customer engagement, renders this study a unique contribution to the field.

The research text commences with the introduction, theory on social CRM and brand relations, and the section where the related hypotheses are developed. The subsequent section includes methodology and analysis sections. The final section comprises discussion and evaluation sections. Use Heading 2 for the second level of headings

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Social CRM

Boulding et al. (2005) specify CRM as "a strategy for the management of the dual creation of value, the intelligent use of data and technology, the acquisition of customer knowledge and the diffusion of this knowledge to the appropriate stakeholders, the development of appropriate (long-term) relationships with specific customers and/or customer groups, and the integration of processes across the many areas of the firm

and across the network of firms that collaborate to generate customer value" (p. 157). As the definition suggests, it is emphasised that the essence of CRM is to create value, and that technology should be utilised for this purpose. The current approach that emerged with the integration of social media technology into the field of customer relationship management is designated as social CRM (Alt & Reinhold, 2020), and this approach is accepted as CRM 2.0 (Greenberg, 2010).

Social CRM is described as "a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a system and a technology, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative interaction that provides mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment" (Greenberg, 2010, p. 414). In accordance with the established definition, a business is required to engage in continuous evaluation of all forms of interactions (primarily with external and internal customers) within the domain of social media. In this context, it can be regarded as a system intended to enhance human interaction within the business domain. It can also be conceptualised as a philosophy and business strategy that is facilitated by technology (Lacy et al., 2013). Integrating social media with classic customer relationship management (CRM) efforts, including processes, systems and technologies, is a fundamental aspect of social customer relationship management (Social CRM). This integration is designed to enhance collaboration with customers and strengthen customer relationships. In this regard, it should be noted that social CRM does not replace conventional CRM; rather, it builds upon the foundations of conventional CRM by taking into account social interactions between customers and customers (Acker et al., 2011; Trainor, 2012). It can be viewed as a necessity of the contemporary era and the co-evolution of social consumer reality, perpetuating the fundamental ideas of classical CRM (Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014).

A customer-centred approach is indispensable in social CRM. Thus, developing relationships with customers and utilising social media for this purpose is a necessity (Askool & Nakata, 2011). In light of this reality, it is possible to establish the necessary interactions in accordance with customer needs, enhance their personal experiences, and provide long-term mutual value with the company (Woodcock et al., 2011). In this regard, it is important to emphasise the direct correlation between a company's business and marketing strategies and the engagement of its social customers (Greenberg, 2010b). Integrating social networks into all CRM processes with a dynamic perspective that encompasses suppliers and the entire company, and ensuring active customer engagement, has been identified as a key factor in the success of social CRM initiatives (Acker et al., 2011). The implementation of social CRM enables the identification of consumer needs, including the motivation to connect with groups, share experiences, and establish relationships in order to construct a sense of identity. Companies can address these needs through collaboration with consumers (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Lehmkuhl, 2014). This enables businesses to gather data and utilise it to address customer requirements (Goldenberg, 2015).

The emergence of social CRM has facilitated the production and dissemination of a plethora of information and content through a multitude of social media platforms that have attained considerable popularity on a global scale (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, among others, depending on the number of users – Statista, 2024). Conversely, businesses view various platforms as an efficacious communication instrument for establishing connections with their customers (Dutot, 2013). In this manner, social CRM promises increased efficiency in terms of increasing brand visibility, improving brand loyalty, and low-cost management (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2019). Indeed, recent studies on social CRM have indicated a correlation between social CRM and customer engagement, as well as between customer engagement and brand perceptions. It is suggested that these three factors should be evaluated together within the social CRM framework (Dewnarain et al., 2021; Gräser et al., 2023; Medjani & Barnes, 2021; Naim, 2022; R. Sharma et al., 2022).

## 2.2. Social CRM and Brands

While customers utilise social media to maintain relationships with their family and friends, over time they have transitioned to employing it for purposes such as obtaining information about brands, receiving discounts, accessing special promotions, and reporting complaints (Ismail, 2017). Although it is common for customers to interact with businesses via social media without temporal or spatial constraints, they also possess control over their experiences with brands (Lacy et al., 2013; Woodcock et al., 2011). For businesses to develop relationships with customers, it is necessary to establish a presence on these platforms and foster

communication between customers and the brand, as well as among customers themselves. Moreover, social media may be utilised within the scope of social CRM to mitigate negative dissemination (i.e. negative e-wom) between brands and companies (Thaichon et al., 2020). As brands receive rapid feedback with data obtained from social media and dynamically established communications, they can comprehend target audiences and generally cultivate positive attitudes towards the brand by monitoring opinion leaders and brand followers (Küpper et al., 2014). Furthermore, social CRM is employed as a strategy to engage with customers in order to engender customer trust and build brand loyalty. It is also regarded as an effective tool for brands to target new customers and to establish a strong, positive and transparent relationship with the customer (Pilav-Velic et al., 2015; Woodcock et al., 2011).

Social CRM is a valuable tool that provides brand visibility and consciousness (Goldenberg, 2015; Küpper et al., 2014). It is well established that utilising social CRM has an effect on establishing more frequent and higher quality interactions with customers (Naim, 2022). Communication efforts that facilitate customer feedback to the brand may have a decisive impact on customers' perception of the brand as relevant to the consumer. Consequently, it is anticipated that the communication established between brands and consumers is highly profitable and provides a competitive advantage to the business (Alt & Reinhold, 2020; Hassan et al., 2019). Thus, the implementation of social CRM facilitates enhanced communication with customers, thereby fostering brand loyalty (Sharma et al., 2022).

### 2.3. Hypothesis Development

#### Social CRM and Customer Engagement

An interaction that does not consider social CRM and social media may be regarded as an instance where opportunities have not been sufficiently evaluated and the brand has not been kept up to date (Goldenberg, 2015). In this context, social CRM efforts encourage customers to actively participate as part of a community (Gräser et al., 2023). From a marketing perspective, participation can be defined as the act of attracting the attention of an audience and/or establishing a connection with it. It necessitates audiences to interact with a brand and its content (American Marketing Association-AMA, 2024). If one considers that individuals and communities on social media networks can be defined as customers, one can discuss the notion of customer engagement (CE) in social CRM activities (Lehmkuhl, 2014). In comparison to conventional communication channels, social media offers a direct and authentic form of participation (Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014). The consumer's engagement with the brand's digital assets, including the website, blog, social media accounts, and content, is indicative of customer engagement (Arora et al., 2021).

Van Doorn et al. (2010: 254) defined customer engagement as "behaviours go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers". Customer engagement corresponds to the psychological state that occurs between the brand and customer experiences. Different levels of customer engagement can be observed under contextual situations and conditions (Brodie et al., 2013). Customer engagement can be sustained if consumers demonstrate loyalty to the brand and tend to establish a relationship in the process. Achieving this can be considered the key to success for brands (Bryła et al., 2022; Marino & Lo Presti, 2018).

In social CRM, it is of paramount importance to encourage customer participation rather than manage customers to create mutual value (Chan et al., 2018). Consequently, customer engagement is a crucial element of customer communication facilitated through social media (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014). The implementation of social CRM enables organisations to achieve numerous strategic objectives, including the collection of customer feedback, the generation of innovative ideas, the reduction of service costs, the enhancement of brand consciousness and visibility, the increase of web traffic and revenues, and the contribution to sales and marketing efforts. These benefits can be realised as a product of customer engagement in social CRM (Goldenberg, 2015). Through customer engagement, businesses can assign a more prominent role to customers in value creation; subsequently, customers can influence other consumer groups, and ultimately transform into fan groups that foster brand loyalty (Marino & Lo Presti, 2018; Sashi, 2012). Brodie et al. (2013) posited that customer engagement is the fundamental tenet of relationships, encompassing a multitude of concepts that serve as either precursors or outcomes. In various studies (Afaq et al., 2023; Arora et al., 2021;

Chan et al., 2018; Kim & Wang, 2019; Lehmkuhl, 2014; Medjani & Barnes, 2021; Shah et al., 2024), customer engagement has been considered as an output of social CRM, and it has been suggested that social CRM primarily affects customer engagement. Based on this information, a hypothesis is proposed;

***H1: Social CRM significantly predicts customer engagement.***

#### **Value Consciousness, Brand Consciousness and Brand Loyalty**

Social media facilitates business-consumer interactions and demonstrates the value proposition of brands to consumers (Schoja, 2016). It is widely acknowledged that fostering customer-brand interactions on social media and engaging customers more actively through consumer participation is of significant importance (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016). Consequently, customer engagement aims to increase the duration of customer interaction with a brand and enhance their interest in the brand (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Brand experiences that emerge based on interaction with customers lead to increased interaction intensity in ongoing customer engagement and a corresponding rise in brand loyalty (Alam et al., 2021; S. Kim et al., 2022). Therefore, it is reasonable to posit that increased consumer participation in the social CRM context will alter individuals' perceptions (i.e., consciousness) and behavioural intentions (i.e., brand loyalty) (Lehmkuhl & Jung, 2013). Consumers' engagement in social CRM processes increases the likelihood that they will perceive the relevant brand as more attractive and interesting (S. Kim et al., 2022). In accordance with this, Ismail (2017) posits that consumers exhibit brand consciousness, perceiving brands as symbols of status and prestige. Alternatively, consumers may be value-conscious individuals who evaluate and compare prices among brands in an effort to identify the optimal option. This suggests that consumers are heterogeneous, attributing different values to brands and exhibiting varying degrees of commitment to the brand (Woodcock et al., 2011).

Value consciousness is associated with the perceived sensitivity to price in relation to quality (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). While consumers' judgements are formed according to the balance of quality and price, this consciousness aids them in selecting brands in the face of potential risks (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2014). In this value-conscious environment, customers' concerns regarding poor quality and cost are also reduced to a comparable level, and they are inclined to examine projected prices and compare alternative brands (Sharma, 2011). Given that the relationship between price and quality is a subject of individual communication (Liu & Lee, 2016), it is anticipated that the communication occurring on social media will contribute to consumers' value consciousness (Khan et al., 2019). It is widely accepted that consumers are more likely to utilise social media networks to identify optimal pricing. Consumers are expected to employ these platforms to obtain benefits such as locating low prices, identifying appropriate products, and comparing value differentials between brands (Ismail et al., 2018). Empirical research on social media and value consciousness (Geric & Dobrinic, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2023; Ismail, 2017; Kamal et al., 2022) and studies that specifically examine value consciousness in the context of CRM support this proposition, and it is posited that there exists a connection between value consciousness and customer engagement (Nguyen & Simkin, 2013). The following hypothesis is proposed in this regard:

***H2: Customer engagement significantly predicts value consciousness.***

Brand consciousness is defined as the mental orientations that consumers employ to select popular and heavily advertised products (Sprotles & Kendall, 1986). Consumers exhibiting a high degree of brand consciousness are more likely to be concerned about the brand and its associated image (Kim et al., 2022). Brand consciousness serves as a determining variable in consumers' purchasing decisions, shaping brand preferences (Jaravaza et al., 2024). Individuals with high brand consciousness may perceive their preferred brands as symbols of their own prestige and status (Liao & Wang, 2009). Consequently, it is postulated that individuals who engage with brands on social media platforms will demonstrate increased brand consciousness (Ismail, 2017). Social media interactions may influence individuals' brand consciousness and subsequently differentiate their beliefs and behaviours (Chu & Kamal, 2011). It is recognised that consumers utilise social networks to interact with businesses, and brand consciousness can be enhanced through customer engagement in this manner (Dutot, 2013). Thus, it can be posited that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) efforts conducted on social media platforms have a more pronounced effect on shaping brand consciousness (Lingavel, 2015). Empirical studies have demonstrated that interactions on social media (Ismail,

2017; Ismail et al., 2018; Yee et al., 2022; Yoel et al., 2021) and customer engagement influence brand consciousness (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016; Leckie et al., 2016). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H3: Customer engagement significantly predicts brand consciousness.***

Brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999) is defined as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (p. 34). It is noteworthy that the interactions between businesses and customers via social media within the CRM framework are significant in terms of satisfaction. Comprehending customers' concerns, intensifying dialogues, and implementing efforts to enhance customer satisfaction, such as resolving their issues, can strengthen customers' loyalty to the brand (Buss & Begorgis, 2015; Chen, 2015). Indeed, social CRM aims to interact with customers via social media to establish brand loyalty (Dewnarain et al., 2021; Woodcock et al., 2011). It is probable that customer engagement resulting from social CRM efforts will increase brand consciousness and value consciousness, and subsequently predict brand loyalty in conjunction with brand consciousness and value consciousness. Extant literature indicates that customer engagement is among the antecedents of brand loyalty (Naim, 2022; Prentice & Correia Loureiro, 2017; Wali et al., 2015; Wongsansukcharoen, 2022), while value consciousness (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015; Ismail et al., 2018; Kara et al., 2009; Yee et al., 2022) and brand consciousness (Ghosh et al., 2023; Ismail et al., 2018, 2021; Yee et al., 2022) are related to the brand and influence brand loyalty. In this regard, the following hypotheses are formulated;

***H4: Customer engagement significantly predicts brand loyalty.***

***H5: Value consciousness significantly predicts brand loyalty.***

***H6: Brand consciousness significantly predicts brand loyalty.***

#### 2.4. S-O-R Theory and Research

The S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response) theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) posits that external environmental stimuli initiate the internal process that generates behavioural responses. The model proposes that external stimuli do not directly impact behaviour, but rather affect the internal state of consumers, subsequently leading to behavioural outcomes. Stimuli can be conceptualised as a set of features that influence customer cognition and emotions (Islam et al., 2020). The adoption of an external stimulus is contingent upon the relevance of the idea or concept to the consumer. Consumers evaluate stimuli based on cognitive and emotional motives (Hussain et al., 2023). The internal state (organism) corresponds to the psychological or cognitive state of the individual in response to external stimuli (Zhu et al., 2020). Finally, reactions (response) are defined as the final states that emerge following exposure to the stimulus and are shaped by the consumer's internal states (Kumar & Mokha, 2022).

The S-O-R model is frequently employed in customer relationship management (Hossain et al., 2021; Kumar & Mokha, 2022), social media (Hussain et al., 2023; Yasin et al., 2024) and brand management (Banerjee et al., 2024; Tran et al., 2023). Despite its widespread application, various studies offer differing perspectives on the factors that should be included in the stimulus, internal state, and response domains in relation to the topics under investigation. Jacoby (2002) acknowledged this variability, stating that variables within the S-O-R model perspective can be substituted and that differences are likely to occur in their determination. In this study, social CRM efforts were considered as external stimuli. Customer engagement, brand consciousness and value consciousness variables were identified as internal state elements. It was hypothesised that brand loyalty would emerge as a response. From a social CRM perspective, the research has recognised that while brand loyalty is an important final outcome to obtain, internal and external variables may vary (Dewnarain et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Naim, 2022). As Lehmkühl (2014) asserts, testing the concepts associated with social CRM is crucial for understanding the final results. Accordingly, the research model is presented in Figure 1.

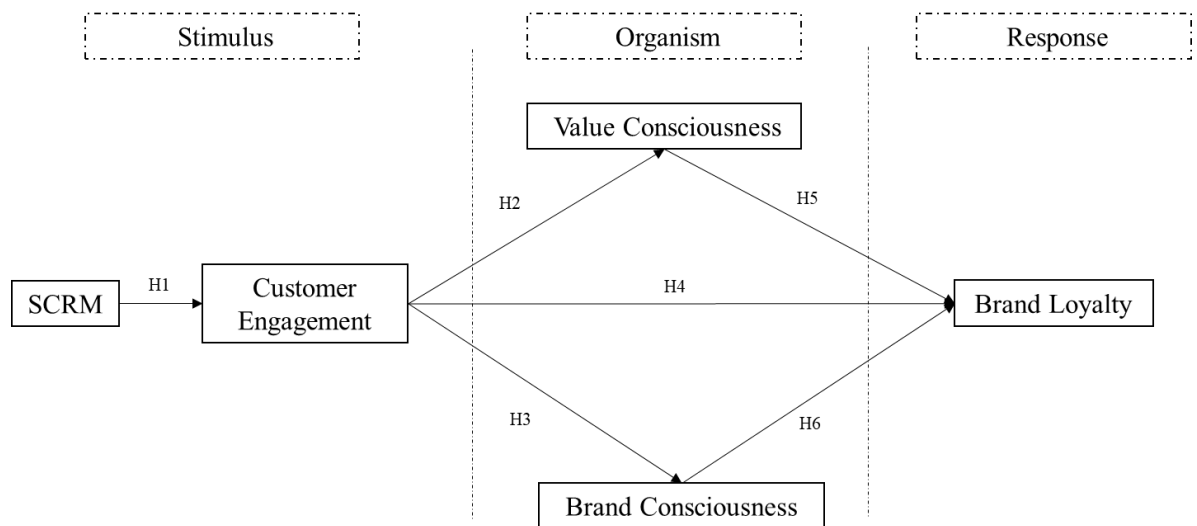


FIGURE 1. - RESEARCH MODEL

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design and Sample

The study is predicated on the philosophy of positivism (Kelly et al., 2018). A quantitative research methodology was employed. This investigation adheres to a positivist approach, which entails reliance on objective, measurable data and scientific methods to comprehend reality (Kelly et al., 2018). The researchers utilised quantitative methods, which involve the collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and draw conclusions. This approach typically encompasses techniques such as surveys, experiments, or statistical analyses to gather and interpret information in a systematic, numerical manner. The research aims to determine the association between the independent variable social CRM and the dependent variables: customer engagement, brand consciousness, value consciousness and brand loyalty. Consequently, individuals who actively utilise social media constitute the research population to be used in determining these relationships. In the investigation, it was determined to obtain data from social media (i.e. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc.) users. Thus, the population comprises individuals who use social media in Turkey. The high prevalence of social media use in Turkey (approximately 57 million active users) (Kemp, 2024) and the general participation of businesses in social media are the primary reasons for selecting this population. It is crucial for the research that the individuals participating in the study are current users of social media platforms. The convenience sampling method, which is among the non-probability sampling methods, was employed in this study (Berndt, 2020). The survey method was adopted for data collection, and an online survey was developed for this purpose. The prepared survey was disseminated on social media platforms, and individuals who encountered the message were requested to respond to the survey. 290 people participated in the survey between 07.03.2023 and 09.04.2023 on a voluntary basis. Considering that a sample size of 200 and above is sufficient for structural equation modelling, this number constitutes the required adequacy (Kline, 2015). It was determined that the expected effect size of the number of participants (anticipated effect size = 0.3, desired statistical power level = 0.8, probability level = 0.05) exceeded the expected number (>150) considering the observed and latent variable numbers (Soper, 2024; Westland, 2010).

The study revealed that 23% of the participants were female and 77% were male according to their gender. Regarding age distribution, individuals over 45 years old constituted 16% of the participants, those between 25 and 45 years old represented 77%, and those under 25 years old accounted for 6%. Furthermore, participants with a bachelor's degree or higher comprised the majority (64%) in terms of educational attainment, while those below bachelor's degree level represented a smaller proportion (24%). The findings indicated that the majority of participants, at a rate of 40%, reported an income above 15,000 TL.

### 3.2. Measurement

The instruments utilised for data collection in this study were derived from pertinent literature. Arora et al. (2021) served as a reference for the social CRM latent variable, comprising five observed statements, and the customer engagement latent variable, consisting of four observed statements. Similarly, the observed variables (Table 1) employed for the latent variables of brand consciousness and value consciousness, each comprising four observed statements, and brand loyalty, consisting of three observed statements, were adapted from Ismail (2017). Participants were requested to provide Likert-type responses (1-absolutely disagree; 5-absolutely agree) to the statements.

TABLE 1 -MEASURES

Code	Item Description
SCRM1	I AM GETTING THE RIGHT INFORMATION ABOUT PRODUCTS/SERVICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA.
SCRM2	I AM GETTING RELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA.
SCRM3	SOCIAL MEDIA ARE HELPING COMPANIES TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS.
SCRM4	I ALWAYS FEEL CONNECTED WITH THE COMPANIES DUE TO IMMEDIATE RESPONSES TO CUSTOMER CARE ISSUES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA.
ENG1	I USUALLY GIVE MY OPINION ABOUT THE QUALITY OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO OTHERS.
ENG2	I CONSIDER COMPANIES TO SHARE RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA.
ENG3	I FEEL POSITIVE ABOUT PRODUCT INFORMATION AND PROMOTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA
ENG4	I THINK RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA ARE USEFUL
BC1	I PAY ATTENTION TO THE BRAND NAMES OF THE PRODUCTS I BUY
BC2	BRAND NAMES TELL ME SOMETHING ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE PRODUCTS
BC3	SOMETIMES I AM WILLING TO PAY MORE MONEY FOR PRODUCTS BECAUSE OF ITS BRAND NAME
BL1	I WOULD RATHER STICK WITH A BRAND I USUALLY BUY THAN TRY SOMETHING I AM NOT VERY SURE OF
BL2	I HAVE CERTAIN TYPES OF BRANDS THAT I ALWAYS BUY
BL3	I CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE LOYAL TO ONE BRAND OF PRODUCT
VC1	I AM VERY CONCERNED ABOUT LOW PRICES, BUT I AM EQUALLY CONCERNED ABOUT PRODUCT QUALITY
VC2	WHEN SHOPPING, I COMPARE THE PRICES OF DIFFERENT BRANDS TO BE SURE I GET THE BEST VALUE FOR THE MONEY
VC3	WHEN PURCHASING A PRODUCT, I ALWAYS TRY TO MAXIMIZE THE QUALITY I GET FOR THE MONEY I SPEND
VC4	WHEN I BUY PRODUCTS, I LIKE TO BE SURE THAT I AM GETTING MY MONEY'S WORTH

A two-stage assessment was conducted to ascertain the comprehensibility of the statements prior to the research. Initially, a panel of five academicians was consulted regarding the intelligibility of the scale statements. Subsequently, the finalised statements were presented to a pre-test group of twenty individuals. Following this phase, all statements deemed comprehensible were administered to participants in the form of an online survey.

#### Common Variance Bias

The data were collected from a single source, which may potentially result in a common variance bias (CVB) issue. To ascertain the presence of this problem, Harman's one-factor test was employed. Subsequently, factor analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS software. The results of the single-factor analysis indicated that the first eigenvalue (26%) did not account for the majority of the total variance. Consequently, it was determined that no CVB problem was present (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The relationships between variables and the observed expressions were analysed utilising the two-stage procedure of structural equation modelling (SEM) (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). As the constructs in the study were reflective, the CB (covariance based)-SEM algorithm was employed to examine the reliability and validity of the constructs. Regarding the normality distributions among the CB-SEM requirements, it was determined

that the skewness values ranged from -0.01 to 1.55 and kurtosis values ranged from -0.00 to 4.08. Based on this test result, it was concluded that the distribution was normal (Kline, 2015).

#### 4.1. Measurement Model

AMOS 24.0 software programme and statistical add-ons incorporated into the programme (Gaskin, 2018) were utilised. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted employing the maximum likelihood method, convergent validity and reliability were examined, and discriminant validity was considered (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Two statements (SCRM5 and BC4) were excluded from the analyses due to their disruption of structural harmony and low loadings. As presented in Table 2, which illustrates the findings for all remaining statements, the factor loadings (FL) ranged from 0.960 to 0.487, the average variances extracted (AVE) were between 0.620 and 0.509, exceeding the threshold value of 0.5. The factor loadings were deemed sufficient as they did not compromise the model structure and exceeded the minimum value ( $>0.40$ ) (Hair et al., 2019). As indicated in the same table, the relevant composite reliability (CR) values surpassed the minimum threshold value of 0.7, ranging from 0.835 to 0.800. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assert that the reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) values of each variable ranged from 0.841 to 0.786, indicating high reliability. According to the FL (Fornell-Lacker) and HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) criteria employed for discriminant validity (Table 3), it can be concluded that the model demonstrated discriminant validity. The model fit values were found to be acceptable ( $X^2/df= 2.213$ , CFI=0.943, NFI= 0.901, SRMR= 0.075, and RMSEA= 0.065) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

TABLE 2 - CONSTRUCTS AND VALUES

Constructs		Loading	Mean	SD
SCRM1	SOCIAL CRM - SCRM (A =0.841; CR=0.835; AVE=0.573)	0.960	2.92	1.01
SCRM2		0.872	2.83	0.97
SCRM3		0.571	3.43	0.98
SCRM4		0.534	3.23	1.02
ENG1	CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT - ENG (A =0.786; CR=0.800; AVE=0.509)	0.488	3.96	0.98
ENG2		0.732	4.04	0.96
ENG3		0.854	3.94	0.95
ENG4		0.730	3.85	0.94
BC1	BRAND CONSCIOUSNESS - BC (A =0.806; CR=0.827; AVE=0.620)	0.604	3.95	0.91
BC2		0.865	3.94	0.93
BC3		0.865	3.47	1.12
BL1	BRAND LOYALTY – BL (A=0.811; CR=0.811; AVE=0.590)	0.709	3.77	0.92
BL2		0.755	3.65	0.94
BL3		0.835	3.74	0.90
VC1	VALUE CONSCIOUSNESS S -VC (A=0.831; CR=0.846; AVE=0.590)	0.487	3.87	0.91
VC2		0.753	4.23	0.78
VC3		0.912	4.29	0.76
VC4		0.851	4.32	0.74

TABLE 3- DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

	FL					HTMT				
	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
A.SCRM	0.757									
B.ENG	0.471	0.713				0.594				
C.BC	0.216	0.331	0.788			0.218	0.365			
D.BL	0.185	0.393	0.532	0.768		0.233	0.418	0.582		
E.VC	0.201	0.512	0.602	0.525	0.766	0.264	0.621	0.584	0.528	

FL> THAN BELOW VALUES & HTMT<0.90

#### 4.2. Structural Model

In the second stage of structural equation modelling, path estimates were determined utilising maximum likelihood estimation. The model fit values pertaining to the model constructed to ascertain the path effects between variables were found to be within acceptable parameters ( $X^2/df= 2.18$ , CFI=0.943, NFI= 0.900, SRMR= 0.076, and RMSEA= 0.064) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Subsequent to ensuring model fit, parameter

estimates were interpreted to determine the specific effects between the concepts in the model. The effect of Social CRM ( $\beta = 0.468$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) on customer engagement is positive and statistically significant. This result supports hypothesis H1. According to the results demonstrating the effects of customer engagement, customer engagement exhibits a significant and positive effect on brand consciousness ( $\beta = 0.0.337$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), and on value consciousness ( $\beta = 0.507$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). These results support hypotheses H2 and H3. In accordance with the results indicating the effects on brand loyalty, customer engagement ( $\beta = 0.155$ ,  $p < 0.036$ ), value consciousness ( $\beta = 0.247$ ,  $p < 0.006$ ), and brand consciousness ( $\beta = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) demonstrate a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty. These results similarly support hypotheses H4, H5, and H6. Adjusted R square values for customer engagement is 0.219, for value consciousness is 0.257, for brand consciousness is 0.113, and for brand loyalty is 0.366. It was additionally observed that 21% of customer engagement was explained by social CRM. The findings indicate that 36% of brand loyalty is explained by brand consciousness, value consciousness, and customer engagement. Although not included among the research hypotheses, the mediation effects in the research model were examined. The mediating effect of brand consciousness and value consciousness between customer loyalty and brand loyalty was found to be insignificant ( $p=0.106$ ). Based on this result, it was determined that there was no mediation effect.

TABLE 4 - HYPOTHESES' TEST RESULTS

HYPOTHESIS	RELATIONSHIP	STD. B	T-STATISTIC	P-LEVEL	RESULT
H1	SCRM→ENG	0.468	6.773	0.000	ACCEPTED
H2	ENG→VC	0.507	7.124	0.000	ACCEPTED
H3	ENG→BC	0.337	4.549	0.000	ACCEPTED
H4	ENG→BL	0.155	2.101	0.036	ACCEPTED
H6	VC→BL	0.247	2.752	0.006	ACCEPTED
H7	BC→BL	0.331	3.389	0.000	ACCEPTED
NOTES: ADJUSTED R <sup>2</sup> : ENG (0.219), VC (0.257), BC (0.113), BL (0.366)					

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

Significant findings emerged from this study, which utilised the S-O-R model to analyse the connections between social CRM and brand consciousness, value consciousness, and brand loyalty through customer engagement. Social CRM and customer engagement were considered as stimuli in the study. In the context of social CRM, it was observed that the expected efforts by consumers affected customer engagement, which is evaluated as the perceptions of consumers towards the brand beyond the interactions and purchases in general. The current findings corroborate the results of earlier studies (Afaq et al., 2023; Arora et al., 2021; Dewnarain et al., 2019; Medjani & Barnes, 2021; Sharma et al., 2022). This indicates that social CRM is among the antecedents of customer engagement.

In the research model, it is posited that social CRM may have indirect effects on brand consciousness and value consciousness through customer engagement. Accordingly, it was found that customer engagement has an effect on internal state (organism) elements such as brand consciousness and value consciousness. Theoretically, this supports the assumption that possible outcomes for consumers will occur with customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010). There is congruence between this result and various studies in the literature (Ismail, 2017; Kamal et al., 2022; S. Kim et al., 2022; Sashi, 2012). There is evidence to suggest that customer engagement significantly affects individuals' perceptions of brand value in relation to their perceptions and that customer engagement is among the motivations for brand value. Similarly, customer engagement has been found to elucidate product value in terms of value consciousness. This demonstrates that customer engagement is also among the motivations for product value.

Finally, brand loyalty was considered as a response in the research model. It was hypothesised that customer engagement, brand consciousness and value consciousness have influence on brand loyalty. With this assumption, it was predicted that social CRM indirectly affects brand loyalty through relevant variables. In accordance with the findings, it was observed that customer engagement, brand consciousness and value consciousness significantly affect brand loyalty. This final result, which corroborates the extant literature

(Huang et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2021; Li et al., 2020; Yee et al., 2022), is consistent with the research model. This situation indicates that customer engagement is among the motivations in the formation of brand loyalty. In the current model, brand consciousness was found to be the strongest motivation in explaining brand loyalty. It was also observed that value consciousness is among the effective motivations in the formation of brand loyalty.

Although it was not included among the research hypotheses, it was predicted in the model that brand consciousness and brand loyalty could have mediating effects between customer engagement and brand loyalty. However, as a result of the analysis, it was determined that there was no such effect. Therefore, it was found that the brand consciousness and value consciousness variables did not play a mediating role between customer engagement and brand loyalty and did not create an indirect effect.

### 5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) has been extensively applied in consumer behaviour and environmental psychology; however, its extension into Social CRM and digital engagement presents a novel perspective. This study conceptualises Social CRM as a stimulus, customer engagement as the internal state (organism), and brand loyalty as the behavioural outcome (response). Previous studies have explored S-O-R in e-commerce (Wu, 2023) and digital marketing (Jiang et al., 2024); nevertheless, the integration of real-time brand interactions via Social CRM within this model remains underexplored. By reconceptualising engagement as a psychological process rather than a mere behavioural outcome, this study enhances our understanding of how digital brand experiences shape consumer attitudes.

The majority of prior research on Social CRM has focused on customer engagement and brand loyalty (Trainor, 2012; Harrigan et al., 2017). This study extends the theoretical framework by introducing brand consciousness and value consciousness as mediators, demonstrating that social media interactions not only drive engagement but also shape brand-related perceptions. While brand consciousness is traditionally associated with advertising and brand prestige (Parker, 2015), this study reframes it as an outcome of digital engagement. Similarly, value consciousness, which has often been examined in pricing and consumer economics (Lichtenstein et al., 1993), is now positioned as a result of brand interaction on social platforms. This perspective enriches branding and digital marketing theories by demonstrating that real-time engagement actively constructs consumer perceptions beyond price and prestige.

The study employs Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to quantify the impact of Social CRM-driven engagement on brand loyalty, which adds to the empirical rigour of prior CRM research (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014; Naim, 2022). While previous studies have acknowledged the role of engagement in fostering loyalty, this research provides statistical evidence that engagement influences loyalty through cognitive-affective mechanisms such as brand and value consciousness. Moreover, it challenges existing literature by demonstrating that brand consciousness and value consciousness do not serve as mediators in the loyalty formation process. This finding aligns with recent calls to re-evaluate the assumed mediation role of brand perception variables in digital contexts (Kim et al., 2022).

By integrating consumer psychology, relationship marketing, and digital transformation theories, this study contributes to the growing literature on how Social CRM drives digital engagement strategies (Lehmkuhl, 2014). It suggests that CRM in the digital age is not merely a data-driven approach but an active engagement mechanism that constructs consumer attitudes and behaviours. The findings underscore the importance of AI-driven CRM tools, predictive analytics, and omnichannel personalisation, aligning with emerging literature on technology-driven customer engagement (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Kumar & Mokha, 2022).

Furthermore, this study builds upon contemporary discussions in marketing literature by addressing the prevalence of collaborative interactions between businesses and consumers (Boulding et al., 2005) and the increasing role of technology in consumer-brand engagement (Greenberg, 2010a). The results demonstrate that Social CRM and customer engagement concurrently impact brand consciousness, value consciousness, and brand loyalty, reinforcing the role of digital brand engagement as a key strategic asset. Although brand consciousness and value consciousness were not found to mediate engagement and brand loyalty, this study

provides empirical support for the assumption that these variables shape loyalty indirectly rather than act as discrete mediators.

## 5.2. Managerial Contributions

The findings of this study indicate that while Social CRM facilitates engagement, it does not inherently establish trust or guarantee loyalty. This observation suggests that organisations must transcend engagement metrics and incorporate trust-building mechanisms such as transparency, AI-driven validation, and community-driven credibility (Gefen et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2008). Research on trust in digital environments suggests that consumers rely on third-party validation and algorithmic transparency when evaluating information credibility (Tian, 2016). Similarly, organisations that incorporate peer-driven reviews, blockchain verification, and AI-powered sentiment analysis are more likely to enhance consumer trust and brand credibility (Leung et al., 2022).

Additionally, this study emphasises that Social CRM is fundamentally defined by customer expectations and behaviours rather than being solely determined by organisation-driven initiatives. The findings reveal that while brands strive to enhance engagement, there remain significant gaps in the performance of Social CRM capabilities. Consumers demand greater authenticity, personalised experiences, and information reliability, yet many organisations still struggle to integrate trust-building digital tools into their Social CRM strategies (Kumar & Mokha, 2022). Given that trust-building mechanisms require real-time analytics, automation, and omnichannel coordination, Social CRM strategies should be developed in parallel with an organisation's digital capabilities rather than as an isolated customer relationship tool. Prior studies indicate that organisations leveraging AI and machine learning to personalise digital interactions experience higher consumer retention and trust (Kumar & Mokha, 2022). Future research should further explore the intersection of Social CRM and digital transformation to better understand how organisations can leverage technology to enhance customer trust and long-term brand loyalty.

Finally, empirical results confirm that customer engagement positively influences brand consciousness and value consciousness, which subsequently affect brand loyalty. This finding is consistent with prior literature suggesting that digital brand interactions shape consumer perceptions and enhance long-term brand commitment (Trainor et al., 2014). For practitioners, this implies that Social CRM should not only focus on engagement as an end goal but also on strategically shaping brand perception and value alignment. This can be achieved through branded storytelling, educational content, and community-driven engagement that reinforces both brand recognition and perceived value.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the impact of Social CRM on customer engagement, brand consciousness, value consciousness, and brand loyalty, utilising the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework as a theoretical foundation. The findings indicate that Social CRM significantly enhances customer engagement, which subsequently influences brand consciousness and value consciousness. These variables collectively contribute to the formation of brand loyalty, underscoring the significance of digital engagement strategies in fostering long-term consumer relationships (Trainor, 2012; Harrigan et al., 2017).

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends existing literature by integrating Social CRM into the S-O-R model, demonstrating its role in stimulating customer engagement and shaping brand-related perceptions. While previous research has established the connection between Social CRM and customer engagement, this study further elucidates how engagement influences brand consciousness and value consciousness, contributing a new dimension to discussions on digital brand management (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014). The findings challenge assumptions regarding the mediating role of brand consciousness and value consciousness between customer engagement and brand loyalty, suggesting that these constructs function more as complementary drivers rather than mediators in the loyalty formation process (Kim et al., 2022).

For practitioners, the study highlights the necessity for a strategic approach to Social CRM that extends beyond engagement metrics. While Social CRM facilitates brand interactions, engagement alone does not

automatically translate into trust or loyalty. Organisations must incorporate trust-building mechanisms, such as transparent communication, AI-driven content validation, and consumer-driven credibility systems, to strengthen brand relationships (Gefen et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2008). Moreover, the results emphasise that Social CRM should be integrated within a business's broader digital transformation strategy, ensuring that engagement efforts are supported by real-time analytics, automation, and omnichannel coordination (Kumar & Mokha, 2022).

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While this research provides valuable contributions regarding the role of Social CRM in fostering customer engagement, brand consciousness, value consciousness, and brand loyalty, it also has certain limitations. These limitations primarily stem from sampling constraints, platform-specific variations, and unexamined relationships between Social CRM and other consumer behaviour variables.

The findings of this research may not be universally applicable across different cultural and demographic contexts. Cultural differences in brand perception, digital engagement habits, and trust in online content could influence the relationships identified in this study. The role of cultural values in shaping consumer-brand relationships has been extensively discussed in prior research, particularly regarding how collectivist versus individualist cultures approach engagement and loyalty (Harrigan et al., 2017). Future research should explore cross-cultural comparative studies to assess whether the effects of Social CRM on engagement and loyalty are consistent across different market structures, regulatory environments, and consumer behaviours.

Social media platforms differ significantly in their content formats, user behaviours, and engagement mechanisms. The type of content, interactivity, and ease of engagement vary across platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Discord. Previous studies have emphasised that consumer responses to digital engagement strategies are platform-dependent, with variations in the effectiveness of brand communication, content virality, and consumer trust mechanisms (Malthouse et al., 2013). Since this study did not isolate the impact of Social CRM by platform, it assumes that customer engagement occurs across social media in a generalised manner. However, the findings suggest that the intensity, nature, and effectiveness of brand engagement strategies may vary depending on the primary platform used by consumers. Future research could benefit from platform-specific analyses or multi-group structural equation models to examine whether the relationships proposed in this study hold across different digital ecosystems. Experimental studies comparing brand engagement effectiveness across various social media platforms could provide further insights into how Social CRM strategies should be tailored for specific consumer groups (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

This study conceptualised customer engagement as the key mediating variable between Social CRM and brand-related outcomes. While the findings validate these relationships, they do not account for other psychological and behavioural mechanisms that might influence brand loyalty development. In particular, this study did not test the potential effects of Social CRM on variables such as consumer trust (Gefen et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2008), satisfaction and perceived value exchange (Hollebeek et al., 2019), word-of-mouth (Leung et al., 2022), and brand personality formation (Chatterjee et al., 2021). Future research could extend the existing model by incorporating additional psychological constructs and examining how trust, satisfaction, and advocacy behaviours emerge in the context of Social CRM interactions. Multi-mediation models and latent growth curve modelling could be used to track how consumer relationships evolve over time through Social CRM engagement.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a robust foundation for comprehending the impact of Social CRM on digital consumer engagement. Addressing these lacunae in future research will contribute to refining the theoretical framework and enhancing managerial applications for organisations seeking to strengthen their customer relationships in an increasingly digitalised market.

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