

Conceptualising the Impact of Social Media Marketing Features on Brand Loyalty for Local Cosmetics Brands in Egypt

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Abstract:

This study aims to provide a conceptualisation on the impact of Social Media Marketing Features (SMMF) on consumers' brand loyalty (BL) for local cosmetics brands in Egypt. It conceptualises the impact of five SMMF: entertainment, customization, interaction, trendiness, and word-of-mouth, on

brand loyalty. This research facilitates brand marketers in properly comprehending the impacts of and utilizing SMMF to enhance customers' brand loyalty. To understand and conceptualise the variables under investigation, the conceptual model is developed utilising the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model as exploratory research through conducting in-depth interviews with consumers of local cosmetics brands. The findings revealed that marketing professionals do not fully comprehend the significance of a strong social media marketing plan; majority of respondents stated that cosmetics brands do not utilise customized services and use minimal interactive and trendy content. Lastly, respondents agreed that they might switch to a competitor brand with more effective SMMF.

Keywords: Social media marketing features, brand loyalty, cosmetics sector.

الملخص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تصور لتأثير خصائص التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (SMMF) على ولاء المستهلكين للعلامة التجارية (BL) لماركات مستحضرات التجميل المحلية في مصر. تتناول الدراسة تأثير خمسة ميزات للتسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي: الترفيه، والتخصيص، والتفاعل، والعصرية، والكلام الشفهي، على الولاء للعلامة التجارية. يساعد هذا البحث مسوقي العلامات التجارية في فهم تأثيرات خصائص التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي واستخدامها بشكل صحيح لتعزيز ولاء العملاء للعلامة التجارية. لفهم المتغيرات قيد التحقيق وتصورها، تم تطوير النموذج المفاهيمي باستخدام نموذج

الاستجابة للكائن الحي (SOR) كبحث استكشافي من خلال إجراء مقابلات متعمقة مع المستهلكين لماركات مستحضرات التجميل المحلية. كشفت النتائج أن المتخصصين في التسويق لا يدركون تمامًا أهمية خطة التسويق القوية عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؛ حيث ذكر غالبية المستجيبين أن ماركات مستحضرات التجميل لا تستخدم خدمات مخصصة وتستخدم محتوى تفاعلي وعصري بشكل محدود. وأخيرًا، اتفق المستجيبون على أنهم قد يحولون إلى علامة تجارية منافسة ذات خصائص تسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي أكثر فعالية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: خصائص التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الولاء للعلامة التجارية، قطاع مستحضرات التجميل.

1. Introduction

Due to the growth of the middle class in developing countries, the e-commerce expansion, and consumers' interest in personal grooming, the global cosmetics industry is projected to reach unprecedented profits based on Grand View Research Analysis 2021 (Warbung et al., 2023). Despite major international players, Egypt's local cosmetics sector has witnessed a substantial growth; also, the depreciation of the Egyptian pound and the growing impact of social media on consumers purchase decisions will further increase consumers' interest in local cosmetics brands in the future (Euromonitor, 2022).

Sohaib and Han (2022) posited that over 65 million businesses utilise social media platforms to engage with their target audience, with a projected growth of \$833 billion in 2026. Warbung et al., (2023) described the vast social media platforms as an open space.

Businesses desire to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, meet customer demands, and boost brand loyalty are the reasons behind their reliance on social media marketing, which results in sustainable customer value (Warbung et al., 2023). Moreover, various social media marketing features; entertainment, trendiness, customization, interactivity, and WOM, enhance consumers' engagement with brands (Yousry & Fahmy, 2024).

Prior literature examined the relationship between SMMF and consumers' brand loyalty BL, which revealed that SMMF positively impact BL (Althuwaini, 2022; Geraldine et al., 2022; Hafez, 2021; Haudi et al., 2022; Kamboj et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020; Khoa & Huynh, 2023; Koay et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2023; Salhab, 2023; Sohaib & Han, 2023; Wei et al., 2023; Wongsansukcharoen, 2023). Notwithstanding earlier research, to the researchers' knowledge the research variables under investigation have not been examined in context of the cosmetics industry in Egypt.

This study aims to provide a conceptualisation on the impact of Social Media Marketing Features (SMMF) on consumers' brand loyalty (BL) to local cosmetics brands in Egypt. It conceptualises the impact of five SMMF: entertainment, customization, interaction, trendiness, and word-of-mouth WOM, on brand loyalty.

The following research question is proposed:

RQ1: Does SMMF impact consumers' BL for local cosmetics brands?

2. Literature Review

The following literature review aims to cover the following points: the five social media marketing features, brand equity, relationships between variables, S-O-R model; lastly, it'll briefly discuss the conceptual model of the paper.

Social Media Marketing Features (SMMF)

SMMF refers to “the processes used by firms to develop and maintain stakeholder relationships by creating, communicating and distributing online marketing offerings of products or services via social media platforms” (Safeer, 2024, p. 534); also, known as social media marketing efforts (SMME) (Aljuhmani et al., 2022). SMMF is perceived as a multifaceted construct that includes features as trendiness, entertainment, interaction/interactivity, customization, word-of-mouth, informativeness (Althuwaini, 2022), and advertisement (Bilgin, 2018).

SMMF has a favourable impact on customers' sentiments toward the brands. The following five characteristics operationalised in previous research are adopted in this study: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and word-of-mouth.

Entertainment

Entertainment is a primary feature influencing social media platforms' appeal to consumers, which influences brand loyalty and produces a positive experience between brands and consumers (Masa'deh et al., 2021) and is defined as “the importance of providing entertaining and engaging content to social media users, stimulating participation and inspiring user-generated content”. (Safeer, 2024, p. 535).

Interaction

Interaction, which may be divided into profile-based and content-based activities, facilitates users' interacting with and comprehending the brand's marketing efforts more effectively (Fetais et al., 2022). Interaction is operationalised as “the amount of space provided by social media platforms to discuss and exchange ideas, bidirectional interactions and data sharing” (Masa'deh et al., 2021, p. 4).

Trendiness

When a brand's social media marketing efforts are trendy, consumers' search efforts are reduced, and brand loyalty and trust is established (Khoa and Huynh, 2023). Safeer (2024, p. 535) operationalised trendiness as “the need to keep up with the most recent social media news and trends and promptly disseminate this information to consumers.”

Customisation

Brands can boost consumer preferences and provide exclusive offerings by customizing their offerings and marketing messages (Masa'deh et al., 2021). Customisation can be defined as “the extent to which services given are tailored to fulfil the consumers’ predilections” (Masa'deh et al., 2021, p.3).

Word-of-Mouth WOM

Prior research showed that WOM affects consumers' preferences in brands and their products, which in turn affects brand equity (Masa'deh et al., 2021), is regarded as a reliable information source (Fetais et al., 2022) and contributes to the growth of customers' brand loyalty.

Safeer (2024, p. 535) conceptualised Word-of-Mouth WOM as “most influential tool for brands because it allows satisfied customers to spread positive words about a brand to their friends and followers.”

Brand Loyalty (BL)

One of the dimensions of brand equity is brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). Brand loyalty is defined as “deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing” (Konuk, 2024, p. 6040) and is an important marketing objective that cosmetics brands’ marketers aim to

achieve. On social media, brand/product recommendations are produced by a brand's loyal customers (Dhewi et al., 2021).

Cosmetics Industry

The worldwide cosmetics industry, which includes products as skincare, haircare, perfumes, makeup, and other oral care cosmetics, generate approximately \$500 billion annually and provides millions of employees (Malhotra et al., 2022). According to Malhotra et al., (2022), previous research has mainly concentrated on branding of the cosmetics industry. According to Euromonitor (2022), despite major multinational brands, Egypt's emerging cosmetics businesses are making significant expansions into the cosmetics industry. The customers' desire to purchase and consume natural goods and their readiness to support local businesses are advantages driving local cosmetics brands' success. Egyptian consumers are expected to become more immersed in local cosmetics businesses because of social media's escalated involvement in consumers' purchase decisions (Euromonitor, 2022).

SMMF and Brand Loyalty

In the context of Thai banking sector (Wongsansukcharoen, 2022) and Saudi Arabian banking sector (Althuwaini, 2022), SMMF has a favourable impact on brand loyalty additionally, brand trust mediates the relationship between SMMF and brand loyalty (Sohaib & Han, 2023).

In the Indian banking industry (NR, 2023) and Jordanian travel & tourism (Al-Dmour et al., 2023), SMMF influences brand loyalty. In social security organizations, SMMF affects brand loyalty through brand awareness (Gholamveisy et al., 2023). On one hand, all previous research findings are consistent with research undertaken in Jakarta (Cynthia & Keni, 2023), (Aljuhmani et al., 2022), in Bangladesh's banking industry (Hafez, 2021), in Turkey (Bilgin, 2018), and Jordan's aviation context. On the other hand, SMMF's impact on brand loyalty in Qatari luxury fashion firms is insignificant and is ought to be mediated by lovemark and community participation as SMMF cannot foster loyalty in the absence of several mediators as engagement, passion, and a creative community (Fetais et al., 2022). As a result, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1. SMMF impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.

- H1a. Entertainment impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1b. Trendiness impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1c. Customization impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1d. Interaction impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1e. WOM impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

According to Mehrabian and Russel (1974), SOR model originates from environmental psychology and provides a mechanism for understanding complexities of human behaviours (Duong 2023). SOR Model includes three dimensions: environmental stimuli (S) (online or offline) on users' emotions and reactions (O), which causes behaviour (R) (Duong, 2023). SOR is originally developed within the retail industry then later applied to virtual worlds studies (Koay et al. 2020). Khoa & Huynh (2023) and Koay et al. (2020) applied the SOR model, where (stimulus) are the SMMF, which results in consumers' online trust (organism) and e-loyalty (response).

Conceptual Model

This proposed conceptual model, which will be comprehensively discussed in a following chapter, is based on SOR model, where SMMF are stimuli (S), consumers' emotions due to exposure to SMMF are the organisation (O), lastly brand loyalty of consumers are the response (R).

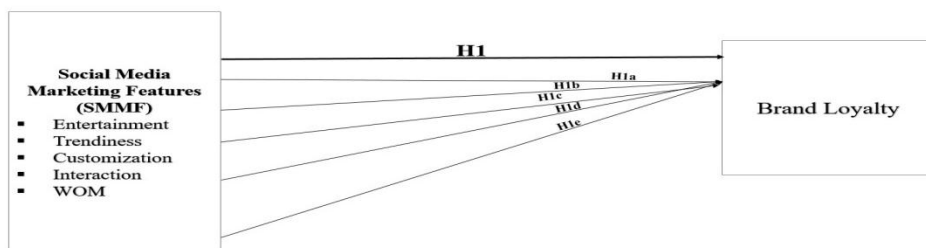


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

3. Exploratory Research Evidence

To determine the extent to which the selected local cosmetics brand uses the five social media marketing features under investigation, this chapter thoroughly discusses the exploratory research through a qualitative study through eleven in-depth interviews with customers of local cosmetics brands in Egypt.

Qualitative Research

In-depth interviews, part of qualitative research, will allow gathering sufficient data to comprehend the research variables and phenomena and pinpoint underlying issues or gaps in knowledge of the variables examined (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

To better understand the research variables under investigation, as well as consumers' perceptions of social media marketing features and brand loyalty, toward their local cosmetics brands, a total of eleven interviews were conducted. For convenience, interviews were undertaken over the phone as well as in-person. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), telephone interviews are quicker and less expensive than in-person interviews, particularly when participants are spread out geographically. Conversely, in-person or personal interviews allow for rapport building, question clarification, and the use of nonverbal clues (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

Females between the ages of 16 and 50 participated in all 11 interviews; they ranged from high school students to

postgraduate students and workers. Respondents from the upper middle class who use a variety of Egyptian cosmetics brands were interviewed for 10 to 18 minutes during December 26, 2023, and January 2, 2024. Several interviews were recorded; the respondents were asked for their approval beforehand, and respondents were offered with the variables' definitions, the study's purpose, and the products included in the cosmetics industry, comprising of seven open-ended questions in total—one for each study variable, as indicated in Appendix A.

Interviews Conclusions and Analysis

Most respondents agreed that content they find on the social media platforms of their cosmetics brand is highly engaging and enjoyable to view, in response to the first question, which asked if the platforms offer fun and entertaining content. Respondents emphasized that they found the content entertaining and engaging because it was varied (carousels, reels, videos); additionally, the brand uses a range of influencers from various backgrounds to generate interest and displays the before and after effects of using their product. Additionally, the brand's logos, colours, styles, and images are all consistent. Additionally, many brands use professional material, such as graphics, and photography. Additionally, the brand highlights the components and manufacturing process of the product or products. Respondents emphasized that a wide range of enjoyable and engaging content improves their engagement with the business as well as their level

of trust in it. Three respondents stated that they thought the information and material were neutral and enjoyable enough; they also thought the brand should produce more engaging and diverse content. Finally, those customers stick with this local cosmetics brand because they are interested to see what the brand has to offer, not because the content is particularly interesting.

In response to question two, which asked if the local cosmetics brand's social media channels offered personalized services, most respondents said that the brand does not use customized services. On social media, the brands provide their standard services. The local cosmetics brand respondents buy from and follows on social media used to provide personalized services like asking for or adding special order notes, requesting a gift card, or anything else the customer wanted but no longer does, according to one respondent. However, the brand may offer personalized services, such as personalized packages, items, or a quiz to determine which product is best for the customer, on their website but not on their social media accounts, according to two respondents. Finally, according to three responses they do not require any further tailored services because the brand's offerings are adequate.

Many respondents agreed that the cosmetics brand's social media platforms provide enough detailed information that customers are looking for when it comes to question three, which inquired if the content and information on these platforms provide

the relevant and accurate information that the customer is looking for. Four respondents stated that they must conduct additional searches or send a direct message to the brand to obtain the information they seek because not all information is readily available on social media platforms. According to one responder, the brand she consumes and follows on social media provides more information on its website than it does on social media.

Several respondents agreed that the information is updated and trendy when it comes to question four, which asked if the cosmetics brand's social media channels provide trendy, up-to-date, or newest information. In contrast to other rival brands that customers follow, respondents clarified that brands employ an approachable strategy in their material, which is varied and up to date with current trends. According to one respondent, the brand only adopts trends when there is a particular trend linked to a blogger or influencer. Two respondents stated that the brand they follow and consume is neutrally trendy; they should do better because other companies that compete with them are more popular. Although they are not too trendy, one respondent stated that she is okay with the content, pointing out that the brand she consumes and follows might do more in terms of trendiness of the content (video quality, creativity, and stylistic approach); the level of trendiness the brand use satisfies her.

In response to question five, which inquired if the cosmetics brand's social media platforms enable followers or consumers to communicate with one another and express their opinions about the brand, several respondents concurred that the brand they use and follow facilitates communication between consumers and the brand. In addition to using games, polls, and ask-me-a-question content formats, the companies' posts and ads also feature call-to-actions that encourage users to connect with them in some way, such as liking, sharing, commenting, or messaging the brand directly, to which the business will reply right away. According to the respondents, social media platforms that are very favourable to interaction inspire users to ask others to engage with the brand. Additionally, one respondent stated that she is sufficiently motivated to buy from the business by the amount of contact she observes between customers online. However, two respondents stated that the brand they consume, and follow on social media is not sufficiently interactive. According to a different interviewee, other rival brands encourage consumers' interaction through partnerships or collaborations with influencers or individuals, and their material permits greater interactivity; moreover, the brand needs more innovative material to enable more customer involvement. Additionally, another respondent clarified that the brand she consumes and follows uses incredibly alluring offers and promotions that persuade her to engage with the brand frequently. The final respondent stated

that the brand encourages interactions and that many discussions take place in the comments section, but she will continue to be passive and avoid interacting with the company.

In response to question six, which asked if consumers would share information and discuss or recommend the brand to others on social media platforms, respondents defended their actions by stating that they would do so because the brand is trustworthy, its prices are reasonable, and its products are useful and efficient. According to one respondent, she will only advocate for or discuss the brand with others in person rather than online because she has not consumed its products sufficiently. Several respondents also stated that they will share the product photographs or send the profile link to others on social media sites to promote the brand. One respondent stated that she will share the product URL or profile on social media after recommending the brand in person first. In conclusion, most respondents said they would use social media platforms to promote the brand.

All respondents agreed that they are loyal to their local cosmetics brand under specific circumstances in response to the last question, which asked about consumers' loyalty to the brand. Respondents remain loyal only until prices rise above average, a competitor offers lower prices, the brand spreads false information on social media, other consumers show amplified loyalty to another brand, the quality declines, ingredients become harmful to

individuals, or products are ineffective as they previously used to. Interestingly, when asked if social media influences their decision to switch to a different brand, four respondents stated that they are likely to switch to a competitor with more entertaining social media content if the SMMF of the brand they already consume have declined over time. On the other hand, three respondents stated that switching to a rival is not influenced by social media, as reasons for substitution will be based on other circumstances, as previously mentioned. The answers to the earlier interview questions go counter to Dhewi et al., (2021), who claimed that a long-standing, accomplished brand may not be able to maintain its success if its social media marketing tools are not effectively used. One respondent stated that if the products are regularly sold out or if she wants to switch brands every while, she can switch to an international brand rather than a local one, and she might switch to another competition brand if social media is boring and uninteresting. She would, however, repurchase and follow the brand again if it enhanced its social media marketing features.

Research Gap

Academic Gap

Numerous researchers have been carried out in the literature on SMMF. Prior research has examined how SMMF affect consumers' loyalty in a variety of industries; All studies confirmed the positive impacts of SMMF on the growth of consumers' brand loyalty. (Al-Dmour et al., 2023; Althuwaini,

2022; Fetais et al., 2022; Geraldine et al., 2022; Hafez, 2021; Haudi et al., 2022; Kamboj et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020; Khoa & Huynh, 2023; Koay et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2021; NR, 2023; Putri et al., 2023; Salhab, 2023; Sohaib & Han, 2023; Warbung et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2023; Wongsansukcharoen, 2023). Conversely, the research variables conceptualised in the current study have not been adequately researched in Egypt's local cosmetics sector, according to the researcher's knowledge.

Practical Gap

To the researcher's knowledge, the research variables have not been studied sufficiently in Egypt. Consequently, eleven customers of local cosmetics brands participated in in-depth interviews, which led to the conclusion that marketing professionals do not fully comprehend the significance of a strong social media marketing plan. Since trendy content increases customer brand loyalty, marketers of local cosmetics brands continue to overlook its effectiveness (Fetais et al., 2022). Furthermore, several interviewees confirmed that they might switch to a competitor brand who utilises more effective social media marketing features, demonstrating that marketers still fail to understand the significance of producing engaging online content for consumers. Additionally, only three out of eleven respondents stated that customised services are provided by the local cosmetics brands they follow and purchase from. This suggests that marketers are attempting to automate their services and restrict customisation, which is crucial

for building customer brand loyalty and branding competitiveness (Masa'deh et al., 2021). Additionally, customers prefer firms that allow for interaction on their social media platforms, which several brands fail to do.

Research on the local cosmetics industry in Egypt is insufficient, despite substantial number of research conducted on social media marketing features and brand loyalty, globally. Therefore, the aim of this study is to conceptualise and how customers' loyalty to local cosmetics brands in Egypt are affected by five Social Media Marketing Features SMMF: entertainment, customization, engagement, trendiness, and word-of-mouth.

4. Conceptual Model

This chapter unveils the below five important dimensions of the proposed conceptual model: (1) underlying rationale of the model, (2) objectives of the model, (3) expected contributions of the model, (4) limitations of the model; lastly, arguments or hypotheses of the model.

Underlying Rationale

Due to its low cost, large reach reaching 3 billion users, social media marketing is an essential instrument that most firms utilise extensively (Koay et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, to the researcher's knowledge, no research has been undertaken to test the proposed conceptual model on Egyptian cosmetics brands. Because of the devaluation of the Egyptian currency,

rising customs, inflation, high prices of international brands, also the increased knowledge and know-how to effectively compete with international brands, consumers—mostly women—have shifted to local cosmetics brands, leading to the widespread emergence of the local cosmetics sector in recent years. The proposed model would enable a thorough comprehension of the essential social media marketing features that influence customers' brand loyalty. Therefore, the proposed model is essential for contributing to existing literature and managerial practice to better comprehend and explore the significant relationship between the five social media marketing features that lead to a crucial marketing goal: brand loyalty.

Furthermore, because social media marketing is yet a novel phenomenon, marketers require further transparent answers on how SMMF affects consumers as well as the effective methods to use SMMF in increasing consumers' brand loyalty.

Research Objectives/Agenda of the Model

The following are several objectives that the proposed conceptual model seeks to accomplish.

First, to examine how the five SMMF affect customers' brand loyalty to the local cosmetics brands they regularly consume and follow-on social media.

Secondly, to investigate how social media marketing helps brands achieve their marketing goals, which include increasing

sales and profitability as well as improving consumer loyalty, brand perceptions, and brand experience.

Finally, the suggested conceptual model will improve knowledge of how the new phenomena, SMMF, lead to crucial marketing goals as brand loyalty.

Contributions of the Model

It is anticipated that the proposed conceptual model will offer practical implications as well as academic contribution on how to understand and utilise the variables under investigation.

First, the proposed model is ought to identify which social media marketing feature has a greater influence on consumers' brand loyalty on the local cosmetics brand they consume. Thus, the outcomes of SMMF would be comprehensible to academic researchers.

Additionally, the model would allow brand managers and marketers to utilise the most social media marketing features that assist brand marketers in accomplishing various marketing goals as brands utilize social media marketing, a new and significant phenomenon, to accomplish marketing goals including building long-lasting relationships with customers, improving their purchase decisions, and boosting their brand loyalty. As a result, the proposed conceptual model will improve knowledge and application of how the new phenomena, SMMF, affects crucial marketing goals like brand loyalty.

Limitations of the Model

Since this study focuses on examining the relationships between the variables in the local cosmetics sector, which is primarily dominated by female consumers, the suggested conceptual model is restricted to the Egyptian market, specifically the targeted female market segments. Second, the suggested model can only be used to examine the effects on Egypt's local cosmetics sector. Examining the relationship on the Middle East and GCC nations may yield diverse findings. Additionally, only five social media marketing features—entertainment, engagement, customisation, trendiness, and word-of-mouth—were used to conceptualise their impact on consumers' brand loyalty. Contrasting results may be obtained when testing the effects of different SMMF, such as consumer online interaction, online communities, content sharing, accessibility, and perceived relevance (Abu-Rumman and Elhadid, 2014). Additionally, only one dimension of brand equity—brand loyalty—were examined in this study; other dimensions, such as brand awareness, brand connections, and perceived quality, should be tested.

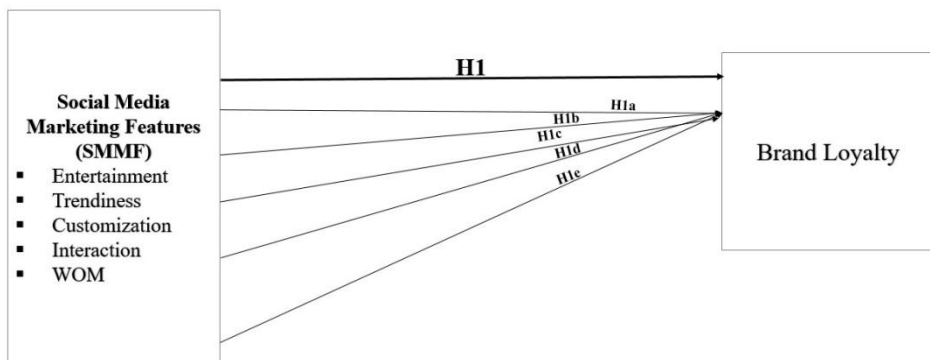
Arguments of the Model

After the exploratory research conducted on the research variables under investigation, the research gap will be filled through the following hypotheses:

H1. SMMF impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.

- H1a. Entertainment impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1b. Trendiness impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1c. Customization impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1d. Interaction impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.
- H1e. WOM impacts consumers' brand loyalty for local cosmetics brands.

Conceptual Model



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Appendix

Qualitative Research: In-depth Interviews Open-ended questions

1. Does this local cosmetics brand have engaging and enjoyable content on its social media platforms?
2. Does this local cosmetics brand offer personalized services on its social media platforms?
3. Do you find the correct or pertinent information you're looking for on the social media network or platforms for this local cosmetics brand?
4. Do you get the most recent, stylish, and up-to-date information from this local cosmetics brand's social media network or platforms?
5. Are you able to communicate with people and express your thoughts about this local cosmetics brand on its social media platforms?
6. Do you find yourself wanting to use social media to share information and discuss or suggest this local cosmetics brand to others?
7. If you are in any circumstances, are you willing to switch to another competing local cosmetics brand?