

## **Examination of the Impact of Brand Communities on Social Networks on Brand-Customer Interactions and Brand Loyalty (Case Study: Leather Brand Dorsa on Instagram)**

**Malihe Siyavooshi<sup>a\*</sup>, Azita Darushi<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>. Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management, University of Hormozgan, Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan, Iran

<sup>b</sup>. MSc, Department of Business Management, University of Hormozgan, Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan, Iran

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### **Abstract**

The widespread presence of consumers in social networks, on the one hand, and the desire and obligation of companies to create and maintain their customers, on the other hand, have led companies to use social networks as a platform to create a brand community. Virtual brand communities have the same features as real brand communities. The current research has investigated the impact of brand community commonalities (consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility) on customer engagement with the brand and brand loyalty. The research data were collected using the distribution and collection of 384 online questionnaires among the followers of Dorsa leather brand page on Instagram. The result of data analysis using structural equation modeling with use of LISREL software showed that the brand community commonalities have positive effect on customer-brand engagement. Also, the results showed that the brand community commonalities, and customer-brand engagement have positive effect on brand loyalty. Among the brand community commonalities, the shared rituals and traditions have the greatest impact on customer-brand engagement. Research findings can be used by companies to manage their brand in cyberspace.

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**Keywords:** Brand Communities, brand community commonalities, customer-brand engagement, brand loyalty.

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### **1. Introduction**

Social networks have transformed traditional marketing communications. Internet users are gradually shaping commercial relationships that were traditionally formed by marketers (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). The importance of social networks in marketing is increasing day by day because these networks provide individuals with common interests the ability to interact, exchange information and knowledge, experiences, benefits, or needs. Additionally, the development of social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) has provided brands with numerous opportunities to engage with customers (Nadda et al., 2015). Social networks have created a platform for customer interaction, leading to a marketing revolution through these networks (Alqharabat et al., 2020).

The prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased restrictions imposed by governments to reduce human gatherings and the need to comply with health protocols have greatly accelerated the rate of use of social networks. Consumers are increasingly turning to social networks to gather information to base their purchasing decisions on. (Izadi et al., 2020). Brands have utilized brand-hosting networks such as Facebook and Instagram as platforms for support activities, offering services to customers, product information, special offers, and

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [siyavooshi@hormozgan.ac.ir](mailto:siyavooshi@hormozgan.ac.ir) (M. Siyavooshi)

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various forms of entertainment (Cheung, Pires & Rosenberger 2020), aiming to enhance customer relationships, increase sales, and consequently achieve higher profitability through these platforms.

On the other hand, establishing and maintaining brand loyalty is one of the key concerns of business owners and a major area of marketing research. Marketers are constantly seeking to identify and utilize various tools to maintain customer loyalty to the brand, and social networks are one of the new tools that can help maintain customer loyalty to the brand. (Mozafari and Anani, 2014). Optimal and continuous use of social media, due to their wide popularity and potential benefits such as easy and extensive access, low cost, and diverse communication efficiency, encourages many companies to engage in these spaces (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media provide a common virtual space for individuals to share and discuss ideas, creating a community that fosters long-term interaction and social relationships (Chen and Lin, 2019). Social media has made it possible to achieve a new form of communication and content sharing on the Internet, and by strengthening or building a brand, it quickly creates the key to success in changing the company's mindset and adopting new strategies in response to consumer preferences (Kohli et al. 2018). Therefore, in order to improve their customer retention strategy companies must identify and understand how consumers interact with their brand and integrate their needs and desires.

Most studies on brand loyalty and brand-customer interactions cover aspects such as price, after-sales services, face-to-face communication, and individual interactions contributing to loyalty and brand interactions. Limited research has been conducted on how brand communities on social media affect individual interactions with the brand and brand loyalty. Brand community means a geographically unlimited specialized community that is based on a structured set of social relationships among those interested in a brand. These communities are specialized in the sense that a brand of goods or services is their focus. Brand communities help embed brands in the daily lives of consumers. These communities are based on the bond between brand and consumer, as well as consumer to consumer. (Lynch and De Chernatony, 2007). Among the commonalities of the members of this society, it can refer things such as: consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility or commitment to society (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

In conclusion, companies need to identify and understand how consumers interact with their brand to enhance their strategies for customer retention. Effective utilization of brand communities on social networks can lead to improved brand-customer interactions and customer loyalty, consequently impacting purchasing behavior positively. Product manufacturers and service providers have well understood the fact that buyers and consumers become fans of certain brands on social media and know that social media, in addition to being effective tools for marketing communications, influence consumers interactions with the brand and their brand loyalty. However, there is still a large research gap regarding how this effect works. Considering the ever-increasing increase in online sales and brand-customer virtual communication, the current research aims to reduce this gap, and seeks to answer the question of what effect the common dimensions of the brand community have on brand-customer interactions and brand loyalty.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2-1. Brand community and its commonality**

Society is a major structure in social thought, whose intellectual history is long and very rich. As mentioned earlier, the brand community is a specialized and non-geographical community based on a structured set of social relationships among fans of a brand. The brand community, like other communities, is characterized by consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Consciousness of kind expresses an inner connection that each member feels towards each other and a sense of collective difference from other people outside the community. Shared rituals and traditions, in which participants seek to celebrate and inculcate certain behavioral norms and values. And the sense of moral

responsibility expresses the sense of duty or obligation towards the whole society and its members (Albert and Thomas cited in Attri & Bairagi 2020).

Consciousness of kind is an important factor in society and the common inner feeling among the members of society. Consciousness of kind is shared consciousness, a way of thinking about things that is more than shared attitudes or perceived similarity. It is a shared knowing of belonging (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) have put forward reasons about the effect of consciousness of kind on brand community. In the brand community, members feel a sense of belonging to a very large community that has no geographical boundaries. They also suggested that the role of computer communication such as the global network is very important in this regard.

Shared rituals and traditions are the factor that unites the members of a society and represent the vital social processes that the members of the society bring and maintain (Moniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Shared rituals and traditions are a symbolic form of communication that, due to the satisfaction of community members with experiences, become a systematic method through repetition over time, and play an important role in creating and constructing community identity (Laroche et al., 2012). Shared rituals and traditions between brand community members and marketers in both media and face-to-face marketing environments reinforce community culture, history, and customs through processes such as brand birthday celebrations, storytelling, advertising, and shared experiences (Moniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002).

Social commitment or moral responsibilities have two main tasks and functions in society, which are of great importance. First, supporting the survival of the society through reasoning and knowing what is right or wrong in the society, and it leads to the integration and preservation of the members of the society. Second, moral responsibility makes members seek help from each other in consumption behavior through information dissemination. Therefore, reasoning and dissemination of information is very important in the environment and virtual media space that these environments have the ability to support shared information and it is believed that the main role of social networks is to connect people and facilitate information sharing (Laroche et al., 2012).

## **2-2. Brand virtual community and factors affecting participation in it**

A virtual brand community is an online community based on social relationships and social connections among consumers of a brand that is not limited by geographic boundaries (Huangfu et al. 2022). There is a belief that people are attracted by virtual communities. These communities provide an attractive environment to their members where people can express themselves and communicate with others. These communities fulfill four basic human needs: enjoying interests, building interpersonal relationships, living dreams and aspirations, and trading. Brand communities help embedding brands in the daily lives of consumers (Lynch & De Chernatony, 2007). Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) defined brand communities as a place for customer empowerment that enables each member to establish a relationship with other like-minded consumers and share their interests about the brand, this leads to a strong bond between consumers and the brand, and as a result, it has a positive effect on purchasing behavior and brand loyalty.

Multiple studies regarding engagement in online brand communities indicate that members are interested in helping others, participating in collective activities, demonstrating online community approval, and seeking ways to enhance the online brand community for themselves and others (Algesheimer, 2012). Van Doorn et al. (2010) posit that customer engagement goes beyond mere attitudes; it implies behavioral manifestations towards the brand and company as a result of motivational stimuli. There are a broad spectrum of customer behavioral engagements includes word-of-mouth recommendations, aiding other customers, blogging, providing feedback, and even engaging in legal actions.

Several factors can determine the level of participation in the brand's virtual community, which can be classified into four groups (Algesheimer, 2012). The first category includes factors related to the brand. One of the motivations for joining brand communities is emotional attachment to brands that have symbolic functions, and community members are eager and interested in that particular brand. The brand community allows members to display their emotional connection to the brand, exchange information, discuss the brand, upload photos of products, or list reports of brand usage experiences (Braun, Eshuis & Klijn, 2014). Brand identification

is another factor in this category. Customer participation in collective activities in brand communities can be explained by social and psychological variables. Group behavior influences individual behavior towards the brand. It has been established that individual behaviors related to the brand are a result of group behavior. More activities in the brand community lead to a stronger sense of brand identification (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Brand identification can be an introduction and a factor for customer participation in the virtual community. For example, Algesheime (2012), by examining brand identity in European car clubs, found that identification with brands and their communities has a positive effect on participation in brand communities. Consumers have a high intrinsic motivation to interact and collaborate with other community members. Therefore, a strong relationship with the brand can stimulate customers to search and interact with like-minded consumers to share their enthusiasm (Algesheime, 2012).

The second category of factors influencing the level of participation in the brand's virtual community are social factors, which include the two factors of social benefits and social identity. Like traditional communities, online brand communities facilitate interaction among members and offer a wide range of social and emotional benefits (Moniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Consumers often participate in online brand communities to seek help from other members (Dholakia et al., 2009). Social identity has recently expanded from psychology to organizational studies. Social identity theory claims that self-concept is to some extent derived from psychological membership in diverse social groups. Individuals are generally striving to gain positive self-esteem and group membership is one way to achieve that. Social group members maintain and strengthen social identity through comparing individuals within and outside the group (Hughes & Ahearne, 2010). Social identity is defined by sharing with a social group, confirming the norms of the group, and being different from external group members. Individuals with a higher social identity tend to be recognized as members of a group, distinguishing themselves from outsiders, and preferring a group that offers them positive self-perception.

The third category includes product-related factors, which include product complexity, involvement with product, and participation in the product. Customers may become members of brand communities because they want to ensure the quality of products or services that have important and significant features. Customers may also become members of brand communities due to their interest in a specific product or service category, such as online games. Evidence shows that searches for communities such as cars, lifestyles, sports, clothing, and music are at the top of Facebook search lists. Such communities bring together thousands, and in some cases millions, of people around a specific product category (Dehdashti et al., 2014). On the other hand, instead of being consumed individually, some products such as sports competitions, some online games, and concerts are consumed collectively. Brand communities are likely formed around such brands and events, and shared consumption acts as one of the motivations to join such brand communities (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008).

The last category includes functional factors, which include information quality, avoiding uncertainty, entertainment, and rewards. Economic value and practical benefits are important reasons for individuals to join virtual brand communities (Dholakia et al., 2009). In fact, one of the prerequisites for feeling useful in a virtual community is practical benefits. Practical benefits often arise from the direct support and information that customers receive from the virtual brand community, allowing members to have a general understanding and insight into a wide range of related topics that can be used by other members. Topics such as whether to make a specific purchase, recommended products and the reasons for it, potential problems, practical solutions, and general product usage guidelines that can be shared with other members (Dholakia et al., 2009). Brand communities reduce feelings of discomfort and anxiety by providing assurance about the quality of the product; this reduction in uncertainty is beneficial even for users who consider themselves informed and knowledgeable. Information quality is an important factor that defines perceptual benefits by members of virtual brand communities. In a virtual brand community, members can easily refer to any individual for brand-related information. Extensive and up-to-date information facilitates learning for members (Hung, Li & Tse, 2011).

Entertainment value is another functional motivator for participation in virtual communities, based on recreation, enjoyment, and relaxation, resulting from interactions between virtual community members. Entertainment value refers to the extent that the use of a virtual community is perceived as entertaining and enjoyable (Dholakia et al., 2009). Previous studies have shown that the entertainment value lies in its ability to meet users' needs for escapism, recreation, enjoyment of beauty, and expressing hidden emotions. Individuals enjoy entertainment for their own sake, regardless of any positive or negative consequences that may be perceived (Dholakia et al., 2009).

### **2-3. Consumer brand engagement**

Consumer brand engagement has been defined as high relevance of brands to consumers and the development of an emotional connection between consumers and brands that enhanced predictive and explanatory power of consumer focal behaviors outcomes, including brand loyalty (El Shaboury & Shamma, 2021). The 'consumer brand engagement' concept more comprehensively reflects the nature of consumers' particular interactive brand relationships, relative to traditional concepts, including 'involvement' (Hollebeek et al. 2014). Greve (2014) assumes that customer engagement can be divided into active and passive participation. Active participation can be described as commenting, sharing and posting posts/photos/videos, pressing the like-button and communicating and connecting with other users and the company. Whereas passive participation can be described as reading posts/comments, watching videos, following links, and watching profiles.

Consumer brand engagement is a multidimensional construct with cognitive, emotional and behavioral (social) relevant dimensions (Cheung et al. 2020; Greve. 2014, Hollebeek et al, 2014). Although some researchers conceptualize consumer engagement in Online brand communities on social media as cognitive, affective, behavioral and collaborative activities (Bhandari, Bhattarai & Mulholland, 2024). The cognitive and affective elements of customer engagement incorporate the experiences and feelings of customers. Whereas the behavioral and social elements capture the participation by current and potential customers, both within and outside of the exchange situations (Greve, 2014).

### **2-4. Brand loyalty and its benefits**

Loyalty is an almost fanatical behavioral reaction (buying or recommending a purchase) that a person shows to a brand over time, and his (her) behavior causes a special tendency towards that brand name in the decision-making and evaluation processes among other brand names. This reaction is a function of a person's psychological and mental processes (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The American Marketing Association defines brand loyalty as: an advantage in which a customer, instead of buying a product from several suppliers, always buys it from one supplier. In other words, brand loyalty is the possibility of not switching from one brand to another, especially when that brand causes changes in the product and price due to some factors (Ansari and Nasabi, 2013).

Experts in marketing knowledge have listed many benefits for customer loyalty, including reduce in the cost of attracting new customers, reducing the sensitivity of customers to commitments and prices, benefits from customer lifetime value, positive performance through increased predictive power, and creation obstacles for competitors (Kotler & Armstrong, 1997:45). So, creating loyal customers are vital to the business.

### **2-5. Conceptual model development and formulation of research hypotheses**

Many users participate in virtual brand communities either because they already had experiences with the product or service of that brand or because the product is complex and they wanted to learn more about it, both from the company and other users (Rosenthal & Brito, 2017). As mentioned above three core community commonalities, which enable to distinguish the main features of the brand community are: consciousness of kind, Consciousness of kind affects customer-brand engagement., and moral responsibility. Rituals and traditions are a symbolic form of communication that, owing to the satisfaction that members of the community experience through its repetition, is acted out over time in a systematic fashion. Through their special meaning and their repetitive nature, rituals contribute significantly to the establishment and preservation of a community's collective sense of self, which plays a role in building community identity (Laroche et al. 2012). Rituals stabilize

community identity by clarifying expected roles, delineating boundaries within and without community, and defining rules so that members know that “this is the way our community is” (Laroche et al. 2012) Weber has described shared consciousness of kind as a shared knowing of belonging (cited in Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). Members of a community feel a strong connection with one another that it called “they sort of know each other” even if they have never met (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). Moral responsibilities/obligations to society is a felt sense of duty or obligation to the community as a whole as well as to its members (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Laroche et al. (2012) confirmed that brand community engagement practices are positively influenced by the shared consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral obligations of members of the community. Lin, Long & Liu (2024) argue that a shared value proposition generates consumer engagement and fosters in customers a sense of brand community. Shared value proposition is positively related to sense of brand community and a sense of brand community is positively related to brand engagement. Consumers would realize the importance of cooperating with other members in a brand community in co-creating value, and thus cultivate a strong sense of community with the brand. According to the mentioned materials, the following main hypothesis and related sub-hypotheses were proposed:

**H1:** The brand community commonalities have a significant positive effect on customer-brand engagement.

**H1a:** The consciousness of kind affects customer-brand engagement.

**H1b:** The shared rituals and traditions affect customer-brand engagement.

**H1c:** The moral responsibility affects customer-brand engagement.

Given the important role of brand loyalty in corporate performance, exploring the factors that promote brand loyalty has become a hot topic in academia. With the emergence and development of virtual communities, the social scope of consumers has gradually expanded from the traditional physical environment to the virtual. Today, companies are gradually realizing that virtual brand communities can help them manage customer relationships, enhance their brand influence, and strengthen consumer brand loyalty (Huangfu et al. 2022). Simon and Tossan (2018) findings demonstrate that the engagement with a brand social media – including reading the brand's posts, engaging conversation with the community's members, and actively supporting the brand – is part of the reciprocal responses of grateful consumers. Brand consumer social interactions, as reflected by the corresponding media gratifications, generate gratitude in consumers which, in turn, is expected to trigger gratitude-driven reciprocal behaviors. According to these materials, the following hypothesis was proposed:

**H2:** Brand community communalities have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.

Consumer brand engagement is considered a recent topic in the marketing literature. It is the level of a customer’s motivational, brand-related, and context dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions (El Shaboury & Shamma, 2021). Cognitive consumer brand engagement dimension is defined as “a consumer's level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration in a particular consumer/brand interaction”. Emotional consumer brand dimension refers to “a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction”. And finally, behavioral consumer brand engagement dimension is defined as “a consumer's level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand in a particular consumer/brand interaction” (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

Underlying the prevalent views of the effectiveness of brand communities is the assumption that forming relationships with other like-minded consumers who share one's interest in the brand will be credible and impactful in persuading and bonding customers to the brand. Brand communities are venues where intense brand loyalty is expressed and fostered, and emotional connections with the brand forged in customers. Companies can influence brand loyalty by encouraging interactions between customers in small groups that are mostly controlled by the customers themselves (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). Bhandari et al. (2024) showed that the greater online brand community engagement, the greater the likelihood of brand purchase intention, positive brand referrals, and oppositional brand referrals. In jonez and kim' (2011) study was also confirmed brand community as a reliable predictor of loyalty. Hollebeek et al. (2014) indicated that consumer brand engagement may contribute to the development of consumer-perceived ‘brand usage intent. Cheung et al. (2019) suggested

that consumer–brand engagement is a critical factor in affecting consumer behavior including self-brand connection, purchase intention and brand loyalty. Customer engagement can lead to successful marketing outcomes, such as loyalty, word-of-mouth, share of wallet and cross-selling. The higher the level of engagement activity, the higher the brand loyalty (Greve,2014). Therefore, according to the findings of previous research, the following hypothesis was developed.

**H3:** Consumer- Brand engagement have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.

Figure 1 shows the research conceptual model.

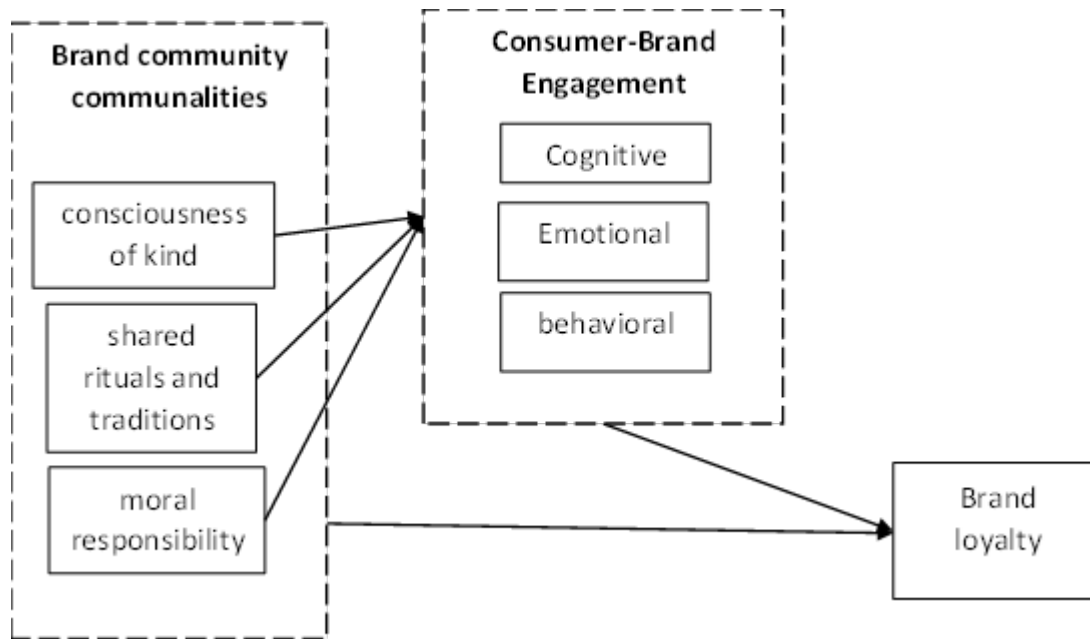


Fig. 1. Research conceptual model

### 3. Methodology

The research is applied research in terms of the result, and in terms of the method of doing the work, it is a survey research, case study and correlation. Data collection was done by distributing questionnaires online by sending direct messages to the members of Dorsa leather brand community on Instagram. The instrument used to measure research variables contains 23 questions. The questions related to the brand community communalities variable include 9 questions from Shirkhodai et al.'s research (2016), the questions related to the Consumer-Brand Engagement variable include 10 questions from Cheung et al.'s research (2020) and the questions related to measuring brand loyalty include 3 questions that adopted from the research of LaRoche et al (2012). The questions were set on a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1).

The statistical population of the research includes all the followers of the Dorsa leather brand's official page on Instagram, which was 276 thousand people at the time of the research. The research sampling method was convenient sampling method. The link of the questionnaire was sent for 445 followers of Dorsa Leather Instagram page, who were active on this page by liking and writing comments about the content of the page, and a total of 384 usable questionnaires were completed. The validity and reliability of the research tool was checked and confirmed by calculating factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and composite reliability, whose values are shown in the table (2). Composite Reliability shows higher and better composite reliability values than Cronbach's alpha because the factor loadings of the items are used when calculating. Kolmogorov-

Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the data and structural equation modeling was used to check the research hypotheses with the help of LISREL software.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1. Data analysis and measurement model

To access the proposed model, this study used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyses data and create appropriate results. SPSS software was used to analysis demographic variables, and LISREL software was used to test the model. Table (1) presents participants’ age and gender of participant in the research.

Table 1 Participants’ sample characteristics (n = 384)

Item	Categories	Frequencies	%
Gender	Male	190	49.4
	Female	194	50.6
Age (Years)	Low-20	17	4.4
	21-30	90	23.4
	31-50	185	48.2
	51 -Above	92	24

Source: Authors’ own creation/work

As can be seen in Table 1, the ratio of participation of men and women in the research sample is almost equal, and the largest number of respondents are in the age group of 31 to 50 years. In Table 2, the criteria related to measuring the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument are shown, and as it can see, all these values are at acceptable levels.

Table 2: Constructs reliability and validity

Construct	question number	factor loading	Standard Error	T-value	CR	AVE
brand community commonalities	-	-	-	-	0,70	0,04
	Q1	0,06	0,79	10,29		
	Q2	0,02	0,73	9,36		
	Q3	0,44	0,81	7,84		
	Q4	0,74	0,09	12,24		
	Q5	0,70	0,08	12,33		
	Q6	0,70	0,44	14,92		
	Q7	0,88	0,23	18,94		
	Q8	0,88	0,22	19,36		
Q9	0,84	0,29	17,73			
customer-brand engagement	-	-	-	-	0,83	0,71
	Q10	0,81	0,34	16,98		



Construct	question number	factor loading	Standard Error	T-value	CR	AVE
	Q11	0,83	0,3	17,72		
	Q12	0,80	0,27	18,42		
	Q13	0,87	0,24	18,92		
	Q14	0,82	0,23	17,28		
	Q15	0,86	0,26	18,68		
	Q16	0,81	0,34	17,07		
	Q17	0,87	0,20	18,78		
	Q18	0,84	0,29	17,96		
	Q19	0,80	0,27	18,22		
brand loyalty	-	-	-	-	0,77	0,06
	Q20	0,72	0,49	12,99		
	Q21	0,71	0,49	12,90		
	Q22	0,81	0,34	16,72		
	Q23	0,89	0,21	19,20		

**4.2. Structural model and hypothesis testing**

In Table 3, the results of the evaluation of research hypotheses are presented.

**Table 3. Path coefficient, T-value, and the result of checking the hypotheses**

No	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	t-Value	The result is at the 95% confidence level.
H1	The brand community commonalities have a significant positive effect on customer-brand engagement.	0.72	9.99	Approved
H1a	The consciousness of kind affects customer-brand engagement.	0.44	4.04	Approved
H1b	The shared rituals and traditions affect customer-brand engagement.	0.45	4.12	Approved
H1c	The moral responsibility affects customer-brand engagement.	0.39	3.42	Approved
H2	Brand community commonalities have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.	0.22	2.69	Approved
H3	Consumer- Brand engagement have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.	0.65	7.31	Approved

According to the t value in Table 2, the hypothesis that community commonalities have an effect on brand-customer interactions was confirmed, and as can be seen in the table, the path coefficient in this effect is 0.72, which indicates a strong effect of brand community commonalities over customer brand interactions. This finding is consistent with the research results of Simon & Tossan (2018) which showed that the dimensions of brand community commonalities in social media have a positive and significant effect on brand-customer interactions. It is also consistent with the results of the research of Laroche et al. (2012). In shirkhodai et al (2017) also in assessing the effect of brand community commonalities on social interactions and brand use, only the relationship between social commitment and social interaction was not significant.

All three sub-hypotheses related to this hypothesis were also confirmed. Referring to the results of the research data analysis, it can be said that according to the path coefficient of 0.44 and t-value =4.04, the positive influence of consciousness of kind on customer-brand engagement was confirmed (at a confidence level of 95%). In the research of Shirkhodai et al (2017), the positive effect of shared consciousness of kind on customer-brand engagement also was confirmed. This finding is also consistent with the results of Simon & Tossan (2018), and Laroche et al. (2012). In the research of Saeednia et al. (2016), the effect of shared awareness on interactions with the brand community was confirmed.

According to the values of the path coefficient and the value of t, the sub-hypothesis of the influence of shared traditions on brand-customer interactions was also confirmed. The results of this hypothesis are consistent with the research results of Shirkhodai et al (2016), Simon and Tossan (2018), and Laroche et al (2012). Muniz and Ogin (2001) state that community brand rituals such as greeting rituals, celebrating the history of the brand, sharing brand stories, and so on, highlights the active role brand community members have in the social construction of brand meaning, and thus the brand. This involves accommodation, negotiation, text rejection, interpretation, evaluation, and use of communal symbol systems. In brand communities the rituals and traditions represent an important aspect of consumer agency, and point to the social negotiation between marketer and consumer in constructing a brand's meaning.

The sub-hypothesis of the influence of moral responsibility on customer-brand engagement was also confirmed, and the values of the path coefficient and the t-value related to it are presented in Table 3. The results of this hypothesis are consistent with the research results of Simon and Tossan (2019), and Laroche et al. (2012). However, in the research of Shirkhodai et al. (2016), this effect was not confirmed. Shared moral responsibility is a sense of duty to the community as a whole, and to individual members of the community. This sense of moral responsibility is what produces collective action and contributes to group cohesion. A sense of moral responsibility towards other members makes them help each other in consuming the product and It is something they do "without thinking," simply acting out of a sense of responsibility that they felt toward other members of the community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001)

According to the path coefficient of 0.65 and also the t- value of 7.31 presented in the table 2 it can be said that Consumer- Brand engagement have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty at a confidence level of 95%. The study of Yavarigohar & Koraghli (2019) also showed that customer interactions with the brand have a positive effect on brand loyalty, and the more customer interactions with the brand, the more the customer's desire to buy the brand, word-of-mouth advertising, and brand recommending behaviors. Goli & Yazdani (2020) also showed that brand socialization strengthens brand loyalty among customers by strengthening customer relationships with the company, with the brand, with the product, and with other customers. This relationship in the research of Bhandari et al. (2024), Cheung et al. (2019), and (Greve, 2014) have also been confirmed.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current research showed that the commonality of the brand community and consumer interactions with the brand in the space of virtual pages can increase consumer loyalty to the brand. On the other hand, the results of this research showed that the commonality of the brand community can strengthen cognitive, emotional and behavioral interactions with the brand. This research offers empirical evidence to confirm the important role of brand community commonalities in brand loyalty and their positive impact on consumer brand engagement. Therefore, it is suggested that brand managers design the space of the brand's social pages in such a way that its followers feel that they benefit from this community and that there is an inherent connection among the members of the brand community and feel a sense of belonging. In order to achieve this purpose, an environment should be provided in the brand's social media so that the members of the brand community can share their experience about the better use of the brand's products and their successful or unsuccessful experiences in relation to the customization of products. For motivating and encouraging members of the brand community to express their opinions or suggestions and experiences, brand managers could periodically hold competitions in this field and consider prizes. It has been established that a reduction by 5 per cent in customer defections can lead to an increase in profits by 85 per cent (Attri and Bairag, 2020). Brand managers therefore continuously focus on improving customer satisfaction and retention through high-quality appealing products and services. However, to retain the customer, marketers need to inculcate a feeling of belonging and connect with the brand.

The vast reach, low cost and popularity of social media are prompting all brand managers to take advantage of such characteristics, so that they, almost blindly, want to be on social media. This research findings help them have more insights into this process. First, it shows that brand communities based on social media have the same advantages and benefits as offline brand communities. They positively influence through shared consciousness, shared rituals and obligations to society on consumer-brand engagement. Second, our findings show that if managers wish to enhance brand loyalty, they have to promote consumer brand engagements in their brand communities. Obviously these activities could be promoted easily with social media capabilities of sharing information and connecting people. Also, paying attention to the coefficients of the path related to the influence of brand community commonalities on consumer-brand engagement shows that the most influential is related to shared rituals and traditions. Rituals are an important part of online community building, as they provide a way for members to connect, bond, and establish a sense of belonging. Rituals offer consumers the chance to interact with a brand. Because people want more than just consumption – they appreciate rituals, as these give them a sense of belonging and significance. Rituals are a welcome break from the humdrum of everyday life, and they charge activities with emotion. Most of all, they reduce complexity in our complex world: They give orientation and provide calmness and serenity. Brand managers can strengthen consumer interactions with the brand and with other consumers by creating rituals such as welcoming new members, celebrating members's successes, using rituals to emphasise the importance of respect and kindness, setting up rituals that encourage members to be open and honest with each other.

This study has a number of limitations, which suggest opportunities for further research. This research uses convenience sampling, which is adequate in size to provide internal validity for its findings, but limits their generalizability beyond the present study. In addition, this research focuses on a specific context, Leather Brand Dorsa page on Instagram, Since one of the influencing factors on consumer interactions with the brand are the factors related to the product, repeating the research in several brands that belong to different product groups and also conducting research in other social network platforms, especially Iranian virtual networks Like Ita, Bale, and Rubika can yield interesting results.

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