




# Investigating the Impact of Social Media Marketing Efforts on Brand Trust

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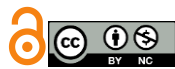
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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The aim of the present study is to investigate the impact of social media marketing efforts on brand trust.

**Methodology:** The research method employed is descriptive and correlational. The statistical population consists of all customers of domestic brand products in Tehran, and due to the large number of individuals, the sample size was estimated at 384 using simple random sampling method and Cochran's formula. The questionnaire was distributed among them. Data collection was done through a questionnaire, the reliability of which was measured and confirmed using Cronbach's alpha reliability and composite reliability methods.

**Findings:** The validity of the tool was examined using construct validity methods (external model), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity. The AVE value for all variables should be greater than 0.5. The research data were analyzed using structural equation modeling method and employing SPSS and AMOS software. The results of the study indicate the confirmation of all hypotheses.

**Conclusions:** The findings suggest that social media marketing efforts, including pattern recognition, consumer panel, and social networks, have a significant impact on brand trust.

**Keywords:** *Social media, social media marketing, brand trust, technology.*

## 1 Introduction

Technological advancements, along with the rapid pace and synchronization of change, have become an inseparable part of human life and individuals' inevitable escape (Ibrahim, 2022). People resort to web platforms for purchasing and using services and simultaneously engage in discussions and conversations with other users while obtaining comprehensive information about the desired

products or services and receiving their opinions about the product (Alidoost Zoghi et al., 2021). One of the most important tools for creating such a platform is social media. The power of social media in this era of human life cannot be overlooked in any (Yadav & Rahman, 2017).

The use of social media has turned into a major social phenomenon and serves as group applications of online tools and technology, facilitating participation, dialogue, free thinking, creation, and socialization among a group of users

(Voorveld et al., 2018). Social media platforms share several common characteristics. One of the most important features is that most of these sites heavily rely on user-generated content, where users largely determine the product offered by the company (Li et al., 2021). The vast customer base has made social media not only popular among users but also among companies that use social media as a marketing communication medium (Rastgar et al., 2022).

Social media marketing programs usually focus on creating content that can attract users' attention on social media sites and encourage them to share desired content on social media platforms, thus transmitting the company's/person's message in a chain from one user to another (Jacobson et al., 2020). Users' interest and attention to social networks increase every day, seemingly bringing them under their influence and domination, turning this into a tool for increasing companies' investments in social media (Voorveld et al., 2018). Having a satisfied customer base causes them to transfer their satisfaction to other customers, recommend products and services to them, and repeat purchasing behavior themselves with brand trust (Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Rastgar et al., 2022).

In recent years, many companies have come to believe that one of their most valuable assets is their product and service brands. A deeper understanding of concepts such as brand satisfaction and its formative structures will deepen the knowledge of practitioners in this field and provide better design and planning in the sales and branding activities (Ahmadi Dastjardi, 2018). Understanding the relationship between brand concepts and customer trust is one of the most important issues that today's managers face. Trust in the brand can result in performance beyond the buyer's expectations, allowing the buyer to feel the value acquired and recognize that value above their expectations (Portal et al., 2019). Brand trust plays a significant role in creating long-term benefits for the company, as customers with brand trust need less promotional activities than other customers and are willing to pay more for the benefits and quality of their favorite brand (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022).

On the other hand, organizations can gain a larger market share with the help of brand trust, as customers repeatedly purchase the brand and withstand competitive positioning factors and marketing efforts of competitors (Dehdashti Shahrokh & Naeli, 2020). The expansion of the Internet along with technological advancements has created new channels in the field of social media marketing for businesses interested in advertising and selling their products and services and has managed to attract user opinions (Ibrahim, 2022). Based on this, this marketing area can be employed to create brand trust. Therefore, this research is based on examining the impact of social media marketing efforts on brand trust.

## 2 Methods and Materials

The present study is of applied nature and was conducted using a descriptive and correlational method. The statistical population includes all customers of domestic brand products in Tehran. Considering the high number of individuals, the sample size was estimated at 384 using simple random sampling method and Cochran's formula, and the questionnaire was distributed among them. The results of the Cronbach's alpha reliability test and composite reliability for assessing the reliability of the instrument are presented in Table 1. To assess the validity of the questionnaire, content validity (expert opinion) was utilized, and its validity was confirmed. After distributing the questionnaire in the selected sample, the validity of the questionnaire was examined using construct validity methods (external model) and convergent validity (AVE). It is necessary for the AVE value to be greater than 0.5 for all research variables. The research data were analyzed using structural equation modeling method and employing SPSS and AMOS software.

## 3 Findings and Results

In this study, Cronbach's alpha reliability test was used to determine the reliability of the test. The alpha value for all variables was acceptable.

**Table 1**

*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability and Validity of Research Variables*

Research Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Brand Trust	0.808	0.564	0.866
Social Networks	0.794	0.622	0.867
Pattern Recognition	0.772	0.593	0.853
Consumer Panel	0.908	0.786	0.936

In this section, for testing the research hypotheses, a structural model was implemented. However, before running the structural model, the normality of the data was examined using the skewness and kurtosis indices. According to the obtained results, the range of skewness values was between -0.128 to 0.770, and the range of kurtosis index was between -1.066 to 1.173, indicating that

the data were normal. Additionally, to validate the model, besides the factor loadings of each question, the validity and reliability of the research variables were also considered. Factor loadings greater than 0.5 indicate that the observed variable is a reliable scale for the latent variable, which, according to the results in Table 2, all factor loadings of items are above 0.5.

**Table 2**

*Initial Factor Loadings*

Structure	Item	Factor Loading
Social Networks	Q1	0.740
	Q2	0.830
	Q3	0.860
	Q4	0.720
Brand Trust	Q5	0.520
	Q6	0.630
	Q7	0.580
	Q8	0.600
Pattern Recognition	Q9	0.820
	Q10	0.640
	Q11	0.740
Consumer Panel	Q12	0.770
	Q13	0.550
	Q14	0.920
	Q15	0.850
	Q16	0.740
	Q17	0.733

After examining and confirming the models, two partial indices, critical value, and P-value, were used to test the hypotheses' significance. Based on the significance level of 0.05, the critical value should be greater than 1.96. Values below this threshold render the parameter in the model insignificant. Additionally, P-values less than 0.05 indicate

a significant difference between the calculated value and the regression weights with a confidence level of 95%. The research hypotheses along with regression coefficients, critical values, and corresponding P-values are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Hypothesis Testing of Research Model*

Row	Hypothesis	Standard Coefficient	t-value	P-value	Result
1	Pattern Recognition → Trust	0.340	1.992	0.020	Confirmed
2	Consumer Panel → Trust	0.606	4.505	<0.001	Confirmed
3	Social Networks → Trust	0.136	1.122	0.035	Confirmed

The results indicate that among the three formulated hypotheses examining the influence of independent variables on brand trust, all hypotheses were accepted.

**Table 4***Fit Indices*

Fit Index	Description	Acceptable Criterion	Obtained Value	Status
Absolute Fit Indices				
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	$\geq 0.80$	0.821	Accepted
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index	$\geq 0.90$	0.870	Rejected
RMR	Root Mean Square Residual	$< 0.08$	0.085	Rejected
Comparative Fit Indices				
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	$\geq 0.90$	0.921	Accepted
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index	$\geq 0.90$	0.903	Accepted
IFI	Incremental Fit Index	$\geq 0.90$	0.922	Accepted
RFI	Relative Fit Index	$\geq 0.90$	0.843	Rejected
NFI	Normed Fit Index	$\geq 0.90$	0.872	Rejected
Parsimony Fit Indices				
(CMIN/Df)	Chi-Square to Degrees of Freedom Ratio	$\leq 3$	3.55	Accepted
PCFI	Parsimonious Comparative Fit Index	$\geq 5.0$	7.52	Accepted
PNFI	Parsimonious Normed Fit Index	$\geq 5.0$	7.12	Accepted
PRATIO	Parsimony Ratio	$\geq 5.0$	8.16	Accepted
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	$\leq 0.08$	0.08	Accepted

To evaluate the fit of the research model after confirming the measurement model, the structural model of the research is depicted, and the relationships between latent variables (which are actually the hypotheses of the research) are examined. In this regard, we first ensure the adequacy of fit indices and then proceed to examine the assumed relationships between latent variables. Based on the results, it can be claimed that the model fits well and is acceptable.

#### 4 Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the present study is to investigate the marketing efforts of social media on brand trust. The research findings indicate that all three formulated hypotheses regarding the examination of the effect of independent variables including pattern recognition, consumer panel, and social networks on brand trust as the dependent variable were confirmed. Social media serves as a powerful tool for building brand trust. It enables brands to engage with customers, showcase products in action, and highlight real customer experiences. Through effective use of social media, brands can establish credibility, build trust, and maintain a loyal customer base.

In social marketing, the effort is towards influencing the beliefs and behaviors of society, conceived as a planned process to influence the voluntary behavior of the audience group towards achieving a social goal (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Among the three types of social marketing implementation including pattern recognition, consumer panel, and social network, as a suitable and desirable media coverage, can convey our desired messages to the target audience group.

Utilizing a combination of mass media, communities, small groups, and individual activities can be more effective. When a simple and clear message is repeated across multiple platforms and throughout society, the likelihood of being seen and remembered increases (Evans et al., 2021). The diversity of channels used depends on the program budget and the research results on the influential channels on our target audience group.

By employing techniques such as audience research, product analysis, message design, dissemination of prepared messages, advertising, and ultimately evaluation and feedback, these concepts and principles alongside behavior change models can be applied effectively in the field of brand trust (Jacobson et al., 2020).

Measuring individuals' thoughts and beliefs through data collection and analysis, such as through surveys, and benchmarking the organization's beliefs and their recall capacity by stakeholders are useful ways of pattern recognition in building brand trust. Social media efforts can be likened to panels, forming closed communities for conducting special research inviting members to discuss the desired brand topics. In this closed community, members can express their interests in the desired brand discussion and get acquainted with individuals who share common interests. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as the most important social networks, contribute to the development and dissemination of ideas towards increasing brand trust (Evans et al., 2021; Hafez, 2021). The research results are consistent with prior findings (Dehdashti Shahrokh & Naeli, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Evans et al.,

2021; Hafez, 2021; Ibrahim, 2022; Jacobson et al., 2020; Shirkhodai et al., 2018).

Limitations of the study include the use of questionnaires and difficulties in gaining satisfaction and trust of the statistical community members in responding to the questionnaire. Furthermore, among the research limitations is the recommendation to investigate the impact of media marketing efforts on brand awareness in future studies.

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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.