

The Impact of Ephemeral Content Marketing on Advertising Value: The Mediating Role of Self-Brand Connection and Customer Engagement

The Journal of Educational Paradigms
2026, Vol. 08(01) 470-479
© 2026 THACRS
ISSN (Print): 2709-202X
ISSN (Online): 2709-2038
DOI:10.47609/0801042026



Maham Imran¹, Abdullah¹, Muatter Zahra¹, Qalab-e-Abbas¹, Saroosh Irfan*¹, Umair Ullah Naem¹, Muhammad Ahmad Bin Yousaf¹, Muhammad Umar¹

Abstract

Social media platforms have dramatically reshaped how brands and consumers communicate, and ephemeral content marketing has become one of the most important formats in today's digital marketing landscape. This study examines how ephemeral content marketing affects advertising value with mediating role of self-brand connection and customer engagement. Building on self-expansion theory and the entertainment-based model of communication, the research explores the psychological and behavioral processes through which temporary, story-based content shapes how consumers perceive advertising effectiveness. Data were collected from 369 university students in Lahore, Pakistan, who met the study criteria, including being active users of at least one story-based social media platform. The study used a structured adopted questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for the analysis. Results show that ephemeral content marketing significantly enhances both self-brand connection and customer engagement, and that both of these in turn positively affect advertising value. The findings offer practical insights for digital marketers aiming to improve advertising effectiveness through immersive, time-limited social media content.

Keywords: *Ephemeral Content Marketing, Advertising Value, Self-Brand Connection, Customer Engagement, and Social Media Marketing.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the explosive growth of social networking platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook Stories, and TikTok has fundamentally changed the way brands and consumers interact. One of the most significant developments in this space is the emergence of ephemeral content marketing, referring to time-limited digital content that disappears after a set viewing period, usually 24 hours. Brands have rapidly embraced this format to promote products, build brand identity, and encourage audience participation. Because such content is temporary, it creates a sense of exclusivity and urgency that more permanent formats often struggle to achieve (Aruan et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2026).

The growing use of ephemeral content marketing reflects more than just a passing trend; it mirrors a broader change in how today's consumers seek out and engage with information. Modern consumers increasingly favor personalized, emotionally engaging, and visually appealing brand interactions, qualities that ephemeral content is especially well suited to provide (Bayer et al., 2016; Kim & Kim, 2023). In response, platforms like Instagram Stories and Snapchat have added interactive features such as polls, question boxes, countdown stickers, and swipe-up links, turning passive viewing into active brand participation. As a result, ephemeral formats have become key touchpoints throughout the consumer journey, shaping awareness, consideration, and purchase decisions (Kim & Kim, 2023; Lim & Childs, 2020).

Within this landscape, two constructs carry particular psychological and behavioral weight: self-brand connection and customer engagement. Self-brand connection refers to the degree to which consumers incorporate a brand into their sense of self that has long been recognized as a key driver of brand loyalty,

advocacy, and emotional attachment (Park et al., 2010a; Thomson et al., 2005). Customer engagement, on the other hand, reflects the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment consumers make in their ongoing relationship with a brand across digital platforms (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Together, these two constructs shape how consumers evaluate advertising and whether they perceive brand messages as valuable, relevant, and worth their attention. However, despite increasing practitioner interest in ephemeral content and its known ability to drive engagement, the specific mechanisms particularly the psychological pathway of self-brand connection and the behavioral pathway of customer engagement through which it influences advertising value remain poorly understood.

This study aims to fill that gap by combining self-expansion theory (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) with the entertainment-based model of communication (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), creating a theoretically grounded and empirically testable framework for understanding how ephemeral content marketing boosts advertising effectiveness. Pakistani university students offer a particularly relevant context for this research, as they represent one of the most digitally active user groups on story-based social media, with high exposure to brand communications and notable sensitivity to identity-driven content.

Although practitioners have widely embraced ephemeral content strategies, academic research has not kept pace in explaining how and why this format generates advertising value. Most existing studies on social media advertising focus on static or permanent content, leaving the psychological and behavioral effects of time-

¹ Department of Business Administration, University of South Asia. Corresponding author: Email: saroosh.irfan@usa.edu.pk

limited content largely unexplored. While some studies have begun to examine specific aspects of ephemeral content such as its influence on brand authenticity and consumer self-image (*Lim & Childs, 2020*) or overall engagement (*Nguyen et al., 2026*) that is the precise pathways linking ephemeral content exposure to advertising value, especially via self-brand connection and customer engagement as sequential mediators, have not been directly tested. Without understanding the specific psychological and behavioral pathways through which ephemeral content drives advertising value, marketers cannot design campaigns that are both efficient and strategically effective. This study tackles this issue directly by proposing and testing a structural model in which self-brand connection and customer engagement together mediate the relationship between ephemeral content marketing and advertising value.

This study offers meaningful contributions to both theory and practice. On the theoretical side, it builds on self-expansion theory by extending it to ephemeral social media content, showing how temporary brand stories can help weave brand identity into consumers' sense of self a mechanism explored through how self-brand connection shapes consumer-brand interactions in the context of ephemeral content marketing. The study also draws on the entertainment-based model of communication, applying it to the distinct nature of ephemeral platforms, opening up new theoretical connections between how entertaining content feels and how effective it is as advertising, building on the entertainment-based model of communication as applied to social media content marketing (*Moyer-Gusé, 2008*). On the empirical side, the study brings in evidence from Pakistani university students a group that is heavily active online yet rarely included in social media marketing research, given the strong bias toward Western educational settings in existing literature, even though digital behaviors are deeply shaped by local cultures and contexts. On the practical side, the findings help marketers better understand what actually moves the needle psychologically and behaviorally including entertainment, interactivity, and Informativeness when it comes to ephemeral brand content, giving them clearer direction for crafting story-based campaigns that feel more personal and emotionally relevant to their audiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Expansion Theory

Self-expansion theory, originally developed and later extended to consumer-brand relationships suggests that people are naturally motivated to expand their sense of self by acquiring new perspectives, resources, identities, and experiences (*Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006*). In the context of brand relationships, this theory helps explain how consumers come to view favored brands not as external objects but as extensions of who they are or wish to become. Another study found that consumers use brand-related social media pages as tools for self-expansion, especially when they feel a strong emotional and identity-based connection to those brands (*Sohail, 2023*).

Self-expansion theory is especially relevant to ephemeral content marketing because story-based content tends to be personal, visually expressive, and tied to identity. Unlike static advertisements, ephemeral brand stories often showcase lifestyle

moments, user-generated content, and behind-the-scenes glimpses that encourage consumers to imagine themselves as part of the brand's world. According to a study, social media brand content allows consumers to express both their actual and ideal selves through brand association (*Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012*).

Entertainment-Based Model of Communication

The entertainment-based model of communication suggests that when audiences find media content entertaining, they become more psychologically involved by experiencing less counterarguing, greater narrative transportation, and stronger identification with content (*Moyer-Gusé, 2008*). This model has been applied to various persuasive communication settings, including social media marketing (*Bazi et al., 2023*), where entertaining brand content has been shown to foster deeper cognitive and emotional engagement with advertising messages.

This model is particularly relevant to ephemeral content, as story-based formats are intentionally designed to be engaging, entertaining, and emotionally compelling. Elements such as music, GIFs, animated stickers, video filters, and countdown timers are crafted to maximize viewer immersion within a short viewing window (*Aruan et al., 2024*). When consumers find ephemeral content entertaining, they are more likely to stay engaged with advertising messages, respond positively to brand calls-to-action, and form favorable impressions of the brand's advertising value (*Nguyen et al., 2026*). Together with self-expansion theory, the entertainment-based model offers a complementary lens for understanding both the identity-related and engagement-related outcomes of effective ephemeral content marketing.

Ephemeral Content Marketing

Ephemeral content marketing involves the use of time-limited digital content such as images, short videos, and interactive media that automatically disappears after a set period, typically 24 hours (*Bayer et al., 2016*). Pioneered by Snapchat and later adopted by Instagram Stories, Facebook Stories, and TikTok's transient features, this format now attracts massive daily engagement worldwide. Ephemeral content has emerged as a powerful force in modern brand communication, largely because its temporary nature creates a sense of urgency that nudges consumers to act right away rather than scrolling past (*Aruan et al., 2024*).

The effectiveness of ephemeral content can be attributed to its multidimensional nature. Ephemeral content creates value for consumers through six key dimensions: entertainment, which captures the simple enjoyment of watching the content; trendiness, meaning how current and culturally in-tune the content feels; Informativeness, or how well it helps consumers make sense of their choices; interactivity, referring to the back-and-forth communication that story features make possible; aesthetic quality, which comes down to how visually appealing and well-put-together the posts look; and perceived relevance, which reflects how closely the content speaks to a person's own interests, goals, and sense of self (*Nguyen et al., 2026*). Together, these dimensions shape how consumers respond to brand stories and influence their subsequent psychological and behavioral reactions. Beyond its multidimensional nature, ephemeral content stands apart from other social media formats due to several unique characteristics. The temporary nature of stories takes away much

of the social pressure that comes with permanent posts, which naturally opens the door for brand communication that feels more spontaneous, genuine, and less rehearsed (Kim & Kim, 2023). This sense of authenticity is especially valued by younger consumers, who are increasingly wary of overly polished advertising and respond more positively to content that feels transparent and genuine (Ahmad et al., 2024; Pittman & Sheehan, 2021). Additionally, because story-based platforms prioritize content from brands users have previously engaged with, ephemeral content tends to reach audiences who are already inclined to respond favorably creating a self-reinforcing cycle of engagement and advertising value (Haldborg Jørgensen et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the entertainment-based model of communication offers a strong explanation for why ephemeral content produces behavioral and attitudinal effects. Highly entertaining content tends to pull consumers in at a deeper psychological level, quietly lowering their guard against persuasive messages and making them more likely to act on what they see (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Applied to ephemeral content, this implies that story formats that successfully entertain, inform, and engage consumers create favorable conditions for building self-brand connections, fostering customer engagement, and ultimately enhancing advertising value.

2.3 Self-Brand Connection

Self-brand connection refers to the extent to which a brand becomes part of a person's self-concept and serves as a means of expressing identity (Thomson et al., 2005). This construct rests on three closely connected elements: brand identification, where consumers come to see the brand as a coherent and meaningful presence; self-image alignment, where the brand's character feels like a natural reflection of who the consumer is; and identity integration, where choosing that brand becomes a way of expressing one's values and aspirations to the world (Park et al., 2010). Together, these elements create a personal bond between consumer and brand that goes beyond functional benefits and operates at the level of identity and meaning.

Social media has proven to be an especially fertile environment for building and strengthening self-brand connections. Brands that lean into narrative storytelling on social media tend to create a stronger sense of closeness with their audience, which naturally spills over into deeper self-brand connection and greater behavioral engagement (Harrigan et al., 2018). Both active and passive interactions with brand pages have been shown to strengthen self-brand connections in their own distinct ways, which then feeds into electronic word-of-mouth a key piece of what drives customer engagement (Moisescu et al., 2022). Self-brand connection has also been shown to act as a bridge between interactive marketing campaigns and consumer engagement on Instagram, where interactivity-driven connections tend to translate into noticeably stronger engagement overall (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024).

There is strong theoretical support for the link between ephemeral content marketing and self-brand connection. Visual brand storytelling on Instagram which is structurally quite similar to ephemeral content has been found to foster telepresence and self-image congruence, both of which lay the groundwork for self-

brand connection (Lim & Childs, 2020). Along the same lines, social media marketing activities have been shown to boost self-expressive brand perceptions, an idea closely tied to self-brand connection, which then ripples outward into brand love and loyalty (Algharabat, 2017). Within the world of ephemeral content specifically, the personal, lifestyle-driven, and identity-expressive nature of brand stories makes them particularly well-suited to triggering the kind of self-brand integration that self-expansion theory describes. Consumers who encounter ephemeral brand content that reflects their values, aspirations, and aesthetic preferences are more likely to view the brand as an extension of themselves, leading to stronger self-brand connections. Based on the theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence presented above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Ephemeral Content Marketing positively influences Self-Brand Connection.

This hypothesis draws on self-expansion theory, which predicts that consumers form stronger bonds with brands that support identity expansion. Ephemeral content, with its visually rich, lifestyle-oriented, and personally relevant nature, is well-suited to support this process. When consumers repeatedly encounter brand stories that reflect and reinforce their identity, they are more likely to integrate those brands into their self-concept, strengthening self-brand connection (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Sohail, 2023).

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is a multidimensional concept that reflects consumers' ongoing psychological, emotional, and behavioral investment in their relationship with a brand across both digital and physical touchpoints (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Customer engagement breaks down into four distinct behavioral components: customer purchases, which reflect a transactional commitment to the brand; customer referrals, which signal a willingness to recommend it to others; customer social influence, which captures how actively consumers promote the brand within their own networks; and customer knowledge sharing, which covers everything from feedback and reviews to sharing product insights (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). This framework highlights that engaged consumers contribute to brand success not only through purchases but also through the social and informational value they generate within brand communities.

The link between social media content and customer engagement is well documented across many contexts. Platform-specific engagement with social media advertising has been found to shape advertising effectiveness differently across platforms, with engagement serving as a key mechanism that connects content exposure to actual behavioral outcomes (Voorveld et al., 2018). Building on this, perceived advertising value on Instagram has been shown to significantly mediate the relationship between content quality and customer engagement, suggesting that the way consumers evaluate ephemeral brand messages plays a direct role in how behaviorally involved they become with the brand (Tee et al., 2023). More broadly, social media marketing activities have been found to mediate the relationship between platform-level engagement and purchase intention, further underlining just how much effective social media engagement can shape consumer behavior (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2024).

Ephemeral content marketing seems particularly effective at driving customer engagement because its interactive features such as polls, question stickers, swipe-up links, and countdown timers are designed to prompt immediate and active responses from consumers. Ephemeral content marketing has been shown to positively influence customer engagement, especially when the content feels interactive and personally relevant to the viewer (Nguyen et al., 2026). The time-limited nature of ephemeral content also creates urgency, encouraging consumers to act quickly whether by making a purchase, sharing content, or participating in brand-sponsored activities (Aruan et al., 2024; Wu & Zhang, 2021). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2: Ephemeral Content Marketing positively influences Customer Engagement.

This hypothesis focuses on the impact of ephemeral content marketing on customer engagement that is basically build on the entertainment-based model of communication, which suggests that highly entertaining content leads to greater behavioral involvement. Since ephemeral content is designed to maximize entertainment, interactivity, and relevance within a short timeframe, it is expected to be a particularly strong driver of consumer engagement behaviors. Moreover, consumers who have integrated a brand into their self-concept are naturally motivated to interact with, advocate for, and remain loyal to that brand (Harrigan et al., 2018; Thomson et al., 2005). When brand identity closely aligns with personal identity, consumers are more likely to actively engage with brand communications, share brand-related content with others, and participate in brand communities, behaviors that together define customer engagement (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: Self-Brand Connection positively influences Customer Engagement.

Advertising Value

Advertising value refers to consumers' subjective judgment of how worthwhile or useful an advertising message is (Ducoffe, 1995). It is generally understood as a combination of three key dimensions: informativeness, the ad's ability to provide useful, decision-relevant information; entertainment, the enjoyment derived from viewing the ad; and credibility, the perceived trustworthiness of the advertiser and its claims. Together, these dimensions determine whether consumers see an advertising message as beneficial and worth their attention, or as intrusive and irrelevant (Hofacker, 2012; Van-Tien Dao et al., 2014).

Advertising value has been shown to play a key mediating and outcome role in various social media advertising contexts. In mobile advertising, Consumer perceptions of advertising value are largely shaped by how informational, entertaining, and credible the content feels and when these elements come together, they tend to drive more favorable attitudes toward mobile brand messages (Hofacker, 2012). Informational content stands out as the most influential factor in shaping advertising value perceptions, especially among female social media users engaging with Facebook ads (Logan et al., 2012). This pattern holds beyond social platforms as well in the banking sector, advertising value has been shown to positively shape how consumers feel about mobile banking ads (Lom et al., 2024), while in travel and tourism,

vlog-based advertising value has proven strong enough to motivate actual destination visit intentions (Abbasi et al., 2022). Together, these findings point to how broadly relevant advertising value is, cutting across both commercial and experiential settings.

Platform-specific engagement plays a significant role in shaping how advertising value perceptions are formed across different social media platforms (Voorveld et al., 2018). Consumers who are genuinely engaged with a platform tend to be more open to the ads they come across there, and naturally assign more value to the messages they encounter. This tells us that customer engagement is not just a stepping stone to purchase behavior it also actively drives how people perceive advertising value, a relationship that sits at the heart of this study's final hypothesis. The role of self-brand connection in shaping advertising value perceptions has received less direct attention but is well supported theoretically.

Personalized advertising when ads feel genuinely aligned with who a consumer is and what they care about tends to generate much warmer responses in terms of brand attitude and behavioral intention (De Keyzer et al., 2022). When consumers see a brand as reflective of their self-concept, they are more likely to view that brand's advertising as personally relevant, credible, and valuable, since the brand already holds a special place in their psychological landscape. This aligns with earlier evidence suggesting that perceived value acts as a bridge between social media marketing activities and how likely consumers are to stick with a brand (Hanaysha, 2018). when a brand becomes part of a consumer's identity, it creates a positive bias toward how that consumer evaluates the brand's communications. Consumers for whom a brand is self-defining tend to see its advertising as more personally meaningful, credible, and informative the core elements of advertising value (De Keyzer et al., 2022; Ducoffe, 1995). This effect is likely amplified in the ephemeral content context, where brand messages are often identity-driven and lifestyle-oriented, making their relevance and value especially salient for consumers with strong self-brand connections.

Engaged consumers evaluate advertising more favorably than those who are passive or disengaged (Tee et al., 2023; Voorveld et al., 2018). Customer engagement reflects a deep psychological and behavioral investment in the brand relationship. Consumers who actively purchase, refer, advocate for, and share knowledge about a brand are also building a richer framework for evaluating that brand's communications. Within this framework, advertising messages are more likely to be seen as informative, entertaining, and credible, the key elements of advertising value. This relationship highlights the strategic value of fostering engagement through ephemeral content as a way to improve overall advertising effectiveness. The advertising value of a product or service being advertised helps to maximize customer engagement that ultimately fosters customer satisfaction (Tee et al., 2022). Although much research has been done, still there is a gap that how and what type of advertising value is linked to customer engagement. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H4: Advertising Value positively impacts customer engagement.

The advertising value and customer engagement relationship builds a connection with the brand and consumers. According to a study, consumers develop an emotional as well as social

connection with brands to satisfy the self-identity desire (Arghashi and Yuksel, 2022). This ultimately leads to a strong self-brand connection. Self-brand connection is defined as brands supporting consumers' self-related psychological requirements (Escalas, 2004). Similarly, another study found that many marketing specialists use story building strategies in order to connect consumers with brands that helps in cultivating self-brand connection (Escalas, 2004; Papadatos, 2006; Huang, 2010; Woodside, 2010). Although much research has been done how marketing practitioners link different factors for advertisement but little research has been done on how ephemeral content marketing, advertising value and self-brand connection interrelated. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H5: *Self-Brand Connection mediates the relationship between Ephemeral Content Marketing and Advertising Value.*

If we study about advertisement, it is a decades old concept that does not only focus on creating awareness of the product but also helps in developing brand image in order to attract and retain customers (Shah et. Al., 2008). Advertising values is defined as the way how consumers comprehend the digital content (Siddiqui & Naseer, 2026). According to another study, advertising value serves as a statistic tool to check the efficiency and effectiveness of advertisements as well as attract the customer engagement with the product/service being advertised (Tee et al., 2022). The finding that content ephemerality enhances recall is consistent with previous studies, which indicate that this effect is due to the additional effort spent on processing the content. Specifically, when the information is perceived as temporary instead of permanently available, consumers use more cognitive resources to process the information. Building on this, another study found that this is true of ads in ephemeral social media, which has implications for advertising effectiveness in ephemeral digital contexts (Campbell et.al, 201). Although much research has already been done but still there is a gap how advertising value strengthens ephemeral content marketing and customer engagement. Thus, we hypothesize:

H6: *Advertising value mediates the relationship between Ephemeral Content Marketing and Customer Engagement.*

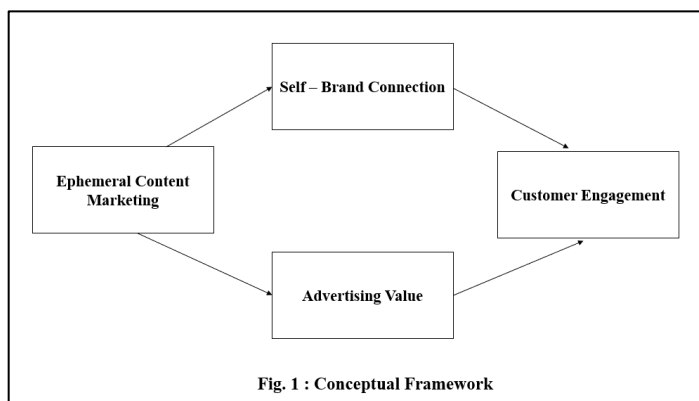


Fig. 1 : Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework guiding this study. The model proposes that Ephemeral Content Marketing (ECM) directly affects both Self-Brand Connection (SBC) and Customer Engagement (CE). Self-Brand Connection is also expected to

influence Customer Engagement, while both SBC and CE independently contribute to Advertising Value (AV). Together, these two theories provide a comprehensive picture of how ephemeral content marketing shapes advertising value perceptions through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms.

METHODS

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study is to examine the proposed relationships among ephemeral content marketing, self-brand connection, customer engagement, and advertising value. This study used a quantitative and cross-sectional design. A survey-based approach was chosen because it allows for systematic measurement of latent psychological and behavioral constructs across a large group of respondents and enables statistical testing of directional hypotheses through structural equation modeling (Jr. et al., 2017). The study follows a positivist approach, treating the constructs as objectively measurable phenomena whose relationships can be tested through deductive hypothesis testing.

Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected from 369 university students at institutions in Pakistan who met the following criteria: active use of at least one story-based social media platform (Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook Stories) and prior exposure to ephemeral brand content, such as brand stories, story ads, or sponsored story content. This sample was chosen for both theoretical and practical reasons. University students represent one of the most digitally active groups on story-based platforms, with high exposure to brand content, strong social media literacy, and a demonstrated responsiveness to identity-driven advertising. Screening questions confirmed platform usage and exposure to brand content before respondents proceeded to the main survey.

Data were collected via adopted structured online questionnaire shared through social media channels and university networks. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, and the study followed ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

Measurement Scales

All constructs were measured using validated, multi-item scales adapted from previous studies, on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items for Ephemeral Content Marketing were adapted from the six-dimensional framework developed by (Kim & Kim, 2023), (Logan et al., 2012), (Bazi et al., 2023), and (Nguyen et al., 2026), covering entertainment, trendiness, informativeness, interactivity, aesthetic quality, and perceived relevance. Self-Brand Connection items were adapted from (Thomson, 2006) and (Park et al., 2010a). Customer Engagement items were based on (Kumar & Pansari, 2016) four-component framework covering purchases, referrals, social influence, and knowledge sharing. Advertising Value items were adapted from (Ducoffe, 1995) and (Liu et al., 2012).

Data Analysis Technique

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), using Smart PLS 4, was used to test both the measurement and structural models. PLS-SEM was chosen over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) for several reasons: it is well suited to exploratory

research involving complex multi-mediation models, it handles non-normal data well, and it works with sample sizes that, while adequate, may not meet CB-SEM requirements (Hair et al., 2019; Jr. et al., 2017). The measurement model was tested by using consistent PLS-SEM algorithm because the study used reflective scale only and assessed on the basis of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, and the Heterotrait-

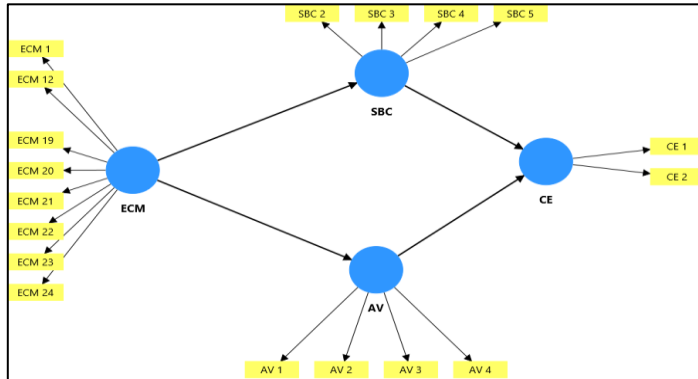


Fig. 2: Proposed Conceptual Model Framework Developed Using Smart PLS 4 Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for discriminant validity. The structural model was tested using consistent PLS-SEM bootstrapping with 5,000 sub samples to obtain path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values (Henseler et al., 2015).

Smart PLS is particularly suitable for studies with smaller sample sizes and is capable of producing reliable and accurate results. This characteristic made Smart PLS an appropriate choice for this study, as it allowed for precise parameter estimation and hypothesis testing despite the sample size of 369 respondents.

In Fig. 2 the conceptual framework, developed using Smart PLS, illustrates the proposed relationships among the study variables. As shown in Figure 1, Ephemeral Content Marketing (ECM) is expected to influence Self-Brand Connection (SBC), Customer Engagement (CE), and Advertising Value (AV), with SBC and CE acting as mediators in the model.

Results

Reliability and Convergent Validity

The measurement model was assessed for internal consistency and convergent validity using Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) usually have all of these measures. The results of CFA were satisfying and all constructs met the recommended thresholds (CA > 0.70, CR > 0.70, and AVE > 0.50), as suggested by (Jr. et al., 2017c), confirming strong reliability and convergent validity for all variables. Table 1 presents the full reliability and validity results.

Table 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Ephemeral Content Marketing	0.904	0.909	0.547
Self-Brand Connection	0.883	0.884	0.655

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Customer Engagement	0.812	0.821	0.689
Advertising Value	0.844	0.846	0.577

Note: All values exceed the recommended thresholds (CA, CR > 0.70; AVE > 0.50)

Factor Loadings

Most factor loadings exceeded the recommended minimum of 0.70, confirming that they reliably reflects its corresponding latent construct (Jr. et al., 2017). Some items with loadings below this threshold were removed during scale refinement and some scholars argue that factor loading should above 0.6 is still acceptable (Sarstedt et al., 2022) . Table 2 shows the factor loadings for all retained items.

Table 2: Factor Loadings for All Measurement Items

Item	Factor Loading
ECM 1	0.683
ECM 12	0.634
ECM 19	0.733
ECM 20	0.860
ECM 21	0.792
ECM 22	0.741
ECM 23	0.696
ECM 24	0.753
SBC 2	0.811
SBC 3	0.808
SBC 4	0.844
SBC 5	0.772
CE1	0.776
CE2	0.881
AV1	0.801
AV2	0.730
AV3	0.777
AV4	0.727

Note: ECM = Ephemeral Content Marketing; SBC = Self-Brand Connection; CE = Customer Engagement; AV = Advertising Value.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, which (Henseler et al., 2015) showed to be more sensitive and specific than the traditional Fornell-Larcker criterion in PLS-SEM. As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that each construct is sufficiently distinct and that the measurement model has acceptable discriminant validity.

Table 3: HTMT Ratios for Discriminant Validity

Construct	AV	CE	ECM
CE	0.720	—	
ECM	0.767	0.740	—
SBC	0.698	0.821	0.846

Note. ECM = Ephemeral Content Marketing; SBC = Self-Brand Connection; CE = Customer Engagement; AV = Advertising Value. All HTMT values < 0.85, confirming discriminant validity

Model Fit Indices

Overall model fit was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of the estimated model. As shown in Table 4, both indices fell within acceptable ranges, indicating that the proposed measurement model fits the data well (Goretzko et al., 2024).

Table 4: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
SRMR	0.039	< 0.08	Acceptable
NFI	0.914	> 0.90	Acceptable

Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Structural Model Results

Path analysis was performed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to obtain path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values for each hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 5. All five hypotheses were supported at the 0.05 significance level, confirming the proposed relationships.

Table 5: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Relationship	β	t-Value	P-Value	Decision
H1	ECM $\rightarrow$ SBC	0.845	24.430	0.000	Supported
H2	ECM $\rightarrow$ AV	0.766	18.787	0.000	Supported
H3	SBC $\rightarrow$ CE	0.618	6.132	0.000	Supported
H4	AV $\rightarrow$ CE	0.289	2.854	0.004	Supported
H5	ECM $\rightarrow$ SBC $\rightarrow$ CE	0.522	5.964	0.000	Supported
H6	ECM $\rightarrow$ AV $\rightarrow$ CE	0.221	2.767	0.018	Supported

Note. ECM = Ephemeral Content Marketing; SBC = Self-Brand Connection; CE = Customer Engagement; AV = Advertising Value. Bootstrap $n = 5,000$; all significant at $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

The findings provide meaningful insight into the psychological and behavioral mechanisms through which ephemeral content marketing generates advertising value. All five hypotheses were supported, forming a coherent and theoretically grounded chain running from ephemeral content marketing through self-brand connection and customer engagement to advertising value.

The strongest path was between ephemeral content marketing and self-brand connection ($\beta = 0.845$), strongly supporting the predictions of self-expansion theory. As (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006) argued, consumers who encounter brand content that resonates

with their identity are more likely to incorporate that brand into their self-concept, forming the kind of deep attachment that defines self-brand connection. The size of this effect suggests that ephemeral content—visually immersive, lifestyle-oriented, and personally relevant—is especially effective at supporting this identity integration process. This finding aligns with (Nguyen et al., 2026), who found that self-brand connection significantly mediates the relationship between ephemeral content and brand love among Vietnamese consumers, and extends this evidence to the Pakistani university student context.

The positive relationship between self-brand connection and customer engagement ($\beta = 0.618$) builds on findings by (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024), who showed that interactive marketing campaigns strengthen self-brand connections, which then lead to higher engagement. This study shows that this relationship holds specifically within the ephemeral content context, where identity-driven brand stories create the kind of psychological resonance that encourages ongoing consumer involvement.

Finally, the significant positive effect of advertising value on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.289$) reflects findings by (Tee et al., 2023; Voorveld et al., 2018), both of whom found that advertising value has an impact on customer engagement. This suggests that the behavioral investments consumers make in brand relationships through purchases, referrals, advocacy, and knowledge sharing create a cumulative framework within which advertising is evaluated more positively. Overall, these findings highlight the strategic importance of designing ephemeral content that builds identity-level connections and sustains behavioral engagement as complementary pathways to advertising effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The study examined how ephemeral content marketing influences advertising value through the sequential mediating roles of self-brand connection and customer engagement. The results clearly show that temporary, story-based social media content is a psychologically rich and behaviorally effective marketing tool, generating advertising value not through direct persuasion but through identity integration and behavioral engagement. Three main theoretical contributions emerge from these findings.

First, this study extends self-expansion theory to the ephemeral content context, showing for the first time that time-limited brand stories can effectively support brand-to-self-concept integration, a process previously studied mainly in relation to permanent brand content and interpersonal brand relationships. Second, it extends the entertainment-based model of communication by demonstrating its relevance to the unique features of story-based social media platforms, strengthening the link between content entertainment value and behavioral engagement. Third, it adds to the advertising value literature by identifying two distinct pathways, identity-based and behavioral, through which consumer responses to ephemeral content marketing translate into favorable advertising evaluations.

From a managerial perspective, these findings offer practical guidance for brands designing ephemeral content strategies. Content that reflects consumers' values, aspirations, and lifestyles is more likely to build the self-brand connection that boosts advertising value. Interactive features such as polls, question

stickers, and swipe-up links should be used consistently to encourage the engagement behaviors that improve advertising effectiveness. Transparency, authenticity, and behind-the-scenes content are especially recommended for reaching Pakistani university students, who are highly active on story-based platforms and responsive to signs of brand sincerity. Brands should also tailor content to specific identity groups within their audience, using the personalization features of story platforms to maximize relevance and impact.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged and that point to future research directions. The cross-sectional design, while useful for initial model testing, does not allow for causal conclusions and cannot capture how self-brand connection and customer engagement evolve over time. Future research should use longitudinal designs to track changes in these constructs across multiple time points and varying levels of ephemeral content exposure, to better establish causality and assess the durability of these relationships.

The reliance on a Pakistani university student sample, while appropriate for this initial study, limits how broadly the findings can be applied to other demographic groups, cultural contexts, and consumer segments. Future studies should test this model using more diverse samples, including working adults, older consumers, and participants from multiple countries, to evaluate the cross-cultural robustness of these relationships. The growing body of research on ephemeral content marketing also points to other variables, such as consumer trust, brand authenticity, influencer credibility, and platform type, that could meaningfully extend this framework, as each may interact with the pathways identified here (Ahmad et al., 2024; Pittman & Sheehan, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2024). Future research could also examine how emerging technologies, particularly AI-driven content recommendation algorithms, influence the relationship between ephemeral content exposure and consumer responses, given the increasing use of algorithmically curated story feeds on major social media platforms (Nguyen et al., 2026).

REFERENCES

- Abbasi, A. Z., Schultz, C. D., Ting, D. H., Ali, F., & Hussain, K. (2022). Advertising value of vlogs on destination visit intention: The mediating role of place attachment among Pakistani tourists. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 13(5), 816–834. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-07-2021-0204>
- Ali Shah, S. Z., & Akbar, S. (2008). Value relevance of advertising expenditure: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 10(4), 301–325.
- Arghashi, V. and Yuksel, C.A. (2022), “Interactivity, inspiration, and perceived usefulness! How retailers’ AR-apps improve consumer engagement through flow”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 64, p. 102756.
- Ahmad, S., Liang, L., Iqbal, A., & Hussain Sarki, I. (2024). Authenticity as a Strategic Weapon: Navigating the Social Media Battlefield to Enhance Brand Loyalty. *Review of Marketing Science*, 22(1), 133–167. <https://doi.org/10.1515/roms-2023-0118>
- Algharabat, R. S. (2017). Linking social media marketing activities with brand love: The mediating role of self-expressive brands. *Kybernetes*, 46(10), 1801–1819. <https://doi.org/10.1108/K-04-2017-0130>
- Aruan, S. H., Purba, H., & Hutabarat, F. (2024). Pengaruh Penggunaan Layanan Influencer, Konten Pemasaran Digital, Dan Perasaan Senang Dalam Berbelanja Terhadap Niat Membeli Di Media Sosial Tiktok Sebagai Moderasi Adaptasi Informasi. *Journal of Economic, Bussines and Accounting (COSTING)*, 7(4), 7051–7064. <https://doi.org/10.31539/costing.v7i4.9895>
- Baig, M. I., & Yadegaridehkordi, E. (2024). ChatGPT in the higher education: A systematic literature review and research challenges. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 127, 102411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102411>
- Bayer, J. B., Ellison, N. B., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Falk, E. B. (2016). Sharing the small moments: Ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(7), 956–977. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1084349>
- Bazi, S., Filieri, R., & Gorton, M. (2023). Social media content aesthetic quality and customer engagement: The mediating role of entertainment and impacts on brand love and loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 160, 113778. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113778>
- Campbell, C., Sands, S., Treen, E., & McFerran, B. (2021). Fleeting, but not forgotten: Ephemerality as a means to increase recall of advertising. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 56(1), 96–105.
- Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17(2), 79–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-006-4219-2>
- De Keyzer, F., Dens, N., & De Pelsmacker, P. (2022). How and When Personalized Advertising Leads to Brand Attitude, Click, and WOM Intention. *Journal of Advertising*, 51(1), 39–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1888339>
- Ducoffe, R. H. (1995). How Consumers Assess the Value of Advertising. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 17(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.1995.10505022>
- Escalas, J.E. (2004) Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 14(1/2): 168–180.
- Goretzko, D., Siemund, K., & Sterner, P. (2024). Evaluating model fit of measurement models in confirmatory factor analysis. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 84(1), 123–144.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Haldborg Jørgensen, R., Voorveld, H. A. M., & Van Noort, G. (2023). Instagram Stories: How Ephemerality Affects Consumers’ Responses Toward Instagram Content and Advertising. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 23(3), 187–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2023.2232797>

- Hanaysha, J. R. (2018). Customer retention and the mediating role of perceived value in retail industry. *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 14(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WJEMSD-06-2017-0035>
- Harrigan, P., Evers, U., Miles, M. P., & Daly, T. (2018). Customer engagement and the relationship between involvement, engagement, self-brand connection and brand usage intent. *Journal of Business Research*, 88, 388–396. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.046>
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>
- Hofacker, C. F. (2012). On Research Methods in Interactive Marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2011.10.001>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Hollenbeck, C. R., & Kaikati, A. M. (2012). Consumers' use of brands to reflect their actual and ideal selves on Facebook. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 395–405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2012.06.002>
- Ibrahim, B., & Aljarah, A. (2024). The role of social media marketing activities in driving self-brand connection and user engagement behavior on Instagram: A moderation-mediation approach. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 27(5), 1723–1742. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-08-2022-0452>
- Jr., J. F. H., Matthews, L. M., Matthews, R. L., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). PLS-SEM or CB-SEM: Updated guidelines on which method to use. *International Journal of Multivariate Data Analysis*, 1(2), 107. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMDA.2017.087624>
- Kim, D., & Kim, S. (2023). Social Media Affordances of Ephemerality and Permanence: Social Comparison, Self-Esteem, and Body Image Concerns. *Social Sciences*, 12(2), 87. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12020087>
- Kumar, V., & Pansari, A. (2016). Competitive Advantage through Engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(4), 497–514. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.15.0044>
- Lim, H., & Childs, M. (2020). Visual storytelling on Instagram: Branded photo narrative and the role of telepresence. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(1), 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-09-2018-0115>
- Liu, C.-L., 'Eunice,' Sinkovics, R. R., Pezderka, N., & Haghirian, P. (2012). Determinants of Consumer Perceptions toward Mobile Advertising—A Comparison between Japan and Austria. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(1), 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2011.07.002>
- Logan, K., Bright, L. F., & Gangadharbatla, H. (2012). Facebook versus television: Advertising value perceptions among females. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 6(3), 164–179. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17505931211274651>
- Lom, H. S., Thoo, A. C., Lim, W. M., & Koay, K. Y. (2024). Advertising value and privacy concerns in mobile advertising: The case of SMS advertising in banking. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 29(3), 1135–1153. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41264-023-00263-3>
- Moisescu, O.-I., Gică, O.-A., & Herle, F.-A. (2022). Boosting eWOM through Social Media Brand Page Engagement: The Mediating Role of Self-Brand Connection. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(11), 411. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12110411>
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a Theory of Entertainment Persuasion: Explaining the Persuasive Effects of Entertainment-Education Messages. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>
- Nguyen, K. M., Nguyen, N. T., Pham, T. T. X., Tran, N. H. M., Cap, N. C. B., & Nguyen, V. K. (2026). How ephemeral content marketing fosters brand love and customer engagement. *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 30(1), 2–30. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SJME-04-2024-0089>
- Park, C. W., Macinnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010a). Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.6.1>
- Park, C. W., Macinnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010b). Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.6.1>
- Pittman, M., & Sheehan, K. (2021). Brand Authenticity and Strategic Response to Crises: Symbolic Effects of Donation Type on Purchase Intent and Digital Engagement. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 42(3), 215–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2020.1734503>
- Rodrigues, C., Brandão, A., Billore, S., & Oda, T. (2024). The mediating role of perceived brand authenticity between brand experience and brand love: A cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 31(3), 293–309. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-023-00342-9>
- Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., Pick, M., Liengaard, B. D., Radomir, L., & Ringle, C. M. (2022). Progress in partial least squares structural equation modeling use in marketing research in the last decade. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(5), 1035–1064.
- Sohail, M. S. (2023). Understanding consumer engagement in online brand communities: An application of self-expansion theory. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 11(1), 69–81. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41270-021-00148-1>
- Tee, P. K., Vashu, D., Wong, L. C., & Ng, C. P. (2023). Customer Engagement in Instagram: The Mediating Role of Perceived Advertising Value. In M. A. Al-Sharafi, M. Al-Emran, M. N. Al-Kabi, & K. Shaalan (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Emerging Technologies and Intelligent Systems* (Vol. 584, pp. 311–321). Springer

- International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25274-7_25
- Thomson, M. (2006). Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(3), 104–119. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.3.104>
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Whan Park, C. (2005). The Ties That Bind: Measuring the Strength of Consumers' Emotional Attachments to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(1), 77–91. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_10
- Van-Tien Dao, W., Nhat Hanh Le, A., Ming-Sung Cheng, J., & Chao Chen, D. (2014). Social media advertising value: The case of transitional economies in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Advertising*, 33(2), 271–294. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-33-2-271-294>
- Voorveld, H. A. M., Van Noort, G., Muntinga, D. G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with Social Media and Social Media Advertising: The Differentiating Role of Platform Type. *Journal of Advertising*, 47(1), 38–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754>
- Wu, Y., & Zhang, M. (2021). Lightweight Network Traffic Classification Model Based on Knowledge Distillation. In W. Zhang, L. Zou, Z. Maamar, & L. Chen (Eds.), *Web Information Systems Engineering – WISE 2021* (Vol. 13081, pp. 107–121). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91560-5_8
- Wurth B, Stam E, Spigel B (2023), "Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Mechanisms". *Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 19 No. 3 pp. 224–339, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1561/03000000089>