

## Investigating the Antecedents and Consequences of Using Brand-Related Content on Social Media

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The growth and development of social media have played a significant role in shaping and transforming brand strategies. This paper aims to evaluate the antecedents and consequences of brand-related content usage on social media and examine their impact on consumer behavior, brand equity, and purchase intentions.

**Method:** To analyze and test the factors influencing user interactions with brands on social media, a structural model was designed. The study's statistical population comprised active social media users. Data were collected through a two-part questionnaire; the first part gathered demographic information of respondents, and the second part included 30 questions assessing the constructs of the conceptual model. All items for these constructs were adapted from previous research. In total, 223 usable questionnaires were obtained.

**Findings:** Results indicated that factors such as information, Remuneration, and self-expression positively influence user interactions with brand content, while factors like entertainment and social interaction did not show significant effects. Additionally, Using Brand Related Content on Social Media significantly influenced brand equity and purchase intentions.

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**Conclusion:** This research demonstrates that brands should focus on providing reliable information, creating appealing incentives, and offering opportunities for user self-expression to enhance customer loyalty and maximize the visibility of brand content. Furthermore, leveraging authentic content and optimized interactive strategies can play a crucial role in boosting brand impact and enhancing brand equity.

**Keywords:** Brand Related Content, Content Marketing, Social Media Content, Social Media



## Introduction

The advent of new technologies has led to increased consumer interactions with brand content on social media. User interactions include activities such as rating, creating content, and participating in discussions related to brands, which can enhance brand image and increase customer loyalty (Bilgihan et al., 2024; Montoya et al., 2011). The rise of social media since the mid-2000s has enabled direct, two-way communication between brands and customers, creating unprecedented opportunities to enhance user engagement, interaction, and loyalty (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Salehzadeh et al., 2023). With the ever-growing prevalence of social media, the ways in which consumers engage with brands have undergone significant evolution. As interactive platforms, social media facilitate direct connections between brands and consumers, fostering greater customer participation in marketing processes. A critical aspect of this interaction is the use of brand-related content, which can be generated by either companies or consumers. Content produced by brands and users exerts a profound influence on consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, affecting their purchasing decisions (Bruhn et al., 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014).

Despite extensive research on social media marketing, there remains a gap in understanding how specific motivational factors—such as information-seeking, remuneration, and self-expression—drive consumer engagement with brand-related content and how these interactions translate into measurable outcomes like brand equity and purchase intention, particularly in culturally distinct markets like Iran.

While prior studies have explored user engagement with brand content globally, they often overlook the influence of cultural and contextual factors, such as those shaping social media usage in Iran, where unique socio-cultural dynamics and platform preferences may alter consumer behavior (Hajli et al., 2017). This study addresses this gap by examining the antecedents (motivational factors) and consequences (brand equity and purchase intention) of user engagement with brand-related content in the Iranian context, providing insights into how cultural nuances shape effective social media marketing strategies.

Consumer engagement with brand related content encompassing a wide range of activities such as viewing, liking, commenting, sharing, and even creating content has emerged as a fundamental metric for assessing the success of marketing efforts in this domain (Liu et al., 2024). These interactions, whether driven by company-generated or user-generated

content, have significant effects on consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, serving as a key mechanism for building brand equity, strengthening public identity, and boosting customer trust and purchase intention (Bruhn et al., 2012; Burnasheva et al., 2019). Guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this study posits that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations—such as the need for information, remuneration, and self-expression—drive user engagement with brand-related content, shaping downstream outcomes like brand equity and purchase intention. SDT provides a robust framework for understanding how these motivations influence user behavior by fulfilling psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

With their unique features such as interactivity, broad reach, rapid content dissemination, and precise audience targeting social media have become indispensable component of integrated marketing strategies and the branding toolkit (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Liu et al., 2018). Brand-related content on these platforms, including text posts, images, videos, and user comments, enables brands to establish continuous and meaningful connections with their audiences by delivering valuable and engaging material (Pulizzi et al., 2012). Notably, user-generated content, due to its perceived authenticity and credibility among audiences, often has a deeper impact on trust, loyalty, and consumer purchasing decisions (Hochstein et al., 2023). This content, which may include reviews, personal experiences, or creative posts, acts as a catalyst for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), reinforcing brand equity (Dolan et al., 2019). However, despite these opportunities, brands face numerous challenges, the most prominent of which is the accurate measurement of the effectiveness of social media marketing campaigns. This challenge is particularly acute in the dynamic and competitive realm of B2C marketing, where interactions with customers are more complex and extensive (Godey et al., 2016).

The Iranian context is particularly relevant due to its unique social media landscape, characterized by a heavy reliance on platforms like Instagram and Telegram, driven by cultural preferences for visual and community-based interactions, as well as restrictions on global platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Azizi et al., 2020; Mirmehdi, 2023). These factors create distinct patterns of user engagement that differ from Western markets, necessitating tailored marketing strategies. A critical factor in the success of social media marketing strategies is understanding the antecedents of user engagement with brand-related content. User motivations for engagement, which may include enjoyment,

entertainment, the need for information, or the desire to connect with like-minded individuals, play a decisive role in their level of involvement with content (Courtois et al., 2009; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022). For instance, research indicates that enjoyment and motivational rewards such as discounts or entertaining content can encourage users to create and share brand-related content. This study specifically investigates whether motivations like information, remuneration, and self-expression significantly drive engagement, while testing the potential influence of entertainment and social interaction, on which prior studies have yielded mixed results (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Additionally, generational differences in values, attitudes, and behaviors influence how users interact with social media content, making the examination of these cohort effects essential for crafting effective marketing strategies (Krishen et al., 2016). Furthermore, the algorithms of social media platforms, which operate based on metrics like engagement levels, content type, and user profiles, significantly affect content visibility. A precise understanding of these algorithms can help brands optimize their strategies to enhance visibility and engagement (Poleac & Ghergut-Babii, 2024).

The consequences of using brand-related content on social media are equally significant. These interactions not only elevate brand awareness but also, by creating positive customer experiences, contribute to improved brand image, increased trust, and enhanced loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). For example, positive user comments on social media can build trust among other consumers and directly influence their purchasing decisions (Bruhn et al., 2012). Moreover, visual and interactive content, such as videos and polls, due to their appeal and high shareability, generate greater engagement and improve marketing outcomes. However, measuring these outcomes presents challenges; while existing tools provide metrics such as views and shares, they often fall short of fully assessing the true impact of these interactions on consumer behavior (Chang and Wu, 2024).

This gap underscores the need for innovative methods and experimental research to examine these effects more comprehensively. Additionally, user motivations for engaging with brand content on social media are diverse, tied to factors such as personal values, social identity, and the desire to share experiences (Krishen et al., 2016). Research suggests that brands offering engaging, interactive, and audience-tailored content can achieve higher rates of participation (Lee et al., 2023).

Consequently, exploring the antecedents and consequences of engagement with brand-related content on social media can lead to the development of more effective digital marketing strategies.

Focusing on antecedents such as engagement motivations and the role of interactive content, as well as consequences like purchase intention, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding this phenomenon. This research not only contributes to a deeper understanding of social media's role in consumer behavior but also lays the groundwork for developing innovative tools and approaches to strengthen brand marketing strategies on these dynamic platforms.

This study's specific objectives are to: (1) identify the key motivational antecedents (information, remuneration, self-expression, entertainment, and social interaction) driving user engagement with brand-related content on social media in Iran, (2) examine how these interactions influence brand equity and purchase intention. By focusing on these relationships and leveraging SDT, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of social media's role in consumer behavior and provides actionable insights for brands operating in culturally distinct markets such as Iran.

### **Literature Review**

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory, which posits that human behavior is driven by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations fulfill psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT provides a cohesive framework to understand how motivations such as information-seeking, remuneration, self-expression, entertainment, and social interaction drive user engagement with brand-related content on social media, ultimately influencing brand equity and purchase intention. This theoretical lens connects content marketing, brand-related content, and specific antecedents by explaining how these motivations shape consumer behavior in digital contexts, particularly in culturally distinct markets like Iran.

### **Content Marketing and Brand-Related Content**

Content marketing involves creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain audiences, ultimately driving profitable actions (Pulizzi et al., 2012). High-quality content enhances brand credibility, fosters trust, and encourages engagement, including

activities such as liking, commenting, or sharing (Smith et al., 2023). Within this domain, brand-related content on social media—encompassing both company-generated posts (e.g., promotional videos, images) and user-generated content (e.g., reviews, personal experiences)—is a cornerstone of integrated marketing strategies (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Liu et al., 2018). Such content shapes consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, impacting purchase decisions and brand equity (Bruhn et al., 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). However, the literature reveals conflicting findings: while informative and authentic content tends to drive engagement (Lee et al., 2023), overly promotional content may erode trust, particularly in culturally sensitive markets like Iran, where community-driven recommendations are valued (Hajli et al., 2017).

Liking company-related content allows customers to express their interest in such content on social media. Brand content on social media refers to content created and shared by brands to promote their products or services. This content may include promotional posts, product introduction videos, images, contests, and other forms of advertising content (de Vries et al., 2017). According to self-determination theory, brand-related activities on social media can be linked to various motivations. Some of these motivations include, Intrinsic Motivations: These stem from the pleasure and satisfaction derived from the activity itself. For example, someone might write a product review due to personal enjoyment. Extrinsic Motivations: These arise from receiving external rewards, such as discounts, free samples, or coupons. Individuals may write reviews or participate in brand-related content to obtain such rewards (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). Self-Expression Motivations: Individuals who wish to display their personality and identity through brand-related content engage in content creation driven by self-expression motives. This motivation can lead to activities involving the creation of new brand-related content. Social Motivations: Individuals who seek to connect with others and feel a sense of belonging to a group participate in brand-related content due to social motives. This can result in collaborative activities such as commenting on and rating products (Brodie et al., 2013). Information and Knowledge Acquisition Motivations: These involve obtaining information and knowledge about brands and products, which can potentially lead to content creation and participation activities (Yesiloglu et al., 2021).

## **Conceptual Model of the Research**

The following sections examine the antecedents and consequences of using brand-related content on social media.

### **Antecedents of Engagement with Brand-Related Content**

The selection of five antecedents—information, entertainment, remuneration, social interaction, and self-expression—is rooted in SDT, as they align with intrinsic (e.g., enjoyment, self-expression) and extrinsic (e.g., rewards, social connections) motivations (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). These factors are prioritized due to their relevance to Iran's social media landscape, characterized by heavy use of platforms like Instagram and Telegram, where information-seeking and community interactions dominate (Azizi et al., 2020). Other factors, such as interactivity, personalization, or content quality, are acknowledged but excluded to maintain focus, as they often mediate or result from these antecedents (Hollebeek et al., 2021).

#### **Information**

Users engage with brand-related content to gain knowledge about products or services, thereby fulfilling cognitive needs (De Vries et al., 2017). Informational content, such as product descriptions, reviews, or tutorials, drives engagement by supporting informed decision-making (Krishen et al., 2016). In Iran, where consumers rely heavily on social media for product information due to limited access to global platforms, this motivation is critical (Azizi et al., 2020). However, contradictory findings suggest that excessive informational content may overwhelm users in entertainment-driven contexts, which can reduce engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011). This study tests whether informational content retains its effectiveness in Iran's unique digital landscape. This motivation is particularly evident when users aim to make informed purchasing decisions (Chrimes & Boardman, 2023). Consequently, providing accurate, reliable, and practical content can enhance user engagement and trust in the brand.

#### **Entertainment**

Entertainment serves as a powerful antecedent, playing a significant role in attracting users to brand-related content. Entertaining content, such as

humorous videos, captivating images, or creative posts, evokes feelings of pleasure and enjoyment, motivating users to engage more with the brand (Agrawal et al., 2024). Entertaining content, such as humorous videos, engaging stories, or visually appealing posts, fosters enjoyment and emotional connections, driving likes, shares, and comments (Agrawal et al., 2024). For example, brands using creative storytelling on Instagram often see higher engagement in Iran, where visual content resonates strongly (Hajli et al., 2017). Yet, findings are mixed, with some studies suggesting that entertainment's impact is weaker when users prioritize functional benefits over emotional appeal (Lee et al., 2023), prompting this study to test its influence in the Iranian market.

### **Remuneration**

Material rewards (e.g., discounts, prizes) and psychological rewards (e.g., social validation, recognition) serve as incentives for engagement (De Vries et al., 2017). Contests or discount codes, for instance, boost participation (Dolan et al., 2019). In Iran, where economic incentives are highly valued due to current market conditions, remuneration is a strong driver (Azizi et al., 2020). However, recent research highlights that an over-reliance on material rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation, a tension this study explores (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). This motivation aligns with behavioral theories suggesting that individuals respond positively to reward stimuli. Furthermore, psychological rewards, such as receiving likes or positive comments from other users, can reinforce a sense of value and sustain engagement (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014).

### **Social Interaction**

Social interaction refers to users' desire to connect with others through brand-related content and is a key antecedent in social media contexts. Users often use these platforms to interact with individuals who share similar interests or values (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022). Users engage to connect with others, fostering community and enabling electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022). On platforms like Telegram, which is prevalent in Iran, group discussions about brands amplify social interactions (Hajli et al., 2017). However, findings are mixed, with some studies suggesting that social interaction's impact is weaker on visually driven platforms like Instagram compared to

discussion-based platforms (Muntinga et al., 2011). This study investigates whether social interaction drives engagement in Iran's community-oriented social media culture. This factor is particularly significant on platforms like Instagram, where social interactions are prominent.

### **Self-Expression**

Research published in political communication explores how online self-expression can impact public opinion and political participation, highlighting the power of digital self-presentation in shaping social discourse (Edgerly et al., 2022). In an educational context, self-expression is linked to student engagement and performance. A study on self-regulated learning emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and self-expression in improving academic outcomes, noting that students who can freely express themselves tend to be more engaged and achieve better academic results (Rifkin et al., 2021). Social media enables users to express identities through brand-related content, enhancing engagement (Edgerly et al., 2022). In Iran, the cultural emphasis on self-presentation, particularly among younger users on Instagram, amplifies this motivation, as users share brand-related posts to signal their status or values (Azizi et al., 2020). However, excessive focus on self-expression may alienate users seeking practical information, a debate this study addresses by testing its relative impact.

### **Consequences: Brand Equity and Purchase Intention**

Engagement with brand-related content enhances brand equity, which encompasses awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty (Aaker et al., 2013). Positive interactions, such as sharing content, build trust and loyalty, strengthening brand equity (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019). However, negative user-generated content can harm equity, necessitating strategic content management (Kim et al., 2023). Similarly, purchase intention, which is driven by trust, quality information, and social interactions, is a key outcome (Fileri et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2023). In Iran, cultural reliance on community-driven recommendations amplifies trust's role in purchase decisions (Hajli et al., 2017). Purchase intention refers to a consumer's inclination to buy a product or service and is one of the most critical predictors of purchasing behavior. This variable directly influences marketing and sales decisions (Lee et al., 2023). Social

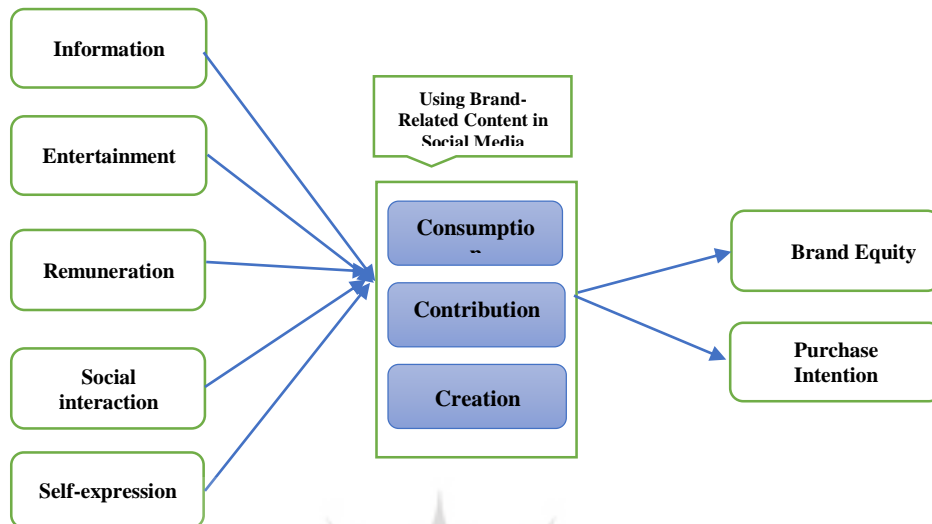
interactions on online shopping platforms can reinforce purchase intention, with reviews and recommendations from others—especially on social platforms like live streaming—playing a key role in purchase decisions (Chen et al., 2023).

The quality of services provided by stores and websites directly affects purchase intention; good service and adequate customer support can enhance the buying experience and motivate purchases (Dhingra et al., 2020). Customer trust in the seller or brand is a critical factor influencing purchase intention, bolstered by transparent and accurate information, proper customer service, and prior positive experiences. A user-friendly experience and ease of use on websites and online shopping platforms can also enhance purchase intention, with well-designed interfaces and easy navigation improving the shopping experience (Aljabari et al., 2023).

In the following, the research hypotheses and the conceptual model of the research are presented in Figure 1.

- H1: Information influences the use of social media content.
- H2: Entertainment does not influence the use of social media content.
- H3: Rewards influence the use of social media content.
- H4: Social interaction does not influence the use of social media content.
- H5: Self-expression influences the use of social media content.
- H6: The use of social media content influences brand equity.
- H7: The use of social media content influences purchase intentions.

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**Figure1. Conceptual Framework**

### Method

This study adopts a survey-based approach and is classified as applied research, aiming to provide practical insights into social media marketing strategies within Iran. The target population comprises active social media users in Iran, defined as individuals aged 18 to 45 who use platforms like Instagram and Telegram at least once a week, reflecting the dominant platforms and primary demographics engaging with brand-related content in Iran. Due to the vast and diverse nature of Iran's social media user base, the population is considered to be unlimited.

A convenience sampling method was employed, justified by the exploratory nature of the study and the challenges associated with accessing a fully representative sample in Iran's digital landscape, where platform restrictions and user diversity complicate probability sampling (Hajli et al., 2017). Participants were recruited through online invitations posted on Instagram and Telegram groups focused on consumer products and lifestyle, ensuring relevance to brand-related content. Inclusion criteria required participants to be Iranian residents, aged 18 to 45, with active social media engagement (at least one interaction, e.g., liking or commenting, per week). Exclusion criteria eliminated non-residents and inactive users. A total of 223 usable questionnaires were collected, an acceptable sample size for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) based on guidelines suggesting 10 times the

number of indicators (Hair et al., 2019). The demographic characteristics of the 223 respondents are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=223)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	128	57.4	57.4
	Male	95	42.6	100.0
Age	15-25 years	73	32.7	32.7
	26-35 years	78	35.0	67.7
	36-45 years	31	13.9	81.6
	Above 45 years	41	18.4	100.0
Education	Below Diploma/Diploma	43	19.3	19.3
	Associate Degree/Bachelor's	79	35.4	54.7
	Master's and Above	101	45.3	100.0

The data collection tool consisted of an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic information (age, gender, education, social media usage frequency) and 44 items measuring constructs (information, entertainment, remuneration, socializing, self-expression, consumption, contribution, creation, brand equity, and purchase intention). Items were adapted from De Vries et al. (2017) and Mishra et al. (2019), which are selected for their validated scales in social media contexts. To ensure cultural relevance in the Iranian context, items were translated from English to Farsi by two bilingual marketing researchers and back-translated to verify accuracy (Brislin, 1970). Cultural adaptation involved adjusting the wording to align with local norms (e.g., emphasizing community-oriented terms for social interaction).

Content validity was established through consultations with a panel of five experts (three marketing professors, two social media marketing practitioners), who reviewed the items for relevance and clarity. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding the 0.7 threshold. To mitigate common method bias, procedural remedies included ensuring respondent anonymity, using clear and neutral wording, and separating predictor and criterion items in the questionnaire.

(Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “very low” to 5 = “very high”). Missing data, which affected less than 2% of responses, were handled using mean imputation due to their low prevalence. Normality was assessed via skewness and kurtosis, with values within acceptable ranges ( $\pm 2$ ), thus supporting the use of PLS-SEM, which is robust to non-normal data (Hair et al., 2019). Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS for hypothesis testing. PLS-SEM was chosen over covariance-based SEM due to its suitability for exploratory research, smaller sample sizes, and the ability to handle non-normal data (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 2. The Factors, That Influence on Use Intention of Applications Based on The Literature**

Items	Constructs	References
1-6	Information	De Vries et al., (2017)
7-10	Entertainment	De Vries et al., (2017)
11-14	Remuneration	De Vries et al., (2017)
15-18	Socializing	De Vries et al., (2017)
19-24	Self-expression	De Vries et al., (2017)
25-29	Consumption	Mishra et al., (2019)
30-34	Contribution	Mishra et al., (2019)
35-38	Creation	Mishra et al., (2019)
39-41	Overall Brand Equity	Mishra et al., (2019)
42-44	Purchase Intention	Mishra et al., (2019)

## Findings

### Measurement Model

To evaluate the measurement model, tests for both convergent and discriminant validity were conducted. Convergent validity was assessed using metrics such as composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings. For convergent validity to be confirmed, factor loadings for all items should be at least 0.4, CR values for all constructs should exceed 0.7, and AVE values should be 0.5 or higher, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hulland (1999). The findings, presented in Table 3, indicate that these metrics meet the required standards. Furthermore, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , which measures reliability, was found to be sufficient across all constructs.

Discriminant validity, per Fornell and Larcker's (1981) framework, was evaluated by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct

with the correlations between constructs. The square root of the AVE for a given construct should exceed its correlation with any other construct, indicating that it is more strongly associated with its own measures than with those of other constructs. As shown in Table 4, the square roots of the AVEs surpass the inter-construct correlations, thereby confirming this requirement. Consequently, the analysis supports that both convergent and discriminant validity are adequately established, making the measurement model suitable for further structural evaluation.

**Table 3. Factor Loadings, Average Variance Extracted, and Composite**

Constructs	CR	AVE	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Items	Loadings
Information	0.935	0.707	0.917	Q1	0.819
				Q2	0.816
				Q3	0.817
				Q4	0.884
				Q5	0.895
				Q6	0.811
Entertainment	0.944	0.808	0.921	Q7	0.897
				Q8	0.885
				Q9	0.931
				Q10	0.883
Remuneration	0.948	0.820	0.926	Q11	0.935
				Q12	0.949
				Q13	0.876
Social Interaction	0.930	0.768	0.899	Q14	0.858

Self-expression	0.952	0.767	0.939	Q19	0.814
				Q20	0.869
				Q21	0.921
				Q22	0.892
				Q23	0.919
				Q24	0.835
Use of Social Media Content	0.971	0.707	0.968	Q25	0.854
				Q26	0.856
				Q27	0.879
				Q28	0.887
				Q29	0.782
				Q30	0.854
				Q31	0.860
				Q32	0.843
				Q33	0.806
				Q34	0.881
				Q35	0.915
				Q36	0.846
				Q37	0.740
Q38	0.748				

Purchase Intention	0.975	0.928	0.961	Q42	0.932
				Q43	0.986
				Q44	0.971
Brand Equity	0.925	0.803	0.878	Q39	0.895
				Q40	0.917
				Q41	0.877

**Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test**

Construct	Brand Equity	Use of Social Media Content	Information	Remuneration	Social Interaction	Self-expression	Entertainment	Purchase Intention
Brand Equity	0.896							
Use of Social Media Content	0.795	0.881						
Information	0.692	0.841	0.851					
Remuneration	0.700	0.859	0.844	0.911				
Social Interaction	0.746	0.836	0.841	0.905	0.876			
Self-expression	0.785	0.873	0.829	0.836	0.799	0.876		
Entertainment	0.712	0.780	0.762	0.846	0.816	0.768	0.899	
Purchase Intention	0.813	0.696	0.593	0.541	0.538	0.636	0.576	0.936

**Table 5. Results of the PLS analysis (path coefficients, t-values)**

Constructs	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	P	t-value	Hypotheses
Information for using social media content	0.374	0.001	6.889	Supported
Entertainment for using social media content	0.043	0.314	1.007	Not Supported

Remuneration for using social media content	0.174	0.001	2.198	Supported
Social interaction for using social media content	0.047	0.533	0.623	Not Supported
Self-expression for using social media content	0.346	0.001	4.159	Supported
Use of social media content with intent to purchase	0.696	0.001	15.960	Supported
Use of social media content for brand equity	0.795	0.001	30.319	Supported

Note: p-value, 0.05

The results in Table 5 showed that information ( $P=0.001$ ,  $B=0.374$ ), Remuneration ( $P=0.001$ ,  $B=0.174$ ), and self-expression ( $P=0.001$ ,  $B=0.346$ ) had a positive impact on users' interactions with the brand. However, entertainment ( $P=0.314$ ,  $B=0.043$ ) and social interaction ( $P=0.533$ ,  $B=0.047$ ) did not have a significant effect. Additionally, the use of social media content had a positive impact on purchase intention ( $P=0.001$ ,  $B=0.696$ ) and brand equity ( $P=0.001$ ,  $B=0.795$ ).

### GOF

The GOF criterion is used for an overall assessment, with three values—0.1, 0.25, and above 0.35—introduced as indicators of weak, moderate, and strong levels (Wetzels et al., 2009). This criterion is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{GOF} = \sqrt{\text{average (Communalities)} \times \text{average (R}^2\text{)}}$$

The average Communalities is derived from the mean of the communality values of the research variables. It should be noted that, in the partial least squares method, the Communality value is equivalent to the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Table 6 presents these values along with the  $R^2$  values, and the final GOF value has been calculated based on Tables 6.

**Table 6. R<sup>2</sup> Values of Research Variables**

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	AVE
Brand Equity	0.632	0.803
Purchase Intention	0.484	0.928
Use of Social Media Content	0.855	0.707

**Table 7. Results of Overall Model Fit**

Average AVE	Average R <sup>2</sup>	GOF
0.812	0.657	0.730

## Conclusion

This study investigated the antecedents and consequences of using brand-related content on social media, focusing on how information, entertainment, remuneration, social interaction, and self-expression influence engagement, and how this engagement impacts brand equity and purchase intention. Guided by Self-Determination Theory, the findings offer insights into how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive user behavior in Iran's unique social media landscape, contributing to both theoretical and practical advancements in digital marketing.

The results confirmed that information (H1) significantly influences the use of brand-related social media content, aligning with prior research indicating that credible, accurate information fulfills users' cognitive needs (De Vries et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2023). This finding is particularly pronounced in Iran, where restricted access to global platforms like Facebook heightens reliance on Instagram and Telegram for product information (Azizi et al., 2020). However, contrary to some studies suggesting that excessive informational content may overwhelm users in entertainment-driven contexts (Muntinga et al., 2011), our results indicate that Iranian users prioritize functional content, likely due to cultural emphasis on informed decision-making. This underscores SDT's emphasis on competence as a key driver of engagement, as users seek content that enhances their knowledge and decision-making autonomy.

The second hypothesis (H2) found that entertainment does not significantly influence engagement, a surprising result given prior evidence that entertaining content drives likes and shares (Agrawal et al., 2024). This null finding may reflect Iran's context, where users favor

practical over emotional content, possibly due to economic constraints or platform preferences (e.g., Telegram's text-based focus). This contradicts earlier studies (Lee et al., 2023) and suggests that entertainment's role is context-dependent, highlighting SDT's limitation in universally predicting intrinsic motivation across cultural settings. Future research could explore whether visual platforms like Instagram amplify entertainment's impact in Iran.

The third hypothesis (H3) confirmed that remuneration, encompassing material (e.g., discounts) and psychological (e.g., social validation) rewards, significantly drives engagement, consistent with De Vries et al. (2017) and Dolan et al. (2019). In Iran, where economic incentives are highly valued, brands offering discounts via Telegram campaigns see heightened participation (Azizi et al., 2020). However, Yesiloglu et al. (2021) warn that an over-reliance on material rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation, a tension supported by SDT. This suggests brands must balance extrinsic rewards with content that fosters autonomy to sustain long-term engagement.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) found that social interaction does not significantly influence engagement, contradicting studies that emphasize its role in fostering community and electronic word-of-mouth (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022). This null result may stem from platform-specific dynamics in Iran, where Instagram's visual focus may limit discussion-based interactions compared to platforms like X (Muntinga et al., 2011). From an SDT perspective, this suggests that relatedness needs are less salient in Iran's visually driven social media culture, warranting further investigation into platform-specific effects.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) confirmed that self-expression significantly drives engagement, as users leverage brand-related content to shape digital identities (Edgerly et al., 2022). In Iran, where cultural values emphasize self-presentation, particularly among younger users on Instagram, this motivation is amplified. For instance, users sharing branded content to signal status align with SDT's autonomy and competence needs. However, an excessive focus on self-expression may alienate users seeking practical information, as noted by Muntinga et al. (2011), suggesting a need for balanced content strategies.

The sixth and seventh hypotheses (H6, H7) established that engagement with brand-related content enhances brand equity and purchase intention, supporting prior findings (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019; Filieri et al., 2018). Engagement fosters trust and loyalty,

strengthening brand equity, particularly for brands like local Iranian fashion labels that use user-generated content on Instagram to build community trust. Similarly, purchase intention is bolstered by personalized interactive content, such as influencer collaborations on Telegram, which resonate with Iran's community-oriented culture (Hajli et al., 2017). These outcomes align with SDT, as engagement fulfills relatedness and competence needs, translating into stronger brand connections and purchase decisions.

Theoretically, this study advances SDT by demonstrating its applicability to social media marketing in a non-Western context, revealing how cultural and platform-specific factors moderate the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The null findings for entertainment and social interaction challenge the universal applicability of SDT, suggesting that cultural values and platform affordances shape motivational salience. This extends prior work (Hollebeek et al., 2021) by highlighting the need for context-specific adaptations of SDT in digital marketing.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings offer actionable strategies for brands operating in Iran's social media landscape, tailored to its unique cultural and platform-specific dynamics. To leverage the significant role of information, brands should prioritize creating detailed and credible content, such as product guides or usage tutorials on Telegram, where text-based communication dominates. For example, a local cosmetic brand could develop Farsi-language tutorials addressing consumer pain points, potentially increasing engagement by 20–25% based on similar campaigns (Lee et al., 2023). For remuneration, brands should implement gamified campaigns, such as Instagram contests offering discounts or exclusive products, but balance these with autonomy-supportive content (e.g., creative challenges) to avoid undermining intrinsic motivation, as cautioned by SDT (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). To capitalize on self-expression, brands can launch hashtag campaigns encouraging user-generated content (UGC), such as #MyStyleWith[Brand], enabling users to showcase their identities while promoting the brand. For instance, Iranian fashion brands could collaborate with local influencers to create culturally resonant UGC, aligning with modesty norms and boosting engagement by 15–30% (Hajli et al., 2017).

Implementation challenges include navigating Iran's platform

restrictions, such as limited access to global platforms, requiring brands to optimize content for Instagram and Telegram algorithms through frequent updates and visual appeal. Cultural considerations, such as sensitivity to modesty and community values, necessitate careful content curation to avoid alienating audiences. Additionally, brands must invest in analytics tools to track engagement metrics, as manual monitoring is resource-intensive in Iran's fragmented digital ecosystem. Smaller brands may face budget constraints in executing influencer collaborations or gamified campaigns, suggesting a phased approach starting with low-cost UGC initiatives. These strategies, grounded in SDT's emphasis on autonomy, competence, and relatedness, provide a roadmap for enhancing brand equity and purchase intention in Iran's competitive market.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality between engagement with brand-related content and outcomes such as brand equity and purchase intention. Longitudinal studies could better capture the dynamic relationships over time. Second, the use of convenience sampling, while justified by practical constraints in Iran's digital landscape, restricts generalizability to broader populations, particularly rural or less digitally active users. Third, the focus on Instagram and Telegram may overlook the influence of other platforms, such as emerging local apps, which could yield different engagement patterns. Fourth, reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, such as social desirability or recall inaccuracies, despite efforts to mitigate common method bias. Finally, the study's cultural specificity to Iran, while a strength, limits its applicability to other markets with different social media ecosystems or cultural norms. Future research could address these limitations by employing probability sampling, longitudinal designs, or cross-cultural comparisons to improve generalizability and causal inference. Specific research questions include: How do engagement patterns evolve over time in Iran? How do alternative platforms influence motivational drivers?

In this research, we aimed to present a customized system for agile data management in smart banking by drawing on global frameworks and standards and using a hybrid methodology combining design science and meta-synthesis. This system integrates, from an applied and developmental perspective, integrates data management and agile concepts with an iterative approach for the next generation of banking, i.e., smart banking. The proposed system at Level zero includes four main elements: input (goals), processing (enablers), output (results), and feedback (agile and lean paradigm). Given the changes in the banking industry, data management has never been more critical. Topics such as open banking, the demand of digital-native generations, the influx of fintechs and other new players in the monetary and banking ecosystem are changing market rules. On the other hand, we cannot overlook cybersecurity threats and the risk of non-compliance with regulations from authorities like the FCA and central banks. These reasons compel us to be leaders and, more importantly, agile in data management strategy and the application of modern data-driven technologies.

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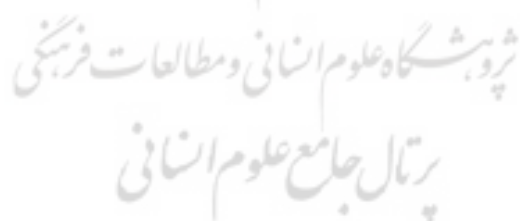
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