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From Feed to Fan: How Content Marketing Value Builds Brand Advocacy Through Authenticity

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how content marketing value shapes consumer advocacy through brand authenticity, and how brand familiarity and digital engagement condition these relationships, among adult social media users in Punjab, Pakistan — as underrepresented in digital-marketing research. Integrating Signalling Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Social Exchange Theory, the study models content marketing value as influencing consumer advocacy both directly and indirectly through brand authenticity, with brand familiarity moderating the content value–authenticity path and digital engagement moderating the authenticity–advocacy path. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data from 310 eligible respondents were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, and common method bias was not a concern. The structural results supported all six hypotheses: content marketing value significantly predicted both brand authenticity and consumer advocacy; brand authenticity significantly predicted consumer advocacy; and brand authenticity partially (complementarily) mediated the content value–advocacy relationship. Both moderation effects were positive and significant — the content value–authenticity link strengthened at higher levels of brand familiarity, and the authenticity–advocacy link strengthened at higher levels of digital engagement. The findings extend authenticity-mediated content-marketing frameworks to a secondary urban market and offer brand managers evidence for calibrating content strategy to consumers' familiarity and engagement levels rather than applying a uniform approach.

Keywords: content marketing value; brand authenticity; consumer advocacy; brand familiarity; digital engagement; PLS-SEM

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Brands increasingly rely on social media content — posts, videos, stories, and influencer collaborations — as a primary means of engaging consumers and building long-term relationships (Curris et al., 2023). This shift has elevated content marketing value from a tactical communication tool to a strategic asset believed to shape how consumers perceive a brand's authenticity and, ultimately, whether they become willing advocates for it. Yet as digital content volumes grow, so does consumer scepticism toward brand messaging perceived as commercially self-serving rather than genuine (Foroudi et al., 2020, as cited in Kaushal et al., 2023).

Pakistan's digital consumer economy has expanded rapidly, with rising social media penetration and mobile internet use, particularly among younger, urban populations (Kaushal et al., 2023). Punjab, with growing digital integration, offers a relevant but underexamined setting in which to study how content marketing value translates into brand authenticity perceptions and, in turn, into consumer advocacy — and how this translation is shaped by how familiar consumers already are with a brand and how digitally engaged they are with its content.

1.2 Problem Statement

Brands invest heavily in content marketing on the assumption that valuable content builds trust and drives advocacy, yet the pathway from content to advocacy is neither direct nor uniform. Curris et al. (2023) and Kaushal et al. (2023) provide evidence for both direct and authenticity-mediated pathways, but their studies are concentrated in specific product categories (beauty products, smartphones) and in Pakistan's major metropolitan centres. Whether these relationships hold among social media users in Punjab, and whether brand familiarity and digital engagement jointly condition them, remains empirically untested. Without this evidence, brand managers in secondary markets lack a validated basis for calibrating content strategy to their specific consumer base.

1.3 Research Gap

Three gaps motivate this study. First, a contextual gap: existing evidence is drawn from major Pakistani cities and from other product categories and countries (e.g., the nutrition sector in Lyu et al., 2025), leaving mid-tier cities of Punjab underrepresented. Second, an integration gap: brand familiarity and digital engagement have each been examined as moderators in isolated pathways, but few studies test both simultaneously alongside authenticity-based mediation in a single structural model. Third, a boundary-condition gap: the literature offers competing accounts of how brand familiarity moderates the content value-authenticity relationship — a ceiling effect for highly familiar consumers versus a signalling effect for less familiar ones — that warrants further empirical testing (Curris et al., 2023).

1.4 Research Questions

- RQ1: Does Content Marketing Value have a significant positive effect on Brand Authenticity among social media users in Pakistan?
- RQ2: Does Content Marketing Value have a significant positive effect on Consumer Advocacy?
- RQ3: Does Brand Authenticity have a significant positive effect on Consumer Advocacy among social media users in Pakistan?

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- RQ4: Does Brand Authenticity mediate the relationship between Content Marketing Value and Consumer Advocacy?
- RQ5: Does Brand Familiarity moderate the positive relationship between Content Marketing Value and Brand Authenticity?
- RQ6: Does Digital Engagement moderate the positive relationship between Brand Authenticity and Consumer Advocacy?

1.5 Research Objectives

- To examine the effect of Content Marketing Value on Brand Authenticity.
- To examine the effect of Content Marketing Value on Consumer Advocacy.
- To examine the effect of Brand Authenticity on Consumer Advocacy.
- To examine the mediating role of Brand Authenticity in the Content Marketing Value-Consumer Advocacy relationship.
- To examine the moderating role of Brand Familiarity in the Content Marketing Value-Brand Authenticity relationship.
- To examine the moderating role of Digital Engagement in the Brand Authenticity-Consumer Advocacy relationship.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the study integrates Signalling Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Social Exchange Theory into a single testable model that captures both mediated and dual-moderated pathways from content marketing value to consumer advocacy — extending recent work by Curris et al. (2023) and Kaushal et al. (2023) into a joint framework. Practically, the findings are intended to help brand managers and digital marketers in secondary urban markets calibrate content strategy to consumers' familiarity and engagement levels rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

1.7 Scope and Delimitations

The study is delimited to adult social media users (18 years and above) in Punjab, Punjab, who actively use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, have engaged with brand-generated content, and have made a brand-related purchase or followed a brand account within the preceding six months. It employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design and does not extend to business-to-business marketing, offline-only consumer segments, or other Pakistani cities. As a cross-sectional design, the study establishes association rather than causal precedence, a limitation discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on content marketing value, brand authenticity, brand familiarity, digital engagement, and consumer advocacy, and develops the study's hypotheses and conceptual model. Chapter 3 details the research methodology, including the research approach, population, sampling strategy, data collection procedure, and data analysis strategy. Chapter 4 presents the results of the measurement and structural model analyses and evaluates each hypothesis. Chapter 5 (not included in this document) discusses the findings, their theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Content Marketing Value

Content marketing value denotes the perceived utility and worth consumers derive from brand-generated digital content on social media. Curris et al. (2023) conceptualise it as a multidimensional construct spanning informational, entertainment, credibility, and relational dimensions — capturing not only informational accuracy but also content's capacity to entertain, build trust, and foster emotional connection, so that brand communications are perceived as genuinely valuable rather than commercially intrusive.

These dimensions — informativeness, entertainment, emotional attachment, and credibility — operate synergistically in shaping how consumers process brand content (Curris et al., 2023). Critically, this value is not evaluated in isolation: it is mediated by the broader relational context, including perceived brand authenticity and consumers' prior familiarity with the brand, calling for integrative frameworks that situate content value within the consumer-brand relationship.

2.2 Brand Authenticity

Brand authenticity captures consumer perceptions of a brand as genuine, transparent, consistent, and true to its stated values. Foroudi et al. (2020), as operationalised by Kaushal et al. (2023), define it as the degree to which consumers believe a brand acts sincerely, maintains congruence between communicated values and actual conduct, and demonstrates a heritage that reinforces marketplace credibility. Authenticity is thus a socially constructed attribution emerging from the interplay between brand communications, consumer expectations, and sociocultural context, not merely an intrinsic brand property.

Kaushal et al. (2023) position brand authenticity as a psychological bridge between content marketing stimuli and downstream outcomes, finding that consumers who perceive a brand as authentic are more likely to develop brand love and advocacy — elevating authenticity from a brand-identity asset to a strategic mediator. It depends on the consistency of brand messaging, the perceived sincerity of brand actions, and whether the brand upholds its values under commercial pressure, making it theoretically central to the present model.

2.3 Brand Familiarity

Brand familiarity is the accumulation of direct and indirect experiences consumers have with a brand, forming a cognitive schema that shapes how brand information is processed and retained. Curris et al. (2023) and Kaushal et al. (2023) treat it as a boundary condition — a consumer-level characteristic, not a brand-generated asset — that moderates relationships within content marketing frameworks by reflecting the depth of prior knowledge and associative strength a consumer holds toward a brand.

Curris et al. (2023) show that more brand-familiar consumers are more receptive to the engagement-enhancing effects of content marketing value, since their existing cognitive schema enables more efficient message processing — a contingency-based challenge to linear models of content marketing influence. A notable gap, which this study addresses, is the limited attention to how brand familiarity interacts with authenticity perceptions among less-familiar consumers.

2.4 Digital Engagement

Digital engagement is the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional investment consumers make in interacting with brand content online. Curris et al. (2023) conceptualise it as encompassing

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active, participatory behaviours — liking, sharing, commenting, following, and creating user-generated content — while Foroudi et al. (2020), as discussed by Kaushal et al. (2023), frame it as a relational process signalling consumers' involvement with and commitment to a brand's digital presence.

In the present model, digital engagement functions as a moderator, strengthening or weakening the brand authenticity-consumer advocacy relationship. This draws on Uses and Gratifications Theory, which holds that consumers actively seek content fulfilling specific psychological or social needs. Curris et al. (2023) find that content marketing's informativeness and entertainment dimensions significantly predict digital engagement, with emotional attachment amplifying this relationship — suggesting that more digitally engaged consumers are better positioned to translate authenticity perceptions into advocacy.

2.5 Consumer Advocacy

Consumer advocacy is the voluntary, unprompted behaviour through which consumers recommend, endorse, or promote a brand within their social networks, driven by genuine satisfaction and emotional attachment. Kaushal et al. (2023) define it as a higher-order relational outcome in which consumers act as brand ambassadors, distinguishing it from mere satisfaction or repeat purchase by its proactive, social character: advocates expend personal social capital, extending the brand's reach beyond paid media.

Kaushal et al. (2023) establish that brand authenticity dimensions — particularly brand love and loyalty — significantly predict consumer advocacy among Gen Z smartphone consumers in Pakistan, showing that advocacy is rooted in affective and identity-based dimensions of the consumer-brand relationship rather than product performance alone. Their study also identifies need for uniqueness as a moderator, with self-brand congruence increasing advocacy likelihood. The present study extends this by examining brand authenticity's mediating role and digital engagement's moderating role in a social media content marketing context.

2.6 Relationship Between Content Marketing Value and Brand Authenticity

The content marketing value-brand authenticity relationship forms the model's foundational pathway and has robust post-2023 empirical support. Curris et al. (2023) show that content marketing value — particularly its informativeness and entertainment dimensions — significantly enhances customer-brand engagement, which in turn reinforces authenticity perceptions. This is grounded in signalling theory: brands that consistently produce high-quality, relevant, entertaining content signal a commitment to consumer value creation that consumers read as evidence of authenticity and transparency.

This relationship is not unconditional, however. Foroudi et al. (2020), as synthesised by Kaushal et al. (2023), caution that overly commercialised or formulaic content — even if informationally rich — can paradoxically undermine authenticity perceptions, especially among sceptical segments such as Gen Z. Content marketing strategies should therefore treat authenticity as an explicit design goal, not an incidental by-product, assessing content quality by sincerity of purpose as well as informational richness.

2.7 Relationship Between Brand Authenticity and Consumer Advocacy

The brand authenticity-consumer advocacy relationship is the model's most consequential pathway, linking perceived brand genuineness directly to willingness to promote the brand.

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Kaushal et al. (2023) provide robust evidence that authenticity dimensions — brand love positivity, brand love passion, and brand loyalty — significantly predict consumer advocacy among Pakistani smartphone users, showing that consumers who perceive a brand as honest, consistent, and responsive move from passive consumption to active advocacy.

This relationship is shaped by individual-level moderators and the wider social media context. Kaushal et al. (2023) find that need for uniqueness moderates the authenticity-advocacy link, with distinctiveness-seeking consumers more likely to advocate for brands they see as authentic — particularly salient on social media, where advocacy behaviours are visible markers of personal identity. The present study extends this by proposing digital engagement as a further moderator, offering a more granular account of when brand authenticity translates into advocacy.

2.8 Moderating Role of Brand Familiarity

Brand familiarity is proposed to moderate the content marketing value-brand authenticity relationship. Curris et al. (2023) find that brand-familiar consumers are more receptive to engagement stimuli, since the cognitive shortcuts familiarity affords enhance processing of content marketing value; a robust prior brand schema makes high-quality content more readily interpreted as consistent with an authentic identity, reinforcing the content value-authenticity pathway.

This moderation is nonetheless complex: for highly familiar consumers, authenticity perceptions may already be so well established that content marketing value has a diminished incremental effect (a ceiling effect), whereas for low-familiarity consumers, compelling content may serve as an initial authenticity signal shaping emergent perceptions. This double-edged pattern underscores the value of segmenting consumers by familiarity level when designing and evaluating content marketing strategies.

2.9 Moderating Role of Digital Engagement

Digital engagement is proposed to moderate the brand authenticity-consumer advocacy relationship, on the premise that deeper consumer involvement in digital brand interactions amplifies the translation of positive brand perceptions into behavioural outcomes. Curris et al. (2023) show that content marketing value predicts brand engagement, which mediates the content quality-brand loyalty relationship; extending this logic, more digitally engaged consumers are exposed to more brand communications and thus accumulate stronger, more nuanced authenticity perceptions.

Digitally engaged consumers are also more embedded in social media ecosystems where advocacy behaviours — sharing, recommending, tagging — are normative and socially rewarded. Kaushal et al. (2023) note that the link between emotional attachment and advocacy is more pronounced among consumers who actively engage with brand content, reinforcing digital engagement's moderating role. This positions digital engagement as a dynamic, context-sensitive construct rather than a static individual trait.

2.10 Direct Relationship Between Content Marketing Value and Consumer Advocacy

Beyond the mediated pathway through brand authenticity, the model proposes a direct content marketing value-consumer advocacy relationship, supported by Curris et al.'s (2023) finding that content marketing dimensions — particularly informativeness and entertainment — directly enhance brand loyalty outcomes theoretically adjacent to advocacy. High-quality content may

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create an intrinsic reward experience sufficient to motivate advocacy even without deeply held authenticity perceptions.

This direct pathway is likely weaker than the mediated one, however, and may depend on brand category and consumer segment: in commodity markets or low-involvement categories, content marketing value alone may be insufficient to generate advocacy without the affective anchoring authenticity provides. Recognising this pathway nonetheless enriches the model by allowing that some content stimuli may bypass deeper relationship processes and motivate advocacy through gratification-based mechanisms.

2.11 Proposed Conceptual Frame and Research Hypotheses

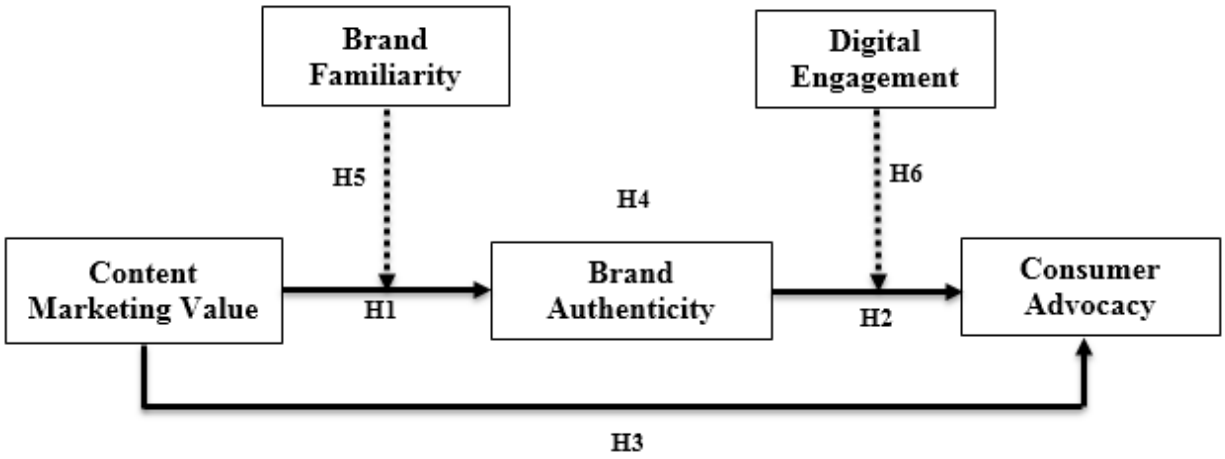


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model.

- H1: Content Marketing Value has a significant positive effect on Brand Authenticity among social media users in Pakistan.
- H2: Content Marketing Value has a significant positive effect on Consumer Advocacy.
- H3: Brand Authenticity has a significant positive effect on Consumer Advocacy among social media users in Pakistan.
- H4: Brand Authenticity mediates the relationship between Content Marketing Value and Consumer Advocacy.
- H5: Brand Familiarity moderates the positive relationship between Content Marketing Value and Brand Authenticity.
- H6: Digital Engagement moderates the positive relationship between Brand Authenticity and Consumer Advocacy.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopts a quantitative approach to examine the relationships among Content Marketing Value (CMV), Brand Authenticity (BA), Consumer Advocacy (CA), and the moderating roles of Brand Familiarity (BF) and Digital Engagement (DE) in Pakistan's digital marketing context. A quantitative paradigm enables systematic measurement, empirical hypothesis testing, and generalisable inference (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), providing the statistical rigour needed to validate a structural model spanning five latent constructs and two moderation pathways.

The study adopts a positivist philosophy, assuming social phenomena can be studied objectively through measurement and statistical analysis (Bryman, 2016), and a cross-sectional survey design, well suited to capturing attitudinal and perceptual data at a single point in time (Hair et al., 2019). The model draws on Social Exchange Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Signalling Theory, providing a conceptual basis for examining how perceived content value shapes authenticity perceptions and drives advocacy.

The analytical strategy uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS, well suited to models combining mediation and moderation with reflective constructs (Hair et al., 2017, 2019).

3.2 Population

The target population comprises adult social media users in Punjab, Pakistan, who actively engage with brand content on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube. It is delimited to individuals aged 18 or above with prior purchasing experience of a specific brand and interaction with brand-generated content within the preceding six months, ensuring respondents have the cognitive and experiential basis to evaluate content marketing value, brand authenticity, and digital engagement.

Punjab is selected as the study context for its growing integration into Pakistan's digital consumer economy and rising smartphone penetration, and because digital marketing research in Pakistan remains concentrated in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, leaving mid-tier cities such as Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sialkot etc. underrepresented. Rising social media and mobile internet use among Punjab's urban adult population make it a theoretically and practically relevant setting for examining these constructs.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy, supplemented by snowball sampling, is used to recruit respondents meeting the study's inclusion criteria — active digital brand engagement — thereby maximising data relevance and validity (Etikan et al., 2016). Snowball sampling addresses the practical difficulty of constructing a full sampling frame for social media users in mid-sized Pakistani cities, allowing initial respondents to refer eligible participants from their networks.

Sample size follows Hair et al.'s (2017) PLS-SEM guideline of ten observations per structural path directed at any single construct; given the model's five latent constructs, two moderators, and multiple pathways, a minimum of 300 respondents is targeted, consistent with comparable Pakistani PLS-SEM studies (Lyu et al., 2025; Prasad et al., 2025). A target of 350 completed questionnaires is pursued to allow for incomplete or invalid responses during cleaning.

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Inclusion criteria are: (1) aged 18 or above; (2) an active social media user (at least three times weekly); (3) prior experience engaging with brand-generated content on a major platform; and (4) at least one brand-related purchase or active brand-account following in the preceding six months. Respondents failing to meet all four criteria are excluded.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data are collected via a structured, self-administered online questionnaire built in Google Forms and distributed through WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups, and university networks in Punjab. The online mode matches the digital nature of the constructs and provides efficient access to the target population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). A cover note accompanying each survey link explains the study's purpose, voluntary and confidential nature, and estimated 12-15-minute completion time.

The questionnaire has four sections. Section A captures sociodemographic information (age, gender, education, monthly income, preferred platform). Section B Measures Content Marketing Value across four dimensions — informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and relevance — adapted from Gupta and Dutt (2025). Section C Measures Brand Authenticity (adapted from Lyu et al., 2025, and Prasad et al., 2025) and Consumer Advocacy (adapted from Shimul et al., 2025). Section D measures the moderators Brand Familiarity (adapted from Aljarah et al., 2024) and Digital Engagement (adapted from Duffek et al., 2025). All items use a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

A pilot study with 30 respondents from the target population precedes full data collection, assessing item clarity, internal consistency, and readability; Cronbach's alpha above 0.70 is the acceptance threshold (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), with ambiguous or weak items revised or removed. Informed consent is obtained via an online checkbox; participation is voluntary and anonymous, no identifying information is collected, and the study follows the affiliated institution's ethical guidelines.

3.5 Data Analysis Strategy

Analysis follows a two-stage approach. The first stage uses IBM SPSS Statistics (v.26) for preliminary screening — assessing completeness, identifying outliers, and examining normality via skewness and kurtosis — alongside descriptive statistics profiling the sample.

The second stage uses PLS-SEM in SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2015) to evaluate the measurement and structural models. Measurement model assessment follows Hair et al. (2019): indicator reliability via outer loadings (≥ 0.70); internal consistency via Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.70); convergent validity via Average Variance Extracted (≥ 0.50); and discriminant validity via the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (< 0.85).

Structural model assessment uses bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples for bias-corrected confidence intervals and significance testing of H1-H3. Moderation effects (H5 and H6) are tested via the product-indicator approach, examining the Brand Familiarity x Content Marketing Value and Digital Engagement x Brand Authenticity interaction terms. R^2 and f^2 are reported to assess explanatory and practical significance, and Q^2 is evaluated via blindfolding (Hair et al., 2017). Common method bias is assessed using Harman's single-factor test and the full-collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) approach.

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CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Sample Profile and Data Screening

The data file contains 310 respondents meeting the eligibility criteria described in Section 3.3 (aged 18+; active social media user at least three times weekly; prior engagement with brand-generated content; a brand-related purchase or active brand-account following within the preceding six months). No missing data, out-of-range values, or duplicate IDs are present in the data file.

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	25-34 years	109	35.2%
	18-24 years	107	34.5%
	35-44 years	64	20.6%
	45 years and above	30	9.7%
Gender	Male	155	50.0%
	Female	143	46.1%
	Prefer not to say	12	3.9%
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	146	47.1%
	Intermediate / A-Levels	72	23.2%
	Master's Degree or above	59	19.0%
	Matriculation / O-Levels	33	10.6%
Monthly Income	30,001-60,000	105	33.9%
	60,001-100,000	81	26.1%
	Below 30,000	69	22.3%
	Above 100,000	55	17.7%
Most Used Platform	Instagram	110	35.5%
	TikTok	81	26.1%
	Facebook	73	23.5%
	YouTube	46	14.8%

Table 4.1. Respondent profile.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Convergent Validity and Indicator Loadings

Item-level means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were examined to assess normality and identify potential outliers, consistent with Section 3.5. Values within normal-range thresholds are generally considered acceptable for PLS-SEM, which does not require multivariate normality but benefits from indicators that are not severely skewed. Furthermore, all indicator loadings should exceed the 0.70 threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2019); items below this value are candidates for removal, provided their removal does not reduce content validity.

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Item	Loading	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Content Marketing Value		**3.08**	**1.1**	**-0.01**	**-0.64**	**0.961**	**0.965**	**0.63**
CMV1	0.814							
CMV2	0.783							
CMV3	0.824							
CMV4	0.776							
CMV5	0.802							
CMV6	0.755							
CMV7	0.795							
CMV8	0.801							
CMV9	0.829							
CMV10	0.809							
CMV11	0.787							
CMV12	0.77							
CMV13	0.781							
CMV14	0.771							
CMV15	0.821							
CMV16	0.779							
Brand Authenticity		**3.06**	**1.11**	**-0.09**	**-0.66**	**0.912**	**0.932**	**0.697**
BA1	0.857							
BA2	0.824							
BA3	0.849							
BA4	0.807							
BA5	0.818							
BA6	0.852							
Consumer Advocacy		**3.1**	**1.08**	**-0.04**	**-0.58**	**0.91**	**0.931**	**0.691**
CA1	0.842							
CA2	0.831							
CA3	0.866							
CA4	0.816							
CA5	0.826							
CA6	0.806							
Brand Familiarity		**3.19**	**1.09**	**-0.12**	**-0.64**	**0.917**	**0.938**	**0.752**
BF1	0.875							
BF2	0.857							
BF3	0.88							
BF4	0.861							

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BF5	0.862						
Digital Engagement		**3.1**	**1.06**	**-0.12**	**-0.53**	**0.895**	**0.923**	**0.705**
DE1	0.853						
DE2	0.815						
DE3	0.86						
DE4	0.811						
DE5	0.859						

Table 4.2. Construct-level descriptive statistics (averaged across items), standardized indicator loadings by construct, and reliability and convergent-validity coefficients. All constructs exceed the recommended thresholds (α and CR ≥ 0.70; AVE ≥ 0.50; Hair et al., 2019), indicating adequate internal consistency and convergent validity.

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed via the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT < 0.85; Henseler et al., 2015).

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	CMV	**BA**	**CA**	**BF**	**DE**
Content Marketing Value (CMV)	-	0.503	0.499	0.188	0.214
Brand Authenticity(BA)	-	-	0.525	0.238	0.157
Consumer Advocacy(CA)	-	-	-	0.195	0.342
Brand Familiarity(BF)	-	-	-	-	0.283
Digital Engagement(DE)	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4.3. All HTMT values fall below 0.85, supporting discriminant validity between the constructs.

4.4 Common Method Bias Assessment

Two procedures were used, following Section 3.5. Harman's single-factor test found the first (unrotated) factor accounted for 35.34% of total variance, below the 50% warning threshold. The full-collinearity VIF approach (Kock, 2015) regressed each construct on all others; all values fell below the conservative 3.3 threshold, as shown below. Together, these results suggest common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern in this data run.

Construct	**Full-collinearity VIF**
Content Marketing Value (CMV)	1.434
Brand Authenticity(BA)	1.473
Consumer Advocacy(CA)	1.531
Brand Familiarity(BF)	1.113
Digital Engagement(DE)	1.165

Table 4.4. Full-collinearity VIF values (Kock, 2015); values below 3.3 indicate no problematic common method variance.

4.5 Structural Model (Inner Model) Assessment

Following Section 3.5, direct effects were assessed via standardised path coefficients with bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (5,000 resamples).

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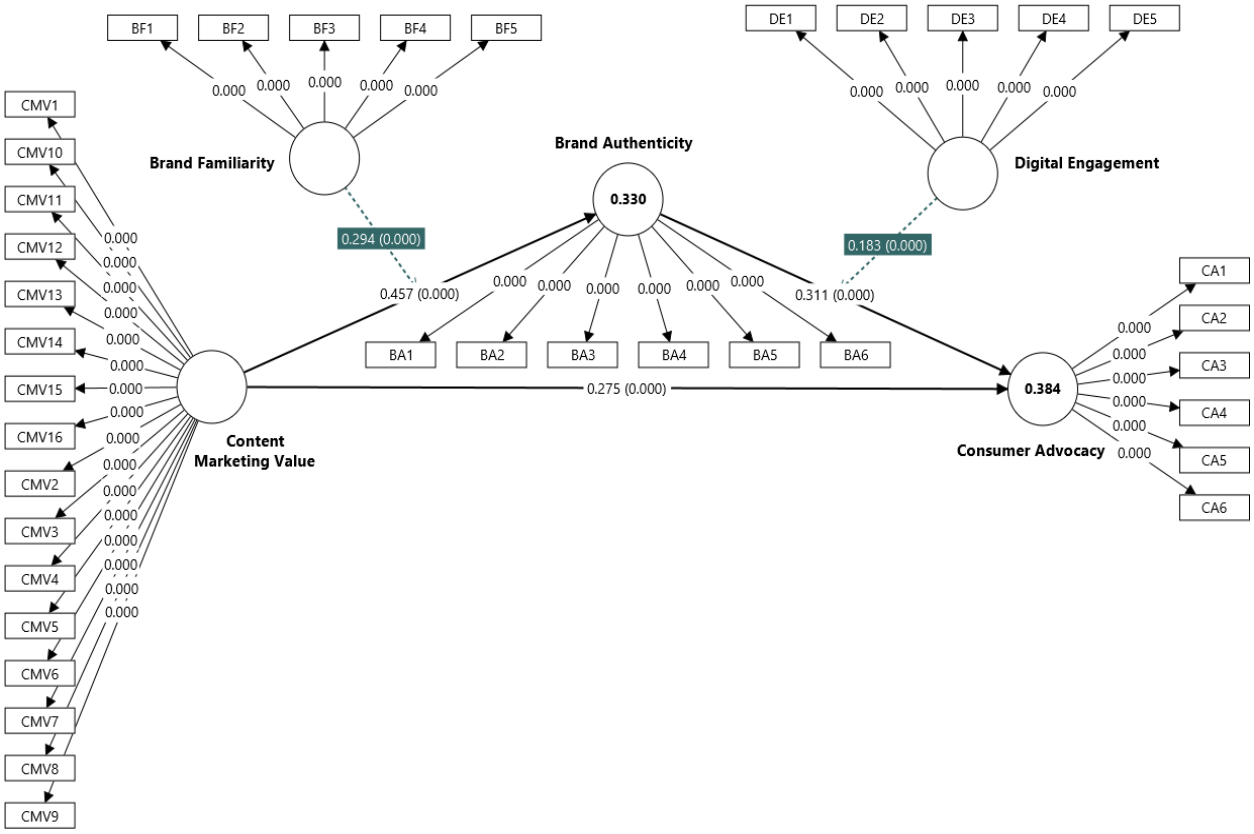


Figure 2.

4.5.1 Direct Path Coefficients (H1–H3)

The three hypothesised direct paths (H1–H3) were estimated with standardised path coefficients and bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (5,000 resamples). All three coefficients were positive and statistically significant, and none of the confidence intervals included zero, providing support for H1, H2, and H3.

Hyp.	Path	β	95% CI	Decision
H1	Content Marketing Value → Brand Authenticity	0.456	[0.361, 0.545]	Supported
H2	Content Marketing Value → Consumer Advocacy	0.274	[0.170, 0.377]	Supported
H3	Brand Authenticity → Consumer Advocacy	0.309	[0.207, 0.408]	Supported

Table 4.5. Direct structural path coefficients with bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (5,000 resamples). β = standardised path coefficient. Confidence intervals excluding zero denote statistical significance.

4.5.2 Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Endogenous construct	R^2	Q^2 (blindfolding proxy)
Brand Authenticity	0.327	0.315

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Consumer Advocacy	0.381	0.354

Table 4.6. R^2 values of 0.327 (Brand Authenticity) and 0.381 (Consumer Advocacy) indicate moderate explanatory power and fall within commonly cited benchmark ranges (Hair et al., 2019). Q^2 values greater than zero for both endogenous constructs indicate that the model has predictive relevance.

4.6 Moderation Analysis (H5): Brand Familiarity

H5 proposed that Brand Familiarity moderates the Content Marketing Value-Brand Authenticity relationship. The CMV x BF interaction term was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.295$, $p < .001$), and the simple slopes below confirm the hypothesized direction: the positive effect of Content Marketing Value on Brand Authenticity strengthens as Brand Familiarity increases. Consistent with best practice, Brand Familiarity's direct main effect on Brand Authenticity was also estimated and was significant ($\beta = 0.163$, $p = 0.001$), though it was not itself hypothesized.

Level of Brand Familiarity	**Simple slope of CMV → Brand Authenticity**
-1 SD (low familiarity)	0.160
Mean familiarity	0.456
+1 SD (high familiarity)	0.751

Table 4.7. Simple slope analysis at ±1 SD of the moderator (Dawson, 2014).

4.7 Moderation Analysis (H6): Digital Engagement

H6 proposed that Digital Engagement moderates the Brand Authenticity-Consumer Advocacy relationship. The BA x DE interaction term was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.184$, $p < .001$), and the simple slopes below confirm the hypothesised direction: the positive effect of Brand Authenticity on Consumer Advocacy strengthens as Digital Engagement increases. Digital Engagement's direct main effect on Consumer Advocacy was also significant ($\beta = 0.208$, $p < .001$), though not itself hypothesised.

Level of Digital Engagement	**Simple slope of Brand Authenticity → Consumer Advocacy**
-1 SD (low engagement)	0.126
Mean engagement	0.309
+1 SD (high engagement)	0.493

Table 4.8. Simple slope analysis at ±1 SD of the moderator (Dawson, 2014).

4.8 Mediation Analysis (H4): Brand Authenticity

H4 proposed that Brand Authenticity mediates the Content Marketing Value-Consumer Advocacy relationship. The bootstrapped indirect effect (Content Marketing Value → Brand Authenticity → Consumer Advocacy) was $\beta = 0.156$, 95% CI [0.100, 0.219], which excludes zero, indicating a statistically significant indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The direct effect (Content Marketing Value → Consumer Advocacy, controlling for Brand Authenticity) remained significant at $\beta = 0.274$, so the pattern is one of partial (complementary) mediation. The proportion of the total effect explained by the indirect path (VAF) was 36.3%.

Effect	**Estimate**	**95% CI**	**Decision**
Indirect effect (a x b)	0.156	[0.100, 0.219]	Significant (CI excludes zero)
Direct effect (c')	0.274	-	Significant
Total effect (c)	0.431	-	-
VAF	36.3%	-	Partial mediation

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Table 4.9. Mediation analysis (bootstrap output, 5,000 resamples).

4.9 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	Statement	Result
H1	Content Marketing Value has a significant positive effect on Brand Authenticity among social media users in Pakistan.	Supported
H2	Content Marketing Value has a significant positive effect on Consumer Advocacy.	Supported
H3	Brand Authenticity has a significant positive effect on Consumer Advocacy among social media users in Pakistan.	Supported
H4	Brand Authenticity mediates the relationship between Content Marketing Value and Consumer Advocacy.	Supported (partial mediation)
H5	Brand Familiarity moderates the positive relationship between Content Marketing Value and Brand Authenticity.	Supported
H6	Digital Engagement moderates the positive relationship between Brand Authenticity and Consumer Advocacy.	Supported

Table 4.10. Summary of hypothesis testing.

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CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview of the Study

This study set out to explain how content marketing value translates into consumer advocacy among adult social media users in Punjab, Pakistan, and to identify the conditions under which that translation is strengthened or weakened. Drawing on Signalling Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Social Exchange Theory, it specified a structural model in which brand authenticity mediates the content value–advocacy relationship, brand familiarity moderates the content value–authenticity path, and digital engagement moderates the authenticity–advocacy path. The measurement model met the recommended reliability and validity thresholds (Hair et al., 2019), discriminant validity was established through the HTMT criterion (Henseler et al., 2015), and common method bias was ruled out through Harman's single-factor test and the full-collinearity VIF approach (Kock, 2015). Against this sound measurement foundation, the structural analysis supported all six hypotheses, and the following sections interpret each finding in relation to the reviewed literature.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

Content marketing value and brand authenticity (H1). The positive and significant effect of content marketing value on brand authenticity ($\beta = 0.456$) confirms that consumers read consistently informative, entertaining, and credible brand content as a signal of genuineness. This is consistent with Curris et al. (2023), who show that the informativeness and entertainment dimensions of content marketing reinforce authenticity perceptions, and with the signalling logic that high-quality content communicates a credible commitment to consumer value creation. The result also echoes Foroudi et al.'s (2020, as cited in Kaushal et al., 2023) caution that authenticity is an attribution consumers infer from the quality and sincerity of brand communications rather than an intrinsic brand property.

Content marketing value and consumer advocacy (H2). Content marketing value exerted a direct, significant effect on consumer advocacy ($\beta = 0.274$) over and above its indirect effect through authenticity. This supports the gratification-based pathway anticipated in the literature review: valuable content can create an intrinsic reward experience sufficient to motivate recommendation and endorsement even before deep authenticity perceptions form. The direct effect is nonetheless smaller than the total effect, consistent with the expectation that content stimuli motivate advocacy most powerfully when they are affectively anchored in perceived brand genuineness.

Brand authenticity and consumer advocacy (H3). Brand authenticity significantly predicted consumer advocacy ($\beta = 0.309$), reinforcing the view that perceived genuineness is a central driver of the move from passive consumption to active brand championing. The finding aligns with Kaushal et al. (2023), who report that authenticity-related dimensions significantly predict advocacy among Pakistani consumers, and it confirms that authenticity functions as a strategic relational asset rather than merely a brand-identity attribute.

Mediating role of brand authenticity (H4). The bootstrapped indirect effect of content marketing value on consumer advocacy through brand authenticity was significant ($\beta = 0.156$, 95% CI [0.100, 0.219]), and because the direct effect remained significant, the pattern is one of partial, complementary mediation, with authenticity accounting for roughly 36% of the total effect (VAF = 36.3%). This positions brand authenticity as the psychological bridge between content stimuli

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and advocacy outcomes that Kaushal et al. (2023) describe, while confirming that a meaningful portion of content marketing's influence still reaches advocacy directly.

Moderating role of brand familiarity (H5). The content value–authenticity relationship was significantly strengthened by brand familiarity (interaction $\beta = 0.295$, $p < .001$): the simple slope rose from 0.160 at low familiarity to 0.751 at high familiarity. Consistent with Curris et al. (2023), consumers with a richer prior brand schema process content more efficiently and more readily interpret high-quality content as consistent with an authentic identity. In this dataset the strengthening (signal-amplification) pattern dominated the competing ceiling-effect account discussed in Chapter 2, suggesting that, for the sampled consumers, familiarity primarily amplified rather than saturated the authenticity signal.

Moderating role of digital engagement (H6). Digital engagement significantly strengthened the authenticity–advocacy relationship (interaction $\beta = 0.184$, $p < .001$), with the simple slope increasing from 0.126 at low engagement to 0.493 at high engagement. This supports the Uses and Gratifications premise that more actively engaged consumers, being more embedded in social media ecosystems where advocacy behaviours are normative and socially rewarded, are better positioned to convert positive authenticity perceptions into visible advocacy — extending Kaushal et al.'s (2023) observation that the attachment–advocacy link is more pronounced among highly engaged consumers.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The study makes three theoretical contributions. First, it integrates Signalling Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Social Exchange Theory into a single empirically tested model, showing that content marketing value operates as an authenticity signal (signalling), that its behavioural payoff depends on how actively consumers engage (uses and gratifications), and that advocacy emerges as a reciprocal response within an ongoing consumer–brand exchange (social exchange). Second, by testing brand familiarity and digital engagement as moderators of two distinct paths within the same model, it advances a dual-moderated, mediated account that prior work has largely examined in isolation. Third, it provides evidence on the contested boundary condition of brand familiarity, indicating that — at least in this secondary-market context — familiarity amplifies rather than dampens the content value–authenticity link.

5.4 Managerial Implications

For brand managers and digital marketers in secondary urban markets, the findings caution against a one-size-fits-all content strategy. Because content marketing value builds advocacy largely by first establishing authenticity, content should be designed with sincerity and credibility as explicit objectives, not merely informational volume. The familiarity moderation suggests differentiated tactics: for less-familiar consumers, content should work to establish an initial, credible authenticity signal, whereas for highly familiar consumers it can reinforce and deepen an already-formed relationship. The engagement moderation implies that investments which raise active participation — prompting comments, shares, and user-generated content — are likely to increase the advocacy return on authenticity, making engagement-building a strategic complement to authenticity-building rather than an end in itself.

5.5 Limitations

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Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The cross-sectional design establishes association rather than causal precedence, so the directionality implied by the model cannot be confirmed. Data were collected in multiple mid-tier cities of Punjab, using non-probability purposive and snowball sampling, which supports relevance and access but limits statistical generalisability to the wider Pakistani population. Reliance on self-reported, single-source survey data raises the possibility of common method variance; although Harman's single-factor test and the full-collinearity VIF approach (Kock, 2015) indicated this was not a serious concern, they do not eliminate it entirely.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

Future research could address these limitations along several lines. Longitudinal or experimental designs would allow stronger causal inference about the content value → authenticity → advocacy sequence. Replication across multiple Pakistani cities and product categories, ideally with probability-based sampling, would test the generalisability of the dual-moderation model and clarify whether the amplification pattern observed for brand familiarity persists in other contexts or gives way to a ceiling effect. Researchers might also model the four dimensions of content marketing value separately to identify which dimensions most strongly drive authenticity and advocacy, and incorporate behavioural or platform-level engagement metrics alongside self-reported measures to reduce common method concerns.

5.7 Conclusion

This study advances understanding of how content marketing value becomes consumer advocacy by demonstrating that brand authenticity is the central mechanism linking the two, and that brand familiarity and digital engagement determine how strongly that mechanism operates. Content marketing value shaped advocacy both directly and through authenticity, and both moderation effects were positive: authenticity formed more readily among more familiar consumers, and it converted into advocacy more strongly among more engaged consumers. By situating these relationships in a mid-tier Pakistani cities and integrating three complementary theoretical lenses, the study offers both a more complete account of the content-to-advocacy pathway and actionable guidance for brands seeking to earn genuine advocacy in secondary digital markets.

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