

Presentation of the brand acceptance model (case study: customers of airline companies)

Abstract

The customer-brand relationship has drawn the attention of many marketers and experts over the past years. Thus, this study aimed to provide a model to explain the effects of brand social self-expression, mediated by the variables of brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement, on brand acceptance. The method used in this study was a descriptive-survey method, and the statistical population of the study consisted of airline customers on Instagram, who totaled 4000 people. Using a simple random sampling method and sample volume estimation via Cochran Formula, the number of 380 people participated in the study. The tools for gathering data included a researcher-made questionnaire adopted from Wallace et al.'s Social Self-Expression Scale (2014). Cronbach's alpha measured the reliability of the tool, and its validity was examined by using face validity under the supervision of factorial validity experts and also using a confirmatory factor test. The results obtained suggested the acceptable reliability and validity of the tool. Data were analyzed at inferential and descriptive levels. At the descriptive level, descriptive indices of mean and standard deviation were used, while at the inferential level, equation modeling was used. SPSS (version 23) and LISREL software were used to analyze the data. Results obtained suggested that brand social self-expression had a positive and significant effect on brand love and the acceptance of brand support. Brand love also significantly and positively affected the acceptance of brand support via word-of-mouth advertisement.

Keywords: *social self-expression, brand, brand love, brand support, Instagram*

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Introduction

1. Introduction

The brand-customer relationship has attracted the attention of many marketers and experts worldwide. Although understanding the formation of this relationship is highly important, factors that help form this relationship should also be determined (Ismaeili & Spinelli, 2012). Today, many experts maintain that the post-modernism perspective in marketing has created an impressive revolution in this area, especially in brand management (Xavier, 2009). From the post-modernist perspective, product selection (in this article, brand acceptance) is no longer a simple phenomenon in purchasing a good or service. According to this perspective, product selection refers to demonstrating internal thoughts, identification, creativity, and even art for the individual (Hussam et al., 2022).

On the other hand, unlike in the past, product selection and brand acceptance are not just related to products' functional and inherent features; instead, they involve a wide variety of brands in the form of aesthetic features and symbolic meanings that originate from brands (Pina et al., 2019). This study aimed to investigate whether the brand's internal and social self-expression could culminate in brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement, which may help form a framework for brand acceptance by integrating brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement with the brand's internal and social self-expression construct. Although brand love is seen as a major construct of the customer-brand relationship, little data are available on what helps form it (Alrwashdeh et al., 2020).

Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the effects of brand social self-expression using brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement on customers' acceptance of the brand. Today, many organizations have concluded that brand is one of the most valuable assets. Powerful brands create values both for the customer and for the organization. Brands refer to ideas, impressions, expectations, and beliefs that can affect the minds of all consumers or individuals who can influence businesses (Ziyaei Bideh and M. Namak-Shenas Jahromi, 2011). Brands applied to products and services help determine the identity of those products and services and distinguish them from other products and services. Brands also help evoke their relevant qualities and traits in the mind of consumers. In other words, brands not only involve the qualities and traits of a product but also reflect what we feel and how we feel them (Veirman et al., 2017). Companies can use stronger brands to set higher prices for their products because they help create better leverage, increasing profit margins and reducing their vulnerability against competitors (Ziaei Bideh & Namakshenas-jahromi, 2012).

The best way to purchase a good is to find several people who have investigated it to gain some information. Hence, consumers perform proper decision-making. These people are the ones who advertise word-of-mouth methods to execute their business activities (Hayes & Carr, 2015).

Therefore, considering the effects of word-of-mouth advertisements on consumers' purchase decisions, it is critical to identify factors that affect this kind of advertisement. The present study investigates the direct and indirect effects of the

variables of brand social self-expression, mediated by brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement, on brand acceptance. Accordingly, the general goal of this study was to present a model to explain the effects of brand social self-expression, mediated by the variables of brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement, on brand acceptance (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012).

2. Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Concept of Social Network

Social networks are Internet platforms that aim to provide services and establish social communications with users. These are the sites where people share their interests and experiences. Users of social networks experience various data content loads through their activities on the networks (Jenkin, 2010). Social networks are people who communicate collectively and share data, requirements, activities, and thoughts. Social networks are closely and directly related to informational and communicational technologies. Bin Yahuda has outlined components affecting virtual social networks in a parallel form and considered the outcomes of web development and interface applications, together with the need for sharing, trust, and an online connection, to form social networks on the Internet. One of the essential communication tools on the Internet is social networks which are highly used by the young generation, as figures show an increasingly growing number of users. Social networks are sites where users can share their interests, thoughts, and activities with others (Mohkamkar & Hallaj, 2014). Apart from specific functions of social networks, the facilities and diversities of designing social networks have made reciprocal virtual actions between actors in weblog and chatroom spaces completely different. Below are the factors that help expand interaction in social networks while maintaining their individuality:

- ✓ Specificity of making videos, photos, and graffiti
- ✓ Visibility or non-visibility of the profile of the page holder by particular people (Castells, 2014).

Brand Self-expression refers to developing mentalities that a brand aims to create and ensure the customers' understanding of a brand and its relation with some of its specific needs. Brand self-expression refers to a unique set of brand evocations that imply concluding a contract with customers (Wallace et al., 2014). To be effective, self-expression should be represented by customers and be distinguished from competing brands. Companies with more distinct brand self-expression can create a better market position for themselves, add to their products' values, and thus provide advantages through price leadership (Da Silveira et al., 2013). According to the literature, it is suggested that brand self-expression is a fully dynamic process that should be developed over time through reciprocal interaction between managers and other social

elements, like consumers. The dynamic aspect of brand self-expression leads to brand flexibility under environmental conditions. Brands represent themselves through self-expression and distinguish themselves from competitors.

Brand Social Self-expression: Brand social self-expression refers to its effect on an individual in society (Wallace et al., 2014). To measure social self-expression, Wallace et al.'s 2-item questionnaire (2014) was used.

Marketing by Word-of-Mouth Advertisement: Word-of-mouth marketing refers to providing conditions by which people speak about goods and services and facilitating the conditions that help form these communications; word-of-mouth marketing refers to creating satisfied customers in a way that they are recognized as the best promoters of companies (Sernovitz, 2009). Word-of-mouth marketing concerns real consumers and why they want to speak about their products and services. Humans would like to speak, and word-of-mouth marketing is one of the best ways of communication in this regard (Martensen & Mouitsen, 2016).

Brand love: Shimp and Maden (1988) have proposed a conceptual model of the object-consumer relationship, which the Trinity Theory of Love inspires. According to this theory, the components of love, as suggested by Sternberg (e.g., intimacy, emotions, decision/cooperation, lust, and tendency, are noted in the concept of consumption). These components are strongly related to the sense of loyalty and are aimed at the object of consumption. Recently, researchers have studied the concept of brand love. Fortier (2011) answers the question, "Do consumers experience a sense of brand love?" by suggesting that there might be a sense, and consumers may establish a strong relationship with brands. Carroll and Ahuovia define brand love as sensual excitations that an individual enjoys for a unique trading name. Consumers' love is characterized by the following: excitations for a brand, brand connection, positive brand evaluation, positive emotions in response to a brand, and making brand love transparent. Brand love relations are deep and sustainable (beyond a simple effect), with love not being traded for anything else. When a customer is deprived of using a brand for a while, she/he could sustain suffering, and this will cause prejudice and a positive evaluation of the brand (Santose & Schlinger, 2021).

Literature review

In a study entitled "Role of the customer's online brand experience in customers' intention of purchase for sending generated online content by companies; a case study of Palestine's Islamic Online Banking, Yasin, et al. (2022) did an experimental study on the role of the customer's online brand experience in promoting the growing Islamic banking industry. In this study, they have sought to remove the gap between the customers' online brand experience, customer brand

interaction, and their intention to purchase in Palestine's Islamic Online Banking industry.

Fernandez and Moreira (2019) studied the effect of the relationship between a customer's brand and brand loyalty and satisfaction, mediated by the modifying role of functional and sentimental relations. The main goal of this study was to understand the difference in customer-brand interaction based on sentimental and functional customer-brand relations and its direct and indirect effect on brand loyalty. The three-dimensional customer brand interaction has a direct effect on customer loyalty.

Ahmed et.al. (2018) studied the interaction between the customer's brand advertisement and brand loyalty by identifying customer brand and value adjustment. Study results indicated that value adjustment directly affected identifying commercial names, the brand's emotional commitment, and customer-brand interaction.

Chiu et al. (2016) investigated the effects of service quality on purchase intention by emphasizing the mediating role of brand reputation and word-of-mouth advertisement and the modifying role. Findings revealed that service quality had a positive and significant effect on brand reputation and word-of-mouth advertisement. Brand reputation and word-of-mouth advertisement were also found to have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Sympathy was a modifying factor in the relationship between the quality of services and word-of-mouth advertisement and purchase intention.

In a study, Hudson et al. (2015) investigated the effects of interactions on social outlets on emotional attachment, the quality of brand relations, and word-of-mouth advertisement. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze data. Results indicated that social media interactions had a positive and significant effect on emotional attachment; however, their effects on the quality of brand relations were insignificant. Emotional attachment was also found to have a positive and significant effect on the quality of brand relations and word-of-mouth advertisement. Meanwhile, the effect of the quality of brand relations on word-of-mouth advertisement was significant.

Hashemnia et al. (2021) did a study entitled "Providing a model of customer-brand relationship on the social network of Instagram," concluding that the strategy of social network marketing affected the quality of brand services through effective marketing, thus leading to awareness of the brand and improving brand character for customers. These factors will eventually create brand value for customers by affecting the brand functions.

In a study entitled "The role of brand self-expression and oral advertisement in the tendency to purchase among customers of shops offering Apple iPhone mobile phones, Seif and Sheikh

Esmaeili (2016) stated that their study aimed to investigate the role of brand self-expression in consumers' word-of-mouth advertisements and a rising tendency among customers to purchase from selected iPhone mobile phones across the city of Tehran.

Methodologically, this study was an applied survey based on underlying exploratory methods. Data needed were gathered through Wallace's Brand Self-Expression Questionnaire (2014), Chiu and Chiu's Oral Advertisement (2014), and Young's Tendency to Purchase (2012). The reliability of the tool was measured by Cronbach's alpha, and its validity was examined by using face validity under the supervision of factorial validity experts and also using a confirmatory factor test. The results obtained suggested the acceptable reliability and validity of the tool. Results from the data gathered indicated the appropriate model of the effects of brand self-expression on oral advertisements and the tendency to purchase, as hypothesized relationships in this model were significantly confirmed. Also, other dimensions explained the variables, and the hypothesized relationships were significantly confirmed.

In a study, "Role of brand loyalty in the relation between brand love and brand advocacy," Alavi and Najafi-Siahroudi (2014) investigated the fans of the sports-cultural club of Malavan Anzali. This study contained data from 332 people who had completed a questionnaire and were selected via the non-probabilistic sampling method. Findings suggested that loyalty mediated the relationship between brand love and advocacy of sports brands and non-mediation of loyalty in the relationship between brand love and positive intention of customers (Albert & Merunka, 2013).

Jalilian, Ebrahimi, and Mahmoudian (2012) investigated the effects of electronic word-of-mouth advertisements on consumers' tendency to purchase through the customer-based special value of brand among students. Findings revealed that electronic word-of-mouth advertisements affected the dimensions of special brand values.

3. Study Procedure

The study procedure was quantitative and fell under explanatory (non-experimental) descriptive-survey research, where the researcher explains the relationship between brand social self-expression and word-of-mouth advertisement. From a goal point of view, this study fell under applied research, where the researcher investigates the relationship between the variables of brand social self-expression, word-of-mouth, and brand acceptance on the advertising network Instagram.

3.1. Statistical Population, Sample Volume, and Sampling Method

The unit of analysis in this study is Instagram pages involved in selling airline tickets. Instagram is one of the social media which was launched by Mike Crager in October 2010. The popularity of Instagram is due to its capability of sharing images, which allows users to upload their content in the form of short video clips. This social network, whose mobile application is also used, serves as a fast, beautiful, and entertaining tool for sharing images and films with friends and families. Instagram offers a new way of seeing the world (Instagram, 2016). The statistical population of the study consisted of airline customers on Instagram, who totaled 4000 people. Using a simple random sampling method and sample volume estimation via Cochran Formula, the number of 380 people participated in the study.

Equation (1)

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left[\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} - 1 \right]}$$

Where N is the population volume (4000), p is the percentage of trait distribution in the population, i.e., the ratio of people who have the trait under study, and q is the percentage of people who lack the trait under study.

If p and q values are unknown, their maximum value, i.e., 0.05, is used.

The statistic is $z=t$, and if t is used instead of z, there will be no problems. At the error level of 5%, the z value is 1.96, and Z^2 is 3.8416, with the d value being the difference between the real ratio of the trait and the researcher's rate of calculation for the same trait in society. The accuracy of sampling depends on this factor, and to increase this rate of accuracy, the maximum value of d, which is 0.05, can be used.

3.2. Data Gathering Tool

This study was, on the one hand, a library study by which the researcher studied books and articles extracted from the

Internet, both in Persian and in English, to gather theoretical data about the variables of brand social self-expression, brand love, word-of-mouth, and brand acceptance. On the other hand, data were gathered using Wallace et al.'s Social Self-Expression scale (2014) and a researcher-made questionnaire about the variables of brand love, word-of-mouth, and brand acceptance. The validity of the researcher-made questionnaire was confirmed by supervisors and advisor professors, as the rate was confirmed by face validity. In the end, after determining the face validity, factorial validity was also calculated, and its results are provided below. Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha of research variables. The reliability of the researcher-made questionnaire and the social self-expressive standards were confirmed by Cronbach's alpha of 0.8.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha test results of study variables to determine the reliability of the study tool

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Brand social self-expression	0.73
Word-of-mouth advertisement	0.86
Brand love	0.86
Brand acceptance	0.93

Study variables were measured as follows:

Social self-expression variable (independent variable): This variable was measured by four items on the Likert scale (very low to very high), adopted from Wallace's scale.

Brand Love variable (mediating variable): It was measured by several items of the researcher-made questionnaire on the Likert scale of very low to very high.

Word-of-mouth advertisement variable (mediating variable): It was measured by the researcher-made questionnaire on the Likert scale of very low to very high.

Brand acceptance variable (dependent variable): It was measured by the researcher-made questionnaire on the Likert scale of very low to very high.

Thus, the model under study is given in Figure 1 below.

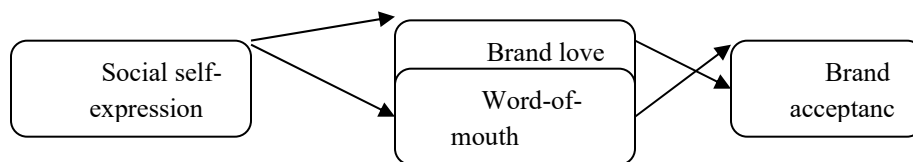


Figure 1: Model of brand acceptance in the present study

3.3. Data Analysis Tool

The tool used to analyze the data in this study was SPSS (version 23) and LISREL (version 8.5) software used to

perform the path analysis. As stated, structural equation modeling was used to present a model of brand acceptance.

4. Data Analysis Results

4.1. Investigating the characteristics of airline customers on the Instagram

Table 2 indicates that most respondents were married (71.35%) and held M.A. degrees (54.69%).

Table 2: Individual characteristics of respondent tourists

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Variable percentage
Marital status	Single	110	28.65
	Married	270	71.35
	Total	380	100
Education	B.A.	104	27.1
	M.A.	210	54.69
	PhD	66	18.21
	Total	380	100

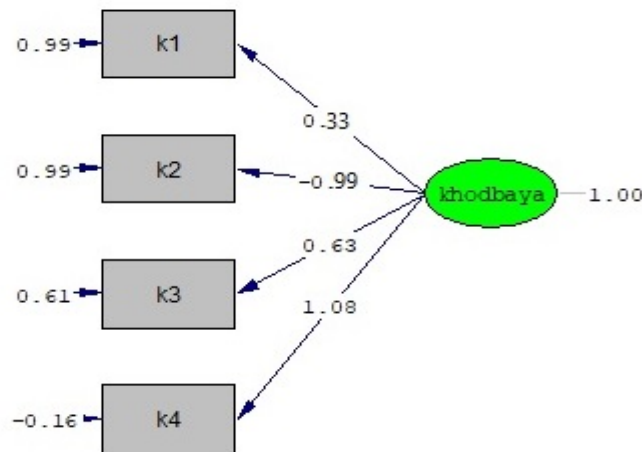
4.2. Determining the factorial (construct) validity of study variables

One of the preconditions of executing structural equations to test the model under study is to fit the items with the variables. To this end, confirmatory factor analysis is used to determine the fit of the tested variables.

Decision-making criterion: In this section, confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm the fit of the items with the measured variable. If the factor load of each item is higher than 0.3, the factorial validity is confirmed.

Factorial Validity of Brand Social Self-Expression

Figure 2 shows the value of the standard factor loading of the social self-expression variable. The outputs of standardized LISREL coefficients are also given for the variable of social self-expression. All the items have factorial loads higher than 0.3, which is significant. Table 3 gives all the items of brand social self-expression with an acceptable fit factorial structure.



Chi-Square=0.08, df=2, P-value=0.96106, RMSEA=0.000

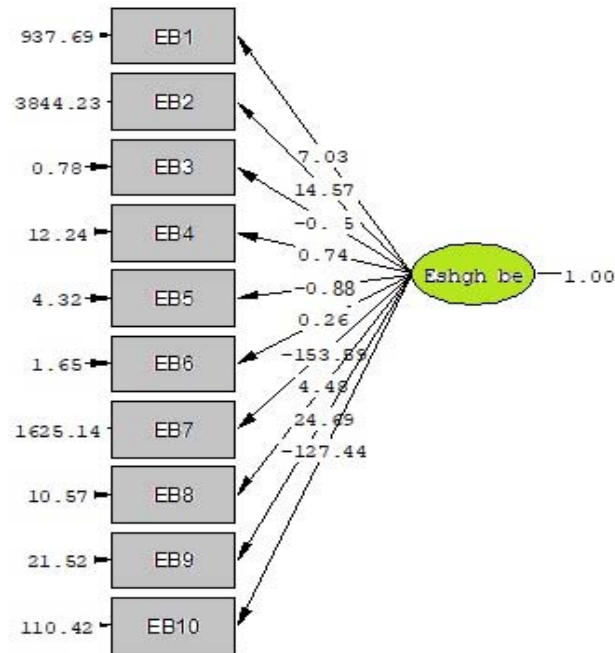
Figure 2: Standard factor load of the variable of social self-expression

Table 3: Indices of fit of social self-expression scale

Indices	Standard	Values
χ^2/df	$3 < \chi^2/df$	1.73
RSMEA	$0.08 < RSMEA$	0.044
GFI	$0.9 > GFI$	0.98
AGFI	$0.9 > AGFI$	0.92
CFI	$0.9 > CFI$	0.96
NFI	$0.9 > NFI$	0.95

Factorial Validity of Brand Love

Figure 3 shows the standard factor loading of brand love variable. The outputs of standardized LISREL coefficients are also given for the variable of brand love. All the items have factorial loads higher than 0.3, which is significant. Table 4 gives all the items of brand love with an acceptable fit factorial structure.



Chi-Square=104.92, df=35, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.254

Figure 3: Standard factor load of the variable of brand love

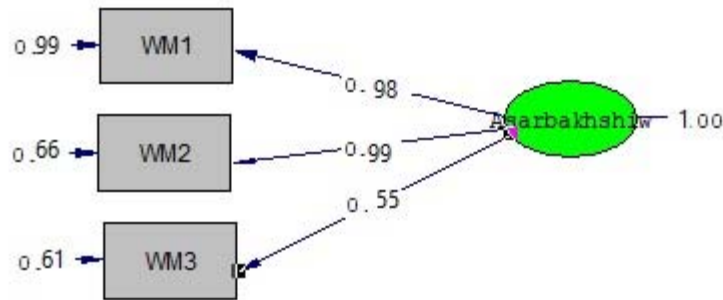
Table 4: Fit indices of the brand love scale

Indices	Standard	Values
χ^2/df	$3 < \chi^2/df$	2.14
RSMEA	$0.08 < RSMEA$	0.055
GFI	$0.9 > GFI$	0.93
AGFI	$0.9 > AGFI$	0.91
CFI	$0.9 > CFI$	0.97
NFI	$0.9 > NFI$	0.95

Factorial Validity of the Word-of-mouth Advertisement Variable

Figure 4 shows the standard factor loading of the word-of-mouth advertising variable. The outputs of standardized LISREL coefficients are also given for the variable of word-of-mouth advertisement. All the items have factorial loads higher than 0.3, which is significant. Table 5 gives all the items of word-of-mouth advertisement with an acceptable fit factorial structure.

Indices in Table 5 suggest the acceptable fit of the items in the variable of word-of-mouth advertisement.



Chi-Square=158.92, df=35, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.259

Figure 4: Standard factor load of the variable of word-of-mouth advertisement

Table 5: Fit indices of the variable of word-of-mouth advertisement

Indices	Standard	Values
χ^2/df	$3 < \chi^2/df$	1.43
RSMEA	$0.08 < RSMEA$	0.033
GFI	$0.9 > GFI$	0.95
AGFI	$0.9 > AGFI$	0.99
CFI	$0.9 > CFI$	0.96
NFI	$0.9 > NFI$	0.95

Brand social self-expression	Mean	Standard deviation	Priority
Brand social self-expression	3.02	0.82	1
Brand love	2.85	0.78	2
Word-of-mouth advertisement	2.78	0.96	3
Support for brand acceptance	2.68	1.04	4

4.3. Prioritization of Study Variables on Airline Customer-oriented Brand

Table 6 gives the views of airline customers concerning factors affecting the airline brand development, i.e., Table 6 indicates that the variable brand social-expression variable (with a mean of 0.82 ± 3.02) ranked the priority in the development of the airline brand, while the variables of brand love (with a mean of 0.782 ± 2.85), and the word-of-mouth advertisement (with a mean of 0.96 ± 2.85) ranked second and third, respectively.

Table 6: Priority of study variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Priority
Brand social self-expression	3.02	0.82	1
Brand love	2.85	0.78	2
Word-of-mouth advertisement	2.78	0.96	3
Support for brand acceptance	2.68	1.04	4

Table 7: Evaluating study variables in airline development

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Univariate value	t	Sig.
Brand social self-expression	3.02	3	0.66		0.45
Brand love	2.85	3	7.90		0.0001**
Word-of-mouth advertisement	2.78	3	7.89		0.0001**

4.3.1. Evaluating study variables in airline development

Table 7 indicates that concerning the development of airline brands on the Instagram network, the variables of brand love, word-of-mouth advertisement, and brand acceptance were lower than the moderate level at a 99% confidence level, while the variable of social self-expression was at a moderate level. For this, it is required to provide planning for brand development if it is accepted by customers. Structural equation modeling was used to determine the best path to strengthen brand acceptance.

Support for brand acceptance

2.68

3

5.89

0.0001**

4.4. Modeling of Factors Affecting Brand acceptance of Airline Companies on Instagram

This section concerns modeling factors that affect the brand acceptance of airline companies on Instagram using structural equation tests. After the fit test of the study constructs in the form of measurement models in the confirmatory factor analysis section, the main stage is the structural model calculation stage, or the significance test of the hypothesized path coefficients in the model, as well as the explained variance, or the explained coefficient, calculated by each path. In fact, after testing measurement models, it is now necessary to provide the structural model, which indicates the relationship between latent variables. The structural model determines the causal relations between latent and hidden variables and explains the causal effects and the level of explained variance. In this section, measurement models or exploratory factor analysis in the previous section are used to test the main hypotheses of the effects of each independent variable on the dependent variables. As stated in this section, the second application of structural equation models, i.e., the structural model, serves as a strong technique to analyze concurrent regression equations, employed in the form of path analysis to investigate the causal relations between the model

variables. The structural equation map is illustrated in the following figure. This map has been developed based on the results from confirmatory factor analyses. According to Table 9 and Figure 5, which indicate the model's map test, it is concluded that the model structure is appropriate. Figure 5 illustrates the standardized path coefficients. Standard path coefficients indicate the strong relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the model. In fact, in this section, the path analysis method in the form of a structural equation model was used to test the study hypotheses. The path diagram suggests which variables cause changes to other variables. Table 9 gives the test of hypotheses results about the causal relations between the study variables. According to the table, five values of the calculated values of the direct path coefficients and the t-value statistic are greater than 1.96 at the 1% level, thus, having a positive and significant effect on the desired dependent variables.

Table 7 indicates that brand social self-expression positively affects brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement at the 1% error level; also, brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement positively affect support for brand acceptance. In the end, it is concluded that brand social self-expression significantly affects the support for brand acceptance.

Table 8: A path analysis of study construct effects

Hypotheses	Variable effect	On the variable	Path coefficient	T	Sig.	Result
1	Brand social self-expression	Brand love	0.77	5.69**	0.000	Confirmed
2	Brand social self-expression	Word-of-mouth advertisement	0.64	2.80**	0.003	Confirmed
3	Brand love	Support for brand acceptance	0.66	3.02**	0.000	Confirmed
4	Word-of-mouth advertisement	Support for brand acceptance	0.38	2.29**	0.000	Confirmed
5	Brand social self-expression	Support for brand acceptance	0.53	3.07**	0.000	Confirmed

** Significance at the 1% error level

In addition to testing the hypothesis, the structural equation model is used to demonstrate the direct and indirect effects as well as the total effects of each of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Table 6 gives the direct, indirect, and total effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables and also indicates the R² coefficient of explanation of

Table 9: Total, direct and indirect effects of the model

the dependent variables by the independent variables. Table 8 suggests that social self-expression explains around 60% of brand love and 60% of word-of-mouth advertisement, whereas all variables of brand love, word-of-mouth advertisement, and social self-expression explain about 70% of the variations of the variable of support for brand acceptance.

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects	R2
Brand love	Brand social self-expression	0.77	-	0.77	0.60
Word-of-mouth advertisement	Brand social self-expression	0.64	-	0.76	0.60
Support for brand acceptance	Brand love	0.35	-0	0.35	0.70
	Word-of-mouth advertisement	0.38	-0	0.38	
	Brand social self-expression	-	0.65	0.65	

Source: study findings

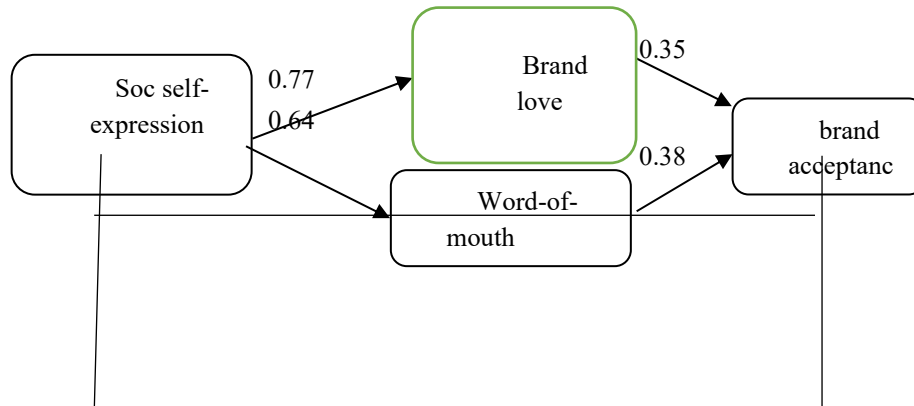


Figure 5: A path analysis of constructs affecting brand acceptance

5. Conclusion

The brand-customer relationship has attracted the attention of experts and marketers over the last decades. Although understanding the formation of this relationship is highly important, factors that affect this formation should also be determined. For this, the goal of this study was to provide a model of brand acceptance by customers (case study: airline company customers on Instagram). First, a review of previous literature and library sources was carried out to determine the study model and its objectives. According to the variables obtained from a systematic review of the study, it was concluded that brand social self-expression affected brand love and word-of-mouth advertisement to affect brand acceptance by customers. Accordingly, the study variables affecting the development of the airline brand were evaluated using the univariate t-test. The evaluation results indicated that at the 1% error level, the variables of brand love, brand acceptance, and word-of-mouth advertisement were lower than the moderate level at the 99% confidence level. Meanwhile, social self-expression was at a moderate level. Thus, it is necessary to perform the structural equation test to determine the best path

for the development of brand acceptance by customers using the three key variables of brand social self-expression, brand love, and brand acceptance, mediated by word-of-mouth advertisement. Thus, the present study elaborated five paths as follows:

- Path 1: Social self-expression- brand love- brand acceptance
Total effects in this section (1.22)
- Path 2: Social self-expression- word-of-mouth advertisement- brand acceptance
Total effects in this section (1.12)
- Path 3: Social self-expression- brand acceptance
Total effects in this section (0.65)
- Path 4: brand love- brand acceptance:
Total effects in this section (0.35)
- Path 5: Word-of-mouth- brand acceptance
Total effects in this section (0.38).

A comparison of the effects of the paths indicates that the best path to accepting the brand is path 1 (Social self-expression- brand love- brand acceptance). Results indicated that brand social self-expression has a positive and significant effect on brand love. Therefore, brand social self-expression helps

increase brand love. This finding is consistent with studies by Wallace et al. (2014) and Hudson et al. (2015). This finding suggests that if a brand contributes to constructing a customer's image, it will persuade him/her to play a social role, have a positive effect on what others think, improve the way society thinks of it, and increase brand love.

Results also indicated that brand social self-expression has no significant effect on supporting brand acceptance through word-of-mouth advertisement. Thus, brand social self-expression does not support the brand through word-of-mouth advertisement. This finding is consistent with studies by Wallace et al. (2014), Chiu et al. (2016), Hudson et al. (2015), and Seyf and Sheikh Esmacili (2016).

Results indicated that brand social self-expression had a positive and significant effect on support for brand acceptance. Thus, brand social self-expression helps increase support for brand acceptance. This finding is in line with studies by Wallace et al. (2014). For this, brand social self-expression helps customers to introduce new services under the name of a brand to others, and if the brand does not meet their expectations, they may tend to give others another chance.

Findings revealed that brand social self-expression has a positive and significant effect on brand acceptance; thus, airline managers and officials are recommended to establish an emotional communication channel to build trust and cooperation with others. Today, the most important feature of product sale is the relation that a customer has with a brand and the emotional relation s/he established with products/services. Emotional features of a brand, such as being unique and credible, are more important than rational features, as in technical, applied, and price areas. Brand services should be up-to-date and have higher quality in order to increase emotions and social self-expression in customers. This is because most consumers use brands for the emotional relationship they establish with them. These communications greatly contribute to creating value-added and maintaining long-term communication between the brand consumer.

Acknowledgments:

We would like to express our gratitude to the respected professors of the business management department of Islamic Azad University, Tehran South Branch, whose guidance was used in the completion of this article. It is hoped that the results of this article will be useful to tourism organizations for the development and prosperity of countries' tourism.

Financial Support:

This research was not under the financial support of any organization and all its costs were estimated by the researcher.

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