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Investigating the Impact of Social Media Communications on Brand Equity with the Mediating Role of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and the Moderating Role of Product Involvement

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate the effect of social media communications on brand equity with the mediating role of electronic word of mouth advertising and moderating product involvement (case study: dairy products in Yazd province). The research method is applicative in terms of its purpose, and survey in terms of its implementation method. The statistical population of all dairy product customers in Yazd province is 384 people consumed those products for at least one year and are present on social media, selected by the convenience sampling method. The research collection tool is a standard questionnaire derived from Lin et al. (2023) research. PLS software was applied to analyze the data. The results showed that the content produced by the company and the user has a significant effect on electronic word of mouth advertising and brand equity. The effect of electronic word of mouth advertising on brand equity was also reported to be significant. The impact of content produced by the company and also the user through the mediating role of electronic word-of-mouth advertising on brand equity has been significant. Finally, the findings confirm the moderating role of product involvement in the relationship between content produced by the company and the user and brand equity.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

The concept of brand equity is the added value acquired for the product and is considered a kind of capital for the brand (Khosravi et al., 2022). Brand equity has been considered as a very important concept in business activities and scientific research because organizations can gain competitive advantage through successful brands (Khodadad Hosseini et al., 2018). Consumers produce content about their specific experience with a specific product, which then has a specific impact on other consumers (Lin et al., 2023). In the field of buying and selling product categories such as dairy products, buyers can increase their information to a large extent through word-of-mouth advertising and suggestions for purchase by others. In such markets, in addition to the brand that buyers consider, the individual characteristics of each product are also important, and awareness of the alignment of different brands of a product with a group of desirable characteristics from the buyer's point of view is achieved through word-of-mouth advertising and recommendations. Social media communications in the form of both company-generated and user-generated content can influence electronic word-of-mouth advertising (Lin et al., 2023). Company-generated content consists of marketers who create content online with the intention of engaging consumers (Coulter et al., 2012). User-generated content also includes professional content. Users participate in information interactions in a decentralized and heterogeneous manner through functions such as liking, following, forwarding, and posting, and make recommendations to others based on their experiences with the brand (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021). Using social media allows the company to monitor the spread of its information, connect with target customers, and negotiate with them face-to-face, thereby engaging them more (Park et al., 2021). In marketing decision-making processes that are created in social media by content created by the company and users, brands that have an established successful value can be easily distinguished from similar brands, thereby increasing their attractiveness to consumers (Alam & Khan, 2019). Therefore, the question of the present study is whether social media communication affects brand equity through the mediating role of electronic word-of-mouth advertising and the moderating role of product engagement among dairy consumers in Yazd province on social media.

Theoretical Framework of Brand Equity

The brand equity variable was defined by Acre (1991) and Clre (1993) (Lin et al., 2023) and researchers have used these definitions extensively. Acre considers brand equity to have five dimensions, including brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and brand equity. The first four dimensions are expressed from the consumer's perspective, and the last dimension is indirectly related to the consumer's mindset about the product (Esmaeilpour & Barjoei, 2016).

Company-Generated Content

Company-generated content can be considered as a type of social media communication such as Facebook posts, tweets, and YouTube videos that are posted by brand owners on their brand pages, accounts, or social media channels (Lin et al., 2023).

User-generated content

User-generated content is content created by everyone, including any form of online content that is created, initiated, distributed, and consumed by users (Estrella-Ramón et al., 2019).

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Electronic word-of-mouth advertising

A type of informal relationship related to products and services, called electronic word-of-mouth advertising, which can act as a filter for customers; because this type of advertising is not dependent on manufacturers and creates user trust for decision-making and customer repurchase intentions (Ahmadi Esfahani, 2021).

Product engagement

Customer engagement is defined as a dynamic and interactive process in which customers and companies jointly create experiences under specific conditions. Similarly, customer engagement is understood as the extent to which customers provide resources in the process of producing and delivering services (Hsieh & Yen, 2005).

Aghadadi et al. (2026) studied the presentation of a model for ranking insurance companies based on brand equity. The findings showed that 36 components were identified and a preliminary model was developed. Based on the final conceptual model, the most important factors affecting brand equity in ranking insurance companies include: service characteristics, customer characteristics, financial performance, profitability, public trust and credibility, innovation and technology, investment and financial assets, symbolic characteristics, and service landscape.

Derisi et al. (2026) studied the presentation of a brand reputation model in order to increase the brand equity of the pharmaceutical industry. The results of the qualitative section showed that five main categories including causal conditions (proven quality, drug safety monitoring system, reliable scientific data), contextual conditions (institutional cooperation, scientific-economic interaction with policymakers, international standards), intervening conditions (geopolitical factors, multi-level competition, technological developments), strategies (scientific superiority, transparency, crisis management, indigenous innovation) and consequences (sustainable trust, market position, scientific credibility and political bargaining power) constitute the body of the brand reputation model. In the quantitative section, the results of the study showed the high validity of the extracted model.

Research Methodology

The research method is applicative in terms of its purpose, and survey in terms of its implementation method. The statistical population of all dairy product customers in Yazd province is 384 people consumed those products for at least one year; present on social media; and selected by the available sampling method. The research collection tool is a standard questionnaire derived from Lin et al. (2023) research.

Research findings

PLS software was used to analyze the data. The results showed that the content produced by the company and the user has a significant effect on electronic word-of-mouth advertising and brand equity. The effect of electronic word-of-mouth advertising on brand equity was also reported to be significant. The effect of the content produced by the company and the user through the mediating role of electronic word-of-mouth advertising on brand equity was significant. Finally, the findings indicate that the moderating role of product involvement in the relationship between the content produced by the company and the user and brand equity was confirmed.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effect of social media communications on brand equity with the mediating role of electronic word-of-mouth advertising and the moderating role of product involvement (case study: dairy products in Yazd province). The results of this study is consistent with the results of Aghadadi et al. (2026), Derisi et al. (2026), Borjalilou & Emadinasab (2025), Doroudi & Babaei (2025), Mohabati et al. (2024), Mohammadbeyk Tabrizi & Salar (2024), Asghari (2022), Alaf Jafari & Hosseini (2023), Arabshahi & Karavi (2022), and Rezvani et al. (2020). Arabshahi & Karavi (2022) showed that social media marketing and customer engagement have a positive and significant effect on electronic word-of-mouth advertising. Also, the effect of the variable social media marketing on customer engagement has been reported to be significant. According to the findings, social media marketing also had a significant effect on electronic word-of-mouth advertising with the mediating role of customer engagement on Instagram.
According to the findings, the following suggestion is made:
Dairy company managers should create more specific user review management programs and implement different strategies for disseminating product or brand knowledge based on consumers' mental engagement.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, or editing of this manuscript.

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Ethics Approval

All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.