

Assessing the Role of Customer-Based Brand Value as a Mediator in the Relationship between Online Public Relations and Customer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of online public relations on customer behavior in Vietnamese joint-stock commercial banks (JSCBs), focusing on the mediating role of customer-based brand equity (CBBE). Using four CBBE dimensions—brand awareness, brand love, perceived quality, and brand association—it assesses how online PR influences customer perceptions and behaviors. The research, conducted through surveys with customers from five major JSCBs, shows a strong positive correlation between effective online PR and customer behavior. Findings reveal that strategic online public relations enhances brand love, perceived quality, and brand awareness, fostering stronger emotional attachment, improved service quality perceptions, and higher brand recognition. CBBE plays a crucial role in amplifying online PR's effects, guiding customer loyalty and decision-making. The study emphasizes that investing in robust online PR strategies enables JSCBs to build lasting customer loyalty and a competitive edge by strengthening brand reputation..

Keywords: online public relations, E-PR, customer-based brand equity, customer behavior

1. Introduction

The continuous development of online media platforms has facilitated the rapid transmission of information without being limited by geographical distance. This has also increased the importance of building and protecting brand reputation, significantly when consumer scepticism is increasing. According to Marketing Charts (2019) only 33% of customers trust product and service advertisements, while two-thirds consider brand reputation and transparency as important factors influencing their brand choice decisions. In addition, current advertising strategies are often one-way, needing more interaction and understanding between brands and customers

(Kotler & Keller, 2012). In particular, incidents occurring in the relationship between banks and customers have undermined public trust in banking brands, thereby reducing the brand reputation of Vietnamese joint stock commercial banks (Rifi & Mostafa, 2021). In this context, research by Algharabat et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of online public relations in maintaining positive relationships between businesses and stakeholders and building public trust in the brand. Online public relations helps companies build a strategy to shape a positive brand image in line with public expectations while creating a continuous two-way interactive relationship between the brand and customers. This not only ensures timely response and accurate information transmission in incidents related to products and services, but also helps minimize the negative impact of false information, protecting brand reputation. This demonstrates the professionalism and responsibility of the business, thereby helping to maintain reputation and brand value (Mikáčová & Gavlaková, 2014). In addition, The Asian Banker (2023) also pointed out that the application of online public relations by Vietnamese commercial banks as a tool to convey information about social and community activities plays a vital role in strengthening brand value because these activities meet the expectations of public social responsibility, thereby increasing customer trust and support for the brand (Nah and Oh, 2021). It can be seen that marketing communications can enhance brand value (Aaker, 1996) and online public relations is considered a tool to help identify and maintain business relationships with the aim of increasing customer-based brand value. Therefore, many researchers have measured the impact of this tool on aspects of customer-based brand equity. Porcu et al emphasized the impact of online public relations on brand awareness. Meanwhile, Neupane (2022) analyzed the impact of online public relations on brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality. The above analysis further confirms the opinion of online public relations is the right tool for marketers to use to improve market share, increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, improve brand recognition, enhance brand value, and increase revenue. However, according to Aaker (1996), customer-based brand equity is not only a measure of customers' awareness and perception of the brand but also helps create sustainable competitive advantages for businesses. This has been demonstrated by Ansary and Nik Hashim (2017) and Mohammadi (2020) who state that customer-based brand equity as a mediator improves customer loyalty and satisfaction. However, in the banking context, where customer loyalty and trust are vital, linking online public relations with customer behaviour with the mediator role of customer-based brand equity acts as a bridge to improve customer brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand love.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. Online Public Relations (E-PR)

Online public relations utilizes the Internet to manage brand reputation, convey positive messages, interact with the public, and handle crises or incidents related to brand reputation through online platforms such as social media, blogs, and websites (Yasmin et al, 2015). Online public relations emerged in 2000 and is referred to as online public relations, which stands for public relations on the Internet. The letter "e" in E-PR originates from "email" (electronic mail) and "commerce" (e-commerce), as both are associated with electronic means on the Internet. The "P" represents "public," referring to various public groups or different stakeholders, and "R" stands for "relations," signifying the relationships built between businesses and stakeholders on the Internet (Haig, 2010). According to Gifford (2010), online public relations leverage the Internet to communicate messages related to products, services, and business activities on online media platforms, such as official websites and social media, to disseminate information more quickly, efficiently, and to the right target audience. Simultaneously, online public relations is used to increase the rate at which the public accesses a brand's positive image in the fastest manner possible. This tool helps address customer concerns, communicate their desires to the brand, and ensure that the brand effectively carries out corporate social responsibility and community activities, fostering mutually beneficial relationships between the brand and the community.

2.1.2. Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

According to Aaker (1991), CBBE is the sum of intangible assets and liabilities linked to a brand, name or symbol of a brand with an increase or decrease in the value provided by a product or service to a business or its customers. According to Aaker (1991), customer-based brand equity is measured by five factors: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty and exclusive brand assets. However, the last factor is more related to the business than the customer, so researchers have excluded this factor when measuring customer-based brand equity (Asli, 2020). At the same time, the foundation of brand loyalty is brand love because when customers love a brand, they will express deep emotions and continue to use their favourite brand's products (Albert and Merunka, 2013). Beside, Sohaib et al (2023) research demonstrated the role of brand love in measuring Apple's brand equity in China, showing that brand love is the premise of electronic word of mouth and customer loyalty. This factor is essential for the brand to develop a close relationship between the brand and the customer. At the same time, Machado et al. (2019) concluded that brand love positively affects customer-based

brand equity. In addition, when customers develop brand love, it will increase the purchase intention of the user and help the brand increase value [19]. Therefore, Batra et al (2012) identified brand love as a factor used to measure the relationship between customers and the brand. This study measures customer-based brand equity based on four factors: brand awareness, brand association, brand love, and perceived quality.

- **Brand Awareness**

According to Aaker (1991) , brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers are familiar with a brand and their ability to recall or recognize a specific brand among competing brands. This is the first and most fundamental step in building brand equity, as a brand can only create value when customers recognize and remember it.

- **Brand Association**

Brand association results from brand awareness, influencing brand loyalty and forming the foundation for customer purchase decisions. According to Aaker (1991), brand association encompasses all elements connected to the brand that come to mind for customers. These associations also include customer thoughts about the brand, including perceptions, emotions, experiences, images, attitudes, and beliefs.

- **Perceived Quality**

According to Wang et al (2020) perceived quality is a factor that influences customer satisfaction, behavioural intentions, and the likelihood of affecting purchase decisions. Perceived quality is the customer's evaluation of the uniqueness or superiority of a product when compared to similar products.

- **Brand Love**

Brand love is a factor that measures the relationship between customers and the brand. It is the foundation of brand loyalty and directly influences brand loyalty (Batra et al, 2012). When customers love a brand, they tend to exhibit high loyalty, are willing to overlook the brand's shortcomings, and actively engage in word-of-mouth behaviours. Brand love is built upon positive experiences and a long-term relationship, which includes satisfaction, joy, and alignment with the brand's core values (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

2.1.3. Customer Behavior

According to Parasuraman et al (2000), customer behaviour is defined as a set of activities related to the purchase and use of goods and services arising from users' spiritual needs, emotional needs and behavioural responses. Looking at the above definitions, there are differences in terms of words, but they all focus on the same point of view that customer behaviour is a process of choosing and deciding to buy and use products and services according to customers' needs. In the online environment, customer behaviour is often influenced by information about brands downloaded online. When choosing a brand, customers tend to choose brands that have positive actions towards the community, such as performing social activities and community activities, rather than brands that do not perform these activities because these brand behaviours are consistent with the ideals that customers expect (Mantovani, 2017)

2.2. Research hypothesis

2.2.1. The relationship of Online Public Relations and Brand Awareness

Building and maintaining positive relationships with customers can enhance their trust in the brand through brand awareness and related brand knowledge, thereby increasing the likelihood of positive word-of-mouth (Anantachart, 2005). Meanwhile, online public relations strategies enable businesses to convey motivating messages and encourage positive actions from the public on online platforms (Permatasari et al., 2021). These campaigns enhance customer awareness of the brand and shape future service usage intentions (Febiola & Tamburian, 2021). In the banking sector, building a solid brand through online public relations helps banks gain customer trust and differentiate themselves from competitors. Customer decision-making in choosing services is primarily based on the perception of product attributes and brand information (Anugrah, 2014). Therefore, enhancing online public relations activities helps banks strengthen brand identity, engrain it in customers' minds, and secure a strong position in their perception while also creating long-term brand value (Armutlu, 2023). Thus, research hypothesis H1 is established:

H1: Online public relations positively (+) affect customer brand awareness

2.2.2. The relationship of Online Public Relations and Brand Association

Studies indicate that in an online environment, customers can easily access and search for brand-related information, which shapes either negative or positive attitudes toward the brand depending on the nature of the information (Kim & Chan, 2005). Such information typically pertains to positive brand activities, including investment in social and community resources, environmental protection, crisis response, and the ability to interact with the public. This information is stored in the customer's memory and can be interconnected to form strong brand associations (Bawa & Saha, 2016). Tuten and Solomon (2020) also point out that a strong and positive brand presence on online platforms is critical in forming and reinforcing brand

associations. Furthermore, in the banking sector, financial products designed with a community-friendly approach are highly valued by consumers for their brand reputation and product quality (Bawa & Saha, 2016), potentially forming positive brand associations among customers. Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis H2 is proposed:

H2: Online public relations positively (+) affect brand associations.

2.2.3. The relationship of Online Public Relations and Brand Love

Brand love is crucial in diagnosing and strengthening the relationship between customers and the brand (Bagozzi et al., 2016). It is expressed through specific emotions, such as thinking about and feeling favourable toward the brand. These emotions help consumers increase their satisfaction with the brand, establish loyalty, and foster positive word-of-mouth about the brand (Reimann et al., 2012). Meanwhile, online public relations implements social media campaigns and builds interactive content, creating deep and enduring relationships between the brand and its customers. Through community-driven media campaigns focusing on the brand's core values, online public relations can encourage customer participation and interaction, enhancing emotional attachment and connection to the brand (Salem et al., 2019). The ability to interact allows the brand to receive feedback and provide timely responses, transparently explaining matters according to specific objectives and customer needs (Armutlu, 2023). Additionally, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) assert that regular and meaningful brand interaction on online platforms can significantly strengthen consumers' brand love and loyalty. Similarly, Bruhn et al. (2012) note that when businesses convey positive social media content, it substantially impacts forming and maintaining consumer brand love by enhancing customer awareness and fostering positive attitudes toward the brand. Based on this analysis, the following hypothesis H3 is proposed:

H3: Online public relations positively (+) affect brand love.

2.2.4. The relationship of Online Public Relations and Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is a factor that influences customer trust and satisfaction, as the benefits customers gain from using the service outweigh the costs they incur (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). Meanwhile, online public relations involves delivering positive messages and resolving crises to ensure customer benefits and build a positive brand image (Nwogwugwu, 2017). Additionally, timely information dissemination ensures accuracy, preventing miscommunication and reducing negative factors between the brand and customers (Yang & Lim, 2009). According to Flora Hung et al. (2016), when businesses provide accurate information and interact effectively with customers through online communication channels, it fosters customer trust in the brand, enhancing brand awareness. Similarly, Shah and Wei (2022) evaluated that the

authenticity of information sources is positively linked to customers' perceptions of the brand and serves as a credible source that reduces perceived risks, thereby influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, maintaining accuracy and information quality in E-PR strategies is crucial for enhancing perceived quality and building trust in the brand online. Shaping consumer perceptions of the brand by highlighting positive elements increases customer satisfaction with perceived quality and encourages service usage (Kehinde et al., 2016). Based on this analysis, the following hypothesis H4 is proposed:

H4: Online public relations positively (+) affect perceived quality.

2.2.5. The Impact of Brand Awareness on Customer Behavior

Brand awareness reflects the extent to which customers are familiar with the brand's functions, value, quality, image, and uniqueness (Rubio et al., 2014). Familiarity with the brand directly influences customer behaviour, as customers tend to choose well-known brands that are present in their memory (Barreda et al., 2015). Additionally, Hutter et al. (2013) argue that brand awareness reflects the stage at which customers intend to use a product or service and serves as a prerequisite for making purchase decisions. When customers repeatedly use a brand's services, it enhances their brand awareness and loyalty. Based on this analysis, the following hypothesis H5 is proposed:

H5: Brand awareness positively (+) affects customer behaviour.

2.2.6. The Impact of Brand Association on Customer Behavior

According to Ridwan et al. (2018), brand association positively influences customer behavioural intention because brand associations in the consumer's mind determine the brand's position and whether consumers will continue to choose the brand they have used. Additionally, the stronger the brand association, the more customers remember and remain loyal to the brand (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). Furthermore, Dada et al. (2021) argue that when customers have positive associations with the quality and reputation of a brand, they are willing to pay more to own the brand's products. This indicates that brand association affects customer behaviour and directly impacts perceived product quality. Brand association is essential in shaping customer perception, attitude, and behaviour while fostering loyalty and enhancing perceived product quality. Thus, research hypothesis H6 is established :

H6: Brand association positively (+) affects customer behaviour.

2.2.7. The Impact of Brand Love on Customer Behavior

Brand love is the desire to maintain a long-term affection for a particular brand (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012). This leads to a strong relationship between the brand and the customer, reflecting the positivity and the strong desire to own the brand when consumers recall it (Bairrada, 2019). In other words, brand love drives consumers' desire to own the brand and serves as an expression of loyalty and a long-term relationship with the brand. Furthermore, consumers are willing to pay more to own a specific brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Additionally, customers who love the brand tend to consistently convey positive things about it and recommend it to friends and family (Batra et al., 2012). In this case, customers become brand ambassadors, increasing their resistance to negative information about the brand (Bairrada, 2019). Thus, brand love not only represents customer satisfaction or increased loyalty but also deepens the bond between customers and the brand, fostering brand advocacy and maintaining long-term brand attachment. Based on this, the following hypothesis H7 is proposed:

H7: Brand love positively (+) affects customer behaviour.

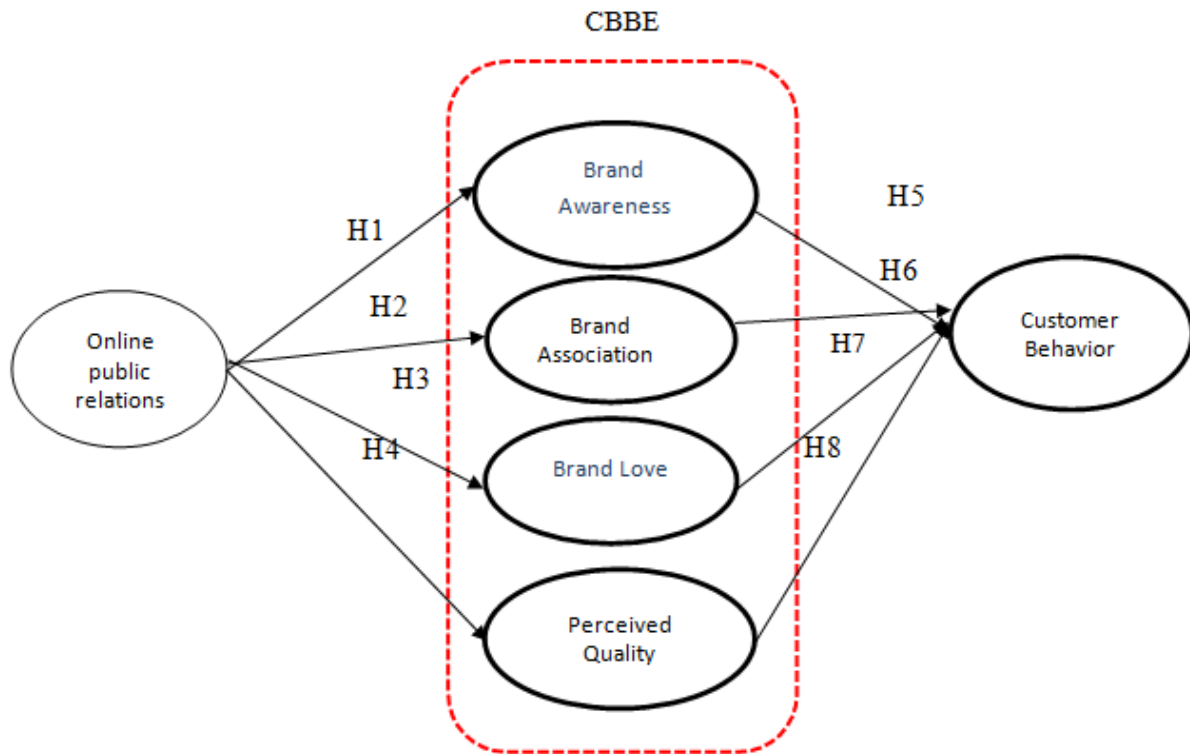
2.2.8. The Impact of Perceived Quality on Customer Behavior

High perceived quality often leads to greater customer satisfaction, promoting loyalty and repeat purchase behaviour, even when products come at a higher price (Bao et al., 2011). Additionally, Asshidin et al. (2016) found that perceived quality is a crucial predictor of customer behaviour, meaning that when a business provides a consistently high-quality product and customers have a positive experience with the brand, it increases the likelihood that consumers will become loyal customers and enhance their long-term value to the brand. At the same time, customers tend to share their satisfying experiences with other potential customers, which boosts positive word-of-mouth. Furthermore, customers with a high perceived quality of a brand are often less sensitive to negative factors (Liu, 2022). Thus, perceived quality significantly influences customer behaviour, including satisfaction, loyalty, and future purchase intentions. Ensuring high perceived quality from customers helps businesses build a sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship. Based on this analysis, the following hypothesis H8 is proposed:

H8: Perceived quality positively (+) affects customer behaviour.

Model: Based on the aforementioned theoretical perspectives, the research model in Figure 1 is constructed to explore the connection between online public relations and customer behavior, with the mediating role of customer-based brand equity.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



3. Research Methodology

Qualitative research includes the synthesis of theories and findings of previous researchers related to the research topic of topic, aiming to propose hypotheses and build a research model. In addition, before conducting the survey, the author discussed with 11 experts, including managers of commercial banks in Vietnam, three researchers in the field of banking and finance and a group of customers at commercial banks in Vietnam discuss the research idea, research model and supplement the scale to suit the research context.

Quantitative research was conducted using basic statistical analysis methods such as Cronbach's Alpha reliability assessment, EFA exploratory factor analysis, and Bootstrap testing on customer survey data at Vietnamese commercial banks from March 2024 to August 2024. 590 valid responses were collected. The quantitative research results reflected the role of E-PR in building CBBE and the role of CBBE in the relationship between E-PR and customer behaviour. Table 1 presents the scales measuring the factors in the research model.

Table 1: Presents the synthesis of all this information

No.	Factors	Code	Scales	Source
1	Online public relations	EPR ₁	I am captivated by the information on the website regarding the online public relations activities of Vietnamese joint-stock commercial banks.	Saoula et al (2023); Cheng et al (2009)
2		EPR ₂	I can easily submit feedback on online public relations activities through the website platform of Vietnamese joint-stock commercial bank brands.	
3		EPR ₃	Online public relations help me gain timely insights into community and social activities of Vietnamese joint-stock commercial banks.	
4		EPR ₄	I feel a greater sense of control over my experience when accessing the website showcasing the online public relations activities of Vietnamese joint-stock commercial bank brands.	
5	Brand Awareness	BA ₁	I regularly pay attention to the brand of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Bank when conducting financial transactions.	Aaker (1991)
6		BA ₂	I can quickly recall the specific symbol or logo of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Bank that appears on online platforms.	
7		BA ₃	I can perceive the quality of service provided by Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Bank when compared to foreign bank brands.	
8		BA ₄	When I need to transact with a bank, the unique characteristics of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks quickly come to mind.	
9	Brand Association	BAS ₁	When thinking of the banking sector, the brands of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks are the first names that come to mind.	Aaker (1991)
10		BAS ₂	When considering online public relations activities, I often associate them with the social and community initiatives of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks. These activities have created a positive	

			brand image and reinforced their commitment to social responsibility.	
11		BAS ₃	I believe that Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks have gained societal recognition.	
12		BAS ₄	Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks have built a distinctive image in the minds of customers.	
13	Brand Love	BL ₁	Despite foreign banks offering better incentives, I still choose to use the financial services of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks	Batra et al (2012)
14		BL ₂	The brand of the Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Bank I currently use makes me happy.	
15		BL ₃	I always look forward to using the services provided by Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks.	
16		BL ₄	I love the brand of the Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Bank that I am using.	
17	Perceived Quality	PQ ₁	The service quality of the Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Bank I currently use fully meets my expectations	Aaker (1991)
18		PQ ₂	The services provided by Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks are very user-friendly and convenient for customers.	
19		PQ ₃	I feel safe and trustful when conducting financial transactions with Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks.	
20		PQ ₄	The service quality of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks is consistently reliable.	
21		PQ ₅	Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks are equipped with modern facilities and equipment.	
22	Customer Behavior	CB ₁	I will continue to use the products and services of the Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks that I trust.	Parasuraman et al (2000)
23		CB ₂	I am willing to use the services of Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks again when needed	
24		CB ₃	I am eager to recommend Vietnam Joint	

			Stock Commercial Banks to family and friends when they need to conduct financial transactions.	
25		CB4	I trust and am willing to promote the online public relations activities conducted by Vietnam Joint Stock Commercial Banks	

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

From the analysis results in Table 2, it can be concluded that all variables meet the requirements with the total correlation coefficient of the variables greater than 0.3. In addition, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients are more significant than 0.8, and the scales ensure reliability.

Table 2: Results of Cronbach’s alpha

Factors	The initial number of variables	Cronbach’s alpha	The number of valid variables
Online public relations (EPR)	4	0.873	4
Brand Awareness (BA)	4	0.842	4
Brand Association (BAS)	4	0.857	4
Brand Love (BL)	4	0.860	4
Perceived Quality (PQ)	5	0.870	5
Customer Behavior (CB)	4	0.881	4

Table 3: Results of factor rotation

	Componets					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
PQ ₅	0.817					
PQ ₃	0.765					
PQ ₂	0.764					
PQ ₁	0.715					
PQ ₄	0.709					
EPR ₁		0.842				
EPR ₄		0.820				
EPR ₂		0.785				
EPR ₃		0.744				
BL ₁			0.836			
BL ₂			0.825			

BL ₃			0.742			
BL ₄			0.668			
BA ₂				0.832		
BA ₃				0.738		
BA ₄				0.730		
BA ₁				0.714		
BAS ₄					0.844	
BAS ₁					0.760	
BAS ₂					0.756	
BAS ₃					0.727	
CB ₁						0.878
CB ₂						0.842
CB ₃						0.758
CB ₄						0.701
Eigenvalue	8.807	2.238	1.867	1.679	1.620	1.380
% of variance	35.228	8.951	7.467	6.716	6.478	5.518
Cumulative %	35.228	44.180	51.646	58.363	64.841	70.359

The results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in Table 3 show that the 25 observed variables are divided into groups of 6: Online public relations, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand love, brand associations and customer behaviour and all observed variables have Factor Loading coefficients greater than 0.5 and do not have wrong variables. Furthermore, the total variance extracted by these 6 factors is 70.359% > 50%. Thus, the 6 extracted factors explain 70.359% of the data variation of the 25 observed variables participating in EFA.

Table 4: Validity Analysis

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PQ	EPR	BL	BA	BAS	CB
PQ	0.872	0.577	0.266	0.875	0.760					
EPR	0.874	0.635	0.302	0.877	0.356***	0.797				
BL	0.861	0.608	0.288	0.865	0.459***	0.478***	0.780			
BA	0.842	0.571	0.241	0.843	0.371***	0.406***	0.421***	0.756		
BAS	0.856	0.599	0.288	0.861	0.452***	0.456***	0.476***	0.442***	0.774	
CB	0.882	0.652	0.302	0.886	0.515***	0.549***	0.537***	0.491***	0.536***	0.807

The results in Table 4 show that the variables in the model all achieve reliability with CR

(Composite Reliability) from 0.842 to 0.882, all exceeding the threshold of 0.7, ensuring the scale's internal consistency. The convergence value is shown through the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) of the variables, all above 0.5 (from 0.571 to 0.652), showing that the indicators of each concept are closely linked, reflecting well the content of each latent variable. In addition, the discriminant value of the scale is also guaranteed when the square root values of AVE are more significant than all the correlation coefficients between other latent variables. This indicates that the concepts in the model are highly discriminant, with no overlap in meaning. The MSV (Maximum Shared Variance) index of each variable is more minor than AVE, further strengthening the convergence and discriminant properties of the scale. MaxR(H) is also higher than CR for all variables, indicating that each concept is well explained by its indicators.

Table 5: Bootstrapping Result

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Conclusion
PQ ₅ <--- PQ	1.000				
PQ ₃ <--- PQ	.911	.049	18.596	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
PQ ₂ <--- PQ	.992	.053	18.846	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
PQ ₁ <--- PQ	1.004	.054	18.430	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
PQ ₄ <--- PQ	.936	.058	16.152	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
EPR ₁ <--- EPR	1.000				
EPR ₄ <--- EPR	.880	.041	21.428	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
EPR ₂ <--- EPR	.856	.040	21.362	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
EPR ₃ <--- EPR	.887	.044	20.201	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BL ₁ <--- BL	1.000				
BL ₂ <--- BL	.955	.046	20.831	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BL ₃ <--- BL	.923	.048	19.276	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BL ₄ <--- BL	.917	.049	18.597	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BA ₂ <--- BA	1.000				
BA ₃ <--- BA	.984	.056	17.562	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BA ₄ <--- BA	.942	.054	17.589	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BA ₁ <--- BA	.954	.054	17.522	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BAS ₄ <--- BAS	1.000				
BAS ₁ <--- BAS	1.141	.058	19.687	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BAS ₂ <--- BAS	.963	.056	17.134	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
BAS ₃ <--- BAS	1.047	.056	18.541	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
CB ₁ <--- CB	1.000				
CB ₂ <--- CB	.936	.040	23.410	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
CB ₃ <--- CB	.909	.042	21.660	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship
CB ₄ <--- CB	.921	.043	21.367	< 0.001	Statistically significant, strong relationship

The Bootstrap test results in Table 5 confirmed the crucial mediating role of CBBE factors on the relationship between E-PR and Customer Behavior. Specifically, Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Brand Love, and Perceived Quality factors all have high standardized regression weights, with Estimate values above 0.9 and p-value < 0.001, indicating that the relationships between the variables in the model are highly statistically significant. At the same time, it confirms the stability and reliability of the estimates, with small S.E (Standard Error) indexes ranging from 0.040 to 0.058. The 95% confidence intervals of the estimates also do not include the value 0, confirming the significant indirect influence of E-PR through the factors in CBBE. These results show that the presence of CBBE elements increases E-PR's effectiveness and builds trust and emotional connection between customers and the brand. As a result, E-PR not only directly impacts customer behaviour but also indirectly through enhancing CBBE, contributing to building sustainable customer relationships and strengthening brand loyalty.

4.2. Discussion

The study's results have emphasized the critical role of E-PR in enhancing CBBE and influencing customer behaviour. Through analysis and testing, primarily through the results from Bootstrap, it can be seen that E-PR strategies play a central role in building and strengthening CBBE factors, thereby strongly influencing customer behaviour. First, the results show that E-PR directly affects customer behaviour and indirectly through CBBE factors such as Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Brand Love, and Perceived Quality. These factors are not only the results of E-PR strategies but also play an important intermediary role, helping to amplify the impact of E-PR on Customer Behavior. This indicates that while E-PR can enhance awareness and create a positive image of the brand, the long-term effectiveness of E-PR also depends on the brand's ability to build brand equity factors based on customer perceptions. Next, the role of each CBBE element in this relationship is also a noteworthy highlight. Brand Awareness helps enhance brand recognition, facilitating customers to know and consider the brand. Brand association creates positive associations and good brand images, making customers think of the brand's value and relevance to their needs. Brand Love promotes emotional attachment and builds loyalty, while Perceived Quality enhances trust in service quality, thereby increasing the likelihood of customers returning and using the bank's services.

5. Conclusion

The research results show that E-PR not only directly impacts customer behaviour but also indirectly impacts through the mediating factors of CBBE, including Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Brand Love and Perceived Quality. These factors have confirmed the solid mediating properties, helping to amplify the effectiveness of E-PR, thereby building and strengthening customer loyalty. Bootstrap test results show that the relationships in the model are

all highly statistically significant, with reliable, standardized regression weights and minor standard errors, confirming the stability of the research model. This demonstrates that the model is suitable for empirical data and can be widely applied to analyze the role of E-PR and CBBE in many different contexts, especially in the banking sector. These results have important practical implications for joint stock commercial banks in Vietnam. Banks need to invest heavily in E-PR strategies to enhance brand awareness and build trust and emotional attachment with customers. In particular, E-PR campaigns should focus on social responsibility activities such as medical sponsorship, education, and environmental protection to strengthen brand image and create long-term value in customers' hearts. By creating and maintaining CBBE elements through E-PR, banks can increase loyalty and enhance competitiveness in an increasingly developed market. The study's results have emphasized the critical role of E-PR in enhancing CBBE and influencing customer behaviour. Through analysis and testing, primarily through the results from Bootstrap, it can be seen that E-PR strategies play a central role in building and strengthening CBBE factors, thereby strongly influencing customer behaviour. First, the results show that E-PR directly affects customer behaviour and indirectly through CBBE factors such as Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Brand Love, and Perceived Quality. These factors are not only the results of E-PR strategies but also play an important intermediary role, helping to amplify the impact of E-PR on Customer Behavior. This indicates that while E-PR can enhance awareness and create a positive image of the brand, the long-term effectiveness of E-PR also depends on the brand's ability to build brand equity factors based on customer perceptions. Next, the role of each CBBE element in this relationship is also a noteworthy highlight. Brand Awareness helps enhance brand recognition, facilitating customers to know and consider the brand. Brand association creates positive associations and good brand images, making customers think of the brand's value and relevance to their needs. Brand Love promotes emotional attachment and builds loyalty, while Perceived Quality enhances trust in service quality, thereby increasing the likelihood of customers returning and using the bank's services.

Limitations and future research: This study primarily focuses on the role of online public relations without fully considering other elements of digital integrated marketing communication tools. Future research should incorporate additional factors such as digital personal selling, digital advertising, digital promotions, and digital direct marketing, as well as include elements like brand trust, brand loyalty, and customer experience to provide a more comprehensive view of the impact of online marketing on customer behaviour through customer-based brand equity.

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