

Development of a Social Media Branding Model for Marketing Consultancy: A Study on Content Sharing Practices

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The research examines the strategic and tactical aspects of content sharing as a means to enhance visibility, engagement, and brand loyalty in the digital realm, drawing on perspectives from managers and experts in marketing consultancy.

Method: Employing a mixed-methods approach, which combines qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, the study provides insights into current practices, challenges, and opportunities that marketing consultants face in utilizing social media for branding.

Findings: Through qualitative analysis, the study identifies key factors influencing successful branding on social media, including the creation of appealing content and strategic interaction with customers.

Conclusion: This research contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the field of social media marketing and offers practical recommendations for industry professionals, enabling them to adapt to the dynamic nature of online branding in the digital age. Recommendations are provided for leveraging digital marketing strategies to improve brand image and performance, ultimately aiming to guide businesses in navigating the evolving landscape of social media branding.

Keywords: Branding, Social Media, Content Marketing, Mixed Methods Approach

1 Introduction

In today's overly interconnected world, the impact of social media on brand perception and recognition cannot be overstated. Social media platforms have become the main arena for brand interaction and audience engagement, transforming into essential tools for marketing consultancy firms aiming to strengthen and improve their clients' brand

identity (Abedi Ja'fari et al., 2011). This article embarks on a journey to explore and develop a comprehensive social media branding model specifically designed for the needs and goals of marketing consultants, delving into the dynamics of content sharing practices and their role in shaping brands on social media.

The business landscape has become increasingly competitive in the rapidly changing digital sphere,

positioning marketing consultancy firms at the forefront of innovative branding techniques (Müller & Christandl, 2019). In this context, social media has emerged as the focal point of brand interaction, with content sharing playing a crucial role in determining a brand's success on social media platforms, as content marketing and social media are two main components of digital branding. Particularly, the activity and production of original content on social media are of great importance due to the much greater opportunity to receive feedback from users. Users can freely and directly share their opinions by commenting, as well as engage in word-of-mouth marketing for the brand through content sharing (Buzeta et al., 2020).

A significant portion of digital branding is currently intertwined with activity on social networks. These tools possess a very high potential for branding and, of course, direct sales and marketing, consistently convincing both small and large businesses to be active on them (Kamboj et al., 2018). Customer and audience engagement with a business on social networks conveys the voice of that business's brand. The activity of businesses on social networks is one of the best ways to increase brand awareness and build a stronger brand identity. Therefore, for branding through social media, specialized knowledge and scientific understanding must be utilized to facilitate active user participation (McClure & Seock, 2020).

This study's importance lies in its focus on the perspectives of individuals active in the field of marketing consultancy. These professionals hold a unique position in understanding the subtle differences of brand management in the digital age. Through their experiences, challenges, and strategies, valuable insights into the complexities of social media branding will be gained. What tactics are more effective in attracting and retaining the attention of online audiences? How can marketing consultants tailor their approaches to the distinct needs and goals of their clients? These are questions that will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

In a world where the consumer's voice carries more weight than ever, the power of content sharing is evident. Each post on any social network, every tweet, or story shared on social media represents an opportunity to strengthen a brand or, conversely, weaken it. This study's exploration of content sharing practices provides a roadmap for marketing consultants to navigate this dynamic landscape. By examining strategies that have significantly resonated with audiences and quantifying the impact of these strategies, our goal is to present a practical, data-driven, and forward-looking model.

As we delve deeper into this study, we will reveal the core components of our social media branding model, with a special focus on content production, sharing, and engagement with audiences. By scrutinizing these elements, marketing consultants and industry specialists can craft brand narratives that greatly appeal to their target audiences. Through the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, this article aims to empower marketing consultants with the knowledge and tools necessary to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of social media branding. Ultimately, the goal is to enable these professionals to guide brands toward sustainable success, foster deeper connections with consumers, and remain at the forefront of the digital marketing revolution.

In the past decade, marked by the unpredictable growth of internet use and virtual networks and the significant welcome of online users to websites offering channels and services online, content marketing techniques have emerged as one of the most effective and efficient methods in terms of cost, performance, and user attraction (Naseri et al., 2017; Noohi & Shakuri, 2018; Rangriz et al., 2017). One of the fundamental reasons for the widespread popularity and appeal of this field is the expansion of data, information, and content production by users and non-professionals, as well as an increase in the level of knowledge and virtual awareness of audiences, users, customers, and consumers. Audiences and, in fact, users in the virtual space crave information and content that answers their questions and needs (Roshandel Arbatani et al., 2016). Generally, research shows that many companies have entered the field of content marketing, and digital marketing has become a new competitive arena for businesses (Bamm et al., 2018; Bu et al., 2021; Buzeta et al., 2020; Fox et al., 2018; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Müller & Christandl, 2019; Naseri et al., 2017; Noohi & Shakuri, 2018; Rezvani et al., 2019; Roshandel Arbatani et al., 2016). This situation also applies to Iran, where there is fierce competition among companies in this field. On the other hand, companies need tools to differentiate their brand in the digital and online commerce environment to succeed in this competitive field. Digital branding provides companies with various tools and opportunities for this purpose, with social media being one of these tools. Therefore, this research seeks to answer what motivations and factors affect branding on social media regarding content creation and sharing by people, so that marketers and other practitioners in this field, recognizing these motivations, can encourage their customers to more positive activity towards the desired brand, leading to more

branding of a commercial name that sequentially results in higher sales and prosperity.

Ultimately, this research aims to provide a reasoned framework to marketing consultancy professionals for leveraging the power of content sharing to increase visibility, engagement, and brand loyalty on social media platforms. By doing so, this article not only seeks to aid in the theoretical understanding of social media branding but also to offer practical guidance for industry professionals. In a dynamic environment where algorithms change, trends evolve, and consumer expectations shift rapidly, the data presented in this article aim to empower marketing consultants with the knowledge and tools necessary to create enduring and impactful brand narratives in the digital age.

2 Methods and Materials

This study is exploratory, aimed at presenting a model of branding on social media based on content sharing. It is conducted from a philosophical perspective based on the interpretive paradigm with an abductive-inductive approach. From the viewpoint of data type, it employs a mixed-methods (quantitative-qualitative) approach and is classified as cross-sectional survey research in terms of the time frame for data collection.

Table 1

Indicators of the Social Media Branding Model Based on Content Sharing

Overarching	Organizing	Basic Themes
Brand-related Factors	Social Media Branding	Defining social media branding goals; Creating relationship marketing with customers; Identifying media commonalities; Employing brand media strategy; Reducing the risk of customer purchase dissatisfaction; Developing an online user platform for customers
	Brand Competitiveness	Recognizing strengths and weaknesses of competitors; Creating attractive visuals for the brand name; Analyzing customer behavior and purchase decision-making; Publishing advertisements at appropriate times targeting a wide range of customers; Competing through content marketing
	Brand Value Creation	Brand personality; Brand awareness; Brand performance; Brand image; Perceived brand quality
Customer-related Factors	Customer Satisfaction and Trust	Enhancing interaction with customers; Customer loyalty; Improving service quality; Addressing customer needs; Quick and timely response
	Customer Experience Management	Engaging customers; Customer-centricity and orientation; Understanding the impact of customer experience elements; Conducting customer needs assessment
Content-related Factors	Content Creation and Sharing	Socializing content; Producing customer-driven content; Awareness of content marketing rules; Continuously producing attractive and user-friendly content; High-quality content production; Attention to website aesthetics and update
	Content Marketing Strategy	Employing digital marketing strategies; Developing marketing strategies; Using new information technologies; Understanding customer behavioral characteristics

The next step of the research was to identify the internal relationships of the identified indicators and present a branding model on social media based on content sharing. In this section, the focus was on the indicators of the first

3 Findings and Results

The interviews were analyzed using content analysis. For this purpose, the interview transcripts were read and reviewed multiple times. Subsequently, the data were broken down into meaningful units in the form of sentences and paragraphs related to the main meaning. These meaningful units were also reviewed several times, then appropriate codes for each meaningful unit were written, and the codes were classified based on semantic similarity. The analysis process was repeated in the same manner with the addition of each interview until theoretical saturation was achieved. The criterion for reaching theoretical saturation was the repetition in the extracted codes. The interview transcripts, previously entered into the MaxQDA software as text files, were studied repeatedly, and their key points were coded into the software. In the open coding phase, 364 codes were identified. Eventually, through axial coding, 3 overarching categories, 7 organizing categories, and 37 basic themes were identified. The indicators of the social media branding model based on content sharing extracted from the interviews using content analysis are presented in [Table 1](#).

quadrant (improvement) and the second quadrant (continuation). The final model was designed using the structural-interpretive modeling method.

Table 2

Influence and Dependency Levels of Branding Indicators on Social Media

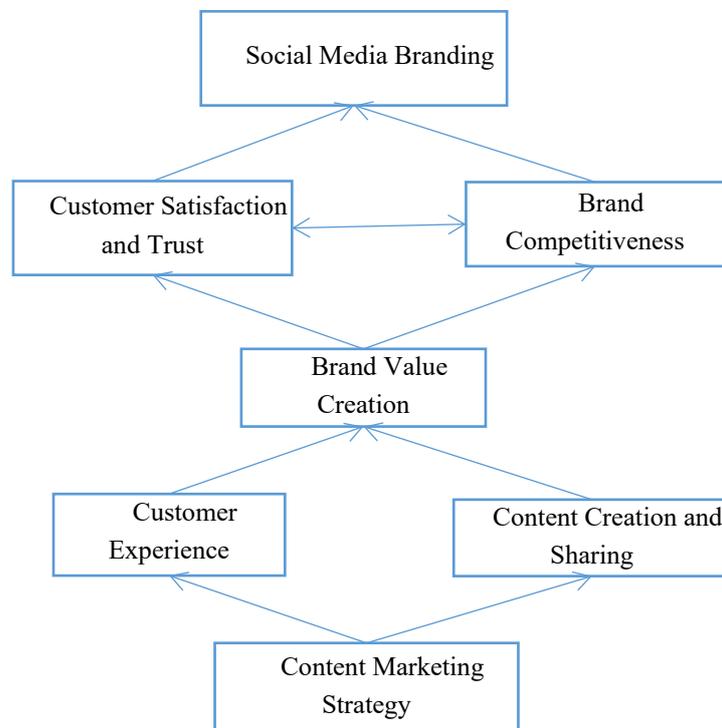
Name (Symbol)	Dependency Level	Influence Level	Level
Social Media Branding (SMB)	7	1	1
Brand Competitiveness (BC)	6	3	2
Brand Value Creation (BVC)	4	4	3
Content Creation and Sharing (CCS)	3	6	4
Customer Experience Management (CEM)	3	6	4
Content Marketing Strategy (CMS)	1	7	5
Customer Satisfaction and Trust (CTS)	6	3	2

Based on the power-influence dependency diagram, the Content Marketing Strategy (CMS) variable has high influence power and low susceptibility and is located in the area of independent variables. The variables of Brand Value Creation (BVC), Brand Competitiveness (BC), and Customer Satisfaction and Trust (CTS) also have high influence power and dependency levels and are therefore linking variables. The variables of Social Media Branding (SMB), Brand Competitiveness (BC), and Content Creation and Sharing (CCS) have high dependency but low influence,

thus are considered dependent variables. No variable was located in the first quadrant, i.e., the autonomous area. After determining the relationships and levels of the aforementioned indicators, they can be designed in a model form. For this purpose, the indicators are initially arranged from top to bottom based on their levels. In the present study, qualitative indicators are placed at 6 levels. The final model of branding on social media based on content sharing is displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Paradigm Model



4 Discussion and Conclusion

A brand can be considered one of the most valuable assets of any company. The greater the brand value in the minds of

customers, the more benefits the company can gain from its customers. Therefore, a brand is a long-term and strategic asset for any company that can be effective in helping with customer relationships and related issues such as customer

retention and profitable behaviors. Given the importance of branding for creating differentiation and growth for companies, this area has recently attracted researchers' attention. Based on the results of the present study, the overarching categories are classified into factors related to the brand, customer-related factors, and content marketing factors. Content marketing factors in social media are organizational factors that form the underlying elements of the model. The organizing categories of content marketing factors include content creation and sharing and content marketing strategy. Brand-related factors also include social media branding, brand competitiveness, and brand value creation as organizing categories. According to the results of this research, the content marketing strategy is the underlying element of the model that affects content creation and sharing and customer experience management. The results of Rezvani et al. (2019) also mentioned the component of customer experience management, which is consistent with the results of the present study (Rezvani et al., 2019). The mentioned factors increase the brand value among customers and lead to brand competitiveness and customer satisfaction and trust. The results of studies by Roshandel et al. (2016) also refer to components of customer satisfaction and trust, which are in harmony with the results of the present study (Roshandel Arbatani et al., 2016). Ultimately, based on the presented model, these components lead to branding on social media.

Based on the findings of the research, the following practical recommendations are provided:

For branding on social media, it is recommended that business owners initially focus on defining their social media branding goals and creating relationship marketing with customers. Initially, it is necessary to identify media commonalities and employ a brand media strategy to develop an online user platform for customers and reduce the risk of customer dissatisfaction.

Regarding content creation and sharing, it is advised that business owners engage in socializing content and producing content based on customer demands. Being aware of content marketing rules and consistently producing attractive and user-friendly content will lead to the creation and production of high-quality content. It is essential to note that the aesthetic appeal and up-to-dateness of a website have a significant impact on branding in social media.

Concerning brand competitiveness, it is suggested that businesses first understand the strengths and weaknesses of competitors. Virtual business owners can create attractive visuals for their brand name and publish their advertisements

at appropriate times over a wide range of customers, succeeding in competition through content marketing aligned with social media branding. Analyzing customer behavior and purchase decision-making will also aid in social media branding.

For brand value creation, it is recommended to work on embedding the brand personality through increasing brand awareness and improving brand performance quality. What attracts customers in social media branding is the brand image and perceived brand quality.

Regarding customer satisfaction and trust, it is recommended to enhance interaction with customers and address their needs to lay the groundwork for customer loyalty. Improving the quality of service delivery is related to responding quickly and timely to customers, which in social media branding leads to customer satisfaction and trust.

For customer experience management, it is advised to engage customers by understanding how customer experience elements impact, increasing interactions with customers, and conducting necessary needs assessments. One of the critical pillars in social media branding is customer-centricity and customer orientation, which online business owners should pay more attention to.

Concerning content marketing strategy, employing digital marketing strategies and, alongside that, developing marketing strategies can lead to an understanding of customers' behavioral characteristics. What is important for branding in social media is using new information technologies to inform customers and aligning them with the intended goals.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Authors Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Ethics principles

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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