

## Validation of the Pattern of Brand Marketing Efforts on Social Media with Customers in the Dermato- Cosmetic Industry

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### Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to validate the pattern of brand marketing efforts on social media with customers in the dermo-cosmetic industry. In terms of method and time frame of data collection this study is considered cross-sectional research. The statistical population involved the dermo-cosmetics industry clients of Serita brand. The sample size was 384 people and the employed sampling method was simple randomization method. To validate the pattern of brand marketing efforts on social media, the researcher made use of the partial least squares method alongside with Smart PLS software. The data collection tool was a questionnaire that was validated by structural validity, convergent validity and divergent validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was judged by employing Cronbach's alpha and combined reliability. The outcome indicated that the creating informative content and social content are considered to be the fundamental factors of the model that affects client trust. Client confidence brings about. Client engagement and encourages attractive page design. Accordingly, interacting with clients and designing attractive pages touches word-of-mouth advertising and eventually leads to the efficacy of social marketing efforts.

### Keywords

*Brand Marketing Effort Pattern in Social Media, Dermato-cosmetics Industry, Partial Least Squares*

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### Introduction

Brand is considered to be a paramount communication tool in customer relationship management and proves precious to clients for two reasons: first, it reduces consumer risk and second, it saves in decision-making processes (Maleki Minbash Razgah and Et al., 2015). Nowadays, by virtue of information and communication technologies, customers can use a broad range of modern technologies and can access ample amounts of considerable information; based on which they are able to have an accurate and complete access to product information and services provided by different organizations and companies. Consequently, today's clients are able to accurately evaluate and compare products. Contrastingly, the social media revolution has transformed the communication outlooks and has significantly affected marketing communications. Such a revolution has led to huge changes in the practices and approaches linked to the marketing activities of companies and mainly their activities in the field of branding and brand management. The rise in the value of social media applications in the lives of clients has been able to affect their communication habits in a significant way (Hotter et al., 2013). Such newfound bonds could turn clients from inactive marketing partners into active creators and influencers (Marz et al., 2009) and move parts of the power in brands directly to clients. As maintained by Burton et al. (2008), traditional one-way communication in marketing has become multidimensional and two-way. Furthermore, the role of customers has changed from being merely consumers to become one of the most important sources of informative advertising for companies. On that account, what is important in the present study is branding activities in the social media environment and the role, weight and importance of customers' favorable behaviors towards the brand in the form of contribution in the brand's electronic word-of-mouth advertising in the social media environment. The researcher will attempt to provide a model for branding in the environment of these media with a focus on the role of word-of-mouth

advertising. In an environment where trust in organizations and advertisements is diminishing, word-of-mouth or oral advertising is a way to obtain a competitive advantage. Influencing individual's opinions has outstanding benefits for organizations that supply goods and services (Jalilvand and Ebrahimi, 2011). However, with the advent of informative technologies and the internet, word-of-mouth advertising through social media has taken on a modern dimension. As a matter of fact, via online social media, users are able to share their experiences, emotions and opinions about different brands with other users. This new type of oral advertising is an important source of information on products and services and is considered to be one of the most successful strategies in the field of marketing communications (Ye and Choi, 2011). Webster (2009) considered oral advertising as the strongest form of getting to know the brand. In addition to that, Liao et al. (2012) proved that social media users who are highly aware of the brand attempt to recommend the brand to others. On the other hand, studies have shown that creating and strengthening an attachment to brand and developing bonds with it has behavioral outputs such as paying attention to buying from the brand and changing the brand (Priester et al., 2010). The current study is carried out in the field of dermo-cosmetics industry and Serita brand. It is a cosmetics manufacturer engaged in skin and hair care and its products are used to repair and improve skin and hair and at the same time adding to their beauty. This industry possess two main features, the specialization of products due to their therapeutic properties and the high volume and intensity of competition in this industry, which has made branding and special attention to the implementation tools of branding activities more and more important. Hence, the development of studies of branding that is based on user interactions and contributions and works to cover internal research gaps by presenting a model in this field, is of great importance. However, the company under study and other competing companies neglected the capabilities of social networks and the profitable attitudinal and behavioral consequences of the branding activities in

them; a fact that has led to an opportunity loss to use the potentials in this sector. This has also enabled other competing brands to make the most of the opportunities, leaving Serita out of competition due to its neglect of satisfactory use of new tools to build a stable competitive advantage. Therefore, the company under study should concentrate on the role and importance of social networks in activities related to its brand. Furthermore, researcher studies of reputable domestic databases led to an observation of a study in the field of modeling the branding activities of companies in social networks. In fact, domestic studies have merely copied or developed foreign models and an attempt to provide a comprehensive model based on global and local variables based on the behavioral characteristics of Iranian users in the field of branding in social network environment were not observed.

### **Background**

Online social media is considered to be a new generation of the internet tools that provide more opportunities for interaction, negotiation, dialogue and two-way communication in general; in such a manner that the concept of the web brings about online social media and the internet dialogues, which in their turn enable multidimensional communications among users of the World Wide Web (Bagheri et al., 2017). Online social media is the source of many of the cultural and social needs of its members. Additionally, it provides its members with the opportunity to simultaneously follow other social activities in these virtual communities (Modarresi Tehrani and Saeedi, 2016). Social media also inspires customers to communicate, participate, and purchase products and services based on a person-to-person interaction across large segments of the industry. Duly, the internet has increasingly been recognized as a room for direct interaction with customers, faster interaction, and information sharing and customer contribution (Kim et al., 2012). Whereas social media has provided new opportunities and benefits in the field of brand management, one of the most lasting challenges- despite

growing scientific interest is the sophistication of measuring their impact on the key factor of the success of brands. Unlike traditional media, customers are very active on social networking sites and they can play a significant role as creators of brand messages and advertisements (Chou and Shuchan, 2011). For instance, they can like a particular brand, comment on brand pages, share the content of brand pages, and invite their friends to the brand pages. These activities might be dubbed Social Media Support Behaviors (SABs). Supportive behavior from social media validates and strengthens brand message and advertising (Kim et al., 2014). Social media provides significant opportunities for marketers to access customers on social media pages and build personal relationships with them (Kelly et al., 2010). Social media plays an important role in brand success (Fan et al., 2011). Social media is a group of internet-based applications based on Web 2.0 technologies that enable the creation and exchange of content created by users. There exist many other forms of social media, including magazines, online forums, blogs, wikis, and social media. These sites concentrate on discussion, in which users send messages in the form of so-called posts, and others respond to these messages (skill and Hosseini, 1393). Social media has changed the direction, distribution and consumption of the resulting brand content and is transferring power in the form of brand images from marketers to online consumer and content communication (Tsai and Mann, 2013). Social media marketing can be seen as a new field and a development in business and includes marketing goods, services, information and ideas through social media marketing. Marketing through online applications brings about information among users and by changing the generated content, empower the users to make predictions for the future of their business and monitor their customers' buying behavior more closely. In the course of the development of communication media, first the amount of interaction and therefore the speed of unlocking passwords decreased. The space for interaction in verbal communication form had a natural form, but various factors caused the transformation of natural

relations into artificial relations (Babaei and Fahimifar, 2012). With the evolution of digital media, the form of interaction in interpersonal communication, the feedback of which was immediate, was replaced by delayed feedback in most cases. (Obe, 2008). The concept of interaction is used for a type of social media that allows two-way or multi-way communication and feedback. Such a possibility is now provided via the internet, and one-way communication has given way to two-way and multi-way interaction. Nowadays, due to information and communication technology, human beings have become a simultaneous community in different places and geographies, which have been linked by the expansion of communication and the accumulation of information. The advent of new communication and interactive technologies has led to a fundamental shift in human communication. Castells believes that since culture—which includes systems of beliefs and behaviors—is transmitted through communication, it undergoes fundamental changes with the advent of new technology. The emergence of communication technologies has changed the structure of human communication. Bell maintains that the online world and the possibility of simultaneous and innumerable communication and interactions let to instantaneous cultures, followed by instantaneous identities which are formed in a limited period and disappear fast with the emergence of other new identities. (Noor Mohammadi, 2009). Based on the nature of communication and interaction, social media is divided into two groups (profile-based and content-based). Profile-based social media concentrate on individual members. Information / topics are relevant to members, and the core purpose of profile-based social media is to motivate social media users to connect and take part in specific information / topics. Content-based social media concentrate on conversations and opinions regarding content. The main objective of content-based social media is to connect users to content (for example: on Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube). Galloger and Ransbotham (2010) concluded that social media-based customer exchange is increasing more than ever, and that



customers can conceptualize this exchange of ideas and interaction using their mobile phones or other devices. Word-of-mouth communication in marketing is the descriptions of recommendations and suggestions of consumers to each other. The speed and lack of brand bias towards a particular brand of a product or service has made word-of-mouth communication an effective source of information for consumers' choices, especially when their previous shopping experience was limited. Andert was one of the pioneer researchers to study mouth-to-mouth communication. He described mouth-to-mouth communication as a verbal and face-to-face, non-commercial communication among people about products, services, and companies. Latwin et al. (2008) also described word-of-mouth communication as communication among consumers about a product, service, or company in which sources are considered to be independent of commercial influence. From the marketers' point of view, positive verbal advertising is a traditional and old form of communication since it has been proven to be more effective than other forms of advertising. Due to the probable impact of verbal advertising and its value to organizations, marketing network managers are recommended to look for ways to encourage positive verbal advertising and reduce negative verbal advertising and its effects. The main source of word-of-mouth communication is the belief leaders. They are in fact active users who collect meanings from media messages and hand them to opinion seekers. Because consumers are unable to process all the data available on purchasing decisions, they often simplify the information and decision-making process. In this regard, word-of-mouth communication helps the process of purchasing decision by reducing the amount of data that needs to be collected and processed, since instead of concentrating on various sources for collecting and processing information we can focus on information obtained only from word-of-mouth communication. In accordance with the research literature and in conformity with the hypotheses developed in this research, the initial

model of social media marketing efforts with clients is designed and presented in Figure 1.

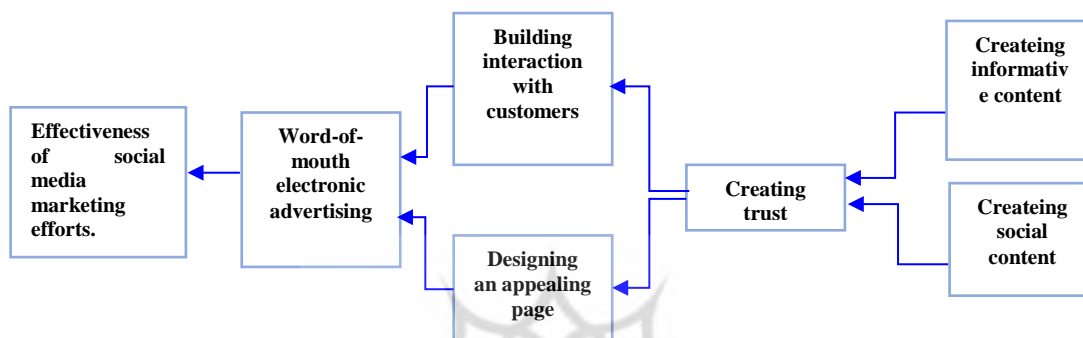


Figure 1  
*Pattern of Social Media Marketing*

### Method

This is an applied study that set to validate the pattern of social media marketing efforts with customers in the dermo-cosmetic industry and its case of study is Serita brand. This research is in the category of cross-sectional research in terms of method and time period of data collection. The statistical population includes Serita brand customers. Therefore, a sample of 384 people was selected by simple randomization sampling. The main tool for collecting research data is a questionnaire. The questionnaire includes seven main structures, which are: creating information content and creating social content, creating customer trust, interacting with customers and designing attractive pages and the effectiveness of social marketing efforts. This questionnaire consists of 33 specialized questions with a Likert scale of 5 degrees and four general questions including sex, age, education and service record. To evaluate the validity of the questionnaire, construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE) and divergent validity were used, the results of which are presented in Table 3. Also, Cronbach's total alpha of the questionnaire in a pilot study was 0.899. The value of AVE for all



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variables must be greater than 0.5. To calculate the reliability, the combined reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each factor have been calculated. The combined reliability and Cronbach's alpha of all dimensions should be greater than 0.7 (Azar and Gholamzadeh, 2019; Hensler et al., 2015). To evaluate divergent validity HTMT criterion was used a method which has replaced the old Fornell-Larker method. The allowable limit of this criterion is 0.85 to 0.9, in other words if the values of this criterion are less than 0.9; divergent validity is acceptable (Hansler et al., 2015). The results of the validation of the questionnaire are presented in the validation part of the model. The partial least squares technique has been employed to test the research hypotheses. This method consists of external model (measurement) and internal model (structural). To analyze the data and test the research hypotheses, the partial least squares method with Smart PLS software was used.

### Findings

The statistical population of this research includes 384 customers of the dermo-cosmetic industry. In terms of sex, 239 (62%) men and 145 (38%) of the customers are women. In terms of education, 41 people (11%) have associate or lower degrees, 206 people (54%) have bachelor's degrees and 137 people (36%) have postgraduate degrees. In terms of age, 100 people (26%) of customers are below 35 years old. 178 people (46%) are between 35 and 45 years old and 106 people (28%) are 45 years old and older.

Table 1

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

	CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SEX	MALE	239	62%
	FEMALE	145	38%
AGE	BELOW 35	100	26%
	35 TO 45	178	46%
	MORE THAN 45	106	28%
EDUCATION	ASSOCIATE	41	11%

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CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
UNDERGRADUATE	206	54%
GRADUATE	137	36%
TOTAL	384	100%

The partial least squares method has been employed to validate and present the final pattern of social media marketing efforts with customers. This analysis has been examined at two levels of external model (measurement section) and internal model (structural section). The observed load in all cases is a value greater than 0.6 and the bootstrap value (t-statistic) is greater than the critical value of 1.96. Thus, it can be concluded that each structure has been measured perfectly. Convergent validity and reliability of research variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Reliability*

Main structures	AVE	Combined reliability (CR)	Cronbach's alpha
Creating informative content	0/783	0/943	0/966
Creating social content	0/617	0/853	0/788
Building trust	0/708	0/910	0/911
Interaction with customers	0/675	0/932	0/853
Attractive page design	0/726	0/929	0/923
Word-of-mouth advertising	0/534	0/909	0/856
The effectiveness of social marketing efforts	0/641	0/773	0/841

Convergent validity (AVE) for all structures is greater than 0.5. Cronbach's alpha and combined reliability are also greater than 0.7. At last, the values of the HTMT single-dual validity index for measuring divergent validity are also presented in Table 3.

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Table 3  
*Divergent Validity*

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Informative content (1)	1.000						
Social content (2)	.321	1.000					
Building trust (3)	.426	.631	1.000				
Interaction with customers(4)	.412	.429	.508	1.000			
Attractive page design(5)	.311	.529	.576	.468	1.000		
Word-of-mouth advertising(6)	.214	.462	.446	.547	.530	1.000	
The effectiveness of social marketing efforts (7)	.342	.390	.447	.444	.553	.587	1.000

HTMT statistic in all cases is less than 0.9; consequently divergent validity is also confirmed. We can test the research hypotheses considering the findings of this scale. The relationship between the variables under study in each of the research hypotheses is tested based on a causal structure using the PLS technique. In the overall research model, which is presented in Figure 2, the relationship between the main research variables is showed.

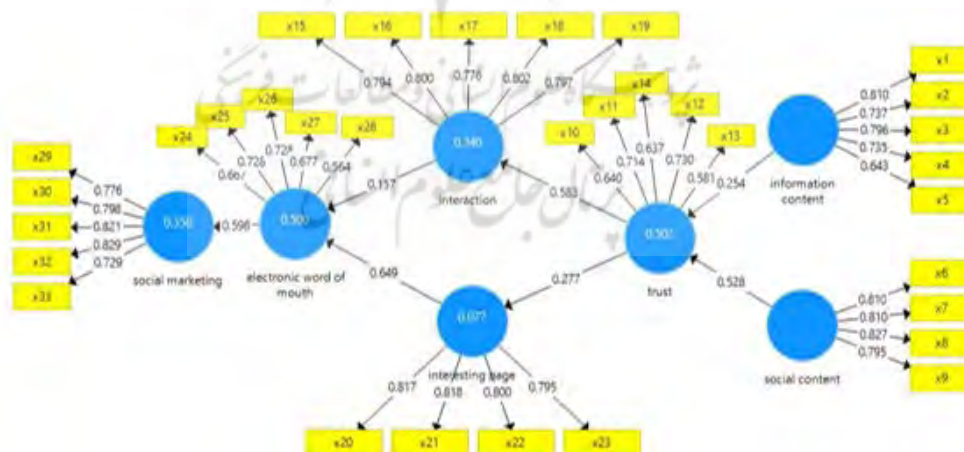


Figure 2  
*Validation Results (Standard)*

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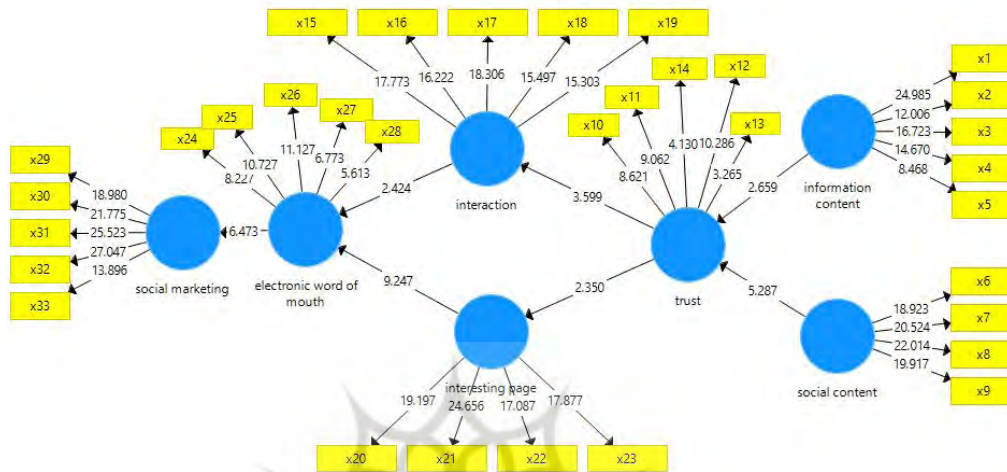


Figure 3  
Validation Results (Significance)

Table 4  
Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Load Factor	T Statistic	Result
H1	Creating informative content	Building trust	0/254	2/659	Approved
H2	Creating social content	Building trust	0/528	5/287	Approved
H3	Building trust	Interaction with customers	0/583	3/599	Approved
H4	Building trust	Attractive page design	0/277	2/350	Approved
H5	Interaction with customers	Word-of-mouth advertising	0/157	2/424	Approved
H6	Attractive page design	Word-of-mouth advertising	0/649	2/247	Approved
H7	Word-of-mouth advertising	The effectiveness of social marketing efforts	0/598	6/473	Approved

At last, the fit of the model is examined. The structural part of the model, unlike the measurement models, does not deal with the obvious questions and variables of the model and only focuses on the latent variables and the relationships among them. In this research, structural model fit is employed using coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>), redundancy and at last GOF statistics. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates the amount of change in each of the dependent variables of the model, which is described by independent variables. It is noteworthy to mention that the value of R<sup>2</sup> is introduced only for the endogenous variables of the model and in exogenous structures its value is zero. The higher the value of R<sup>2</sup> related to endogenous structures of the model, the better the fit of the model. Chin (1998) defined the three values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 as the criterion values for the weak, medium and strong values of the fit of the structural part of the model by the coefficient of determination.

Table 5  
*Fit Assessment of Model*

Main structures	Detection coefficient	CV-Com	CV-RED
Value creation strategy	-	0/480	0/344
Customer experience management	0/793	0/253	0/117
Organizational knowledge management	0/446	0/476	0/340
Human resources management	0/627	0/422	0/286
Service development skills	0/537	0/473	0/337
Creating value with customers	0/629	0/281	0/145
Creating strategic value	0/597	0/358	0/222

Based on Table 5, compatibility structures, critical success factors, competencies, and enablers are the endogenous variables of the research model. The value of the coefficient of determination reported for these variables is in the medium to strong level.

### Conclusion

According to the obtained results, the creation of informative content is one of the dimensions of brand marketing efforts in social networks. Based on the results, this aspect of marketing efforts, could significantly affect the three aspects of brand equity. These aspects include brand image, brand associations and brand quality. The company should focus more on being seen by using various techniques in creating informative content. The old way of providing marketing messages is ignored by many audiences for many reasons. To create informative content satisfactory of products letters should be presented. To submit such letters the company may use a dedicated page on its website, the home page of the website, the product page or the content that generates sales leads. Post product ratings on the web site. Based on the business model, consumers might be allowed to rate services and other things. This procedure can be very useful in e-commerce and online stores. The existence of reviews can increase sales. Customer reviews are up to 12 times more reliable for consumers than the original brand description. Consumers prefer to see updated content on social media, so Google has changed its search engine algorithm to allow customers to get updated content and information. Social media operating systems filter out irrelevant information and content for customers who are exposed to a pile of commercial messages on social media. Therefore, providing relevant and updated content is one of the most important strategies in successful social media. Creating social content also has a significant effect on customer satisfaction, brand personality, brand uniqueness, brand awareness, brand image and brand quality. This company's social media , provide customers with significant opportunities to access the information via their social pages. This way, the company can access a large amount of social content created by customers which provide information about their interests and characteristics and also provide their services in an attractive environment. Content generated by users should be led to content production. For this purpose, create a specific



hashtag for content users-generated content. Motivate users to produce videos, texts or photos of the product with a gift or discount. Risk reduction is another aspect of brand marketing efforts that has only significantly affected customer satisfaction.

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