

The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Brand Image from the Perspective of the Information Adoption Model

Sosyal Medya Pazarlamasının Bilgi Benimseme Modeli Merceğinden Marka İmajına Etkisi

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Abstract

Article Type: Research Article
Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

Article History/
Makale Geçmişi
Makale Geliş Tarihi/
Received: 22/06/2024
Makale Kabul Tarihi/
Accepted: 29/10/2024

Keywords: Social media marketing, information adoption model, brand image.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal medya pazarlaması, bilgi benimseme modeli, marka imajı.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social media marketing on brand image. A conceptual model has been developed based on the Information Adoption Model (IAM) to achieve this goal. **Material and Method:** Data were collected from 204 social media users in the Karabük province through a survey technique. The collected data were analysed with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study investigates how information about a product, service, or brand produced through social media marketing influences consumers' perceptions of information quality, source credibility, information usefulness, and adoption, and how these factors, in turn, affect brand image. **Findings:** The analyses confirm that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand image. Additionally, it was found that social media marketing information is perceived as high-quality, reliable, and useful, which increases the likelihood of its adoption. **Results:** This study concludes that social media marketing positively influences brand image from the IAM perspective. Furthermore, by testing the effect of social media marketing on brand image through the lens of IAM, this study expands the scope of the model and contributes to it. The findings also serve as a reference for marketing researchers and practitioners, reminding them of the significance of social media marketing.

Öz

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı, sosyal medya pazarlamasının marka imajı üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Bunun için Bilgi Benimseme Modeli (IAM) temel alınarak kavramsal bir model geliştirilmiştir. **Gereç ve Yöntem:** Veriler, anket tekniği ile Karabük ili evreninde 204 sosyal medya kullanıcılarından toplanmıştır. Toplanan veriler Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi (YEM) ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma, sosyal medya pazarlaması yoluyla üretilen ürün, hizmet ya da marka bilgisinin, tüketicilerin; bilginin kalitesi, kaynak güvenilirliği, bilginin kullanılabilirliği ve benimsenmesi algılarını nasıl etkilediği ve bunun da marka imajı üzerindeki etkisi incelenmektedir. **Bulgular:** Yapılan analizler, sosyal medya pazarlamasının marka imajını pozitif yönde etkilediğini doğrulamaktadır. Ayrıca sosyal medya pazarlaması bilgisinin kaliteli, güvenilir ve kullanılabilir görüldüğü ve bu durumun da sosyal medya pazarlaması bilgisinin benimsenme durumunu arttırdığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. **Sonuç:** Bu çalışma sonucunda, sosyal medya pazarlamasının IAM perspektifinden marka imajını pozitif anlamda etkilediği belirlenmiştir. Ek olarak bu çalışma, sosyal medya pazarlamasının marka imajı üzerindeki IAM merceğinden test ederek IAM'ın kapsamını genişletmiş ve modele katkı sağlamıştır. Ayrıca elde edilen sonuçlar, sosyal medya pazarlamasının önemini pazarlama araştırmacıları ve uygulayıcılarına hatırlatarak bir referans oluşturmaktadır.



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Cite as/Bu yayına atıfta bulunmak için: Işık, E. (2024). The effect of social media marketing on brand image from the perspective of the information adoption model. *Journal of Current Marketing Approaches & Research*, 5(2), 105-122. <https://doi.org/10.54439/gupayad.1503349>

Ethics committee statement/Etik kurul beyanı: This study was conducted with Ethics Committee Approval by the decision of Karabük University Social and Humanities Research Ethics Committee dated 03.06.2024, meeting number E-78977401-050.04-345187.

1. Introduction

Marketing continuously evolves its principles based on needs and developments in the external environment. Marketing, which continues to play a crucial role in the development of businesses, has expanded its application areas with technological advancements (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012, p. 4444). In terms of access to target audiences, social media has undoubtedly become one of the most significant of these areas. Broadly defined, social media refers to a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 enabling users to create and share content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

Today, social media platforms have billions of users. As of April 2024 statistics, there are 5.07 billion active social media users globally, representing 62.6% of the world's population (Statista, 2024a). Some social media platforms have reached billions of users, while others, though not as vast, have hundreds of millions of users. The ten largest social media platforms by user numbers as follows: Facebook (3.065 billion), YouTube (2.504 billion), Instagram (2 billion), WhatsApp (2 billion), TikTok (1.582 billion), WeChat (1.343 billion), Facebook Messenger (1.010 billion), Telegram (900 million), Snapchat (800 million), Douyin (755 million) (Statista, 2024b). These statistics highlight the sheer importance of social media for businesses in terms of user reach.

The proliferation of social media platforms, where consumers can interact with brands, companies, and other consumers, alongside having billions of users, has diversified the marketing environments in which companies, marketers, and advertisers operate (Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012, p. 25). The internet has substantially transformed how consumers search for and find information to support their purchasing decisions, resulting in a wide range of online information sources (Kuruzovich et al., 2008; Gökerik, 2024). Consequently, social media, which has become a crucial source of information, is used by businesses as a channel

to inform consumers through various newly developed marketing strategies (Il-Hyun & Zamrudi, 2018; Gökerik, 2024), conduct marketing campaigns, build customers relationships, conduct buyer research, generate leads, drive sales, and establish brands (Schmitt, 2012, p. 11).

In today's marketplace, consumers prefer branded products to signal their status. Brands are considered implicit tools through which business can attract consumers' attention and gain competitive advantage (Malik et al., 2013, p. 117). In highly competitive markets, numerous alternative brands compete for consumer preference, making it increasingly challenging for businesses to cultivate brand loyalty. As this point, the importance of brand image becomes evident. Brand image helps businesses establish a distinctive and positive position in consumers' minds (Saeed et al., 2013, p. 1364). Research indicates that brand image positively affects consumer behavior, especially consumer purchasing behavior (Durmaz et al, 2018; Faircloth et al, 2001; Guliyev, 2003; Diputra et al, 2021).

Social media content created as part of businesses' social media marketing efforts has become a key source of information for consumers regarding products and brands. However, the impact of this communication between consumers and businesses on social media may vary from person to person (Cheung, 2014, p. 43). Sussman and Siegal (2003) elucidate how individuals adopt information and subsequently change their intentions and behaviours on computer-mediated communication platforms with their Information Adoption Model (IAM). This model provides a theoretical framework for understanding how users evaluate and adopt information presented through user-generated content on social media platforms (Elwalda et al., 2021, p. 1793). The model investigates the influence of factors, such a information quality, source credibility, and perceived usefulness on the information adoption process (Sussman & Siegal, 2003, p. 52). While social media is often considered the most powerful tool, how

consumers perceive marketing messages on social media is crucial for marketers, as it impact consumer behaviour (Chung & Austria, 2010). Consumers can access a plethora of information about products and services via social media (Kuruzovich et al., 2008), with much of this information originating from corporate social media marketing efforts (Kaur, 2016).

The primary objective of this study is to examine the contribution of social media marketing to brand image from the perspective of the IAM. While research on social media marketing predominantly focuses on consumers, the potential effects on brands have been relatively underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by concentrating on brand image. Moreover, previous studies employing the IAM have explored various marketing strategies on social media, such as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Verma et al., 2023), guerrilla marketing (Gökerik et al., 2018), and influencer marketing (Zhang, 2023). In contrast, this study broadens the scope by focusing on social media marketing in a more comprehensive sense. This research is also significant in providing insights for businesses and marketing practitioners regarding the impact of social media marketing on brand image.

2. Social Media Marketing

One of the critical aspects that marketers emphasize in their promotional activities is the ability to communicate with potential customers without time and place constraints, thereby increasing brand awareness (Barutçu, 2011, p. 8). Social media has emerged as one of the most important effective tools for achieving this goal (Barutçu & Tomaş, 2013, p. 7). Social media is defined as web-based services that allow individuals to create profiles, interact with others – such as friends, family, organisations, strangers, and fellow consumers- and engage through text, photos, and videos (Hall-Phillips et al., 2016, p. 485). In addition to becoming a new platform for individuals to express their ideas, beliefs, and attitudes (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012, p. 4444), social media

serves as crucial marketing tool, enabling businesses to engage directly with their customers (Barutçu & Tomaş, 2013, p. 9).

From a marketing perspective, social media is a space where consumers can produce information, including both positive or negative opinions and experiences about a products or business, with their networks and online communities. It is also provides businesses with a cost-effective and highly capable means of reaching their target audiences compared to traditional media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, pp. 65-66; Jacobson et al., 2020, p. 1; Cheung et al., 2020, p. 697). As a result of these characteristics, social media has become a highly significant component of marketing strategies for many businesses and business managers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 59).

Social media marketing, which has developed alongside the rise of social media, is defined as "increasing visibility on the internet using social media sites, promoting goods and services" (Özgen & Doymuş, 2013, p. 95). Numerous studies have investigated various dimensions of social media marketing and the benefits it offers businesses. These studies demonstrate that social media marketing significantly enhances brand image, influences consumer purchasing decisions, fosters strong connections between businesses and their target audiences, facilitates new business partnerships, increases sales of products and services, and reduces overall marketing costs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Neti, 2011; Ajina, 2019; Ziyadin et al., 2019; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Şahin et al., 2017). In this context, research shows that social media has become a widely adopted marketing tool (Alves et al., 2016; Jacobson et al., 2020; Thaker et al., 2020).

Businesses frequently utilize social media as a marketing and advertising medium due to its numerous advantages compared to traditional channels such as television, radio, and newspapers. These advantages include the ability to reach billions of users, lower advertising costs, the ability to identify and tailor messages to specific target audiences, the

increasing amount of time people spend on social media compared to traditional media, the accessibility for small and medium-sized enterprises to market entry, the permanence of online information allowing consumers to access product and business details at any time, and the facilitation of dialogue between businesses and their target audiences (Todor, 2016, pp. 52-53). These features also contribute positively to a business's image. Furthermore, one of social media's most significant advantages is its measurability. This feature enables businesses to easily track metrics such as the number of people reached by a message about a product or brand, the number of likes and comments (both positive or negative) a post has received, and how frequently potential customers share the post on their profiles (Lee & Hong, 2016, p. 360). These advantages have shifted marketers' focus toward social media over traditional media (Knoll, 2016, p. 266).

Despite the advantages of using social media as a marketing medium, some disadvantages can negatively impact a business's image. These include the ease with which competitors or unauthorized entities can copy marketing campaigns, brand names, logos, and product photos posted by businesses on social media. Additionally, some users may experience difficulty viewing advertised products due to internet speed issues or lose interest during the process. Concerns about the security of online payments may also deter some users (Todor, 2016, p. 53). Negative comments regarding products, brand, or advertisement can damage brand image, and the rapid spread of false information by social media users or competitors may further harm businesses (Çağlıyan et al., 2016, p. 47).

3. Brand Image

Brand image is defined as consumers' perceptions of a brand in their minds (Keller, 1993, p. 3) and as the expression of consumers' thoughts and feelings towards a brand (Lee et al., 2011, p. 1093). In other words, brand image refers to the overall impression of a particular brand that shapes customers' emotional perceptions (Latif et al., 2015, p. 5). A positive or

negative image of the brand can form in the minds of individuals who have no direct interaction with the brand (Torlak et al., 2014, p. 150).

Brand image consists of functional, symbolic and experiential dimensions. The functional brand image addresses and solves consumers' problems by focusing the product's function, as well as meeting consumers' expectations and needs. The symbolic brand image satisfies consumers' intrinsic desires such, as self-worth, social status, and self-recognition. The experiential brand image provides consumers with sensory pleasures, fulfilling their tastes and excitements (Wu & Wang, 2014, p. 44). In this study, we focused on the functional and symbolic dimensions, as they are more validated by numerous studies in the literature. Considering the objectives of our research and model we used (IAM), we examined the effects of social media marketing's information quality, credibility, usefulness and adoption status on brand image. Within this context, the functional and symbolic dimensions are more aligned with predictions of this model. Raji (2019, p. 305) asserts that functional brand image reflect consumers' perceptions of a brand functionality, quality and reliability. For consumers, the functional brand image pertains to the benefit or performance a product or service offers. This perspective suggests that consumers assess the brand based on tangible elements (Özdemir et al. 2021, p. 122). In contrast, the symbolic brand image is the concerned with the intangible benefits a brand offers, such as status or personal image (Salciuviene et al, 2009, p. 179).

In today's business environment, brand image is essential for companies and marketers. The information consumers hold about brands shapes the brand's image (Keller, 1993). Since brand image reflects the entirety of company's marketing efforts over time, it also influences consumers' future decisions regarding the brand (Whang & Yang, 2010, p.177). Therefore, brands aim to create a positive presence in consumers' minds by employing various marketing strategies through communication channels (Torlak et al., 2014, p. 150). Hsieh and Li (2018, p.

29) demonstrate that when consumers have a positive perception of a brand, the brand's messages are more effective than those of competitors, while Shamma and Hassan (2011, p. 14) emphasize that this perception impacts purchasing behavior.

Studies have shown that advertisements implemented with a specific strategy (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993; Meenaghan, 1995), social media marketing activities (Barreda et al., 2020; Bilgin, 2018), influencer marketing (Gönülşen, 2020), electronic word of mouth (EWOM) (Güner ve Öngel, 201) and guerrilla marketing efforts shared on social media have positively effects brand image (Gökerik et al., 2018). In line with these findings, this study will measure the impact of social media marketing activities on brand image through the IAM.

4. Information Adoption Model (IAM)

The Information Adoption Model (IAM) developed by Sussman and Siegal (2003) aims to explain how individuals are influenced by information on computer-mediated communication platforms. This model was developed by integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Erkan & Evans, 2016, pp. 48-49; Wang, 2016, p. 619; Cheung et al., 2008, p. 231). The Technology Acceptance Model, which was originally designed to explain the impact of computer usage behaviour on beliefs, attitudes, and intentions (Davis, 1989, p. 985), does not address the influence of social factors on user behaviour. In contrast, the Elaboration Likelihood Model explores how recipients are

influenced by information conveyed through messages and how their attitudes change is examined. According to this model a message can affect individual's attitudes and behaviours in two ways: via the central route and the peripheral route. In the central route, recipients focus on the content of the message, while in the peripheral route, they evaluate the credibility of message's source (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125). Sussman and Siegal (2003, p. 52) posit that the perceived usefulness of information depends on both the quality of the message and the credibility of its source, ultimately leading to the adoption of the information.

Figure 1 illustrates the IAM that form the basis of this study. The IAM examines the relationships between information quality, source credibility, information usefulness, and information adoption. Information quality refers to which user's perception of the information's usefulness, relevance, accuracy and timeliness. Information quality is similar to information quality; however, this model, examines information quality from a broader perspective (Dedeoğlu, 2018). Information quality is defined in the literature as "the extent to which consumers perceive the content published on a company's page as high quality" (Zhang et al., 2016). Source credibility, on the other hand, refers to the recipient's perception of the trustworthiness and expertise of the information source, independent of the content itself. Information from highly credible sources is perceived as more useful and reliable, which in turn facilitates information adoption (Cheung et al., 2008).

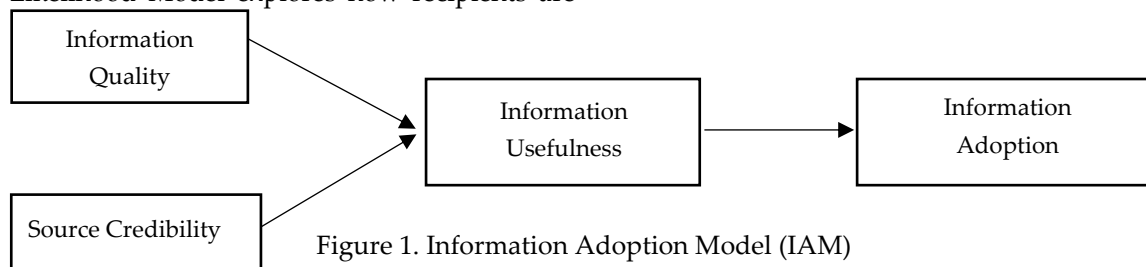


Figure 1. Information Adoption Model (IAM)

Source: Sussman & Siegal (2003)

The rapid development of social media as a marketing and persuasion platform for businesses has led consumers to turn to these environments for information acquisition

processes (Wang, 2016). Some studies indicate that the IAM is a usable method for measuring the impact of materials used in the persuasion process on social media on target audiences.

These studies have utilised the IAM to understand various effects of social media, including the impact of e-WOM on online customer communities (Shu & Scott, 2014; Cheung et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2011; Kong & Ahn, 2020). This research will examine the contribution to brand image of information produced through social media marketing activities conducted by businesses regarding its quality, credibility, usefulness, and adoption.

5. Method

5.1. Measures

This quantitative study investigates the impact of social media marketing on brand image from the perspective of IAM. The research data were collected via survey, targeting social media users over the age of 18. The sample for the study was composed of social media users over the age of 18 residing in Karabük province. For this purpose, the sample was mainly selected from Karabük University students. This sample was considered appropriate since university students represent a significant portion of the social media-using demographic. According to the Statista (2024a), young people aged 16-24 constitute the age group that uses social media the most and spends the most time on these platforms. The survey utilised a 5-point likert scale (ranging strongly agree to strongly disagree). Ethical approval was received for the conduct of this study by the Karabük University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics

Committee with the decision dated 03.06.2024 and numbered E-78977401-050.04-345187.

The survey instrument consists of two parts. In the first part, a classification scale was used to learn about the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part includes statements that allow for measuring evaluations related to social media marketing, IAM and brand image. The data were collected online in June 2024, resulting in responses from 204 participants who completed the survey. As the number of participants was more than five times the number of items in the survey, the sample size was considered sufficient for the analysis (Brown, 2015; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). All hypotheses in the study were analysed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

The constructs “Social Media Marketing” was adopted from Godwin’s (2019) study and consisted of 4 items. The “Information Quality” scale was derived from the study conducted by Park et al. (2007) and included 6 items. The “Source Credibility” scale was based on the study conducted by Prendergast et al. (2010) included 4 items. The “Information Usefulness” and “Information Adoption” scale were drawn from Cheung et al. (2008), with the first scale containing 3 items the second scale containing 2 items. The “Brand Image” scale is based on the study conducted by Wu and Wang (2014) and included 8 items. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of all the constructs and items used in this research.

Table 1.
Measures

Variable	Items
Social Media Marketing (Godwin019)	SMM1: Social media helps in comparing products easily SMM2: Social media provides sufficient information about products SMM3: Interacting with social media makes my shopping experience and purchasing decisions easier SMM4: Social media helps me make better decisions
Information Quality (Park et al, 2007)	Information given about products and brands on social media... IQ1: It is understandable IQ2: It is objective IQ3: It is reliable IQ4: It is transparent IQ5: It is high quality IQ6: It is strong

Table 1. (continue)

Source Credibility (Prendergast et al, 2010)	SC1: It is persuasive SC2: It is convincing SC3: It is true SC4: It is accurate
Information Usefulness (Cheung et al. 2008)	IU1: It is valuable IU2: It is informative IU3: It is helpful
Information Adoption (Cheung et al. 2008)	IA1: Makes it easier for me to make a purchase decision IA2: Increases my effectiveness in making a purchase decision
Brand Image (Wu and Wang, 2014)	FBI1: The quality of such brands is high FBI2: These brands take into account the needs of customers FBI3: These brands satisfy their customers FBI4: It is wise to choose such brands SBI1: These brands are good brands SBI2: They are leading brands SBI3: They have better features than their competitors SBI4: These brands give status to the user

5.2. Research model

Figure 2 shows the research model for this study, which explains the determinants of social media marketing affecting brand image. This study claims that social media marketing activities have an impact on brand image. IAM

was developed to understand this, and it examines the effects between following variables: social media marketing information, information quality, source credibility, information usefulness, information adoption, functional brand image and symbolic brand image.

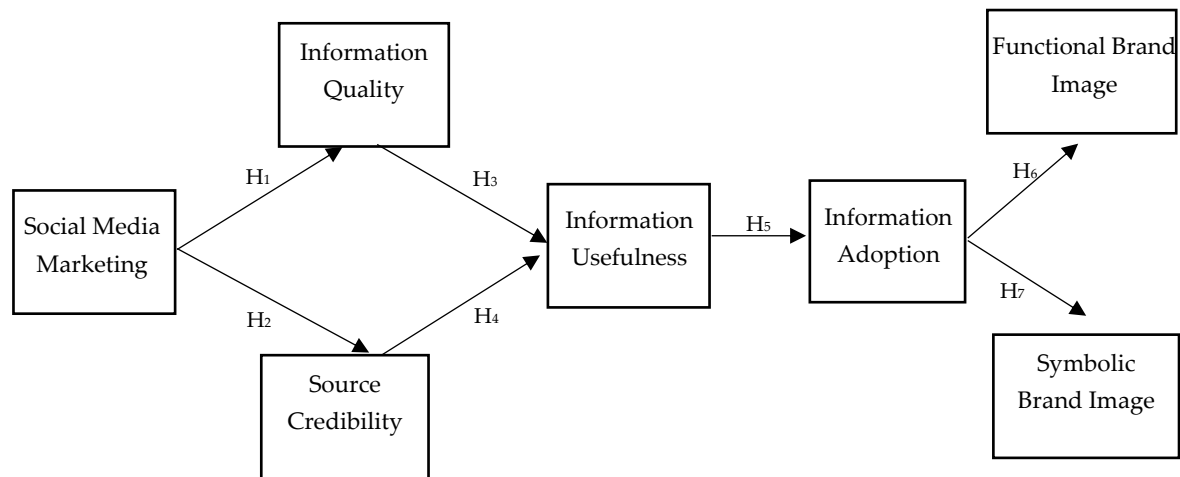


Figure 2. Research Model

5.2. Research Hypotheses

This study aims to explain the significance of businesses' implementation of social media marketing activities. Information produced on social media platforms influences each consumer differently (Cheung, 2014). According

to Sussman and Siegal's (2003), IAM, the usefulness of information is determined by both the quality of the message and the credibility of its source, ultimately leading to the adoption of the information. Based on this framework, the research question is formulated as: "What is the

impact of social media marketing on brand image from the perspective of the IAM?" In the proposed model, social media marketing is considered an independent variable, while the IAM and brand image are treated as dependent variables.

Internet, social media, mobile applications, and other digital communication technologies has become part of the daily lives of billions of consumers. Consumers increasingly expose themselves to social media to search for product information. Marketers have responded to this situation by expanding digital marketing channels such as social media (Stephen, 2016). The quality of marketing information produced on social media is defined as the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of the outputs produced by social media. The source credibility of social media is defined as the extent to which brands, businesses, or individuals producing information on social media are perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and convincing (Zha et al., 2018). Perceptions of information quality and source credibility are critical regarding the power of social media marketing content to influence customers (Morosan and Fesenmaier, 2007). Zembik (2014) confirmed that businesses' marketing activities on social media affect the reliability and quality of the marketing information produced. Lou and Shupe (2019) in their research prove that influencer marketing studies conducted on social media affect the quality and reliability of the marketing information produced. Therefore, the following relationships are hypothesized based on the above discussion:

H₁: Social media marketing has a positive effect on the quality of social media marketing information.

H₂: Social media marketing has a positive effect on the credibility of social media marketing information.

Social media serves as an essential source of information for consumers, thanks to the content produced for social media marketing purposes by many corporate and non-corporate businesses. This makes the quality of

information shared on social media and the source's credibility even more critical for consumers. Information quality and source credibility are dominant determinants of consumers' attitudes towards the message (Zhang and Watts, 2008). The importance of information quality and source credibility for consumers has been emphasised in many previous studies (Rieh, 2002; Davy, 2006; Hong, 2006; Xu et al., 2006). Ruiz-Mafe et al. (2020) state that the quality of information can change consumer behavioural intention and positively increase persuasion. Hovland (1951) notes that if the source is credible, the recipient's opinion changes in the direction suggested by the source. Sussman and Siegel (2003) found in their study on the attitude change regarding the usefulness of information in emails that information quality and source credibility has positive effects on the usefulness of information. Shu and Scott (2014) demonstrated in their study that when social media information is found to be of high quality and credible, the usefulness of the information increases and positively affects consumer behaviour. Thus, the hypothetical relationships are framed as follows:

H₃: Quality of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information usefulness.

H₄: Credibility of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information usefulness.

Digital media, particularly social media platforms, contain vast information on various topics, including products and brands (Salehi-Esfahani et al., 2016). The usefulness of this information is considered the main determinant of information adoption (Sussman and Siegel, 2003). Research shows that when consumers find a message useful or valuable, they are more likely to adopt it (Cheung et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2014). Consumers, who are exposed to a large amount of information through social media marketing activities and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) activities, one of the most important sources of information on social media, are more willing to adopt the information

if they find it useful (Erkan and Evans, 2016; Arumugam, 2016). Hence, it is hypothesized:

H₅: Usefulness of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information adoption.

Information adoption behaviour is one of the fundamental activities that users aim to accomplish on virtual platforms (Cheung et al., 2008). Research demonstrates that information produced through social media marketing activities, which is among the most effective ways for informing consumers about products, brands, or campaigns, has positive effects on the brand image (Savitri et al., 2022; Barreda et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2019; Bilgin, 2018). However, not all information published on social platforms affects every consumer equally (Cheung, 2014). Consumers personally determine the validity of information, and generally tend to undertake it if they discover it meaningful (Zhang and Watts, 2008). Park et al. (1986) argued in their study that brand image

can be affected by the marketing activities of companies and that the information shared is a reflection of marketing activities is considered important in terms of both functional and symbolic brand image. Gökerik vd., (2018) confirmed that the adoption of guerrilla marketing information on social media positively affect the symbolic and functional brand image. Based on these studies, hypotheses H₆ and H₇ have been formulated.

H₆: Adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on symbolic brand image.

H₇: Adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on functional brand image.

6. Findings

The population of the study comprises of all social media users over the age of 18. The sample of the study is social media users over the age of 18 living in Karabük province.

Table 2.
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Measure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	118	57.8
Male	86	42.2
Age		
18 – 25	125	61.3
26 – 33	34	16.7
34 – 41	33	16.2
42 – 49	8	3.9
50 and above	4	2,9
Education Level		
Elementary School	1	0.5
Secondary Education	11	5.4
Associate Degree	11	5.4
Bachelor’s Degree	146	71.6
Postgraduate	35	17.1
Household Income (Total)		
0 – 17.002 TL	58	28.4
17.003 – 33.000 TL	41	20.1
33.001 – 50.000 TL	54	26.5
50.001 – 75.000 TL	31	15.2
75.001 TL and above	20	9.8
Most Used Social Media Platform		
Instagram	130	63.7
Youtube	31	15.2
X	26	12.7
Tiktok	11	5.4
Facebook	6	3

In this context, an online survey form was distributed to 235 randomly selected individuals residing in Karabük province. A total of 228 surveys were returned, and after reviewing the responses, 204 were deemed suitable for analysis.

An examination of the demographic characteristics of the research participants reveals that 57.8% are female, while 42.2% are male. The age distribution indicates that the majority of participants (61.3%) are between 18 and 25 years old, with the least represented age group being 50 years and older, comprising only 2.9% of the sample. In terms of educational attainment, the majority (71.6%) hold a bachelor's degree. The participants' household incomes show notable variation, with the largest group (30.9%) having a household income

between 0-17,002 TL, while those earning 75,001 TL or more represent the smallest group, at 9.8%. Regarding social media platform preferences, Instagram emerges as the most popular platform, with 63.7% of participants using it, highlighting its dominant presence compared to other platforms. On the other hand, Facebook is the least preferred platform, with only 6% of participants using it. The detailed demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is conducted to analyse the relationships among numerous variables in a data set and summarize these variables into a smaller number of latent factors. In line with this objective, EFA has been applied in the current study to examine the relationships among the variables in the data set.

Table 3.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Items	Factor Loadings	Total Explained Variance	K-M-O	Chi-square	Bartlett's Test	DF
SMM1	.754	%61,66	.810	385.334	.000	6
SMM2	.674					
SMM3	.838					
SMM4	.861					
IQ1	.633	%67,23	.901	899.272	.000	1
IQ2	.858					
IQ3	.863					
IQ4	.846					
IQ5	.832					
IQ6	.862					
SC1	.729	%57,59	.742	344,755	.000	6
SC2	.807					
SC3	.807					
SC4	.686					
IU1	.773	%80,89	.730	337.504	.000	3
IU2	.907					
IU3	.856					
IA1	1.869		.500	285.148	.000	1
IA2	.131					
FBI1	.825	%67,42	.796	476.108	.000	6
FBI2	.817					
FBI3	.849					
FBI4	.784					
SBI1	.827	%62,36	.815	393.798	.000	6
SBI2	.779					
SBI3	.868					
SBI4	.672					

In exploratory factor analysis, factor loadings of 0.30 or below are considered low and may not be interpretable, while loadings of 0.40-0.50 are moderate but borderline, and loadings of 0.60 and above are regarded as high, indicating a strong relationship between the variable and the factor, with 0.50 and above generally preferred for meaningful interpretation in social sciences.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test assesses sampling adequacy, with values of 0.90 and above considered excellent, 0.80-0.89 very good, 0.70-0.79 good, 0.60-0.69 moderate, and 0.50-0.59 poor; values below 0.50 indicate that factor analysis is inappropriate. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity examines whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, and a significance value ($p < 0.05$) indicates the suitability of factor analysis. A high approximate chi-square value is expected, and in social sciences, total explained variance should generally exceed 50%, with 60-70% considered good and over 70% deemed excellent. Additionally, degrees of freedom (df) are calculated based on the number of variables, with higher df values typically enhancing the reliability of the analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2018). When the exploratory factor analysis results are examined, it is seen that the factor loadings are above 0.50, which is an acceptable value in social

sciences, the total explained variance is above 50%, the KMO values are good except for the knowledge adoption model, and the Barlett's test results are significant ($p < 0.05$). Table 3 presents the results of the exploratory factor analysis conducted on the data set.

The research model was tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). First, the reliability and validity of each scale were analysed. Convergent validity refers to how well the measurements are related to each other or how well the measurements are balanced (Hair et al., 2010). Prior to performing confirmatory factor analysis and testing the hypotheses, the validity and reliability of the scales were confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and the coherence among the scale items was observed. Cronbach's alpha, ranging from 0 to 1, indicates the internal consistency of a measurement tool; values above 0.70 are generally acceptable, 0.80 or higher is considered good, and above 0.90 is excellent, although values exceeding 0.95 may suggest excessive item redundancy (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that the lower limit for CR is 0.70, and the threshold value for AVE is 0.50.

Table 4.
Factor Loadings, CR and AVE Values

	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Social Media Marketing (M = 3.58 SD = 1.08)	SMM1	0.74	0.863	0.858	0.670
	SMM3	0.85			
	SMM4	0.85			
Information Quality (M = 2,69 SD = 1.03)	IQ2	0.82	0.922	0.903	0.700
	IQ3	0.85			
	IQ4	0.81			
	IQ5	0.85			
Source Credibility (M = 2,96 SD = 1.02)	SC2	0.71	0.844	0.761	0.515
	SC3	0.69			
	SC4	0.74			
Information Usefulness (M = 3.09 SD = 1.06)	IU1	0.84	0.882	0.857	0.667
	IU2	0.79			
	IU3	0.80			
Information Adoption (M = 3.31 SD = 1.15)	IA1	0.94	0.930	0.930	0.870
	IA2	0.92			
Functional Brand Image (M = 3.25 SD = 0.96)	FBI1	0.89	0.890	0.849	0.737
	FBI2	0.82			
Symbolic Brand Image (M = 3.10 SD = 0.98)	SBI1	0.85	0.866	0.844	0.730
	SBI3	0.85			

As the CR and AVE values met the required thresholds, a correlation matrix table was deemed unnecessary. As seen in table 4, the Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.80, CR values are above 0.70 and the AVE values are above 0.50. The confirmatory factor analysis results for the model include multiple goodness-of-fit indices. When examining the goodness-of-fit indices, more is needed for more than one

index to be compatible for the analysis to be considered robust. In this study, the goodness-of-fit indices, X^2/DF , Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and RMSEA results are presented. Table 5 shows the standard and acceptable goodness of fit measures.

Table 5.

Standard and Acceptable Goodness of Fit Measures

Indexes of Fit	Proposed Criteria	Acceptable Criteria
X^2/Df	1:3	3:5
GFI	≥ 0.95	$0.80 \leq 0.95$
AGFI	≥ 0.90	$0.80 \leq 0.90$
CFI	≥ 0.95	$0.90 \leq 0.97$
RMSEA	< 0.05	$0.05 \leq 0.08$

Source: Uğurla & Aslan (2019)

When the goodness of fit values were examined, it was determined that some values did not have a good fit with the data. For this reason, some modifications were made in the linear factor analysis and the model was improved. As part of the improvement studies, firstly the residual errors were examined. In this context, the matrix regarding the standardized residual error covariances was examined and the variables SMM2, IQ1, IQ6, SC1, FBI3, FBI4, SBI2, SBI4, which have low coefficients among the standardized values, were excluded from the analysis. Table 6 contains the goodness-of-fit values related to the confirmatory factor analysis after making the necessary adjustments.

Upon examining the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, it is observed that the chi-square value and the CFI value fall within the recommended criteria range, while the GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA values are within acceptable criteria.

Table 6.

CFA Final Goodness of Fit Index Results

Indexes of Fit	Results
X^2/Df	2.162
GFI	0.871
AGFI	0.809
CFI	0.954
RMSEA	0.075

When reviewing the hypothesis test results related to the path analysis of the study, it is seen that all proposed hypotheses are accepted.

Table 7.

Structural Equation Model Hypothesis Test Results

Hypotheses	Standard Loadings	t-value	P-value	Conclusion
H ₁ Social media marketing has a positive effect on the quality of social media marketing information.	0.731	9.628	***	Accept
H ₂ Social media marketing has a positive effect on the credibility of social media marketing information.	0.786	8.454	***	Accept
H ₃ Quality of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information usefulness.	0.330	5.361	***	Accept
H ₄ Credibility of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information usefulness.	0.754	8.161	***	Accept
H ₅ Usefulness of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information adoption.	0.921	14.142	***	Accept
H ₆ Adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on symbolic brand image.	0.744	10.032	***	Accept
H ₇ Adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on functional brand image.	0.726	10.686	***	Accept

Accordingly, social media marketing has a positive effect on the quality of social media marketing information ($\beta = 0.731$) and credibility of social media marketing information ($\beta = 0.786$). Quality of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information usefulness ($\beta = 0.330$). Likewise, Credibility of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information usefulness ($\beta = 0.754$). Usefulness of social media marketing information has a positive effect on information adoption ($\beta = 0.921$). Adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on symbolic brand image ($\beta = 0.744$). Adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on functional brand image ($\beta = 0.726$). The detailed analysis results are presented in table 7 below.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

This study develops a detailed model to analyse the impact of social media marketing on brand image from the perspective of the Information Adoption Model (IAM). The IAM developed by Sussman and Siegal (2003) explain how individuals are influenced by information on digital platforms. This research focuses on how social media marketing activities shape brand image by investigating the effects of information quality, credibility, usefulness and adoption. One of the main objectives is to explore how the usefulness of the information produced through social media marketing influences consumer behavior and ultimately contributes to brand image. The findings show that social media marketing has a positive effect on the quality of social media marketing information and the credibility of social media marketing information. This result is similar to the studies conducted by Zembik (2014) and Lou and Shupe (2019) showing that social media marketing studies affect the reliability and quality of the marketing information produced. Similarly, it aligns with the results of research on social media advertisements conducted by Lee (2017). Result shows that hypotheses h1 and h2 are confirmed. This highlights the significant role of social media in creating reliable and high-quality marketing content. The study underscores that social media marketing

activities are seen as credible by consumers, aligning with research that points to the critical importance of reliable information in marketing strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Thaker et al., 2020). Hypotheses H₃ and H₄ demonstrate that the quality and credibility of social media marketing information have a positive effect on the usefulness of social media marketing information. The findings from these hypotheses are similar to the results of studies conducted by Erkan and Evans (2016), Shu and Scott (2014), Shen et al. (2014), and Jiang et al. (2021). These results are also consistent with studies that highlight the importance of the information source and indicate that people are more interested in comprehensive, relevant, and useful information that influences their consumption decisions (Cheung et al., 2008; Tam and Ho, 2005; Tang et al., 2012). These results shows that people who need information on social media marketing are likely to find that information useful. Hypothesis H5 suggests that the usefulness of social media marketing information has a positive effect on the adoption of social media marketing information. This result aligns with the findings of studies conducted by Sussman and Siegal (2003), Cheung et al. (2008), Shen et al. (2014), and Erkan and Evans (2016). It is vital for any information to be credible and meaningful to the recipient to create an impact. The usefulness of information is crucial in its adoption because people are reluctant to engage with materials they perceive as harmful (Horrich et al., 2024, p. 16354). Therefore, this result shows that people who think social media information is useful are more likely to adopt it. Hypotheses H6 and H7 indicate that the adoption of social media marketing information has a positive effect on both functional and symbolic brand image. The findings are consistent with the results of studies conducted by Savitri et al. (2022), Barreda et al. (2020), Cheung et al. (2019), Bilgin (2018), Park et al. (1986) and Gökerik vd., (2018).

The literature has widely examined the effects of social media marketing on brand loyalty (Erdoğan, 2012), brand trust (Tatar and Eren-Erdoğan, 2016), brand awareness (Bilgin,

2018) and broadly consumer behaviour (Vinerean, 2013). However, most of these studies focus on how social media marketing influences consumers rather than its direct impact on brand image. While customer attitudes have been explored using the IAM across various social media strategies, such as eWOM (Erkan and Evans, 2016; Verma et al., 2023), guerrilla marketing (Gökerik et al., 2018), and influencer marketing (Zhang, 2023), fewer studies have focused specifically on the effects of social media marketing on brand image. This study fills that gap by broadly examining social media marketing's influence on brand image, making it one of the few studies in this area.

The practical implications of this study are highly valuable for businesses aiming to enhance their brand image through social media marketing. The findings emphasize that consumers perceive social media marketing activities as both reliable and high quality, which plays a direct role in enhancing brand image. This provides an opportunity for businesses to strategically utilize social media not only to build functional aspects, like product features and benefits, but also symbolic aspects, such as brand values and emotional connections. By influencing how consumers perceive and interact with their brand, businesses can foster a more favourable brand image. Focusing on the credibility and usefulness of social media content is key. Companies can build trust with their audience by ensuring that the information shared is credible, informative, and relevant. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that consumers will adopt and share the information, further reinforcing a positive brand perception. This research offers a clear roadmap for businesses to leverage social media marketing effectively, showing that thoughtful, well-executed social media campaigns can

significantly influence brand image in a competitive marketplace.

8. Limitations and Future Studies

This study has been conducted within certain limitations. It is limited to individuals of all age groups residing in Karabük who use social media. Future researchers will contribute significantly to the literature by examining the impact of any social media platform, which could serve as an information source for consumers, on positive eWOM from the perspective of the IAM. In addition, researchers can make significant contributions to the literature or marketing professionals by examining the impact of mega or micro influencers, which have become an important marketing tool for businesses today, on consumer attitudes through the IAM.

9. Declaration of Research and Publication Ethics

For the conduct of this study, ethical approval was obtained from the Karabük University's Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee with the decision dated 03.06.2024 and numbered E-78977401-050.04-345187.

10. Authors' Contribution to the Article

Ebubekir IŞIK has prepared this work on his own.

11. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

This study is not subject to any conflict of interest.

12. Grand Support

No support was received from any institution for this study. The necessary expenses during the study were covered by the author.

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