Impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty in Saudi Arabia

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CHRONICLE	ABSTRACT
	The aim of the study is to explore the impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty. It focused on customers of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) specializing in the fashion products retail in Saudi Arabia. An online instrument was created through Google Forms and published on social media of SMEs that trade in fashion. In total, (1692) responses were received. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test hypotheses. The results of the research showed that all dimensions of social media marketing had a positive impact on brand loyalty. The highest impact was for social media word of mouth. The study recommends the issuance of more legal legislation to protect user privacy and prevent its penetration, in addition to enacting laws that punish bad use of networks, which increases customers' trust in these sites and motivates them to carry out many marketing campaigns.

1. Introduction

Social media is one of the effective marketing tools concerned with applying knowledge and techniques to enhance economic and social exchanges and satisfy user's needs and desires based on marketing products and services effects analysis, maintaining relationships with users, making friends, social interaction and quality more effectively than traditional means (Eldahamsheh et al., 2021; Khorsheed et al., 2020; Al-Hawary & Obiadat, 2021).It has a positive impact in attracting customers, influencing buyers and achieving brand fame, and at the same time it is an effective marketing tool for promotion (Tariqa et al., 2022; Al-Hawary & Alhajri, 2020). Social media provides benefits for both customers and organizations alike, as it allows additional communication channels to provide its services to clients at a lower cost and time, and also allows access to wider geographic areas to attract more clients, and since the client is the focus of competition between organizations, (Qalati et al.,2021).Since the customer is the focus of competition between organizations, the organizations had to find strong strategies in order to excel in work and overcome competitors (Miyonga, 2019). The spread of social media such as Facebook and Twitter via the Internet among a large segment of people, especially the youth category, has forced many organizations to resort to these means as tools for promoting and marketing their products (Wu, Morstatter, Carley, & Liu, 2019), and as an important means to raise the brand reputation, this is because the user of online social media interacts with the information and brands that emerge in a way that is expected to have a greater impact than traditional means (Dasgupta, & Grover,2019).

The traditional means of communication have become less effective and more expensive, which prompted companies to turn to electronic social media to market their products and build loyalty to their brand through (information exchange - knowledge - communication - friendship) (Al-Nady et al., 2016; Bulut, 2013). Customer loyalty is very important to financial performance (Chauhan et al., 2022). Also, customer satisfaction is more important in the case of electronic service because it is difficult to maintain customers in the virtual world and to obtain their loyalty (Khan et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction plays

an important role in business strategies success (Alhalalmeh et al., 2020; Alolayyan et al., 2018; Aldaihani, 2018). As customer satisfaction helps to keep customers from competitors (Oseiet al.,2021). Therefore, studying this topic and focusing on it enables us to come up with results and recommendations for marketers in social media benefits, website designers, as well as researchers. It helps them in developing marketing plans in order to enhance the use of social media, thus achieving their goals and overcoming the difficulties they face on the path to success and excellence.

2. Theoretical background and building of hypotheses

2.1 Social media marketing

Social media is the means that generated the consumer, and represents a diverse source of information on the Internet, which is used by consumers to inform each other about the products, the brand, the services and the problems they face, as social media includes several types of information exchange on the Internet, and this includes networks Social media such as Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, and blogging sites such as Twitter) (Al-Nawafah et al., 2022; Al-Abbadi et al., 2022; Mohammad et al., 2022; Acar, 2019).The term "social media" refers to a collection of web-based programs built on the philosophical and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0 that enable the production and exchange of user-generated content, the exchange of content, and the capacity for interaction with other users and supporters of brands.; makes it an ideal management in media marketing and consumer engagement as a tool for enabling decision-making and obtaining reliable information (Khalayleh & Al-Hawary, 2022; Altarifi et al., 2015; Koshy, 2013). Web (2.0) applications support informal users creation and facilitate ideas and information flow and informational content dissemination and exchange, which allows companies to learn about customer needs and interact with customers directly and personally, There are five categories to the Web (2.0): social networking blogs, forums, content aggregators, communities, and brand audiences (Mohammad, 2020; Pan, 2018).

Uddin (2020) defined social media as media for social interaction as it is comprehensive that goes beyond social communication marketing and includes several types, namely: collaborative projects (Wikidia), blogs, micro-blogs (Twitter), content communities (YouTube), and networking sites such as (FB).It is also a means of mixing and disseminating knowledge and information to a large number of users, and uses technology to disseminate and exchange content provided by users, such as: Facebook, Twitter, and other networking sites that refer to social media marketing g, and they represent low-cost tools that are used in Combining technology and social interaction. (Khorsheed et al., 2020). Social media is characterized as an online service that allows individuals to build a public personality and communication and to display a list expressing the relationship with others, whereby members are communicated, activities and trends are exchanged, and the latest information is obtained. New media has four characteristics that include: (persistence, search ability, repetition, and invisible audiences) (Amer, 2020). The researchers assure that media marketing contributes to convincing consumers that the company's products and services are worthwhile, through the use of online communities and the knowledge application, concepts and techniques necessary to advance economic and social ends and is concerned with analyzing the implications of marketing policies, activities and decisions. It is a strategic and systematic process to establish the company's influence and enhance the brand's reputation (Mariani, & Nambisan, 2021). Social media dimensions include:

Social Media word of mouth

The modern equivalent of basic word of mouth is word of mouth marketing (WOMM), often known as word of mouth advertising. (Maria et al. 2019). Numerous best practices and marketing strategies promote organic word-of-mouth, but campaigns, particularly those on social media, might specifically aim to increase the digital marketing of an internet business (Khasawneh et al., 2021). There are two ways that word-of-mouth marketing occurs: naturally and through the use of marketing and advertising initiatives. The two naturally overlap, and when combined, a successful WOM marketing approach will result in more organic WOM. Conversely, your WOMM initiatives will be considerably more successful if you already have a respectable level of organic WOM. The terms "Organic word of mouth" and "amplified word of mouth" refer to these two types of WOMM.

Social Media sales Promotion

One of the finest areas to increase brand exposure online is social media. Businesses employ social media promotion for many reasons, including the fact that these platforms have extensive user data. If you advertise your business on social media, you can use that data to target your audience and quickly send people who are interested in your brand to your website to increase conversion rates (Martinus & Anggraini, 2018). People are motivated to engage with others because social media platforms have a social element.

Social Media Interactive Marketing

Interactive marketing, also referred as event-driven or trigger-based marketing, is a marketing strategy that entails reacting immediately to the needs, expectations, or behaviors of a consumer (Kim, & Kim, 2022). Since personalization has taken center stage in digital advertising, the approach, which has been around for more than a decade, has proliferated.

Social media Entertainment

Website designers must focus in designing the site on the entertainment aspects of e-marketing, in order to obtain positive attitudes that increase the intent to purchase and help the user to obtain the products he wants, and make these products more attractive (Andika, 2018).Researchers have found that both information and entertainment positively influence online sellers, and that both influence a visitor's attitude toward the site and intent to engage with the Internet. As for remote presence, which meets the needs of users to escape from reality for the entertainment and enjoyment provided by social media; many e-commerce sites use animation to display products and convince customers by interacting with users on the Internet in a more entertaining and entertaining way and providing favorable attitudes to consumers. Studies also indicate that the reasons for using Facebook include social and personal motivations, maintaining a relationship and passing time while maintaining existing relationships, developing new relationships and entertainment (Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2014).

2.2 Brand loyalty

The concept of loyalty is very important due to the high intensity of competition and the widespread of institutions that saturated the markets with goods and services that provided the customer with several options to obtain the good or service he wants from anywhere he wants, since retaining customers is the quickest method to boost revenue and guarantee facility continuity, it was necessary to Companies to conduct a deep study of customer nature, his purchasing habits and the environment in order to create effective marketing plans that will allow businesses to draw in customers and guarantee that he will do business with them repeatedly until he reaches the loyalty stage (Mohammad, 2019; Al-Hawary & Harahsheh, 2014). As we can see, there is no consensus among researchers regarding the definition of loyalty being characterized by multiple dimensions. Loyalty can be broadly defined as a positive feeling that a customer may exhibit toward a brand, service, or activity. It's more of a trait in the customer than something inherent in the brand (Alhalalmeh et al., 2022; Al-Hawary, 2013). Loyalty is defined by Jamil et al. (2019) as a personal behavior that expresses the inclination towards a particular brand over another and the customer's intent to buy that brand again in the future. We learn from the previous ideas that loyalty requires repurchasing and a propensity for a good or service, meaning that loyalty is made up of behavioral loyalty and directional loyalty, which make up the loyalty model.

Loyalty has four stages: Cognitive Loyalty: In this stage, the customer's information about the characteristics of brands indicates that one brand is preferred over other alternative brands for the product or service: Affective Loyalty: At this stage the customer's tendencies and attitudes towards the brand evolve based on the continuous use, cognitive Loyalty: This stage is the stage of behavioral intention where the customer's desire includes repeating the purchase of a particular brand, but this desire may be subject to change or uncertain. Action loyalty: At this stage, the consumer has a strong desire to repeat the purchase of a brand.

2.3 Social Media on Brand loyalty

Reduced marketing expenses and higher sales will inevitably lead to increased profitability, and the fastest method to achieve this is through increased customer loyalty (Li, 2021). Loyalty provides the benefit to the customer and the service provider alike by deepening the customer's relationship with the service provider for a long period that increases the customer's confidence in the product and the service provider's interest in providing a suitable product free of defects and transforming the transaction with the customer with high loyalty to the product into a special transaction such as offering discounts on prices or speed up service delivery. Jazani et al. (2012) assure that customer satisfaction and brand loyalty is affected by the quality of services provided by organizations, and this requires them to emphasize the skills, knowledge and experience of employees responsible for implementing those services. Ahmad and Al-Zu'bi (2011) points out that customer satisfaction with the adoption of electronic banking services is related to: privacy and security, convenience and accessibility. Customer loyalty plays an important role in business strategies success. It can be said that social media marketing and customer brand loyalty have an essential role in the success and continuity of business (Kalia et al., 2021).Rather et al., 2019) confirms that there is a correlation between digital marketing and customer satisfaction; Where customer loyalty depends on the level of the nature of the service provided by service providers (Hadi et al., 2019), which can be better if it is provided electronically. Based on that we may formulate the study hypothesis as follow:

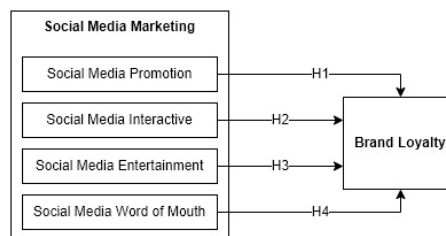**H₁:** *Social media marketing has a statistically significant impact on brand loyalty.*

Fig. 1. Research framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and data collection

The current research population is composed of customers of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) specializing in fashion retail in Saudi Arabia. Recently, social media networks have become one of the most significant means used to expand the market share of companies and increase their competitiveness. There are many social media used by SMEs, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many more. Thus, the phenomenon of buying through social media stores has become noticeable widespread in Saudi Arabia. To gather main data regarding this research, a random sampling method was used when an unlimited population (Zikmund et al., 2010). An online instrument was designed through Google Forms and disseminated on social networks owned by SMEs that trade in fashion. The total number of responses was 1,822. After an initial examination, the responses used in the statistical analysis were 1692, which represents 85.95% of the total responses. This percentage exceeds the minimum response rate, as well as it was quite greater than the minimum threshold for the sample number of 385 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The results of analyzing the characteristics of the sample showed that the majority of the respondents 68.9% were females while the rest of the respondents 31.1% were males. Moreover, the sample included 46.7% of persons who had a bachelor's degree, followed by 32.2% who had a diploma degree or less, and finally 21.1% who had a postgraduate degree.

3.1 Research instrument

A survey of the self-administration questionnaire was executed as a primary source for this research. This questionnaire consisted of three sections as follows:

Independent variable: social media marketing was deemed as the independent variable for this research, which consisted of 16 items borrowed from (Manzoor et al., 2020; Wibowo et al., 2020). Social media marketing is dealt with as a second-order latent variable composed of four first-order measurable constructs. Social media promotion was measured by four items "e.g., social media stores provide motivational gifts for their customers". Social media interactive was measured by four items "e.g., purchasing from social media stores allows sharing the information about the products offered". Social media entertainment was measured by four items "e.g., purchasing from social media stores brings the desired pleasure". Social media word of mouth was measured by four items "e.g., social media stores enable the freedom to exchange perspectives on products". All these items were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Dependent variable: brand loyalty which was measured through six items according to (Budiman, 2021; Zhang, 2019). Brand loyalty was a first-order construct, with its items "e.g., I will encourage/ recommend friends and relatives to purchase their products through social media stores". All responses were rated by a five-point Likert scale.

Control variables: this section included three categorical variables; Gender included the male and female categories. Qualifications were divided into three categories: diploma or less, bachelor's degree, and postgraduate degree.

4. Findings

4.1 Validity and reliability

Several statistical methods were conducted to ensure the accuracy of the research framework related to the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty. Validity was confirmed through both convergent validity and discriminant validity, while reliability indicators were internal consistency and composite reliability. Table 1 lists the validity and reliability results of the research framework.

Table 1 results indicated that the item loadings ranged within 0.662- 0.856, which exceeded the least threshold of 0.50 to keep the factors (Kephart et al., 2019). The average variance extracted (AVE) values were bigger than 0.50, which is considered the minimum limit of accepted AVE (Alshawabkeh et al., 2022; Mindrila, 2017). Hence, the measurement model had a convergent validity (Alolayyan et al., 2022; Cheah et al., 2018). Moreover, the results demonstrated that the AVE exceeded the maximum shared variance (MSV), along with that the square root of AVE ($\sqrt{AVE}$) was greater than the correlation coefficient between the rest of the research constructs. Therefore, the measurement model could be considered to have discriminant validity (Al-Shormana et al., 2021; Cheung & Wang, 2017). Regarding reliability, Cronbach's alpha (IC) values ranged within 0.825-0.885, also McDonald's omega (CR) values exceeded the 0.70, which is considered the lowest value of this index. Subsequently, the model used to examine the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty had an appropriate reliability (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). Besides ensuring the validity and reliability of the measurement model, a confirming factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the suitability of the model used to test hypotheses through construction validity indicators. Figure 2 illustrates the values of these indicators.

Table 1
Evaluating measurement model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	MSV	√AVE	IC	CR
SMP	SMP1	0.814	0.558	0.462	0.747	0.831	0.834
	SMP2	0.739					
	SMP3	0.752					
	SMP4	0.677					
SMI	SMI1	0.711	0.549	0.371	0.741	0.825	0.829
	SMI2	0.694					
	SMI3	0.832					
	SMI4	0.718					
SME	SME1	0.792	0.598	0.511	0.773	0.853	0.856
	SME2	0.856					
	SME3	0.733					
	SME4	0.704					
SMW	SMW1	0.662	0.570	0.486	0.755	0.838	0.841
	SMW2	0.806					
	SMW3	0.783					
	SMW4	0.761					
BL	BL1	0.728	0.568	0.503	0.753	0.885	0.887
	BL2	0.764					
	BL3	0.772					
	BL4	0.811					
	BL5	0.758					
	BL6	0.681					

Note: SMP: social media promotion, SMI: social media interactive, SME: social media entertainment, SMW: social media word of mouth, BL: brand loyalty, IC: internal consistency, CR: composite reliability.
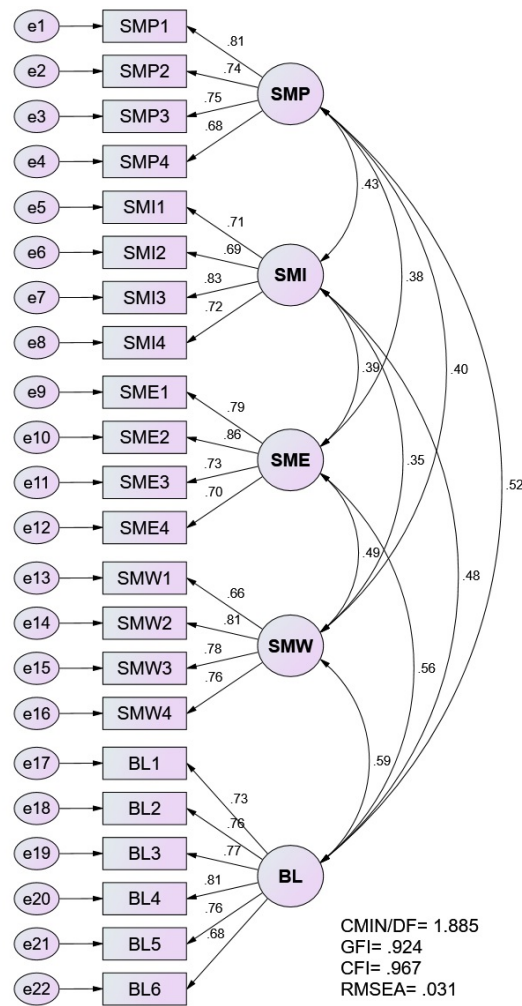

Fig. 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Fig. 2 results emphasized that the relative chi-squared index (CMIN/DF) did not reach the highest accepted value for this index of 3. Moreover, the values of the goodness of fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) were respectively 0.924 and 0.967, which exceeded 0.90 the recognized acceptable value for these indicators. Besides, the value of the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was less than 0.08 the maximum allowed value for this measure. Therefore, it was found that the model of testing the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty had an appropriate construction validity commensurate with the application of the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique in hypothesis testing (Marsh et al., 2020).

4.2 Descriptive statistics

The initial stage to identify the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty was to determine the respondents' attitudes about these variables. Therefore, the means and standard deviations were calculated for each construct separately. Furthermore, the intercorrelation values between the research variables were extracted to ensure that the data were free from multicollinearity. Table 2 lists the values related to these tests.

Table 2
Results of descriptive analysis

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. SMP	3.55	0.714	1				
2. SMI	3.71	0.839	0.415**	1			
3. SME	3.38	0.625	0.528**	0.449*	1		
4. SMW	3.74	0.912	0.463***	0.392**	0.506***	1	
5. BL	3.64	0.820	0.689***	0.662***	0.673***	0.703***	1

Note: SMP: social media promotion, SMI: social media interactive, SME: social media entertainment, SMW: social media word of mouth, BL: brand loyalty, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Through the results in Table 2, it was found that social media word of mouth (M= 3.74, SD= 0.912) ranked first among the dimensions of social media marketing with a high level, followed by social media interactive (M= 3.71, SD= 0.839) which ranked second with a high level also. However, social media promotion (M= 3.55, SD= 0.714) was ranked third with a moderate level, and finally social media entertainment (M= 3.38, SD= 0.625) ranked fourth at a moderate level. The results showed that brand loyalty (M= 3.64, SD= 0.820) was at a moderate level. Moreover, the results indicated that the intercorrelation values between the dimensions of social media marketing were less than 0.80. According to Hair et al. (2019), the data is free from the problem of multicollinearity when the intercorrelation between the dimensions of the independent variable is less than 0.80. Thus, the data used in the current research is free from the multicollinearity problem.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

The hypotheses of the current research indicated that the dimensions of social media marketing have a positive impact on brand loyalty. To test these hypotheses, the structural model shown in Fig. 3 was built using the AMOS program.
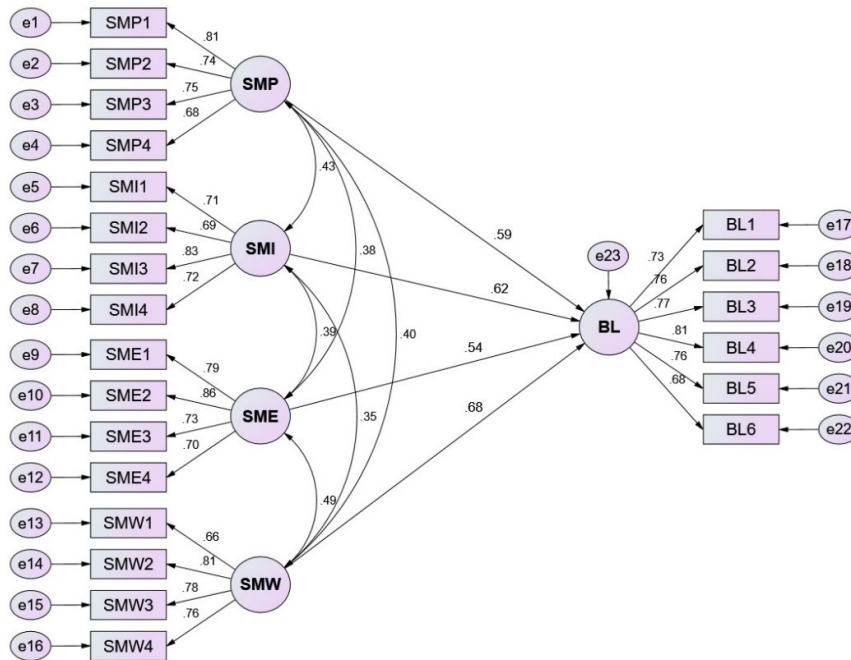

Fig. 3. SEM for examining the impact of SMM on BL

Furthermore, the impact coefficients related to testing the research hypotheses were extracted. Further, the critical ratio for each dimension of social media marketing and its probability value were determined. Table 3 shows the results obtained.

Table 3
Result of the structural equations model

Relationship path			B	S.E	Beta	C.R	P-value
SMP	→	BL	0.715	0.043	0.594	16.63**	0.003
SMI	→	BL	0.788	0.041	0.621	19.22***	0.000
SME	→	BL	0.692	0.044	0.545	15.73**	0.008
SMW	→	BL	0.814	0.038	0.679	21.42***	0.000

Note: SMP: social media promotion, SMI: social media interactive, SME: social media entertainment, SMW: social media word of mouth, BL: brand loyalty, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

All dimensions of social media marketing had a positive impact on brand loyalty. The highest impact was for social media word of mouth (β= 0.679, C.R.= 21.42, P= 0.000), followed by social media interactive (β= 0.621, C.R.= 19.22, P= 0.000), then social media promotion (β= 0.594, C.R.= 16.63, P= 0.003), and finally social media entertainment (β= 0.545, C.R.= 15.73, P= 0.008).

5. Discussions

Marketing social media is an ideal and positive environment to enhance social marketing communication, spread knowledge and information and communicate with friends, in addition to knowing these means of study community needs, working to meet them, preparing to help them and providing urgent service, In addition to being friendly and courteous in dealing with users, which motivates them to exchange opinions, conversations and recommendations based on past experiences. This is consistent with a study by Loanas and Stocica (2014) that found that users turn to social networks to maintain friend relationships and contact with them. Factors and dimensions of social media marketing contribute to building brand loyalty, The quality and improvement of the information provided by communication supports the mechanisms of building brand loyalty and improves marketing and communication effectiveness, and this result is consistent with the study of (Iqbal, & Khan, 2021). The results showed that the generation of content by users and the credibility of content in the context of social media marketing positively influence users to disseminate information, which leads to positive attitudes towards the brand. Therefore, Media interactions strongly influence the evaluation of products, services, and interactive trends, which enhance the customer's experience with the website, which contributes to building brand loyalty through the interaction and telling experiences with users. This finding is consistent with the study of Chandrasekara and Sedera (2018), which found the positive impact of social media marketing on social interaction, which in turn affects the branding and buying intentions of website users, as 70% of consumers visit social media to obtain product information brands and 49% of consumers make their purchasing decisions based on the information obtained.

The study results also confirmed that social media marketing improve customer engagement and commitment, as participation and commitment are positively correlated with the brand, which leads to higher levels of brand loyalty, profit and revenue for companies, and also shows that the study sample is keen to participate in websites through their previous and new experiences as well as their advice and guidance to other users. Findings are consistent with Tsimonis and Dimitradis (2014) study which confirmed that the engagement provided by social media marketing media contributed to building brand loyalty through dialogues. It also agrees with Shojaee and Azman's (2013) study that found that customer engagement and brand exposure positively influence brand awareness in the context of social media marketing. This result is also consistent with the study of Barhemmati and Ahmed (2015), which found a positive relationship between customer engagement through marketing social media and purchasing behavior, and therefore individuals have a positive attitude towards the brand and that participation through communication led to an emotional connection between customers and the brand and leads to increase customer loyalty towards the brand.

6. Recommendations

This study focused on certain dimensions and elements of social media marketing, and there are other factors that were not addressed, such as trust, satisfaction, and personalization; where the researcher recommends that it be taken as a mediating variable in future studies, to know the extent of the impact of these factors combined.

The study recommends the issuance of more legal legislation to protect user privacy and prevent its penetration, in addition to enacting laws that punish bad use of networks, which increases customers' trust in these sites and motivates them to carry out many marketing campaigns. It is also useful for brand owners to not limit their interest in identifying the best sites to target, and this is the classic method of planning or buying advertising spaces in advertising media; But it extends to knowing the reasons why users join those groups, campaigning and recommending messages to create groups that consumers want to join, so that its informational message covers more consumers effectively. Modern marketing social media has transformed from a textual media tool to a comprehensive audio-visual media tool, which indicates the need for those in charge of managing social media marketing communications and marketers to know how customers use marketing social networks and their

impact on them, to enhance companies share in competitive markets and develop brand loyalty and reputation. The study also recommends the need for website designers to issue awareness brochures about the characteristics and advantages of social media marketing, and to convince consumers of the advantages offered by these sites in shopping and to reduce time, effort and cost, and the need for marketers and website designers to understand the features offered by social media marketing and use the appropriate and effective communication tool to communicate with users and achieve their loyalty.

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