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Path analysis of the designed model from the impact of causal conditions to the consequences of digital marketing in the active business of the Mashhad leather industry

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to examine the path analysis of the designed model from the effect of causal conditions to the consequences of digital marketing in active businesses in the Mashhad leather industry. Based on its objective, the research was applied; in terms of execution, it was quantitative; and in terms of nature and method, it was descriptive-survey research. The statistical population of this study consisted of all individuals active in the leather industry, the exact number of whom was unknown. The sample size was determined based on the 5- to 10-times rule of the questionnaire items and, using non-random convenience sampling, 247 participants were selected. The data collection instrument in this study was a standard researcher-made questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm the reliability of the questionnaire, and confirmatory factor analysis was applied to assess its validity; the obtained values indicated the confirmation of both reliability and validity. In addition, discriminant validity was also confirmed. SPSS and Smart PLS software were used to analyze the data. The research findings showed that causal conditions had a significant effect on the central phenomenon of digital marketing in the leather industry. The central phenomenon had a significant effect on contextual conditions, intervening conditions, and strategic factors in digital marketing in the leather industry. Strategic factors had a significant effect on the consequences of digital marketing in the leather industry. The results indicate that organizations must move in step with current knowledge in order to achieve customer satisfaction and must reflect innovation and creativity in the world of digital marketing.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

One of the unique characteristics of today's world is the existence of vast and extensive human communications. The expansion of communications, particularly electronic communications, has so distinguished modern society from preceding ones that the new era is called the "communication age" and today's society is termed the "information society" (Noor et al., 2024). In such a society, media and mass communication tools, as key elements of communication, play a crucial role (Saeednia et al., 2016).

In the past, marketing and selling goods were conducted through face-to-face interaction between the seller and the customer (Mehrabi et al., 2024). Sellers could easily recommend intended products and goods to buyers by closely observing their behavior and understanding their needs (Yang et al., 2024). However, in today's world, with the ever-increasing expansion of products and the growing diversity of various brands, choosing and purchasing a product has become a difficult and time-consuming task. Having public access to the internet provides individuals with the opportunity to use social media, and additionally makes it possible for people to communicate with each other without the need for in-person meetings (Akhmedova et al., 2024). What is critical, however, is the organization's capability to correctly employ digital marketing strategies in the path toward achieving customer satisfaction and utility. This is because marketing on online platforms occurs in the arena of modern technology, where industries are constantly updating while creating innovative performance in their services and products (Erhan et al., 2024). Nonetheless, achieving a digital marketing plan and strategy that aligns with the opinions and desires of customers and online users is a golden and extraordinary opportunity that guides the organization toward high success and advancement (Sheikhvand & Davari, 2023). This is due to the fact that customer satisfaction is a noteworthy issue; moreover, customers are the agents of organizational survival, and their satisfaction is regarded as the motivation for executing organizational activities, keeping hope alive like blood in the veins of the organization (Karim et al., 2024). Customers who are satisfied with the services received in the digital marketing of successful organizations engage in repeat purchases to experience that utility again over time (Baykal et al., 2024).

Accordingly, the present study seeks to answer this question: How should the path analysis of the designed model from the effect of causal conditions to the consequences of digital marketing in active businesses in the Mashhad leather industry be conducted?

Theoretical Framework

Customer Loyalty

Loyal customers engage in continuous purchasing and perpetual advocacy of the brand upon receiving online products, stating that getting acquainted with the brand introduced on social media is one of their best decisions in continuing their relationship and purchasing online (Mehdi et al., 2024).

Competitive Advantage

Sustainable competitive advantage represents the organization's acquisition of a valuable and inimitable advantage through which it achieves substantial financial resources and profit, and triumphs over competitors in attaining success (Zameer et al., 2024). In fact, competitive advantage is the ability to generate a creative and innovative idea that has not been accessed by everyone, and the path to achieving this advantage is facilitated through the existence of specialized and professional human resources (Najafi Moghadam et al., 2024).

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing encompasses the set of all tools and activities utilized to market products and services within digital platforms, including the web, internet, mobile, or other digital devices (Vaziri Gohar & Abdolhosseini, 2020).

Digital Marketing Capabilities

The processes, structures, and skills that a firm requires to succeed in the digital era are defined as digital marketing capabilities (Bargoni et al., 2024).

Moradi Ziba et al. (2023) investigated the formulation of a digital marketing strategy model in successful Iranian startups. The results of the qualitative phase indicated that 241 open codes, 46 axial codes, and 14 selective codes were identified and extracted. The research findings demonstrated that causal conditions—comprising four variables: networking capability, artificial intelligence adoption, marketing capability, and customer knowledge—influence digital marketing strategies. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the model's goodness-of-fit indices.

Bagheri Anilu et al. (2023) examined the analysis of the digital marketing environment. In the open coding stage, 242 primary codes were identified from the interview analysis. In the second stage, axial coding was performed around the investigated phenomenon using the constructs of the axial coding model. Based on the research findings, the concept of the digital marketing environment was selected as the central phenomenon. Causal conditions were categorized into four groups: innovation, optimal management, structural factors, and ease. Six main categories—including business strategies, educational strategies, innovative strategies, planning, and monitoring—were selected as strategies. Intervening factors were identified in two categories: reinforcing and weakening factors. Cultural factors, infrastructural factors, training, leadership style, and strategies were determined as the contextual and grounding factors of the digital marketing environment. Finally, the consequences of the factors affecting the digital marketing environment were determined at three levels: micro, meso, and macro.

Research Methodology

Based on its objective, the research is applied; in terms of execution, it is quantitative; and in terms of nature and method, it is descriptive-survey research. The statistical population of this study consists of all individuals active in the leather industry, the exact number of whom is unknown. The sample size was determined based on the 5- to 10-times rule of the questionnaire items and, using non-random convenience sampling, 247 participants were selected. The data collection instrument in this study is a standard researcher-made questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm the reliability of the questionnaire, and confirmatory factor analysis was applied to assess its validity; the obtained values indicate the confirmation of both reliability and validity. In addition, discriminant validity was also confirmed.

Research Findings

SPSS and Smart PLS software were used for data analysis. The research findings showed that causal conditions have a significant effect on the central phenomenon of digital marketing in the leather industry. The central phenomenon has a significant effect on contextual conditions, intervening conditions, and strategic factors in digital marketing in the leather industry. Strategic factors have a significant effect on the consequences of digital marketing in the leather industry. The results indicate that organizations must move in step with current

knowledge to achieve customer satisfaction and must reflect innovation and creativity in the world of digital marketing.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of examining the path analysis of the designed model from the effect of causal conditions to the consequences of digital marketing in active businesses in the Mashhad leather industry. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Moradi Ziba et al. (2023), Bagheri Anilu et al. (2023), Gholipour Domyeh (2023), Pietroni and Marconi (2022), Norouzi et al. (2022), Agong Bodiatmo (2020), Prosvetova and Dozhdeva (2020), and Wong (2020). Pietroni and Marconi (2022) showed that manufacturing companies turn to four industries to begin a successful digital transformation. In order to maintain competitiveness in the global market and respond to customer demands, industries must adopt a set of digital technologies to innovate in their production processes.
Based on the results obtained, the following suggestions are presented:

- Understanding user culture in virtual and digital spaces and producing appropriate content.
- Continuous training in digital culture and improving the media literacy of human resources.
- Using specialized personnel such as sociologists, information technology experts, digital marketing experts, and social media experts.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, or editing of this manuscript.

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Ethics Approval

All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.