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Understanding the social capital – happiness link among online brand communities: influence of psychological well-being and membership duration

Impact of
social capital
on OBCs

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Abstract

Purpose – Based on the principles of the social capital theory (SCT), this study aimed to generate hypotheses and evaluate a mediated moderated model that examined the impact of social capital on online brand community happiness (OBCH).

Design/methodology/approach – Using 215 online questionnaires from users of private online brand communities (OBCs), researchers examined the hypothesized connections between variables. The SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 26.0 were applied to fulfill the purpose.

Findings – For the goodness of model fit, the authors have applied cut off criteria for fit indexes given by Hu and Bentler (1999) and model-fit measures indicators, i.e. CMIN/DF 1.397, CFI 0.958, SRMR 0.045, RMSEA 0.043 and PCLOSE 0.866, which meet the minimum acceptable criteria. Based on the results, social capital significantly affects psychological well-being (PWB), which, consequently, leads toward increased happiness among OBCs. Furthermore, membership duration moderates the relationship between PWB and OBCs.

Research limitations/implications – The authors have utilized a cross-sectional research design, and it limits the researcher's ability to generalize the findings. These findings imply how social capital leverages PWB and OBCH. Moreover, the presence of membership duration helps to understand that members who spend more time in the community are happier in the OBCs.

Practical implications – In this age of social media, it provides valuable guidance to the administrators of private Facebook groups dedicated to specific brands, enhancing the definition and development of OBC operations and community interactions.

Originality/value – This research takes a broader look at social capital's impact on happiness among private OBCs. The current research contributes to the existing body of work by emphasizing the role of PWB in generating happiness. The study is novel in examining the mediating moderating model of PWB and membership duration to explore deep insights for social media platforms.

Keywords Social capital, Online brand community, Psychological well-being, Online brand community, Membership duration

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

Consumer well-being (CWB) and happiness (CH) have always been areas of interest for academicians, scholars, managers, practitioners and policymakers. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology* (Lambert *et al.*, 2023), *Journal of Product and Brand Management* (Zhou *et al.*, 2022), *Tourism Economics* (Godovykh *et al.*, 2021), *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-being Research* (Leung *et al.*, 2020) and many other international publishers highlighted the importance of well-being and happiness in their recent publications and issues. Even the marketing definition also focuses on the importance of well-being.

In contemporary society, the concepts of well-being and happiness have emerged as fundamental human necessities. Typically, within scholarly discourse, the term “happiness” is employed to denote an individual’s psychological or subjective state of well-being. While these notions are not distinct, scholars tend to employ them in separate manners (Diener, 2000; Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2003; Diener *et al.*, 1999). The concept of well-being encompasses various elements, including subjective, social and psychological. The examination of well-being has constantly placed emphasis on the subjective and social aspects (Diener *et al.*, 1999). On the other hand, a limited number of scholars prioritize the significance of psychological well-being (PWB). Mentionable, brands as significant uses of items, provide several opportunities for consumers to achieve PWB (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013). Online brand communities (OBCs) are a popular way for people to interact with brands. OBCs are the combinations of social network relationships in which consumers involve socialization, collecting and exchanging information (Meek *et al.*, 2019a, b). Online communities may be important drivers of brand buzz if community data and industry benchmarks are appropriately tracked.

In the era of digitalization, several apparel firms, such as Khaadi, Limelight and Sapphire, exhibit a strong inclination toward establishing OBCs as a means to enhance the management of customer brand interactions. These communities play a role in facilitating the optimization of such interactions. In recent times, there has been an increasing emphasis among enterprises and brands in Pakistan on the establishment and cultivation of online brand communities, with the aim of fostering a digital rapport between the brand and its consumers through the utilization of social media platforms specifically through Facebook. According to statistics, Facebook was the largest social network globally, with an estimated 2.91bn monthly users in January 2022. Only in Pakistan, there are around 46.9 m active Facebook users, more than that of the UK with 38.9m, Turkey with 37.4m, France with 33.5 m and Germany with 28 m active Facebook users, respectively (SRD, October 2021).

Considering the increasing presence of OBCs in current business dynamics, researchers tried to understand consumer social relationships and networks from various angles and research lenses (Li *et al.*, 2019). The social capital theory (SCT) may play a pivotal role in comprehending the nature of social relationships and networks (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Putnam, 2000). Deng and Yuan (2020) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) described social capital as a resource created through consumer relationships or social networks. Contrarily, in OBCs, social capital is a problematic notion established by a common language, social trust, shared vision, relationship ties and reciprocity (Meek *et al.*, 2019a, b).

Online brand community happiness (OBCH) and collective social capital have gotten less attention in recent studies. Moreover in OBCs, PWB and social capital are infrequently studied to improve brand community happiness. Social capital may improve consumers’ and brands’ PWB (Zhou *et al.*, 2021). In the context of social capital in OBCs, most of the earlier theoretical contributions focused on brand experience (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013), knowledge (Wasko and Faraj, 2005), brand polarization (Ramírez *et al.*, 2019), brand love (Rodrigues and Rodrigues, 2019), brand loyalty (Rubio *et al.*, 2015) and brand equity (Zollo *et al.*, 2020) domain of social capital; however, very limited researcher explored the influence on consumer PWB and happiness. Thus, this study aims to understand the effect of

collective social capital on PWB and OBC's happiness to develop strong and effective brand well-being in the era of OBC dementia. The collective perception of social capital among OBCs was investigated in this research, which was not previously explored. The structural component comprises interaction ties (Chiu *et al.*, 2006), cognitive includes common language and vision, which promotes purposeful interaction (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998) and relational involves shared trust and reciprocity (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2004). This study comprehensively investigates the connection between collective social capital, PWB and online brand community happiness. Furthermore, the present study investigates the mediating effects of PWB between collective social capital and the happiness among OBCs. Finally, the moderating effect of membership duration will be tested. The theoretical contribution of this study has three different dimensions. From the theoretical perspective, this study is among the novel studies that connect collective social capital with PWB and OBC's happiness. This research, therefore, adds significantly to the existing body of knowledge. This study also adds to the literature by focusing on the function of membership duration in boosting brand community happiness. The study might enhance the theoretical exploration of brand community PWB and the impact of social capital. Further, it also provides real-time directions to a global brand to develop and fortify OBC operations, improve consumer-brand community relationships and enhance brand community happiness in the digital era.

The paper consists of the following sections: first introduction then the literature review is presented that outlines the underpinning theory and an examination of different aspects of variables and their relations. The third section covers the research design and methods used in the study. That leads to the next section, where the findings of the research paper are presented. In the last section, the conclusion is presented with emphasize on critical contributions of study at the practical and managerial levels, and afterward, the research limitations and future recommendations are presented.

2. Literature review

2.1 Social capital theory

As defined by Bourdieu (1986), "social capital is the resources contained within, accessible through, and derived from the network of relationships that individual or social unit possesses". On the other hand, "Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) describe how organized social capital provides the foundation for cooperation, trust and collective action among social groups". According to a different perspective, social capital is thought to emerge as people engage in a social setting and develop over time as the density of social relationships rises (Brown and Duguid, 2001). The SCT also recommends that consumers be entrenched in ties and structures' complex tapestry.

Moreover, these structural networks of social ties shape standards, norms and reciprocal expectations among consumers in the community (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Coleman, 1988). Further, these reciprocity and trust norms in social relations improve community efficiency (Lehtonen, 2004). Social capital can be broken down into three categories: structural social capital, cognitive social capital and relational social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

2.2 Social capital and psychological well-being

Social capital consists of relationships that allow people and society to collaborate for mutual benefit. According to the World Bank, "social capitals are the established social norms and relationships that enable individuals to coordinate their actions to achieve their goals." This concept emphasizes that social networks, not people, generate social capital and individuals

utilize it. All significant theoretical contributions, including Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam and Lin, concur that social capital is deeply rooted in social interactions. However, they disagree on how it should be utilized. Coleman studies the use of social capital by individuals, Bourdieu examines social capital by distinct social groups and Putnam examines the significance of social capital throughout communities. Coleman underlines the importance of social capital in schooling as well as Bourdieu and Lin in contrast; emphasize social capital in a business or the search for employment and social position.

2.3 Structural social capital

The concepts of network linkages, configuration and arrangement are all aspects of social structure considered part of the realm of structural social capital. Interaction between individuals or entities is made more accessible by roles, conventions, precedents and processes (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Uphoff and Wijayaratna, 2000). To explain the many different types of network linkages, numerous researchers categorize social capital as bridging, bonding or linking (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2003). The structural social capital of OBCs is the interaction and connection among community members in the network, which assists customers in acquiring knowledge and resources (Li *et al.*, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2020). The structural dimension is also determined by the quality of relationships among OBC community members. It reflects the individual-level relationships among community members with a crucial dimension of interpersonal ties (Muniz and O'guinn, 2001).

2.4 Cognitive social capital

Cognitive social capital focuses on the shared context that facilitates intentional exchange. Initially, shared capital involves a shared language and narrative (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998); other authors define it as shared culture and vision (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). Working Paper define cognitive social capital as the manifestation of trust and reciprocity. There are divergent opinions among authors regarding the aspect associated with social capital. Some view it as two-dimensional (structural and cognitive), whereas others view it as three-dimensional (structural, relational and cognitive) (Chou, 2006; Grootaert, 2003; Krishna and Shrader, 1999; Van Bastelaer, 1999). Cognitive social capital is described as the resource that provides collective vision and shared interpretation in OBCs. The main characteristics of cognitive social capital are shared language (SL) and shared vision (SV) (Chiu *et al.*, 2006).

2.5 Relational social capital

Relational social capital is a term that refers to the qualities and attributes that are present in human relationships. These qualities and features include regard, companionship, responsibilities and confidence (Gooderham, 2007). The relationship component is concerned with the nature and degree of maintaining enduring connections. It manifested itself through behavioral characteristics such as norms, shared groups, responsibilities and the determination of trustworthiness. Relational capital in OBCs is described as the character and nature of personal connections established by frequent contacts among community members. An essential component of relational capital in OBCs is reciprocity, which also plays a vital role in the concept of shared values (Chiu *et al.*, 2006).

2.6 Psychological well-being

PWB is defined as a phenomenon of life going well. It is a combination of feeling good and effective functioning. PWB focuses on a positive mental state, such as satisfaction or happiness. The first one refers to how people experience positive feelings of happiness and

emotions. The second one is referred to as subjective well-being (Diener, 2000). PWB refers to a global cognitive judgment, including life satisfaction and self-esteem (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2003). In previous years, well-being and subjective well-being have transformed (Ryan and Deci, 2001) based on the idea of effective functioning of common human needs (Ryff, 1989). These methods are referred to as “psychological well-being,” they are based on humanistic beliefs of positive functioning.

Further researchers claimed that they are different from subjective well-being even if they are empirically overlapped. PWB provides optimum human functioning. The current research incorporates the idea of Diener *et al.* (2009) to assess PWB.

2.7 Online brand community (OBC) happiness

A community consists of individuals and an organized system of social ideas. Its significance and meaning have gradually developed over the course of time. The community is built on three fundamental pillars: its traditions and rituals, its awareness of being kind to others and its feeling of being ethically responsible (Casaló *et al.*, 2008). Individuals who share their thoughts and experiences with one another and communicate with other members of the community through the use of the internet to create what is known as online communities (Rheingold, 1993). Social media nowadays play a vital role in developing brand activities and generating the company’s promotional activities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Being socially connected is the key reason behind joining communities, and it helps generate online content. With the rise in the use of social media, consumers are now becoming more empowered, due to which companies spend more on brand community marketing activities (Abid *et al.*, 2023; Goh *et al.*, 2013). Hence, OBC’s happiness means that members of OBCs enjoy participating in the community because it is helpful to obtain necessary information, build interaction ties among other members and feel happy while helping others in the community (Porter *et al.*, 2011), cultivate fruitful connections by interacting with community members (Alexander Hars, 2002; Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2004; McKenna and Bargh, 1999; Nambisan and Baron, 2009).

2.8 Relationship between social capital and psychological well-being

Social capital, as described by Helliwell and Putnam (2004), believes that social capital gained through social interactions with friends, family and the community has a favorable effect on PWB. The social capital promotes social interactions, facilitates social bonds and boosts PWB (Bargh *et al.*, 2002). Zhang and Jung (2022) conducted a research survey on 522 social media users and revealed that social capital has a robust association with PWB. In another study conducted on 1,483 school students, social capital were found to be strong predictor of PWB (Jusiené *et al.*, 2022). Moreover multiple studies have supported the notion that there is a strong positive and significant association between social capital and its various dimensions with PWB (Simons *et al.*, 2023; Xu and Zhao, 2023). Therefore, based on the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1–H2–H3. Cognitive, structural and relational social capital positively affects psychological well-being.

2.9 Relationship of social capital and OBC happiness

Social capital refers to the relationships and social networks on which an individual may rely in order to achieve a higher level of personal well-being and happiness (Leung *et al.*, 2023). Recent studies clarify the role of social capital among OBC members. Results indicate that social capital has a strong effect on brand passion, brand engagement and well-being (Wong, 2023). Zhou *et al.* (2022) revealed that social capital has a strong and positive effect in OBCs to

measure their well-being. According to [Yoshida et al. \(2021\)](#), social capital positively affects consumer happiness and strongly influences well-being, while communicating through communities. Furthermore, the findings of [Leung et al. \(2013\)](#) support social capital as essential in predicting happiness. Notably [Tsuruta et al. \(2019\)](#) revealed that multiple dimensions of social capital like relational ties, trust, connection and participation have substantial influence on consumer happiness among the community members. In same vein, the study of [Rukumnuaykit and Pholphirul \(2016\)](#) shows that a person's capacity for happiness has a close relationship to the amount of social capital they possess. Upon the premises of above argumentations and empirical results, we hereby propose that:

H4–H5–H6. Cognitive, structural and relational social capital positively affects online brand community happiness.

2.10 Relationship between psychological well-being and OBC happiness

All the new research in the marketing field focuses on well-being and happiness nowadays. [Kim et al. \(2017\)](#) believes that competence, relationships and identified autonomy are the factors that affect the PWB of community members and their attachments to brands. According to [Pan \(2018\)](#), connectivity and social support help online communities and PWB. Many other aspects of psychological well-being have been studied empirically and theoretically, including single and multiple brand systems, brand cues, empowerment, benefit and emotions ([Park et al., 2010](#)).

Community brand happiness can be strengthened through OBCs ([Perren and Kozinets, 2018](#)). The relational, functional and emotional aspects of PWB are positively enhanced due to the interactive engagement of community members. Due to positive PWB, consumers share positive opinions, knowledge and ideas about the brand ([Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013](#)). [Zhou et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Zhang and Jung \(2022\)](#) also explore the relationship of PWB in online communities. Studies revealed that PWB has a strong positive influence in online communities and hence increased happiness among them. Recent studies explore the relationship of PWB among the online tourist community ([Zhang and Xiao, 2023](#)). Thus the proposed hypothesis for this study is:

H7. Psychological well-being positively affects online brand community happiness.

2.11 Role of psychological well-being as mediator between social capital and OBC happiness

Many researchers have explored the significance of PWB in social capital and community happiness ([Kumar et al., 2021](#); [Yoshida et al., 2021](#)). Social capital has a positive effect on the consumer's mental health, which makes the community's consumers happier ([Kumar and Kumar, 2020](#)). Even though PWB has been used as a link between social capital and happiness in different studies, it has not been looked into much. In the era of COVID-19 fear, one study found that PWB is the link between happiness and stress ([Peker and Cengiz, 2021](#)). Another study supported the full effect of meditation on PWB in the link between spiritual intelligence and happiness ([Heydari, 2015](#)). Also, psychological functioning as a cause of PWB says that the link between entrepreneurship and subjective well-being is mediated by purposeful engagement with life, realizing personal talents and skills and meeting intrinsic needs like autonomy and competence ([Nikolaev et al., 2020](#)). The most recent studies suggest that it may play a role as a mediator between social capital, well-being and happiness ([Zhou et al., 2022](#)). Findings of [Zhang and Jung \(2022\)](#) also confirm the positive association of social capital and PWB among the online communities. Moreover number of recent studies also confirms the role and relationship of social capital and PWB in various contexts including school principals, teachers, students, professionals and online community members ([Cleveland et al., 2023](#); [Hasan and Nur, 2022](#); [Littman, 2022](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#)). Thus based on the above literature, the proposed hypothesis for the study is:

H8-H9-H10. Psychological well-being significantly mediates the relationship between cognitive, structural, relational social capital and online community happiness.

2.12 *The moderating role of membership duration between psychological well-being and OBC happiness*

Membership duration means how long an individual actively participates in a group of people. In most cases, at the beginning of a member's involvement in a community, participation in the community is motivated more by utilitarian requirements than by social needs. Seeking guidance and requiring necessary information may be their priority (Tsai and Bagozzi, 2014). However, the increasing level of engagement and participation in the online community may help them build close relations and reputation in the community. Furthermore, it helps them understand their role in the community (Thompson and Sinha, 2008; Tsai and Bagozzi, 2014). Several studies have been conducted to investigate the significance of mitigating the impact of membership duration in a variety of different dimensions. In the process of establishing retail loyalty programs, a study was conducted on the moderating effect of membership duration. The results of this research indicated that the relationship between program and store loyalty is contingent on the moderating role of membership duration (Omar et al., 2012). Previous research on OBCs found that individuals with varying lengths of membership exhibited distinct differences in their levels of participation in OBCs (Thompson and Sinha, 2008). Studies on the length of membership also shed light on the myriad of responses and perspectives held by various member subgroups regarding a company's involvement in the local community (Homburg et al., 2015). In OBCs, research on the moderating impact that the length of membership has on contentment and well-being is extremely uncommon. When individuals participate in OBCs for an extended period of time, their relationships with one another become more intimate (McAlexander et al., 2002). The length of time a person is a member of an organization has a moderating impact that is both substantial and beneficial on the link between unfavorable brand experience sharing and online social isolation in OBCs (Zhou et al., 2019). On the other hand, current studies also proposed exploring the mediating effect of membership duration in OBCs (Kim et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2022). This paper investigates the moderating effect of membership duration in developing consumer community happiness. The finding of this research helps the sponsors of OBCs with practical guidance in managing online communities. Notably, the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1. However, based upon the literature discussed, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H11. Membership duration moderates the mediating relationship of psychological well-being between collective social capital and online brand community happiness.

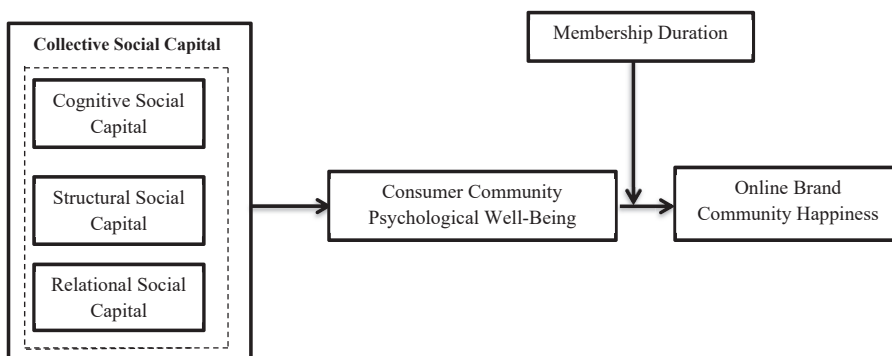


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework

3. Research methodology

3.1 Sample design and data collection

The target population of this study was active members of private OBCs on the Facebook pages of Pakistani Fashion brands. The data were collected through Google-based online survey questionnaires from the actual members of fashion brands' private OBCs, including Khaadi, LimeLight, Gul Ahmed, Nishat Linen and Zellbury. All the data were collected within 14 days. During this period total of 300 questionnaires were sent to the community members, from which 218 responses were received. However, a sample size of 200 respondents was considered valid for this study (Kline, 2015), so we used 215 useable samples for data analysis. Because of the same complexity, the level of recommended sample size in the literature for structural equation models supports our sample size and, therefore, considered accepted (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012; Fabrigar *et al.*, 2010). In order to test the purposed hypothesis of a purposed conceptual model, the non-probability convenience sampling technique is used, which is commonly used in brand community research studies (France *et al.*, 2016; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, the approach of the present research study is deductive.

3.2 Common method bias

The linear experiment is suggested to evaluate simultaneously (Kock and Lynn, 2012). Latent variables yield the variance inflation factor (VIF). Pathological collinearity is defined as a VIF larger than 3.3, which may distort the model. If all VIF values are less than 3.3, the model will be declared free of common method bias (CMB). The CMB is used in this investigation, and no VIF value higher than 3.3 is found. Consequently, it has no inherent methodological bias.

3.3 Measures

The research model shows that all items were adapted from the previous existing scales. The questionnaire consists of four parts. The first part includes the respondents' demographics adopted from the prior research (Zhou *et al.*, 2021).

The second part includes constructs of collective social capital (structural, cognitive and relational). The dimension of structural social capital as interaction ties was measured using four items adopted from Chiu *et al.* (2006).

The two dimensions of cognitive social capital, i.e. shared language, were measured with two items and shared vision with three items adopted from Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998).

The two dimensions of relational capital, i.e. shared trust and reciprocity, were measured with three items adopted from Dholakia and Bagozzi (2004).

The third part consists of PWB, which was measured with eight items adopted from Diener *et al.* (2009), including meaning and purpose (Ryff, 2008; Seligman, 2002), supportive and rewarding relationships (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2008), contribute to the well-being of others (Maslow, 1981; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2008), engaged and interested (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Ryff, 2008; Seligman, 2002), optimism (Seligman, 2002), being respected (Maslow, 1981; Ryff, 2008), competency (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2008) and self-acceptance (Maslow, 1981; Ryff, 2008).

The fourth part includes community happiness, measured with two items adopted (Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the score from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

3.4 Respondent profile

This study collected 215 usable responses from respondents who were actual members of private OBCs. Table 1 shows that 120 (58.8%) were males and 95 (44.2%) were females.

Respondents demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender (<i>N</i> = 215)	Male	120	55.8
	Female	95	44.2
Age (<i>N</i> = 215)	Below 20 years	23	10.7
	21–30	157	81.4
	31–40	13	6
	41–50	4	1.9
	51 and above	0	0
Education (<i>N</i> = 215)	Matric and below	1	0.55
	Intermediate	9	4.20
	Bachelor	146	67.9
	Master and above	59	27.4
Monthly income status (<i>N</i> = 215)	below 25,000	121	26.9
	25,001–40,000	223	49.6
	40,001–60,000	92	20.4
	60,001–1,000,00	14	3.1
Occupation (<i>N</i> = 215)	Student	177	82.3
	Employed	25	11.6
	Unemployed	1	0.5
	Business person	12	5.6
Fashions brands (<i>N</i> = 450)	Khaadi	52	24.2
	Limelight	63	29.3
	Gul Ahmed	38	17.7
	Nishat	14	6.5
	Zellbury	17	7.90
	Any other	31	17.7
Time duration	Less than 1 year	121	56
	1–2 years	69	32.3
	2–3 years	16	7.50
	More than 3 years	9	4.20

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 1.
Respondent profile

The majority of the respondents, 157 (81.4%), were aged 21–30. While 23 (10.7%) were below 20 years, 13 (6%) from 31 to 40 and four (1.9%) from 41 to 50. There is no respondent from the age group of 51 years and above. In terms of education, 146 (67.9%) respondents had bachelor's degrees, so this finding also confirms that undergraduates are the top user of technological devices and social media (Yang *et al.*, 2017), remaining followed by 59 (27.4%) with masters and above, nine (4.2%) with Intermediate and one (0.55) respondent with matric and below. In terms of their income, 141 (65.8%) respondents had less than 25,000 (in Rupees) income level, followed by 43 (20.2%) with income levels ranging from 25,000 to 49,999, 14 (6.6%) with an income range of 50,000 to 74,999, 12 (5.2%) with a range of 75,000–99,999 and five (2.3%) respondents with more than one lac income. In terms of occupation, 177 (82.3%) were students, followed by 25 (11.6) were employed, one (0.5%) were unemployed and 12 (5.6) were business persons. Further, the results related to the likelihood of Fashion brands indicate that most of the respondents chose LimeLight 63 (29.3%), followed by 52 (24.2) chose Khaadi, 38 (17.7) chose Gul Ahmed, 17 (7.9%) chose Zellbury, 14 (6.5%) choose Nishat and 31 (14.4%) choose any other option. Moreover, the results related to the membership duration of the brand community found that 121 (56%) respondents had less than one year of membership duration, 69 (32.3%) had a duration of 1–2 years, 16 (7.5%) have 2–3 years and nine (4.2%) respondents had more than three years of membership duration experience of OBCs.

4. Analysis and results

4.1 Data analysis strategy

For the purpose of data analysis, this research employed both SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 26.0. AMOS 26.0 was used in the first stage to evaluate the model's observations as well as the validity and dependability of each component that was taken into account as well as the operationalization of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Arbuckle, 2010). When validating the structural models' applicability, model-fit measures indicators like minimum discrepancy function by degrees of freedom divided (CMIN/DF), comparative fit index (CFI) and standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and PCLOSE were taken into consideration. The minimum acceptable level for CMIN/DF is acceptable to fit >3 , excellent fit >1 ; for CFI acceptable fit <0.95 , excellent fit >0.95 ; for SRMR acceptable fit >0.08 , excellent fit <0.08 ; for RMSEA acceptable fit >0.06 , excellent fit <0.06 ; for PCLOSE acceptable fit <0.05 , excellent fit >0.05 , respectively (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Using PROCESS macro 4.0, the hypothesized connections between variables were researched during the second stage (Hayes, 2018).

4.2 Measurement model assessment

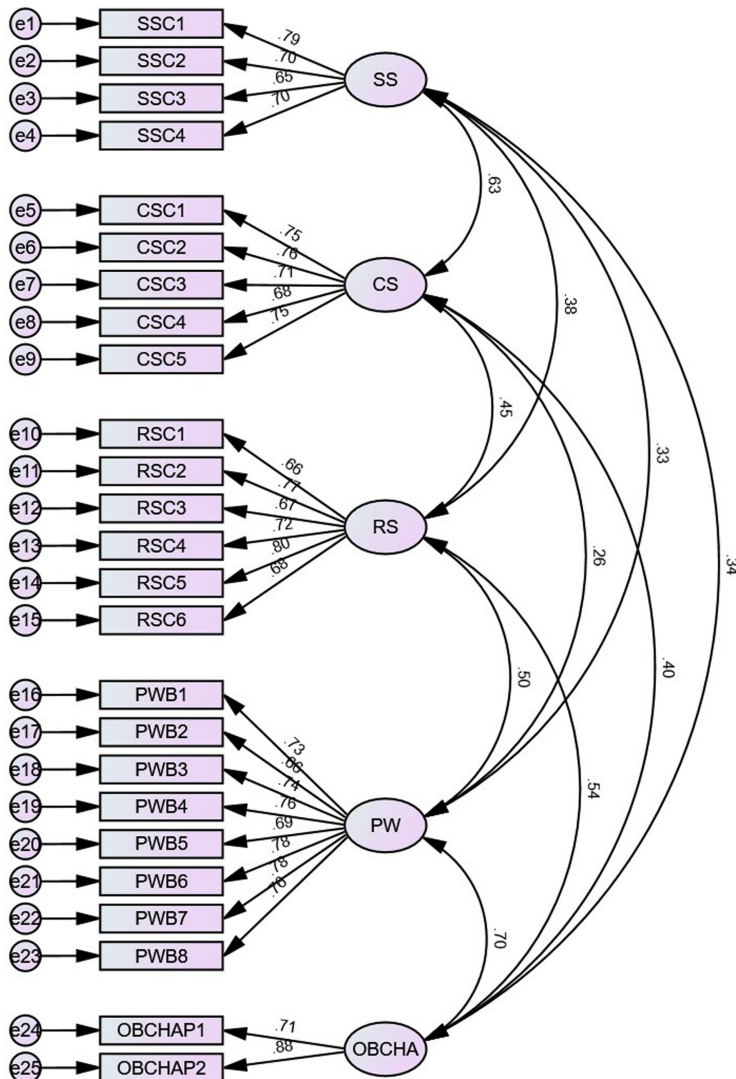
The construct's validity and dependability can be analyzed using a multidimensional statistical method called CFA (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The convergent and divergent validity of the measurement model were analyzed. Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were utilized to examine convergent validity (AVE). According to Hair *et al.* (2021), A cutoff number of 0.07 for (CR) and 0.50 for (AVE) is recommended. Moreover, Figure 2 presents the factor loadings of SSC, CSC, RSC, PWB and OBCH, and all loadings are within the acceptable range, i.e. 0.50. In addition, Table 2 shows the CFA properties of SSC, CSC, RSC, PWB and OBCH.

Cronbach's alpha (α) is also used to assess a construct's internal dependability. The internal consistency of the constructions was consistently higher than the standard of 0.08 (high reliability). Within the framework of the present assessment strategy, construct consistency was assessed via CR. CR is a more all-encompassing definition of reliability that includes assessments of consistency, stability and similarity (Hair *et al.*, 2010); if the number is more significant than 0.07, then the reliability of the measure is likely to be high. Using the previously established cutoff for high-quality match values, the results of Table 2 show that AVE is greater than 0.05. When attempting to demonstrate discriminant validity, the square root of AVE should have an association that is higher than that of any other construct (i.e. the value of AVE) (Ab Hamid *et al.*, 2017), our data shows that ASV is greater than AVE by more than 0.07. As a result, the necessary conditions for demonstrating discriminant validity have been verified. Table 3 represents the goodness of the model fit of Social Capital (SC)–PWB–OBCH.

Table 3 represents the model fit indices for SC–PWB–OBCH, with CMIN/DF = 1.397, CFI = 5 0.958, SRMR = 0.045, RMSEA = 0.043 and PCLOSE = 0.866, respectively. All values exhibit goodness-of-fit indices of the model SC–PWB–OBCH.

4.3 Structural model assessment

All the hypotheses were tested using the SPSS PROCESS Macro 3.0 model 4, with the bootstrapping procedure at 95% confidence interval. Table 4 reports the standardized coefficient β , t and p -value for direct relationships. All dimensions of collective social capital were positively related with PWB. For instance, structural social capital ($\beta = 0.2903$, $t = 4.4274$, $p < 0.000$), cognitive social capital ($\beta = 0.5523$, $t = 10.017$, $p < 0.000$) and relational social capital, respectively ($\beta = 0.4447$, $t = 7.2465$, $p < 0.000$). Thus, H1, H2 and H3 were accepted. Moreover, all dimensions of collective social capital were also positively correlated with OBCH. For example, structural social capital ($\beta = 0.1070$, $t = 1.8686$, $p < 0.006$), cognitive



Note(s): CSC = Cognitive Social Capital, SCS = Structural Social Capital, RCS = Relational, PWB = Psychological Well-Being, OBC-HAP = Online Brand Community Happiness

Source(s): Authors with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2010)

Figure 2. Measurement model

social capital ($\beta = 0.1891, t = 3.4295, p < 0.007$), relational social capital ($\beta = 0.1070, t = 6.9501, p < 0.000$). Thus, H4, H5 and H6 were accepted. Furthermore, PWB was also positively correlated with OBCH ($\beta = 0.5634, t = 9.8416, p < 0.000$). Thus H7 was accepted. Mentionable, PWB mediated the relationship between cognitive, relational and structural social capital and OBCH. Thus, H8, H9 and H10 were accepted. Finally membership duration

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positively moderate the relationship between PWB and OBCH ($\beta = 0.160, t = 3.376, p < 0.01$). Thus H11 was also accepted.

Constructs' secondary connections are shown in Table 5. The indirect impact would be sizeable if the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval (CI) did not equal zero. The outcomes of the interaction model are shown in Table 5. Since the confidence interval for the indirect impact (0.1635) does not include zero, the findings are consistent with the hypothesis that SSC indirectly affects OBCH via PWB (0.0498–0.2868). Furthermore, the confidence interval of the indirect effect (0.2235) does not contain zero, indicating that CSC has a substantial indirect impact on OBCH, mediated by PWB (0.1180–0.3379). Furthermore, the confidence interval of the indirect effect (0.1230) does not contain zero, indicating that RSC has a substantial indirect impact on OBCH mediated by PWB (0.1250–0.2410). So, H18, H19 and H10 were approved.

The length of membership is a moderating variable that has been broken up into four distinct categories. Because of this, if we want to analyze the moderated mediation effect by

Table 2.
Reliability and validity measures of the construct: SSC, CSC, RSC, PWB and OCH-HAP

Constructs	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Cronbach's alpha
SS	0.805	0.509	0.396	0.814	0.802
CS	0.852	0.535	0.396	0.854	0.851
RS	0.865	0.518	0.294	0.872	0.864
PW	0.906	0.547	0.494	0.908	0.906
OBCHA	0.776	0.636	0.494	0.813	0.767

Source(s) Measurement model: Authors with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2010)

Table 3.
Goodness of model fit

Model fit measure of SC–PWB–OBCH	CMIN/DF	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Value	1.397	0.958	0.045	0.043	0.866

Note(s): Cut of criteria for fit indexes given by Hu and Bentler (1999) has been applied
Source(s) Authors with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2010)

Table 4.
Analysis of direct relationships

Direct relationship	β	T-value	P-value	Result
SSC → PWB	0.2903	4.4274	0.000	H1 Supported
CSC → PWB	0.5523	10.017	0.000	H2 Supported
RSC → PWB	0.4447	7.2465	0.000	H3 Supported
SSC → OBCH	0.1070	1.8686	0.006	H4 Supported
CSC → OBCH	0.1891	3.4295	0.007	H5 Supported
RSC → OBCH	0.1070	6.9501	0.000	H6 Supported
PWB → OBCH	0.5634	9.8416	0.000	H7 Supported

Source(s) Authors with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2010)

Table 5.
Analysis of indirect relationships

Relationship	Indirect effect	BootSE	LLCI	ULCI	Result mediation
SSC → PWB → OBCH	0.1635	0.0619	0.0498	0.2868	H8 Supported
CSC → PWB → OBCH	0.2235	0.0574	0.1180	0.3379	H9 Supported
RSC → PWB → OBCH	0.1230	0.0583	0.1250	0.2410	H10 Supported

Source(s) Authors with AMOS (Arbuckle, 2010)

employing the SEM methodology, all three moderating models need to be compared and contrasted against one another in pairs before we can do so. The complexity of the situation is increased further by the use of this comparison. In order to find a solution to this issue, we looked into the possibility of a moderated mediation effect being present by combining the strategy proposed by [Zhao *et al.* \(2010\)](#) with the approach we had previously used [Hayes and Scharkow \(2013\)](#). We used a sample size of 5,000 and a degree of confidence of 95% so that we could calculate the confidence intervals for the bootstrap test. In addition, we set the degree of confidence at 95%. We study whether the amount of time spent as a member affects the association between OBCH and PWB and whether this effect is moderated by the length of time spent as a member. [Table 6](#) indicates that the indirect pathway through PWB is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.185$, $SE = 0.063$, $p = 0.025$). Therefore, [H11](#) is supported. The results indicate that PWB in the OBC strengthens due to the moderating effect of membership duration. Thus, the finding showed that the online community members with more than three years of duration were happier than the members with 2–3 years, 1–2 years and less than one year of duration.

5. Theoretical implications

A brand community is a set of social network links, in which the members acquire social capital by interacting with one another ([Hornig and Wu, 2020](#)). Social capital is one of the most widely used theoretical frameworks for analyzing relationships and social networks ([Adler and Kwon, 2002](#)). Even though the structure of social capital has multiple dimensions in OBCs but collectively all of its dimensions including structural, cognitive and relational have rarely been investigated ([Zhou *et al.*, 2022](#)).

Notably, within the domain of current study, by combining all dimensions of social capital and enlightening the mechanism how it influences on OBCH is the key contribution in social capital theory. Moreover, in this study, the three dimensions of social capital in OBCs were found to influence the PWB of consumer communities positively, enriching the theoretical research on social capital and PWB, which consequently leads toward increased OBCH. Furthermore, this research also underwrites the social capital literature by highlighting he moderating role of membership duration concerning with the mechanism of how collective social capital enrich our underwriting its influence on OBCH.

In conclusion, to its theoretical contribution, the results of this study ads new perspective of social capital influences and OBCs in body of literature. Compared to offline communities, private OBCs may facilitate communication on a large scale among community members to intact each other and enhance the community's PWB. This would improve the standard of relationship interactions and build solid social capital, eventually raising PWB within the community ([Ateca-Amestoy *et al.*, 2014](#); [Veloutsou and Mafe, 2020](#)).

6. Managerial implications

From the management point of view, this study revealed that collective social capital positively influences community members' PWB and encourages using a common language to facilitate communication and sharing of brand-related information among community

In-direct relationship	β	SE	P-value	Result
PWB → MEM-DURATION → OBCH	0.185	0.063	0.025	H11 Supported

Source(s) Authors with AMOS ([Arbuckle, 2010](#))

Table 6.
Analysis of
moderating variable

members. Then it highlights shared values to communicate with consumers and effectively manage them. It also helps develop a culture that develops shared reciprocity and assists OBCs in achieving long-term prosperity. For example, one of the significant contributions of private OBCs is to sustain active user participation on their online forum.

Further, different brand communities in Pakistan is involved in various activities and communication channels such as fashion shows, exhibitions, fashion expos and joint meetings, which helps increase their identity and community engagements. This study also stimulates media and page managers of OBC to actively participate and initiate these kind of activities. So they may understand the importance of the shared value of “making friends with users and letting everyone around the world enjoy the good life brought by science and technology” in OBCs. Moreover, online community managers may devise several incentives to encourage followers of private brand communities to share brand and product-related knowledge, help each other and generate positive results. Which consequently, help to promote social interaction, extend social ties, improve the experience and meet the needs to increase social well-being among community members. Moreover, by enhancing community PWB the OBC managers would be in good position to enhance the quality of knowledge and communication and assists in maintaining OBC’s lifecycle and improving OBC happiness (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005).

Finally, as within the context of our study, collective social capital proved to enhance the happiness among OBC members, so it is imperative for practitioners to prioritize the significance of consumer happiness in their marketing campaigns too. For example, the implementation of marketing communications that prioritize the concept of well-being has the potential to cultivate a favorable perception of a company within the consumer base. Mentionable, this branding phenomenon is seen in the practice of numerous organizations endeavoring to align their marketing initiatives with Goal 3, which pertains to promoting good health and well-being, as outlined in the United Nations’ sustainable development goals (SDGs).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research offers novel insights into the examination of social capital’s influence on the happiness levels of individuals among OBCs. In same vein, our study proposed a model that enlighten us with understanding of how collective social capital effects OBCH via different moderators and mediators. Notably, current proposed model fulfills all the criteria of model fit indices for instance, SC–PWB–OBCH, with CMIN/DF = 1.397, CFI = 5 0.958, SRMR = 0.045, RMSEA = 0.043, and PCLOSE = 0.866, respectively. All values exhibit GFI of the model SC–PWB–OBCH. Also, see [Table 3](#).

Specifically, it explores the individual effect of structural, cognitive and relational social capital, an aspect that has been neglected in previous investigations. Mentionable, previous studies only offered a limited perspective of social capital in OBCs (Zhou *et al.*, 2019, 2021). Notably, the current study highlights the mediating role of PWB in the relationship of social capital and OBC happiness. Prior research has primarily concentrated on the subjective well-being of consumers (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). However, the present study introduces a novel aspect of well-being, namely consumer PWB, which has not been previously investigated. In accordance with the findings, the extent to which social capital influences one’s PWB is considerable which will eventually culminate in an upsurge in overall happiness within the OBCs. Furthermore, the membership duration appeared to be a noteworthy moderator that strengthened the relationship between PWB and happiness among OBCs. Our results also supported previous studies conducted within the same context (Yoshida *et al.*, 2021; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the present study introduced the SCT into the existing body of literature on OBCs and examined the influence of social capital on PWB and happiness among OBCs.

7.1 Limitations of the study

This research enhances the current understanding of the variables and outcomes of social capital and PWB in connection to happiness among individuals who are part of OBCs. The present study utilized well-established statistical methodologies to examine the research model. However, it is crucial to recognize and address the various limitations that exist when interpreting the results. At the outset, the data were collected at a specific temporal juncture solely from members within exclusive private brand communities. The ability of the researcher to make generalizations based on the findings is limited due to the utilization of cross-sectional data in evaluating the extent of mediation and moderation. This highlights the importance of conducting longitudinal research to fully understand the mediating influence of PWB and the moderating impact of membership duration on OBCH. Moreover, the use of a mixed-methodology approach, as exemplified by the study conducted by [Leung et al. \(2020\)](#), along with the utilization of artificial neural networks (ANN), has exhibited enhanced efficacy in comparison to alternative statistical methods.

7.2 Recommendations

The present study uses the social dimension of capital to investigate the OBC's influence on brand community happiness and future researchers may use other dimensions of capital, i.e. cultural capital. The positive psychology theory of well-being has three dimensions: subjective, psychological and social ([Mohsin, 2023](#); [O'Connell et al., 2016](#)). However, the current study only investigates how the community's psychological well-being influences OBCH. In the future, researchers may use other dimensions of well-being. The moderating variable may also investigate the multi-dimensions of social capital, such as personality traits, positive word of mouth and brand love. The finding of the present studies may be limited to a specific industry. It could not be generalized because the sample data were only collected from the members of a private OBC of clothing fashion brands. The data may be collected from community members of other industries like tourism and healthcare, automobile, real estate, education, etc.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 epidemic has limited social contact, leading to anxiety, pessimism, depression and loneliness ([Bauerle et al., 2020](#)). To minimize the impact, people are more involved in communicating online, seeking social support and contact and identifying their feelings. Thus current pandemic conditions may promote the usage of OBCs, which may affect social capital in OBCs differently. Future researchers may investigate the pandemic effect on social capital by gathering data from different cross-culture settings. Likewise, private online communities, offline communities and official online communities also form social relationships, influencing social capital and PWB. Future researchers may focus on the OBCs created by companies as the current study only select OBCs created by private peoples.

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