Investigating the effect of social media marketing on buying intent and brand equity (case study: banks of Karaj city) Mohsen Zadeh

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of social media marketing on purchase intention and brand equity in Melli Bank in Karaj. The research method is descriptive survey and the statistical population of the present study is all customers of Melli Bank in Karaj. The sample size was selected 384 people by using Cochran's formula and simple random sampling method. The data collection method was documentary (library) and field (questionnaire) and the data collection tool in this study was three questionnaires. SPSS and Smart PLS software were also used to analyze the findings. The results showed that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on the purchase intention and brand equity.

Key words: Marketing activities, social media, brand equity, purchase intent

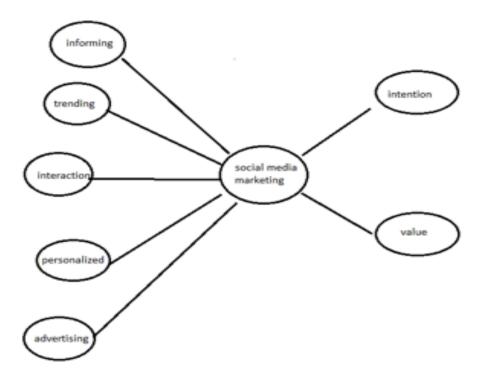
Introduction

Many businesses have had significant success in social media for a variety of reasons, and many virtual businesses have been doomed to failure (Yavada et al. 2017). This issue attracted the attention of many researchers. Various studies have shown that various factors such as industry status, competition, customers, etc. are involved in this failure or success. Therefore, one of the aspects of success in the virtual world is to know more users and Internet buyers, so that a favorable environment and products tailored to their tastes can be provided (Sobol et al., 2018). Today, Internet customers are a new segment of customers and it is necessary to identify the components that affect their purchasing behavior and achieve competitive advantages through the analysis of these components (Cover et al., 2015). In this regard, examining

consumer behavior and recognizing the main factors that affect the completion of the purchasing process when visiting the site and the repetition of purchasing behavior by customers, is vital and for companies active in this field, it is a step toward success (Shi et al., 2016). In recent years, many companies have come to believe that one of their most valuable assets is their brands of products and services, because having a positive and distinctive image in the minds of customers for a brand has been a competitive advantage. Optimal brands can differentiate and make organizations profitable in the long run by attracting new customers and creating loyalty in existing customers, and by creating a positive image because of the value that creates the superiority of that brand in the minds of consumers (Alavi, 1390) they can have a significant effect on customer satisfaction and purchase intention. Today, the brand is one of the most valuable assets of companies in the field of competition. The more the brand value is in the minds of customers, companies can achieve more benefits from customers (Hosseini et al., 2011), because achieving a prominent brand and creating a positive attitude in the minds of consumers has enabled organizations and companies to operate in a competitive environment in today's world, different from companies and competitors. Therefore, in the current and modern society, companies cannot attend only by relying on the functional characteristics of products and services (Seved Javadin Shams, 2007). In the new era of corporate integration and globalization, brand value is a key determinant of corporate value and stock market value. Brand is one of the intangible assets of any company that is the source of the highest values. (Hosseini et al., 2009). Brand equity stems from the perception that consumers have of the brand, which is altered by many factors. Brand equity cannot be understood without considering its sources, i.e. the factors that are effective in creating and shaping brand equity in the minds of consumers. Today, the brand is no longer just an effective tool in the hands of managers. Branding is a strategic requirement that helps organizations create more value for customers as well as creating sustainable competitive advantages (Keller, 1993). Intention to purchase is a predetermined plan for definitive purchasing or receiving services in the future; it is also considered a factor in predicting consumer buying behavior. Purchasing intent shows that consumers follow cognitive needs, searching for information through the external environment, evaluating options, and purchasing decisions and post-purchase experiences (Schiff man and Knock, 2000). The purchasing decision-making process is influenced by various factors, the most important of which are socio-cultural and group factors, psychological and individual factors, situational factors and factors related to the marketing mix.

Today, the importance of consumer behavior in various industries and economic, social and cultural fields is clear to everybody. Therefore, to understand the behavioral intentions of the consumer, it is necessary to identify the factors that affect the intensity of the desire to perform the behavior. One might not have imagined that one day companies and production and service companies would be concerned with consumer behavior in addition to profitability and sales; But intense dynamism and increasing competition and consumer concern about trust or pessimism about the products of companies and institutions is vital to their survival in today's growing competitive market (Bajelan, Mansouri and Shaabani, 2013). On the other hand, consumer behavior has been one of the most important issues for marketing researchers in recent decades. Diversity and variety of consumer behavior is due to the variety of factors affecting a person's behavior and motivation to buy. The existence of different consumer groups for the markets of a product indicates wide differences. Today, the consumer is considered as the key to the success or failure of a company. Therefore, understanding consumer behavior is very important. (Hashemi, 2010). The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of social media marketing on purchase intention and brand equity (Case study: banks in Karaj).

Basic conceptual model of research



Figure

The theoretical framework is the basis on which the entire research design or project is based. It is logical developed, described and complete network between variables that are identified through processes such as interviewing, observation and "review of the literature" (Khaki, 2011).

Theoretical Foundations Social media

According to Kaplan and Hanlin (2010), "Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that influence the ideological and technological basis of the Web and allow the creation and exchange of usergenerated content. Social media can take many forms, such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, microblogging sites, and more.

Social networks are social structures made up of nodes that usually connect individuals or organizations through one or more specific types of communication such as financial exchanges, friendships, business, emotions, prejudices, hobbies, and habits. Today, huge amounts of information are available on social networks, blogs, information sharing sites and online gaming sites. Social Networks, a New Trend in Electronic-Marketing: In the world of electronic-marketing, new business models have been introduced and new trends are emerging. One of the latest trends is social networks, which have not only attracted a large number of users and visitors, but also a place to put online advertisements of various companies. Social networks connect people with all kinds of different interests and one of the expanding areas in the use of social networks is pages and topics related to organizations and companies of production and services. Businesses have begun to use social media as a way to help connect employees and customers, to learn about their interests and characteristics, and to provide customer service in an engaging tech environment. In addition, popular online social networks attract online advertising from retailers and other companies. In the present era, traditional advertising methods do not have the efficiency of the past. Customers understand the content of the advertising message and find traditional advertising methods unpleasant. Customers are aware of the importance of paying attention to advertising methods and make marketing managers aware of their tastes and interests. Brands need to create customer service that is functional and transparent. For example, some brands create mobile applications, in which case, the customer has access to products or services at any time and can choose their product and easily pay for it. In general, it can be said that companies and marketers should use new strategies to attract customers (Shi et al., 2013). The results show that the usability of the website affects satisfaction, satisfaction in turn affects the willingness to use the website. Usability does not directly affect the willingness to use the site, but has an indirect effect on the willingness to use the website through consumer satisfaction. Social media has been discovered through marketing, technology adoption model, user motivations and limitations. There is very little research on the role of social media as an advertising medium for an organization. In this study, we will examine social media marketing from an advertising perspective. Social media is used as a component of marketing advertising to increase awareness of the brand, increase sales, increase customer loyalty and create intangible assets such as brand equity. Here are the dimensions: entertainment, interaction, up-to-datedness, customization and verbal (linguistic) marketing (Contantiness et al., 2010)

Social media marketing

Provides services through social media systems to establish and maintain stakeholder relationships that increase stakeholder value by facilitating interaction, information sharing, and providing personalized purchasing advice on existing products and services. Social media marketing means marketing through social media. Any activity that is done on social media and leads to customer attraction is called social media marketing. (Yadav et al., 2017).

Intention to buy

According to Fishban (1975), an individual's intention to perform a behavior is a function of his or her attitude toward performing that behavior under certain conditions and the norms and values that govern his or her behavior and motivation for a particular situation. It can be said that a person's attitude towards the action is a function of the individual's beliefs about the possible consequences of performing that action and his evaluation of those beliefs. Thus, having a clearer understanding of the consequences of consumer behavior can help marketers to better communicate strategic goals (Yavada et al., 2017).

Expresses the consumer's desire to buy a product or receive a special service in the future. In other words, an increase in buying intention means that the likelihood of buying increases (Asichifman and Kanook, 2007).

Consumers' intention to buy is people's perception of the performance of a product and whether customers are willing to buy more than a particular organization or reduce their purchases (Samadi et al., 2008).

Brand equity

Brand equity is a set of characteristics and credits related to the brand that increase or decrease the value created by the product for customers and the organization (Atilan, 2005).

Yadav et al. (2017) conducted a study entitled Customer Perception of Social Media Marketing Activities in the E-Commerce Industry Development and Validation. This study presents a five-dimensional scale with 15 items for measuring SMMA e-commerce based on existing articles in the field of e-commerce and social media marketing. This scale shows comprehensive psychological characteristics in the form of results from various validations. This indicates that the received SMMA positively affects the purpose of the purchase and the reputation of the brand and confirms the scientific validity of the developed scale. The new scale introduces managerial and theoretical concepts as well as paves the way for future research. Yavada et al. (2017) examined consumer perception. In this study, the dimensions of information, personalization, flexibility, interactivity and word of mouth marketing were considered as the main components of social media marketing and consumer perception. The impact of social media marketing on brand equity and consumer buying intent was also examined. The collected data were analyzed by structural equation method in SPSS and SMARTPLS software. Based on the results, consumer perception, information, personalization, flexibility, interactivity and word of mouth marketing have a direct and

significant impact on social media marketing. Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on brand equity. Social media marketing influences the consumer's intention to buy and perception.

Khosravi (2018) in a study examining consumer perception of social media marketing activities on brand valuation, customer response and purchase intention. The statistical population of this study is the residents of District 21 of Tehran using Kaleh products and the statistical sample consists of 380 people. SPSS and Amos software were also used to analyze the data. Finally, it was examined as a conclusion from the analysis of dissertation hypotheses. The results showed that consumer perception of social media marketing activities has an impact on brand valuation, customer response and purchase intention. Therefore, companies can strengthen their relationship with their customers through such activities.

Rafiei and Farahmand (2018) conducted a study to measure consumer perception of online social media marketing. In this research, the opinions of managers and experts of Fars hotels have been studied. The sample size was 180 people and the standard questionnaire adapted from Arefi research (1396) in a study was used to investigate the impact of social media marketing on the evaluation of service quality by customers. The statistical population of this study is all customers of the Roban online store, of which a sample of 400 people has been selected using Morgan table. In this study, two questionnaires of social media marketing and service quality were used to collect information in order to test the hypotheses. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed using the content validity method. To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for both questionnaires was more than 0.7 which indicates that the questionnaires have a favorable reliability. Skewness and kurtosis tests showed that the obtained data follow the normal distribution. Structural equation modeling technique has been used to test the hypotheses. The results of this analysis showed that the scope of social media marketing has a significant effect on the evaluation of service quality; Social media marketing culture has a significant impact on service quality assessment; The structure of social media marketing has a significant impact on the evaluation of service quality; The dominance of social media marketing has a significant impact on the evaluation of service quality. Finally, research and practical suggestions based on research findings are presented.

Research Hypotheses

The main hypothesis:

Social media marketing activity has a significant effect on the purchase intention and brand equity. Sub-hypotheses:

- 1) Perceived social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
- 2) Personalized social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
- 3) Informing social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
- 4) Trending of social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
- 5) Interaction in social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
- 6) Word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
 - 7) Perceived social media marketing activity has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
 - 8) Personalized social media marketing activity has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
 - 9) Informing social media marketing activity has a significant impact on buying intent.
 - 10) Social media marketing activity trending has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
 - 11) Interaction in social media marketing activity has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
- 12) Word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activity has a significant impact on the intention to buy.

Research Method

The present study is descriptive-survey in terms of data collection and purpose, which is performed to obtain information about the relationship and its extent between variables. On the other hand, because this research follows relationships in a systematic way and is implemented in real life conditions, it is considered a field study (Khaki, 2015). The present study is classified as quantitative research based on the type of

data. To analyze the data, two descriptive methods were used to examine the characteristics of respondents and then the inferential method was used to first evaluate the reliability and validity of the research questionnaire and also the research model by using Cronbach's alpha tests, composite coefficient (Dillon-Goldstein), factor loading and mean extracted variance (AVE) and Chen test. Then, to analyze the proposed model and test the research hypotheses, the factor analysis method using the partial least squares (PLS) method was used. SPSS22 and Smart-PLS software packages were used also for data analysis.

Research Findings

- A: Descriptive findings (sample demographic description):
 - The gender survey showed that more than 86.6% of the people who participated in this study are men, which indicates that men are more willing to work with the researcher.
 - ✓ In the survey of the respondents' income, it was observed that more than 45% of the people who participated in this research have an income of more than 2 million Tomans.
 - ✓ A descriptive study of the respondents' education shows that 43% have a bachelor's degree, which has the highest percentage among the educational levels, more than 26% have a master's degree, and 29% have an associate's degree or lower.
 - ✓ A descriptive survey of respondents' number of years of social media use also shows that more than 92% of respondents have been using social media and related software for more than three years. Also, 7% of respondents have been using this media for less than two years, which indicates the appropriate conditions for advertising and marketing on social media.
 - ✓ A descriptive study of the age of the respondents also shows that more than 58% of the people who participated in this study are under 40 years old, so special attention can be paid to marketing mechanisms (social media marketing, loyalty and advertising) to the age group under 40 years.

Inferential Findings: To test the model of this research, the structural equation modeling method with Smart PLS software has been used.

This software is compatible with conditions such as the alignment of independent variables, data normality and small sample size (Moradi et al., 2011). There are four criteria for selecting a partial least squares approach to data analysis: 1) Existence of hidden variables with constructive indicators in the research model, 3) Existence of minimum sensitivity to sample volume, 4) Existence of a conceptual model in the early stages of development, meaning that it has just been developed, and there are not many previous theories to verify it. On the other hand, studying the mediating effect of variables using the partial least squares method has advantages over other techniques. The most important of these advantages is the insensitivity of this method to normal distribution. Since the interactive effect of two variables is skewed with normal distribution in most cases, it is better to use a method for analyzing the interactive effect that is not sensitive to the normal distribution (Davari, Rezazadeh, 2013).

The findings of the bootstrap500 algorithm output, which indicates the value of t-statistic between the research hypotheses, are summarized as follows:

Test result	T statistic	Path coefficient	Hypothesis
Proving the theory	4.228	0.320	Perceived social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
Proving the theory	3.011	0.137	Personalized social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
Proving the theory	2.752	0.317	Informing social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
Proving the theory	4.108	0.302	Trending of social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.

Table 5-1: Results of research hypotheses:

Rejecting the theory	0.543	-0.040	Interaction in social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
Proving the theory	3.868	0.129	Word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activity has a significant impact on brand equity.
Proving the theory	5.021	0.121	Perceived social media marketing activity has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
Rejecting the theory	0.637	0.039	Personalized social media marketing activity has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
Proving the theory	2.762	0.186	Informing social media marketing activity has a significant impact on buying intent.
Proving the theory	3.344	0.267	Social media marketing activity trending has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
Proving the theory	2.515	0.232	Interaction in social media marketing activity has a significant impact on purchasing intent.
Proving the theory	5.626	0.298	Word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activity has a significant impact on the intention to buy.

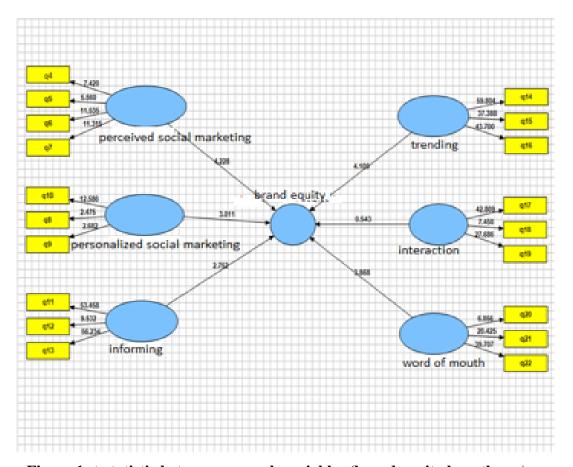


Figure 1: t-statistic between research variables (brand equity hypotheses)

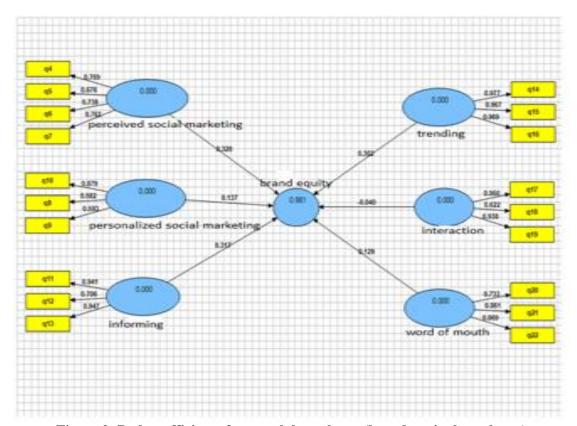


Figure 2: Path coefficient of research hypotheses (brand equity hypotheses)

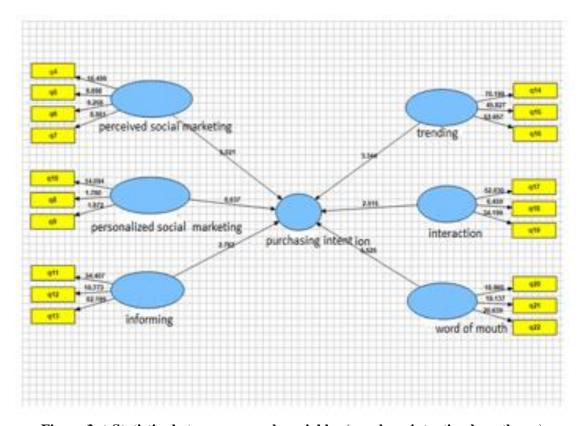


Figure 3: t-Statistics between research variables (purchase intention hypotheses)

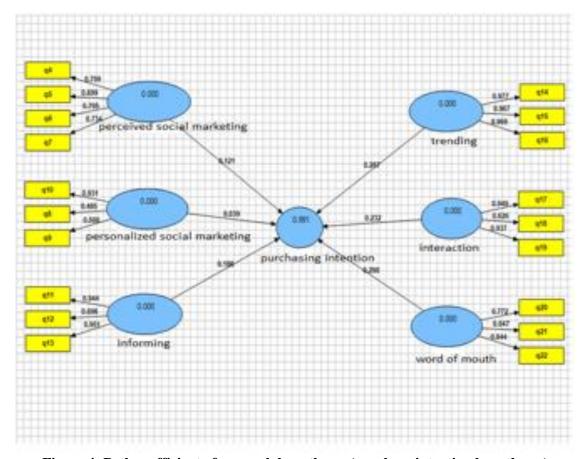


Figure 4: Path coefficient of research hypotheses (purchase intention hypotheses)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the perceived social media marketing activity variable and the brand equity of 4.228 with a 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed. The correlation coefficient between perceived social media marketing activities and brand equity variable indicate that perceived social media marketing activities account for 32% of changes in brand equity. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the Tstatistic between the variable of personalized social media marketing activities and the brand equity of 3.012 with a 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. Hence, this hypothesis is verified. Also, the coefficient between the variable of personalized social media marketing activities and brand equity indicates that personalized social media marketing activities account for 13.7% of changes in brand equity. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the variable of informing social media marketing activities and brand equity with a value of 2.752 at the 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. Hence, this hypothesis is verified. Also, the path coefficient between the informing variable of social media marketing activities and brand equity indicates that the informing of social media marketing activities explains 31.7% of the changes in brand equity. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the trending variable of social media marketing activities and brand equity with a value of 4.109 with a 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. Therefore, this theory is confirmed. Also, the path coefficient between the trending variables of social media marketing activities and brand equity indicates that the trending process of social media marketing activities explains 30.2% of the changes in brand equity. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the t-statistic between the variable of interaction in social media marketing activities and brand equity with a value of 0.543 at the 95% confidence level is not more than 1.96. So this hypothesis is rejected. Also, the path coefficient between the interaction variable in social media marketing activities and brand equity indicates that interaction in social media marketing

activities does not have a positive and significant effect on brand equity. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the word-of-mouth variable of social media marketing activities and brand equity of 3.868 with a 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. Therefore, this hypothesis is confirmed. Also, the path coefficient between the variable of word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activities and brand equity indicates that word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activities explains 12.9% of the changes in brand equity. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the perceived social media marketing activity variable and the intention to buy with a value of 5.021 at the 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. So, this hypothesis is verified. Also, the path coefficient between the variable of perceived social media marketing activities and purchase intention indicates that perceived social media marketing activities account for 12.1% of changes in purchase intention. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the t-statistic between the personalized social media marketing activity variables and the intention to buy with a value of 0.637 at the 95% confidence level is not more than 1.96, so this hypothesis is not confirmed. Also, the path coefficient between the variable of personalized social media marketing activities and the purchasing intention is 0.039. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the variable of informing social media marketing activities and the intention to buy of 2.762 with a 95% confidence level is more than 1.96. Hence, this theory is verified. Also, the path coefficient between the information variable of social media marketing activities and the intention to buy indicates that the information of social media marketing activities explains 18.6% of the changes in the intention to buy. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the t-statistic between the trending variable of social media marketing activities and the intention to buy with a value of 3.344 at the 95% confidence level is more than 1.96, so this hypothesis is confirmed. Also, the path coefficient between the trending variable of social media marketing activities and purchasing intention indicates that the trending of social media marketing activities explains 26.7% of the changes in purchasing intention. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the t-statistic between the variable of interaction in social media marketing activities and the intention to buy with a value of 2,515 at the 95% confidence level is more than 1.96, so this hypothesis is verified. Also, the path coefficient between the interaction variable in social media marketing activities and purchase intention indicates that the interaction in social media marketing activities explains 23.2% of the changes in purchase intention. The output of the Bootstrap 500 algorithm shows that the T-statistic between the word-of-mouth variable of social media marketing activities and the intention to buy of 5.525 with a 95% confidence level is more than 1.96, so this hypothesis is confirmed. Also, the path coefficient between the variable of word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activities and purchase intention indicates that word of mouth advertising of social media marketing activities explains 29.8% of the changes in purchase intention.

Finally, based on the results and discussions presented in the above section, the following necessary suggestions can be presented:

- ✓ Providing the possibility of evaluating and reviewing the service for full knowledge and understanding and creating customer confidence in social media
- ✓ Bank managers should address the psychology of the customer's feelings, emotions, and desires, as well as talent, cognition, and thinking, and reinforce the two important elements of the impact of emotions and the bond between the bank and customers.
- ✓ It is suggested that to improve the role of brand value equality, by choosing appropriate marketing policies such as differentiation and creating a competitive advantage by increasing social media marketing, to create a positive and distinctive impact on customers' perceptions of the bank.
- ✓ Customer response can be enhanced by ensuring that the messages received on social media are clear. The brand needs to be clear about what it is focusing on and striving for.
- ✓ Choosing social media marketing activities such as various social media and establishing continuous customer relationships, has a positive impact on the customers 'perception of banks' position and increases the sense of belonging to the brand through the special value of communication in the customer.
- ✓ Using the capacities of mass media in the field of information and reflection of the bank brand

- ✓ Analyze and identify the advertising activities of banks on social media to create special advertising programs for specific customers .
- ✓ Providing ancillary services during use and after to customers, especially special customers to create a favorable mental image of customers towards the bank and the services provided
- ✓ Banks can try to strengthen positive attitudes by monitoring cyberspace and social networks and being aware of the positive and negative attitudes of people about themselves, and if they see a negative attitude, they can try to find the root cause of this attitude and try to solve it.
- ✓ Providing training and skills courses to specific customers of banks to improve customer relations and strengthen the variable of customers' intention to buy
- ✓ Holding conferences and meetings with specific customers in order to provide solutions to improve and strengthen the bank's brand
- ✓ Creating more added value for the customer in different ways to encourage customers to repeat the purchase
- ✓ To increase customer response and commitment to the purchase, it is possible to create a positive image and differentiate the bank brand by choosing appropriate business policies and increasing marketing activities.
- ✓ Communicating with the customer on a regular basis through social media communication methods can increase the customer's intention to buy.

Field of future research

- Identify and prioritize the components and factors affecting social media marketing activities
 - Review and explain strategies to strengthen banks' social media marketing activities
 - Investigating the effects of social media marketing activities on the performance of banks
- It is suggested that this research be conducted in other organizations and companies and their results be compared.

Research limitations

- Low awareness of some customers about research concepts
- Restrictions on access to information resources have been one of the main limitations in the conduct of this research. Because important databases such as Emerald, Wiley, etc. in the country have faced many restrictions.

Due to the time period of this study, which has been conducted in a limited period of time, conclusive conclusions cannot be reached from the results of the research. Therefore, it requires research on these topics at different times.

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