

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

THE INSTRUMENTAL ROLE OF BRAND AWARENESS IN THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES ON BRAND LOYALTY AND PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Given the increasing empowerment of individuals, businesses must utilize social media platforms to cultivate strong customer relationships and loyalty. The proliferation of brands has compelled companies to employ social media marketing strategies to differentiate themselves and effectively engage with their target audiences.

In this study, the mediating effect of brand awareness on the impact of perceived social media marketing efforts on brand loyalty and purchasing behavior was examined. The luxury brand sector was chosen as the focus due to the lack of extensive research in recent years. The study specifically examined individuals who use the Beymen Club brand within the framework of the luxury brand concept. Since Beymen is highly active on its Instagram account, data were collected through surveys from followers of Beymen's official Instagram social media account. The data obtained from surveys conducted with 532 consumers who use the Beymen Club brand were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The analysis revealed that brand awareness has a mediating effect on the influence of social media marketing efforts on brand loyalty and purchasing behavior. Additionally, it was found that social media marketing efforts positively affect brand awareness, brand loyalty, and consumers' purchasing behavior.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Purchasing Behavior

ALGILANAN SOSYAL MEDYA PAZARLAMA ÇABALARININ MARKA SADAKATİ VE SATIN ALMA DAVRANIŞI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİNDE MARKA FARKINDALIĞININ ARACI ROLÜ

Öz

Bireylerin etkin rol oynadıkları bu dönemde işletmelerinde müşteri ilişkilerini kuvvetlendirebilmeleri, müşterilerde sadakat yaratabilmeleri için pazarlama faaliyetlerinde sosyal medya platformlarından yararlanmaları gerekmektedir. Marka sayısındaki artışla birlikte markalar, rakiplerinden ayrılarak hedef kitlesine ulaşabilmek amacıyla sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerini kullanmaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda bu çalışmada algılanan sosyal medya pazarlama çabalarının marka sadakati ve satın alma davranışı üzerindeki etkisinde marka farkındalığının aracı etkisi incelenmiştir. Araştırmada son yıllarda çok fazla üzerinde çalışma olmaması nedeniyle sektör olarak lüks marka sektörü incelenmiştir. Lüks marka kavramı çerçevesinde Beymen Club markasını kullanan kişiler üzerinde

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inceleme yapılmıştır. Beymen markası sosyal medya platformlarından Instagram hesabında çok aktif olduğu için, Beymen markasının resmi Instagram sosyal medya hesabının takipçilerinden anket yoluyla veriler toplanmıştır. Beymen Club markasını kullanan 532 tüketici üzerinde gerçekleştirilen anket sonucunda elde edilen veriler yapısal eşitlik modellemesi aracılığı ile analiz edilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucunda, sosyal medya pazarlama çabalarının marka sadakatine ve satın alma davranışına olan etkisinde marka farkındalığının aracı bir etkisinin olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bununla birlikte, sosyal medya pazarlama çabalarının marka farkındalığı, marka sadakati ve tüketicilerin satın alma davranışı üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya Pazarlama Çabaları, Marka Farkındalığı, Marka Sadakati, Satın Alma Davranışı

1.Introduction

Businesses increasingly leverage digital technology to streamline operations, gain a competitive advantage, foster stronger customer relationships, drive sales, and achieve long-term objectives. As technology evolves rapidly, the focus of digital technologies has shifted from mere information management towards service design, where big data plays a pivotal role in determining competitive advantage. Businesses across various sectors are strategically restructuring their marketing activities to harness the power of big data and gain significant competitive benefits.

In the digital age, the internet has become one of the most important marketplaces for businesses, with the advantages that enable people to adapt to their environment and the world. Social media (SM) marketing, which is defined as using SM platforms to promote goods or services, has grown to be one of the most significant communication tools in the market because of its benefits, which include raising brand awareness, fostering a positive brand image, facilitating prompt customer communication, and boosting website traffic. SM marketing; given the growing prevalence of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, it is increasingly crucial for brands that want to reach their target customers. It is an effective way for businesses of various sizes to get a large number of customers quickly in a short time. People follow brands and shop using SM platforms. However, SM marketing also includes advertising activities enabling businesses to reach many consumers. With SM marketing, companies aim to reach substantial customers in a short time, increase sales volume, and achieve superior performance by getting one step ahead of their competitors (Li et al., 2021).

Past studies in the literature have emphasized that social media marketing activities (SMMA) are very important for brands (Cheung et al., 2020; Shareef et al., 2019; Bilgin, 2018; Ismail, 2017; Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Additionally, some of the concepts associated with SMMA in the literature are; purchasing behavior (Ardahanlıoğlu & Deniz, 2021; Sehar et al., 2019), social identity and perceived value (Atıgan, 2020), customer loyalty (Bilgin et al., 2023), brand value (Tüfekci et al., 2020; Seo & Park, 2018; Khodadad Hosseini et al., 2018) and brand awareness (Kim & Ko, 2012).

SMMA implemented by brands that have emerged recently on SM platforms are; It has begun to take its place in the literature as a concept that can create brand value in customers, create brand awareness, and contribute positively to brand perception (Demir & Yıldız, 2021, p. 651).

Past studies in the literature have emphasized that SMMA is very important for brands (Cheung et al., 2020; Shareef et al., 2019; Bilgin, 2018; Ismail, 2017; Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Additionally, some of the concepts associated with SMMA in the literature are; purchasing behavior (Ardahanlioğlu & Deniz, 2021; Sehar et al., 2019;); social identity and perceived value (Atıgan, 2020); customer loyalty (Bilgin et al., 2023); brand value (Tüfekci et al., 2020; Seo & Park, 2018; Khodadad et al., 2018) and brand awareness (Kim & Ko,2012).

The developments mentioned above have led marketing experts to examine the impact of SMMA on consumers' purchasing behavior and brand loyalty. Today, when SM marketing is very important, the starting point of this study is the limited number of studies that deal with SMMA and dimensions together with the concepts of brand loyalty, brand awareness, and purchasing behavior.

In this regard, this study aimed to examine the mediating effect of the role of brand awareness on the impact of SMMA on consumer purchasing behavior and brand loyalty. At the same time, the impact of SMMA on brand loyalty, brand awareness, and consumers' purchasing behavior will also be examined.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Social Media Marketing Activities

SMMA, in its most general definition, are different marketing activities carried out by businesses through SM platforms. In the context of the intense use of SM by consumers, SMMA of brands is gaining importance daily.

SM marketing refers to the diverse marketing initiatives conducted by businesses through SM platforms. It can be argued that SMMA has the potential to contribute equally to or even more than traditional marketing efforts in achieving brand-building goals (Godey et al., 2016).

Kim and Ko (2012, p. 1482) discuss the characteristics of SMMA as a marketing communication tool, such as promoting a brand's products and services or introducing the brand itself to consumers. Examples of SMMA include a photo shared on a brand's Instagram account, a tweet posted, or a YouTube video. This study examines SMMA from the perspective of consumer perceptions.

In the early days of SM, brands were uncertain whether to prioritize it. However, today SM has become a crucial component of brands and businesses. In this digital age, business managers must give importance and priority to marketing activities not only from a commercial perspective but also from a social one, considering the interactions between consumers and sellers. Those who use SM as a marketing tool can provide marketing activities, strategies, and techniques that indicate social engagement and meet community characteristics (Wibowo et al., 2020, pp. 1-2). By interacting with consumers through SM platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, emotional connections with brands can be established (Kim & Ko, 2012). For instance, content, videos, or photos shared by a brand or business on Instagram can entertain users, encourage interaction by being shared with others, or allow users to stay updated with current information.

The conceptual framework of social media marketing activities (SMMA) was significantly shaped by the work of Kim & Ko (2012). The researchers conceptualized SMMA as a multidimensional construct encompassing entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth communication. In the literature, there are various classifications related to SM efforts. In this study, the classification of SMMA is based on the classification in the work of Yadav and Rahman (2017), as it is considered to be less commonly used in the literature and more suitable for the luxury brand sector. SMMA is addressed in five different dimensions, which are outlined below.

- **Interaction:** Interaction, one of the fundamental factors of SMMA, significantly influences and transforms the communication between brands and SM users (Godey et al., 2016). The platforms that enable this feedback are the SM accounts of brands. Through this interaction between the brand and the consumer, consumers' decisions may change, and trust in the brand may increase (Orel & Arik, 2020, p. 148). Interaction also helps determine how much SM applications create advantages for mutual exchange of ideas and information transfer. Additionally, interaction serves as a motivating factor for the continuity of content created for consumers, and this factor significantly influences consumers' attitudes toward the brand and their purchasing decisions (Cheung et al., 2020, p. 698).
- **Informativeness:** People using SM exchange information with other users when making purchasing decisions about a product or brand, and consumers often base their purchasing decisions on the information they obtain. Therefore, the accuracy and quality of the information are crucial for establishing a secure bond between the consumer and the seller and for ensuring that consumers make informed decisions. Providing accurate and real-time information is highly important. The sense of reliability that comes with offering correct information encourages consumers to make purchases. In other words, consumers seek high-value-added information. Through SM, consumers can quickly access the information they desire at any time. They can also save money while obtaining the information they need (Kim & Park, 2013, p. 324).
- **Personalization:** Personalization refers to the degree of customization consumers offer to meet their wants and needs when presenting a product or service. Brands can create a stronger brand structure by personalizing their websites or the content they share on SM (Godey et al., 2016, p. 3). Personalization is also defined as tailoring SMMA according to individuals' interests and desires. Businesses promoting products on SM platforms can identify their target customers by utilizing consumers' personal information. Personalized ads on SM are also significantly cheaper than traditional advertising activities (Gülsever, 2021, p. 26). Just as in conventional marketing activities, the most important way to implement the concept of personalization in SM marketing is through market segmentation. Otherwise, the advertisements might be seen by customers who are not the target audience, and the concept of personalization could lose its effectiveness (Alan Koçak et al., 2018).
- **Trendiness:** Trendiness is the ability to present new and fashionable content. The content shared on SM must be fresh and trendy to capture the attention of consumers. It is also important for businesses sharing content to keep up with innovations and make

trend-based posts to reach their target customers and maintain ongoing interaction with them (Durukal et al., 2019, p. 133). The posts shared by brands on their SM accounts should consist of the latest content for users. There are various studies in the literature on the alignment of SMMA with trendiness. In a study conducted by Seo and Park (2018) on 302 passengers to examine the impact of SMMA on brand value and customer response in the airline industry, trendiness was found to be the most influential factor.

- **Word-of-Mouth Communication:** Word-of-mouth communication is defined as the sharing of individuals' satisfaction, experiences, or negative encounters with a product or brand with people they know (Çetin & Zengin, 2022). When individuals share their opinions and experiences about a product or service with their close circle on SM platforms, it is referred to as electronic word-of-mouth marketing (Destici, 2020, p. 18). SM users often receive and share word-of-mouth messages through the communities they belong to on SM. Through SM, users can quickly share their thoughts with people they know without any restrictions. Consumers tend to trust the information they obtain about a product or service from SM more than the information provided by brands. Positive or negative comments made by consumers about products or brands on SM can spread very quickly, significantly impacting the marketing activities of businesses (Abuca & Ekici, 2022, p. 58).

2.2. Brand Awareness

Brand awareness can be defined as the first contact a brand establishes with its target audience, including consumers and potential customers. Associated with the product category, the ability to identify the first brand that springs to mind while considering a product is known as brand awareness. (Avcılar, 2008). It can also be described as the initial reaction to the product and the ability to encourage individuals to examine the brand to make a purchase decision (Uğur, 2018, p. 119). Tosun (2014, p. 131) defines brand awareness as the combination of a brand's name, logo, packaging, the advantages it offers, and its functional attributes in meeting needs. In some studies in the literature, brand awareness is also referred to as brand recognition. Awareness is related to whether a brand comes to mind during the purchase process (Aaker, 1996, p. 21).

The concept of awareness influences consumers' perceptions and attitudes. Awareness has a significant part in brand preference, the execution of purchasing behavior, and the development of brand loyalty. Brand awareness, defined as the place a brand occupies in individuals' minds, has a significant impact during the purchase process. Many studies have shown that brands that occupy a certain place in consumers' minds are preferred more often than other brands (Uğur, 2018, p. 120).

2.3 Brand Loyalty

Odabaşı and Barış (2002) describe it as the consumer having positive feelings towards a particular brand and purchasing it more frequently than other brands.

In a related study, Bilgin (2018, p. 133) defines brand loyalty as a consumer's consistent preference for a specific brand within a product category, regardless of price. Brand loyalty emerges when consumers perceive a brand as offering the ideal product with desired features, quality, and aesthetics at a suitable price. This perception fosters repeat purchases and directly

translates into loyalty. Additionally, prolonged use of a particular brand can also cultivate loyalty.

2.4. Luxury Brand

The connotations associated with luxury brands influence individuals' perceptions and aspirations, positioning them as luxury brand consumers. These individuals often view their brand choices as a distinctive marker of their identity, allowing them to express themselves (Solomon, 2006, p. 43).

Luxury brands aim to cultivate a strong emotional connection with their consumers. Maintaining consistent consumer affinity for the brand is essential within this established relationship (Hız, 2011, p. 118).

Internet and SM platforms have significantly impacted consumer brand preferences. Their democratic and accessible nature requires only internet access. However, luxury, by its very essence, is exclusive and difficult to attain. Luxury brands, with their distinctive characteristics, necessitate a unique marketing approach. Due to the potential for negative brand image implications, the use of SM by luxury brands has been a subject of debate among brand managers for years (Çelebi & Pınar, 2017).

However, with SM recently becoming a crucial concept in marketing, luxury brands have started to reach their target audiences by conducting their marketing strategies and promotional activities on SM platforms. It has become increasingly important for luxury brands to be visible on SM when controlling brand communication and positioning on social platforms. At this point, it is crucial to know what is being said about the brand on SM platforms and on which platforms these discussions are occurring (Reyneke et al., 2011b).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Model and Hypotheses Development

The research model and hypotheses determined as a result of the detailed literature review conducted in the previous sections of the study are presented as follows.

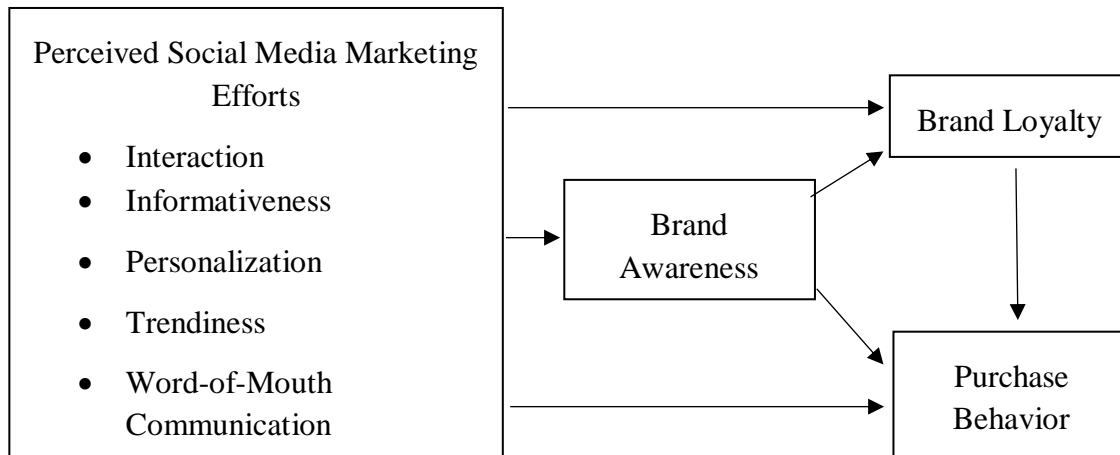


Figure 1. Research Model

Brand awareness, a concept considered to have a positive impact from marketing efforts made by businesses and brands through SM, is a crucial concept for both businesses and brands. It is stated that marketing efforts made by brands on SM are effective in increasing brand awareness (Yazdanparast et al., 2016, p. 251).

As a result of the literature review, it has been concluded that SMMA has a positive impact on brand awareness (Fetais et al., 2023; Malarvizhi et al., 2022; Zollo et al., 2020; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Based on these studies, the following hypotheses have been formulated: H1: The interaction dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand awareness.

H2: The informativeness dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand awareness.

H3: The personalization dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand awareness.

H4: The trendiness dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand awareness.

H5: The word-of-mouth communication dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand awareness.

Çetin and Zengin (2022) found that SMMA positively and significantly affect brand loyalty. Ebrahim (2019) found that the sub-dimensions of SMMA significantly affect brand loyalty. Based on these results from the literature, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H6: The interaction dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H7: The informativeness dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H8: The personalization dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H9: The trendiness dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H10: The word-of-mouth communication dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

SMMA provides up-to-date and accurate information, is open to and suitable for innovation, and creates interaction and word-of-mouth communication among consumers, increasing consumers' purchase behaviors. A review of the literature reveals that SMMA has a significant effect on purchase behavior (Şahin et al., 2017; Kazancı & Başgöze, 2015). Based on this, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H11: The interaction dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

H12: The informativeness dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

H13: The personalization dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

H14: The trendiness dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

H15: The word-of-mouth communication dimension of SMMA has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

A review of the literature indicates that brand awareness has a significant effect on brand loyalty (Alkhaldeh et al., 2017). Based on the information from the literature, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H16: Brand awareness has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

Sökmen & Kenek (2022) found significant relationships between brand awareness and brand loyalty. Based on this, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H17: Brand awareness has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

Dilek & Öztürk (2022) found that brand loyalty positively affects consumers' purchase behavior. Based on this, another hypothesis has been formulated:

H18: Brand loyalty has a significant effect on purchase behavior.

In a study by Anggraini and Hananto (2020), it was found that brand value (brand awareness, brand image) plays a mediating role in the effect of SMMA on customer loyalty. The hypotheses indicating the mediating role of brand awareness are as follows:

H19: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the interaction dimension of SMMA on purchase behavior.

H20: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the informativeness dimension of SMMA on purchase behavior.

H21: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the personalization dimension of SMMA on purchase behavior.

H22: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the trendiness dimension of SMMA on purchase behavior.

H23: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the word-of-mouth communication dimension of SMMA on purchase behavior.

H24: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the interaction dimension of SMMA on brand loyalty.

H25: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the informativeness dimension of SMMA on brand loyalty.

H26: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the personalization dimension of SMMA on brand loyalty

H27: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the innovativeness dimension of SMMA on brand loyalty.

H28: There is a positive mediating effect of brand awareness on the positive impact of the word-of-mouth dimension of SMMA on brand loyalty

3.2. Selected Industry and Brand for the Study

Research on SMMA has been conducted across various sectors. Studies have focused on single-industry areas such as the airline industry (Seo & Park, 2018), the automotive sector (Seo & Park, 2018), and e-commerce (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Kim and Ko (2012) explored the luxury brand industry, while Karayalçın (2019) compared Apple and Samsung in the technology sector. However, recent studies specifically focusing on the luxury brand category are scarce. Thus, this research aims to fill this gap by examining the luxury brand industry.

Among the luxury brands, Beymen was selected for this study because of its significant presence and prominence in Turkey's luxury market. Beymen include brands such as YSL, Chloé, Lanvin, Celine, Stella, Dolce&Gabbana, and Beymen Club. Beymen was chosen because it is one of the first brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury brands in Turkey. Furthermore, the Beymen Club, a brand within the Beymen group, was selected for the research. Beymen Club has been recognized as the top brand in the 'Luxury Clothing' category at the ECHO Awards, held by Marketing Turkey and Akademetre, because of its brand diversity, digital product categorization, and easy filtering features.

When examining Beymen Club's presence on SM platforms, it is noticeable that the brand is engaged in online environments. To reach users of the Beymen Club brand, Instagram has been selected as the SM platform for this research. As stated by data from January 2023, Instagram has been identified as the most used and popular platform in Turkey (Güvenliweb, 2023). Furthermore, among the SM platforms of the Beymen brand, it is observed that they are most active on Instagram.

3.3. Data and Measures

The target population for this study comprised individuals aged 18 and over who follow the Beymen brand on Instagram. Given the sizable follower base of 1,200,000, it was deemed appropriate to conduct an online survey among this audience. The study employed a convenience sampling method, resulting in a sample size of 532 participants. The survey was administered between October 20, 2023, and November 21, 2023. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Erciyes University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee, with approval number 385, dated September 26, 2023.

In the study, a targeted sample of followers on the Beymen brand's Instagram account was selected. These followers were chosen to represent the target population of Turkish luxury consumers. They were then contacted via direct message (DM) with a pre-screening question: "Please respond to this survey if you use products from the Beymen Club brand." This ensured that only relevant participants – those who are actual users of the Beymen Club brand – were invited to participate in the online survey hosted on "docs.google.com."

The survey instrument was developed using Google Forms and disseminated through SM platforms and Google Forms links. The first section of the survey consisted of fifteen statements designed to assess SMMA. These statements were adapted from the study by Yadav and Rahman (2017). The original SMMA scale, developed by the same authors, comprises five factors: interaction, informativeness, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth.

The second section of the survey focused on measuring brand awareness, using a scale adapted from the works of Aaker (1991) and Berry (2000). This section included seven statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The third section assessed brand loyalty, utilizing a scale of ten statements derived from the studies of Aaker (1991) and Berry (2000). Similar to the previous section, a 5-point Likert scale was employed.

The fourth and final section of the survey measured purchasing behavior, incorporating four statements adapted from the study by Donmaz, Akyol, and Şimşek (2021) on consumer purchasing behavior.

3.4. Results

The demographic characteristics of the study participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Findings on the Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Socio-Demographic Characteristics		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Female	339	63,7
	Male	193	36,3
Marital Status	Married	337	63,3
	Single	195	36,7
Age	18-24	39	7,3
	25-34	254	47,7
	35-44	152	28,6
	45-54	87	16,4
Education Level	High School and Below	71	13,3

	Associate's Degree	31	5,8
	Bachelor's Degree	287	53,9
	Graduate Degree	143	26,9
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Occupation	Not Employed	7	1,3
	Homemaker	42	7,9
	Student	39	7,3
	Academic Staff	34	6,4
	Lawyer	26	4,9
	Doctor/Dentist	36	6,8
	Engineer	88	16,5
	Private Sector Employee	44	8,3
	Freelancer	29	5,5
	Teacher	31	5,8
	Healthcare Worker	34	6,4
	Civil Servant	62	11,7
	Other	60	11,3
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Number of Family Members	0-2	78	14,7
	3-5	439	82,5
	6-8	15	2,8
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Household Income Level	0-49999 TL	311	58,5
	50000-79999 TL	155	29,1
	80000-109999 TL	47	8,8
	110.000 TL and above	19	3,6
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	Total	532	100
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The study involved a total of 532 participants, aged 18 and older. In terms of gender, 63.7% of participants were female, while 36.3% were male. Regarding marital status, 63.3% were married, and 36.7% were single. The age distribution of participants was as follows: 7.3% were aged 18-24, 47.7% were 25-34, 28.6% were 35-44, and 16.4% were 45-54. In terms of educational attainment, 53.9% of participants held undergraduate degrees, 26.9% had postgraduate degrees, 5.8% had associate degrees, and 13.3% had a high school education or lower. The occupational distribution of participants was diverse. Engineers represented the largest group at 16.5%, followed by civil servants (11.7%), teachers (5.8%), doctors/dentists (6.8%), and private sector employees (8.3%). The majority of participants (82.5%) reported having family sizes ranging from three to five members. Regarding family income, 58.5% of participants fell within the 0-49,999 TL income bracket, while 29.1% earned between 50,000-79,999 TL. These socio-demographic characteristics offer valuable insights into the profiles and participation tendencies of the study participants.

The reliability analysis results for the scales are detailed in the table 2 below.

Table 2. Reliability analyzes

Factors	The Cronbach's alpha value	N
Perceived Social Media Marketing Activities	0,929	15
• Interaction	0,798	3
• Informativeness	0,805	3
• Personalization	0,823	3
• Trendiness	0,718	3
• Word-of-Mouth Communication	0,849	3
Brand Awareness	0,787	7
Brand Loyalty	0,931	10
Purchase Behavior	0,797	4

Convergent validity is established when multiple measurement tools designed to assess the same construct demonstrate a moderate or strong correlation ($r > .5$). In contrast, discriminant validity exists when there is a low correlation ($r < .5$) between related but distinct constructs. A confirmed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model indicates that the factors and their corresponding items in the scale possess a satisfactory level of both convergent and discriminant validity (Gürbüz, 2021).

Cronbach's alpha, a commonly used reliability index, measures the internal consistency of a scale based on the inter-item correlations. However, Cronbach's alpha assumes that all items

within a factor have equal error variances, which may not always be the case. For confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) models, composite reliability (CR) is often considered a more suitable measure of reliability. CR, along with average variance extracted (AVE), mean shared variance (MSV), and average shared variance (ASV), can be calculated using Excel formulas.

Table 3. Ave, cr, msw and asv values calculated for the combination and discriminant validity of the factors

Factors	AVE	CR	MSV	ASV
1. Perceived social media efforts scale	0,47	0,93	0,51	0,62
2. Interaction	0,56	0,69	0,48	0,38
3. Informativeness	0,58	0,70	0,62	0,40
4. Personalization	0,62	0,72	0,62	0,43
5. Trendiness	0,48	0,62	0,38	0,28
6. Word-of-Mouth Communication	0,66	0,76	0,41	0,36
7. Brand Awareness	0,38	0,78	0,52	0,40
8. Brand Loyalty	0,59	0,93	0,69	0,43
9. Purchase Behavior	0,55	0,83	0,69	0,40

Even though the AVE values are below 0.5, when evaluated together with other criteria, it can be stated that all 8 factors have convergent validity.

In this study, an 8-factor measurement model was created, including 5 factors of the SMMA scale, brand awareness scale, brand loyalty scale, and purchasing behavior scale. In recent years, the concept of testing scales used in research as a whole, rather than analyzing them separately and measuring different structures, has become widespread. In this understanding, before hypothesis testing, the scales of all variables should be included in the analysis as a whole and it should be determined whether there is a problem in terms of discriminant and convergent validity among the research variables (Gürbüz, 2021).

In this study, it will be checked whether there is an issue with the legitimacy of the measurement model in which all variables will be included. The brand awareness "BA1" item was removed from the study because its factor loading was low and did not indicate the factor significantly. The goodness of fit values of the 8-factor model are shown in the table below.

Table 4. Goodness of fit values for the 8-factor model

<i>Model</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	<i>CFI</i>	<i>RMSA</i>	<i>SRMR</i>
8 Factor	2634,728	529	4,981	0,839	0,087	0,057

Estimated values for the 8-factor model are presented in Table 4. In the model, the factor loadings of the items under all factors were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Estimated values for the factorial model

Factors	Path	Factors	B	S.E.	β (Beta)	CR	p
SMI3	<---	F1	1,00			0,802	
SMI2	<---	F1	0,93	0,05	17,49	0,736	$p < 0,001$
SMI1	<---	F1	0,88	0,05	16,85	0,713	$p < 0,001$
SMIN3	<---	F2	1,00			0,75	$p < 0,001$
SMIN2	<---	F2	0,95	0,05	18,31	0,783	$p < 0,001$
SMIN1	<---	F2	1,02	0,06	17,64	0,757	$p < 0,001$
SMP3	<---	F3	1,00			0,781	$p < 0,001$
SMP2	<---	F3	1,09	0,05	20,17	0,816	$p < 0,001$
SMP1	<---	F3	1,04	0,06	18,46	0,759	$p < 0,001$
SMT3	<---	F4	1,00			0,737	$p < 0,001$
SMT2	<---	F4	1,20	0,08	14,91	0,755	
SMT1	<---	F4	0,68	0,06	11,67	0,569	$p < 0,001$
SMW3	<---	F5	1,00			0,741	$p < 0,001$
SMW2	<---	F5	1,22	0,06	19,17	0,866	$p < 0,001$
SMW1	<---	F5	1,11	0,06	18,33	0,821	$p < 0,001$
BA2	<---	F6	1,00			0,423	$p < 0,001$
BA3	<---	F6	0,81	0,11	7,46	0,357	$p < 0,001$
BA4	<---	F6	1,64	0,19	8,59	0,576	$p < 0,001$
BA5	<---	F6	3,48	0,35	9,84	0,835	$p < 0,001$
BA6	<---	F6	1,32	0,17	7,83	0,479	$p < 0,001$

BA7	<---	F6	3,27	0,34	9,74	0,806	p<0,001
BL1	<---	F7	1,00			0,715	
BL2	<---	F7	0,93	0,04	21,87	0,781	p<0,001
BL3	<---	F7	1,22	0,06	19,59	0,858	p<0,001
BL4	<---	F7	1,22	0,06	19,53	0,855	p<0,001
BL5	<---	F7	1,23	0,07	19,01	0,833	p<0,001
BL6	<---	F7	0,82	0,05	16,63	0,73	p<0,001
BL7	<---	F7	0,66	0,04	15,64	0,688	p<0,001
BL8	<---	F7	1,38	0,07	19,35	0,847	p<0,001
BL9	<---	F7	0,73	0,05	13,98	0,616	p<0,001
BL10	<---	F7	1,34	0,08	16,47	0,724	p<0,001
PB1	<---	F8	1,00			0,478	
PB2	<---	F8	2,41	0,22	11,19	0,813	p<0,001
PB3	<---	F8	1,66	0,16	10,46	0,694	p<0,001
PB4	<---	F8	2,94	0,26	11,28	0,832	p<0,001

SMI: The interaction dimension of SMMA. SMIN: The informativeness dimension of SMMA

SMP: The personalization dimension of SMMA SMT: The trendiness dimension of SMMA

SMW: The word-of-mouth communication dimension of SMMA BA: Brand Awareness

BL: Brand Loyalty PB: Purchase Behavior

3.4.1 Testing Hypotheses

Amos program was used to test the hypotheses. In the path analysis, it was seen that the path coefficients between some variables were quite low. When the estimated values between the variables, or in other words, the number of road floors, are examined; It was observed that the coefficients between brand awareness and interaction factor, brand loyalty and informativeness and personalization factors were insignificant ($p>0.05$).

Table 6. Predicted values for the unmodified model

Factors	Path	Factors	B	S.E.	β (Beta)	CR	p
Brand awareness	<---	Interaction	0,00	0,03	0,00	-0,02	0,986
Brand awareness	<---	Informativeness	0,11	0,04	0,14	2,45	0,014
Brand awareness	<---	Personalization	0,22	0,04	0,33	5,86	p<0,001

Brand awareness	<---	Trendiness	0,12	0,04	0,13	3,09	0,002
Brand awareness	<---	Word-of-Mouth	0,14	0,03	0,22	5,23	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Brand awareness	0,67	0,05	0,46	12,86	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Interactivity	0,22	0,04	0,24	6,19	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Informativeness	0,08	0,05	0,07	1,54	0,125
Brand loyalty	<---	Personalization	0,07	0,05	0,07	1,48	0,140
Brand loyalty	<---	Trendiness	-0,19	0,05	-0,15	-4,26	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Word-of-Mouth	0,21	0,03	0,23	6,38	p<0,001
Purchasing behavior	<---	Brand awareness	0,17	0,05	0,13	3,66	p<0,001
Purchasing behavior	<---	Interactivity	0,06	0,03	0,08	2,19	0,028
Purchasing behavior	<---	Informativeness	-0,15	0,04	-0,15	-3,59	p<0,001
Purchasing behavior	<---	Personalization	0,08	0,04	0,09	2,15	0,032

B: Unstandardized path coefficient, β (Beta): Standardized path coefficient

Proportion of variance explained in dependent factors: BA $R^2=0,487$, BL $R^2=0,655$; PB $R^2=0,722$

The values resulting from the path analysis, taking into account the insignificant path coefficients, are shown in the table below.

Table 7. Predictive values for the modified model

Factors	Path	Factors	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β (Beta)	<i>CR</i>	<i>p</i>
Brand awareness	<---	Informativeness	0,11	0,04	0,14	2,52	0,012
Brand awareness	<---	Personalization	0,22	0,04	0,33	6,04	p<0,001
Brand awareness	<---	Trendiness	0,12	0,04	0,13	3,10	0,002
Brand awareness	<---	Word-of-Mouth	0,14	0,03	0,22	5,35	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Brand awareness	0,72	0,05	0,49	14,58	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Interaction	0,27	0,03	0,29	8,33	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Trendiness	-0,15	0,04	-0,12	-3,54	p<0,001
Brand loyalty	<---	Word-of-Mouth	0,23	0,03	0,25	7,12	p<0,001

Purchasing behavior	<---	Brand awareness	0,17	0,05	0,13	3,60	p<0,001
Purchasing behavior	<---	Interaction	0,06	0,03	0,08	2,16	0,031
Purchasing behavior	<---	Informativeness	-0,15	0,04	-0,15	-3,60	p<0,001
Purchasing behavior	<---	Personalization	0,08	0,04	0,09	2,15	0,031
Purchasing behavior	<---	Trendiness	0,08	0,04	0,07	2,18	0,029
Purchasing behavior	<---	Word-of-Mouth	0,08	0,03	0,09	2,75	0,006
Purchasing behavior	<---	Brand loyalty	0,55	0,03	0,63	16,21	p<0,001

Indirect effect or intermediary effect

SMI→BA→PB	$\beta=0,181, 95 \text{ CI } (0,130 - 0,232)$
SMW→BA→PB	$\beta=0,254, 95 \text{ CI } (0,188 - 0,324)$
SMT→BA→PB	$\beta=-0,017, 95 \text{ CI } (-0,109 - 0,065)$
SMP→BA→PB	$\beta=0,144, 95 \text{ CI } (0,085 - 0,211)$
SMIN→BA→PB	$\beta=0,060, 95 \text{ CI } (0,001 - 0,120)$
BA→BL→PB	$\beta=0,307, 95 \text{ CI } (0,232 - 0,375)$
SMI→BA→BL	$\beta=0,000, 95 \text{ CI } (0,000 - 0,000)$
SMW→BA→BL	$\beta=0,109, 95 \text{ CI } (0,060 - 0,157)$
SMT→BA→BL	$\beta=0,063, 95 \text{ CI } (0,001 - 0,115)$
SMP→BA→BL	$\beta=0,160, 95 \text{ CI } [0,098 - 0,232)$
SMIN→BA→BL	$\beta=0,066, 95 \text{ CI } (0,001 - 0,136)$

B: Unstandardized road coefficient, β (Beta): Standardized road coefficient

Proportion of variance explained in dependent factors: BA $R^2=0,487$, BL $R^2=0,650$; PB $R^2=0,723$

CI: Confidence Interval, Values in parentheses are the lower and upper confidence interval values. Bootstrap resampling =5000

In line with these results, the variance explained for brand awareness is 48.7%, the variance explained for brand loyalty is 65% and the variance explained for purchasing behavior is 72.3%.

It was found that the interaction dimension did not affect brand awareness ($\beta=0.00$; $p>.05$), the informativeness dimension did not affect brand loyalty ($\beta=0.08$; $p>.05$) and the personalization dimension did not affect brand loyalty ($\beta=0.07$; $p>.05$). According to these results; hypotheses H_1 , H_7 , and H_8 were rejected.

It was determined that the informativeness dimension ($\beta=0.14$; $p<.05$), the personalization dimension ($\beta=0.33$; $p<.01$), the trendiness dimension ($\beta=0.13$; $p<.01$), and the word-of-mouth dimension ($\beta=0.22$; $p<.01$) significantly and positively affect brand awareness. Based on these results, hypotheses H_2 , H_3 , H_4 , and H_5 were accepted.

It was found that the interaction dimension ($\beta=0.29$; $p<.01$) and the word-of-mouth dimension ($\beta=0.25$; $p<.01$) significantly and positively affect brand loyalty, while the trendiness dimension ($\beta=-0.12$; $p<.01$) negatively and significantly affects brand loyalty. Based on these results, hypotheses H_6 , H_9 (despite its significant effect, the direction of the effect is negative), and H_{10} were accepted.

It was found that the interaction dimension ($\beta=0.08$; $p<.05$) and the personalization dimension ($\beta=0.09$; $p<.05$) significantly and positively affect purchase behavior, while the informativeness dimension ($\beta=-0.15$; $p<.01$) negatively affects purchase behavior. Additionally, the trendiness dimension ($\beta=0.07$; $p<.05$), the word-of-mouth dimension ($\beta=0.09$; $p<.01$), brand awareness ($\beta=0.13$; $p<.01$), and brand loyalty ($\beta=0.63$; $p<.01$) significantly and positively affect purchase behavior. Based on these results, hypotheses H_{11} , H_{12} , H_{13} , H_{14} , H_{15} , H_{17} , and H_{18} were accepted.

It was determined that brand awareness significantly and positively affected brand loyalty ($\beta=0.49$; $p<.01$). According to these results; hypothesis H_{16} was accepted.

To test whether there was a mediating effect of the variables, a path analysis based on the bootstrap method was conducted. It has been stated that the bootstrap method provides more reliable results compared to the traditional method of Baron and Kenny, as well as the Sobel test (Gürbüz, 2021). In the bootstrap analysis, the option of 5000 resamples was chosen. For mediation hypotheses to be tested in mediation effect analyses conducted with the bootstrap technique, the values obtained within the 95% confidence interval (CI) must not include zero (0) (Gürbüz, 2021). The standardized indirect effects were examined for the indirect or mediating effects. According to the bootstrap results, the indirect effect of interaction through brand awareness on purchase behavior was found to be significant ($\beta=0.181$, 95% CI [0.130–0.232]), the indirect effect of informativeness through brand awareness on purchase behavior was found to be significant ($\beta=0.060$, 95% CI [0.001–0.120]), the indirect effect of personalization through brand awareness on purchase behavior was significant ($\beta=0.144$, 95% CI [0.085–0.211]), the indirect effect of trendiness through brand awareness on purchase behavior was not significant ($\beta=-0.017$, 95% CI [-0.109–0.065]), and the indirect effect of word-of-mouth through brand awareness on purchase behavior was significant ($\beta=0.254$, 95% CI [0.188–0.324]).

The indirect effect of the interaction dimension through brand awareness on brand loyalty was found to be insignificant ($\beta=0.000$, 95% CI [0.000–0.000]). The indirect effect of the informativeness dimension through brand awareness on brand loyalty was found to be significant ($\beta=0.066$, 95% CI [0.001–0.136]), the indirect effect of the personalization

dimension through brand awareness on brand loyalty was significant ($\beta=0.160$, 95% CI [0.098–0.232]), the indirect effect of the trendiness dimension through brand awareness on brand loyalty was significant ($\beta=0.063$, 95% CI [0.001–0.115]), and the indirect effect of the word-of-mouth dimension through brand awareness on brand loyalty was found to be significant ($\beta=0.109$, 95% CI [0.069–0.159]).

The lower and upper confidence interval values obtained using the percentile bootstrap method, with brand awareness as the mediator, do not include the value of 0 for variables other than the trendiness factor. These results indicate that the brand awareness variable has a mediating effect in the relationship between SMMA specifically interaction, informativeness, personalization, and word-of-mouth, and purchase behavior. In this case, hypotheses H₁₉, H₂₀, H₂₁, and H₂₃ are supported, while hypothesis H₂₂ is rejected.

In the mediating effect of brand awareness on brand loyalty, the lower and upper confidence interval values obtained using the percentile bootstrap method do not include the value of 0 for variables other than the interaction factor. These results indicate that the brand awareness variable has a mediating effect on the relationship between SMMA; specifically informativeness, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth, and brand loyalty. In this case, hypotheses H₂₅, H₂₆, H₂₇, and H₂₈ are supported, while hypothesis H₂₄ is rejected.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

SM marketing has emerged as a prominent research area in recent years. While the positive influence of SMMA on brand loyalty and purchase behavior is well-established, the moderating role of brand awareness in these relationships remains under-explored. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research employing structural equation modeling to examine the sub-dimensions of SMMA. This study aims to: investigate the mediating role of brand awareness in the relationship between SMMA and brand loyalty and purchase behavior, and examine the direct and indirect effects of SMMA, both as a whole and at the sub-dimensional level, on brand loyalty, brand awareness, and purchase behavior.

In an analysis of SMMA, it was determined that while the interaction dimension did not positively influence brand awareness, the dimensions of informativeness, personalization, innovativeness, and word-of-mouth communication had a positive impact on brand awareness. The findings of this study are consistent with the existing literature (Fetais et al., 2023; Malarvizhi et al., 2022; Zollo et al., 2020; Yadav & Rahman, 2017; Tatar & Erdoğan, 2016; Godey et al., 2016). At the same time, Seo and Park (2018) observed in their study that the marketing efforts of airline companies through SM have a positive effect on brand awareness. The congruence of the results with previous literature enhances the reliability of the findings. This parallel aligns with other studies that emphasize the significance of content quality, personalization, and innovation in SM marketing. The unexpected lack of impact from the interaction dimension may indicate that superficial interactions such as increasing follower count have limited effects on brand awareness. It is suggested that high-quality, meaningful interactions tailored to the target audience may be more effective in generating awareness. The positive impact of informativeness, personalization, innovativeness, and word-of-mouth communication suggests that consumers desire to learn more about brands, feel special, and are

open to innovative approaches. The particularly positive impact of word-of-mouth communication affirms that information from trusted sources is more influential.

The path analysis revealed that the interaction, innovativeness, and word-of-mouth communication dimensions of the SMMA scale significantly and positively influenced brand loyalty. This finding is supported by numerous studies in the literature (Çetin & Zengin, 2022; Ebrahim, 2019; Ismail, 2018). These results indicate that continuous interaction with the brand, the sharing of innovative and trendy content by brands, and positive consumer reviews about the brand increase brand loyalty. However, the study found that the informativeness and personalization dimensions of the SMMA scale did not positively influence brand loyalty. This result contradicts the findings of previous studies (Sharawneh 2020; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2018; Schivinski & Dabrowski 2015). This discrepancy may be attributed to the use of a specific luxury brand in the study.

Businesses and brands can have a positive impact on consumers through their SMMA. One of these impacts is the effect of SMMA on consumers' purchasing behavior. It is recommended that businesses, especially those seeking to increase profitability and sales, should prioritize SMMA. SMMA that includes up-to-date and accurate information, is innovative and relevant, and create interaction and word-of-mouth communication among consumers increase consumer purchasing behavior. Studies have shown that SMMA has a significant impact on purchasing behavior. These results are consistent with the literature (Şahin et al., 2017; Başgöze & Kazancı 2015; Toksarı et al., 2014).

A study examining the impact of brand awareness on brand loyalty revealed a significant positive correlation between the two. This finding aligns with existing literature on the subject (Alkhaldeh et al., 2017). Bernarto and colleagues (2020) concluded in their study that there is a direct relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty; as brand awareness grows, so does brand loyalty. Dhurup and colleagues (2014) corroborated this finding, suggesting a positive association between the two constructs.

Analyses have revealed a significant impact of brand awareness on consumer purchasing behavior. Keller (2013) defines brand awareness as a consumer's ability to recall a brand when given a cue. A high level of brand awareness among consumers is crucial for both their purchasing behavior and brand loyalty. The research also found that brand loyalty positively influences consumer purchasing behavior.

The hypothesized mediating role of brand awareness between SMMA (interaction, informativeness, personalization, and word-of-mouth) and brand loyalty was supported by the findings. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that brand awareness positively mediates the impact of informativeness, personalization, innovativeness, and word-of-mouth on purchasing behavior.

This study offers a valuable contribution to the literature on SM marketing, broadening the theoretical underpinnings of the field. By specifically examining the mediating role of brand awareness, this research provides a novel perspective that can deepen our comprehension of consumer behavior.

While the study's findings are generally consistent with previous research, certain limitations must be considered. The reliance on convenience sampling and the singular focus on one brand constrain the extent to which the results can be generalized to other populations or brands. Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. The relatively small sample size and the restricted range of stimuli further constrain the generalizability of the findings. To address these limitations, future research could explore a wider range of populations, industries, and geographic regions, as well as incorporate additional constructs such as brand image, brand love, and perceived value.

In the realm of marketing, as in many other fields, brands are grappling with the immense volume of big data. To effectively analyze and leverage this data, businesses are turning to artificial intelligence. AI technologies are revolutionizing SM marketing by enabling targeted dissemination of information. Specifically, AI can facilitate the creation of systems that deliver tailored messages to specific audiences, employing the most effective communication style and tone for each individual. Consequently, to maintain a competitive edge and ensure the seamless execution of marketing strategies, businesses are increasingly adopting AI applications for their SMMA.

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