



# The Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity and Customer Response in Turkish Apparel Industry: A Comparative Study Between Turkish and Moroccan Customers<sup>1</sup>

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<b>Türk Hazır Giyim Sektöründe Sosyal Medya Pazarlama Faaliyetlerinin Marka Değeri ve Müşteri Yanıtı Üzerindeki Etkisi: Türk ve Faslı Müşteriler Arasında Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma</b>	<b>The Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity and Customer Response in Turkish Apparel Industry: A Comparative Study Between Turkish and Moroccan Customers</b>
<b>Özet</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<p><i>Bu çalışma, Türk hazır giyim sektöründe sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerinin (SMPF) marka değeri (marka bilinirliği ve marka imajı) yaratma ve firmaya yönelik müşteri yanıtı (daha yüksek ücret ödeme ve sadakat) üzerindeki etkisini araştırmayı ve sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerinin Türk ve Faslı müşteriler üzerindeki etkisini karşılaştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Nicel bir araştırma yapılmış ve Türk hazır giyim sektörünün temsilcilerinden biri olarak kabul edilen ve ismi çalışma boyunca X olarak anılacak olan bir Türk tekstil markasının 140 Türk ve 163 Faslı müşterisinden veri toplamak için yapılandırılmış bir anket kullanılmıştır. Toplanan veriler SPSS programı 28.0 ve SmartPLS 4.0 ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerinin marka değeri üzerinde önemli</i></p>	<p><i>This study aims to investigate the effect of social media marketing activities (SMPF) on the creation of brand equity (brand awareness and brand image) and customer response (pay premium price and loyalty) towards the Turkish apparel industry and to compare the effect of social media marketing activities between Turkish and Moroccan customers. Quantitative research was conducted and a questionnaire was used to collect data from 140 Turkish customers and 163 Moroccan customers of a Turkish textile brand that is considered representative of the Turkish apparel industry and will be referred to as X throughout the study. The data were analyzed with the SPSS program 28.0 and SmartPLS 4.0. The findings show that social media marketing activities have a significant impact on brand equity and a positive impact</i></p>

<sup>1</sup>This study is a part of a master degree thesis titled "The impact of social media marketing activities on brand equity and customer response in Turkish apparel industry: A comparative study between Turkish and Moroccan customers", written by Chaimae Grari, and supervised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Burçin Kaplan. A part of this study was presented in the II. International Congress of Economics and Administrative Sciences on 19-20 January 2023 organized by Bingöl University.

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<p><i>bir etkiye ve ayrıca müşteri yanıtı üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca bulgular, marka değerinin sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetleri ve müşteri yanıtı üzerindeki arabuluculuk etkisini de göstermektedir. Elde edilen verilerle yapılan analizler, sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerinin Türk ve Faslı müşteriler arasında farklılık göstermediğini göstermiştir. Bu araştırma ile, mevcut veriler ve koşullar altında Türk hazır giyim markalarının sosyal medyadaki varlıkları ve sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerini kullanmalarının, güçlü bir marka değeri inşa etmelerine yardımcı olduğu ve olumlu bir müşteri yanıtı elde etmelerini desteklediği sonucuna varılmıştır.</i></p>	<p><i>on customer response. The results also prove the mediating effect of brand equity on social media marketing activities and customer response. Finally, the analyzes showed that social media marketing activities did not differ between Turkish and Moroccan customers. As a result of this research, the Turkish apparel industry brands' presence on social media and their use of SMPF help them to build strong brand equity and obtain a positive customer response.</i></p>
<p><b>Anahtar Kelimeler:</b> Sosyal Medya Pazarlama Faaliyetleri, Marka Değeri, Müşteri Yanıtı, Türk Hazır Giyim Sektörü, Türkiye, Fas</p>	<p><b>Keywords:</b> Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Equity, Customer Response, Turkish Apparel Industry, Turkiye, Morocco</p>
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## 1. Introduction

In the digital world we are living today, the use of social media became a part of our daily routine. Every social media user rarely spends a day without checking his accounts in different social media platforms. Social media is used by several billions of people all around the world. It represents all the online platforms and applications making the content sharing, interactions and communication easier (Richter and Koch, 2008) such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Obviously, the emergence of social media brought many changes to the business world. Marketing, which is one of the main activities of any company and plays a big role in the success of the company and the achievement of its goals, have witnessed a significant change due to the arrival of social media. This change is related to the migration from traditional marketing to social media marketing. The latter is based on promoting the enterprise by interacting and attracting the interest of present and potential customers with different social media channels (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Many companies employ this strategic tool, as they understood its importance for the success of the company (Pavel, 2015). Social media marketing has surely brought many advantages for businesses such as reaching customers, interacting with them (Kelly et al, 2010) and achieving goals whether the company is big or small and whatever is its sector. Not to forget that social media marketing impacts positively brand equity (Abu-Rumman and Alhadid, 2014) and customer response (Godey et al, 2016).

Brand equity is a crucial element for every company. It is one of the keys that allow the businesses to survive the fierce competition with different competitors. Building a brand is mainly related to founding brand equity (Pappu, et al. 2005). Over the years, brands have used several tools and methods to build strong brand equity such as sales force, advertisements, and public relations (Aaker, 1991), but the digital era we are living in has obliged brands to choose new techniques. Social media marketing is one of the effective techniques to build brand equity as it was proven by many researchers (Seo and park, 2018; Godey et al, 2016).

Today, Customers not only use social media to have fun and entertain themselves but it has become a way to express their opinions, to share ideas with other customers, and to build their points of view. The interactions between customers give them the opportunity to collect information about products and services and even influence their thoughts. Moving from traditional media such as television to get information to using social media to look for it (Mangold and Faulds, 2009) reflects the importance of adopting social media marketing by companies in order to be close to customers, interact with them and understand their needs. Social media marketing has the power to influence customer behavior and response towards a brand.

The significance of this research lies in exposing the importance of using social media marketing activities in Turkish apparel industry by evaluating its role in building brand equity and influencing customer preferences. Moreover, this study is exploring an interesting point which is the role of brand equity in the relationship between social media marketing and customers; a matter that hasn't been studied by many researchers. Also, this study participates in determining if the culture has an effect on the customer's exposure to social media marketing. This research's importance lies in its contribution to the literature related to social media marketing and its effect on brand equity and customer response in the Turkish apparel industry. The selection of this topic was based on the significance of social media in the existence of every brand and in the daily life of every customer.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Social media marketing activities**

Nowadays, users are not focusing on the product features; rather, brands should provide them with stunning experiences (Sheu et al., 2009; Komppula and Gartner, 2013). Companies are obliged to organize marketing activities in compliance with the different needs of users; they should understand the needs of users before users themselves and determine what products they need to arrange occurrences that generate everlasting memories (Kim and Perdue, 2013). We all agree that activities of marketing have an impact on the consumers and even on the brands, which make them important in the success of every company.

Social media marketing activities as a type of marketing activity have many components that differed from one sector to another. Many are researchers that have addressed social media marketing activities in different fields. Kim and Kko (2011) and Godey et al. (2016) have classified social media marketing activities of luxury brands to five possible characteristics which are entertainment, word-of-mouth (WoM), customization, interaction, and trendiness. Sano (2015) addressed trendiness, customization, perceived risk, and interaction as the SMMA aspects in insurance services. While later, Seo and Park (2018) have applied entertainment, trendiness, interaction, perceived risk, and customization as the five SMMA elements in the airline industry. This study will work on four dimensions, which are entertainment, customization, trendiness, and interaction.

#### **2.1.1. Entertainment**

One of the most crucial elements of social media marketing is entertainment. It is a result of play and fun the person gets by using social media platforms (Agichtein et al., 2008). According to Kang (2005), entertainment gotten from using social media increases participating conduct and produces continuous use, which develops and induces favorable feelings about the brand. Mathiou et al. (2013) believe that social media users are seeking pleasure and amusement, which makes them interested in the entertaining and amusing content. The companies using social media marketing should be interested in this activity as entertainment is so important for every user.

Many researchers have presented entertainment as a strong reason that makes people use social media. Park et al. (2009) state that entertainment has an interesting role in leading participation in social networks. Shao (2009) discovers how entertainment is an effective motive for using user-generated content. Muntinga et al. (2011) realized the use of brand-related content by social media users is mainly for amusement and entertainment. Courtois et al. (2009)

find escapism and recreation, which are causes for looking for amusement, lead loading content on different social media platforms.

Entertainment is a crucial element in social media, which obliges us to evaluate if apparel brand we are working on in this study have fun and entertaining social media.

### **2.1.2. Interaction**

Interaction in social media is important in order to maintain solid communication between brands and customers. Social media make interaction, collaboration, and content sharing of brands with customers easier (Wang, 2012). Interaction with customers in social media helps the brand understand the customers' needs and demands and get their thoughts about the brand in actual time (Vukasovic, 2013). Interaction in social media is beneficial for every business as it gives consumers the opportunity to discuss and share their ideas (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Daughetry et al. (2008) state that social media interactions motivate and incite the creation of content generated by users. Social media interactions simply represent the users that participate in creating content on social media channels to interact with like-minded users about a particular brand or a product (Muntinga et al. 2011). So, social media interactions make it easier for customers to contribute in brands social media platforms.

Social media differs depending on the type of interaction. There is content-based social media and profile-based social media (Zhu and Chen, 2015). The profile-based one concentrates on individual members in order to encourage them connect with specific topic or information as it is interested in the user such as Facebook and Twitter. While, content-based one concentrates on comments and conversations related to the content posted in order to make interact users with content provided by an account they like such as Instagram and YouTube.

In this study, interaction is defined as information sharing and opinion exchange.

### **2.1.3. Trendiness**

Trendiness is described as giving the most recent and trendiest news about goods and services (Godey et al., 2016). Social media provides the most updated information and provide hot discussion topics, which is why social media is considered a good tool to search for the best functional products (Naaman et al., 2011).

Customers choose information coming from social media platforms and not company-sponsored information coming from promotion activities as they believe that social media information is more trustworthy (Vollmer and Precourt, 2008; Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Muntingua et al. (2011) believe that trendiness in social media platforms has four motivations. Firstly, pre-purchase data signifies looking on brand communities for information about products to make wise buying decisions. Inspiration as following brands' social media is a source of inspiration by helping consumers to get information and ideas. Surveillance is staying updated about the brand's social media. Finally, Knowledge means obtaining brand-related information from other consumers in order to profit from their expertise and learn more about the brand's products.

In this research, trendiness is defined as the diffusion of the newest information about apparel brands.

#### **2.1.4. Customization**

Customization is how personalized a certain service in order to satisfy the individual's choices (Schmenner, 1986). It is founded on contacting users individually, which is distinct from traditional promotion activities. Giving an optimized content to the customer is a strategic tool that allows companies to establish customer satisfaction and generate positive conceivable control (Ding and Keh, 2016; Nam and Yeo, 2011). Social media customization allows businesses to convey the originality of their brands, which helps them build strong brand loyalty and affinity (Martin and Todorov, 2010). The posts in social media differ based on how customized every communication, as there are two sorts: a broadcast and a customized message (Zhu and Chen, 2015). Broadcast has content that target any user who might be interested. While customized message has a specific target whether it is one person or a small audience.

In this study, customization is described as the level to which platforms of social media give a customized content to their users.

#### **2.2. Brand Equity**

Keller (2003) has defined brand equity as the differences in the response of customers to marketing activity. The idea behind brand equity is to make customers rely on positive experiences when they think or feel a product or service. Every company is obliged to create situations that make the customers have positive feelings, perceptions, and thoughts about the brand. Brand doesn't rely only on a simple product name but on an iconic definition that the brand pursues. It is a sociocultural event (Keller, 2003).

In brand equity, there is brand awareness which is the reflection of characteristics such as a sign, logo, and catchphrase of the brand, and brand image, which is the image of the brand in the mind of the customer apart from the signs. These two notions will be explored more deeply below.

### **2.2.1. Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is referring to the existence of a brand in the memory of the customer, which is the capability of the consumer to memorize the brand and recognize it under various circumstances (Rossiter and Percy, 1987). So, brand awareness is described as the ability of the customer to remember and notice the brand by linking the brand logo, name, or symbol to a definite association in the memory.

To build brand awareness, the company should make sure that the customer knows the service or product category that the brand competes in (Keller, 2003). Aaker (1996) defines brand awareness as the consumer's recall and recognition of the brand but he believes that this recognition can reflect the attitude of the customer towards the brand.

Brand awareness means that the consumer easily realizes the brand name, which raises the brand's chance of being one of possible candidates and surely the possibility of being picked (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness helps the consumer decide which product to get in less time as he will always pick the brand that he has enough information about.

### **2.2.2. Brand Image**

Brand image refers to the perceptions that customers maintain about a brand based on the reflection of the brand associations in their memory (Keller, 1993). It is the specific physical system developed in the mind of the consumer by combining his feelings for a product and the indirect aspects associated. Iversen and Hem (2008) agreed that brand image is the consumers' private symbolism that includes and incorporates every evaluation and definition about the brand. Brand image is consisting of ideas and information that consumers have regarding the diverse goods of a brand and their characteristics (Lee et al., 2011). Brand image is considered a crucial marketing component as it is a result of marketing communication (Riezebos, 2003).

### **2.2.3. Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Equity**

Buying motivations of the consumers are different and various but the brand itself constitutes the most significant mean to bond with the customers (Godey et al., 2013). Every brand has the power to affect the attitudes and visualization of customers through different methods, including the two features of brand equity in Keller's CBBE model (1993) which are brand awareness and brand image. Marketing activities that are done through social media are known to be so beneficial to the brand as they reinforce brand equity (Bruhn et al, 2012; Kim and Ko, 2012).

Many are the studies that proved the significant impact of brand awareness on brand equity. Fanion (2011) believed the importance of social media as a

crucial way to create and improve brand awareness. Also, Seo and Park (2018) arrived to the conclusion that activities of social media marketing enhance brand awareness and create a positive brand image. Social media is known for the speed of information spread which permits the brand to be recognized by many users (Kumar et al., 2007; Sharma and Verma, 2018). Social media marketing activities represent interesting instruments of awareness by reminding customers of the brand and staying in their minds (Bilgin, 2018).

Some researchers have proved that social media has also an influence on brand image. It is a powerful instrument to interact with different consumers and to develop a favorable image of the brand (Halligan and Shah, 2009; Fortezza and Pencarelli, 2015).

### **2.3. Customer Response**

#### **2.3.1. Price Premium**

Readiness to pay a premium price is defined as the price the customer is glad to give in order to get the products of a certain brand compared to other brands (Netmeyer et al., 2004). The price premium is definitely an immediate precedent of the purchasing conduct of a customer (Godey et al., 2016). A brand gets a premium price when the cost that a customer is ready to spend for its products is higher than the amount, they are willing to pay for the same products from other brands (Aaker, 1996).

#### **2.3.2. Brand Loyalty**

According to Godey et al. (2016), loyalty indicates the probability that customers will purchase a certain brand's products again. Aaker (1991) advanced that brand loyalty is considered as a measure of a customer's attachment towards the brand. Jackson (2006) shares the same definition as he defines brand loyalty as a real commitment by customers to frequently or favorably purchase certain products or services. Brand loyalty is the customer's pledge to rebuy a brand's goods and services regardless of competitors' activities and to engage in becoming a potential loyal customer of that brand (Dick and Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999).

Customer loyalty is crucial for every brand as it helps the brand achieve success and survive in the business world. Loyalty is an outstanding asset for every enterprise (Moisescu, 2014; Jiang and Zhang, 2016), which every brand should make sure to have and sustain.

This research considers brand loyalty as the level to which customers are loyal to a specific brand by already purchasing its products or planning to purchase them soon.



### 2.3.3. Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Consumer Response

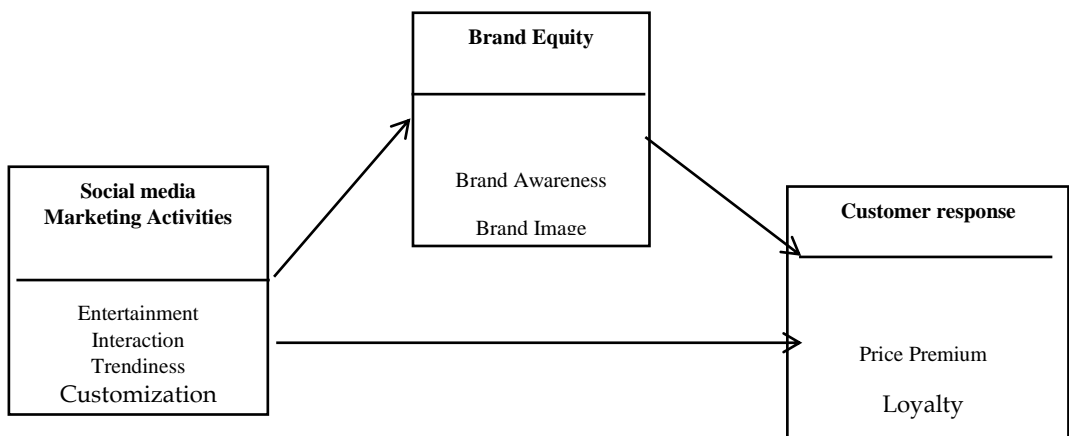
Social media platforms are good for finding information and creating preferences about goods and brands (Naylor et al., 2012). Nowadays, many consumers are using social media as business platforms as they pay and purchase products directly from these platforms (Anderson et al., 2011; Tuten and Solomon, 2015). Social media activities not only made direct payments easier but it boosts the relationship between the brand and the customers. According to Laroche et al. (2013), loyalty is enhanced by these strong relationships.

Many researchers have discovered that social media activities are positively impacting brand loyalty. According to Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), customers who follow brands social media trusts these brands more and have the aptness to stay loyal to them. Social media marketing activities have a crucial role in increasing brand loyalty (Erdoğan and Cicek, 2012; Kim and Ko, 2010).

### 2.4. Conceptual Framework

The research model of this study was elaborated based on the existing literature (Godey et al, 2016; Seo and Park, 2018) with making some modifications to adapt it to our research. The independent variable is social media marketing activities: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, and customization, and the dependent variables are brand equity with two dimensions brand awareness and brand image and customer response with price premium and loyalty as dimensions. The variable brand equity is also mediating the relationship between the two other variables. Conceptual framework of this dissertation is shown in figure below:

**Figure 1: The Study Conceptual Framework**



This research will apply this framework to the apparel sector by analyzing the responses to the questionnaire adopted. According to the conceptual framework, the hypotheses of this study were formed as follow:

H1: Social media marketing activities have a significant impact on brand equity.

H2: Social media marketing activities have a significant impact on customer response.

H3: Brand equity has a mediating effect on the relationship between social media marketing Activities and customer response.

H4: Social Media Marketing Activities have a different effect on Turkish and Moroccan customers.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study is quantitative research that explores the impact of social media marketing activities (entertainment, customization, trendiness, and interaction), which is the independent variable, on brand equity (brand awareness and brand image) and customer response (price premium and brand loyalty), which are the dependent variables. This research is focusing on the Turkish apparel industry precisely X brand that is considered as one of the strongest brands in the sector.

The survey was developed based on past researches in order to guarantee the validity of the scales. The questions are taken from articles of Kim and Ko (2012), Kim and Hyun (2011), Netemeyer et al. (2004), Godey et al. (2016) and Yoo et al. (2000) then they were adapted to our study. The latest was conducted in Türkiye and Morocco as we want to compare the effect of social media marketing on customers from different cultures.

Google forms application was used to develop our survey in 4 languages (English, Turkish, French, and Arabic) and which contained 29 questions. The first part included close ended questions related to demographic characteristics while the other parts included the scale questions related to the research variables. The scale used was a 5 points Likert scale in which 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree.

#### **3.2. Sampling Method**

The sampling method that was used in our research is a non-probability method, which is convenience sampling technique. In this method, the sample is chosen based on accessibility and availability of the participants, which means it is composed of the part of population that is close to hand. Additionally, the reasons that there are a lot of famous Turkish brands in Morocco and there are many Moroccan people in Turkey that the researchers personally know,

motivated the sampling profile to be selected. The culture was not chosen as a differentiation variable in this study because based on the literature, studying culture would be difficult and need a specific scientific approach. As it was hard to share our survey with all Turkish and Moroccan customers, we have chosen convenience technique to collect our data, which allows us to get the appropriate data at the right time with less cost and effort. The survey forms were submitted to the respondents via personal social media accounts. We collected 312 answers but only 303 were retained, as 9 of the answers were invalid for data analysis. 140 of the respondents were Turkish customers, while 163 were Moroccan customers.

#### 4. Normality Analysis

It is important to examine the normality of distribution to know which test to use for data analysis. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test will be performed. For both tests, the data is normally distributed if the sig. is greater than 0.05 and abnormally distributed if the sig. is lower than 0.05.

**Table 1: Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Results**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov				Shapiro-Wilk			
	Türkiye		Morocco		Türkiye		Morocco	
	Static	Sig	Static	Sig	Static	Sig	Static	Sig
SMMAs	,123	,000	,208	,000	,934	,000	,857	,000
Brand Equity	,178	,000	,160	,000	,906	,000	,869	,000
Customer Response	,113	,000	,127	,000	,952	,000	,915	,000

According to the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test stated in the table, the sig value of social media marketing activities is .000, brand equity value is .000 and Customer response value is .000; which led us to reject the null hypothesis of the normality of distribution for both Turkish and Moroccan samples because the sig is less than 0.05 and consequently assume the non-normality of the data distribution for the Turkish and Moroccan samples.

In addition, the results of Shapiro-Wilk test, which are a sig value of .000 for social media marketing activities, for brand equity .000, and for customer response .000, make us reject the null hypothesis of the normality distribution and hence confirm the non-normality of the data distribution of both the Turkish and Moroccan samples as the sig is lower than 0.05.

#### 5. Analysis and Discussions

##### 5.1. Demographic Discussion

The demographic data is the one to be analyzed in this part to develop a clear idea about the sample characteristics. It shows that there are differences in the

gender ratios between males and females. not just in one even in two countries. This output is coming basically from the profile of the sampling as the female respondents accepted to answer to the survey questions.

**Table 2: Characteristics of Turkish and Moroccan samples**

		Türkiye		Morocco	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	21	15%	32	19.60%
	Female	119	85%	131	80.40%
	Total	140	100%	163	100%
Age	Under 20	6	4.30%	9	5.50%
	20-30	83	59.30%	75	46%
	31-40	41	29.30%	53	32.50%
	41-50	5	3.60%	5	3.10%
	More than 50 years	5	3.60%	21	12.90%
	Total	140	100%	163	100%
Employment status	Student	61	43.60%	39	23.90%
	Employed	56	40%	104	63.80%
	Unemployed	19	13.60%	10	6.10%
	Others	4	2.90%	10	6.10%
	Total	140	100%	163	100%
Interaction with X brand in social media	Instagram	79	56.40%	115	70.60%
	Facebook	20	14.30%	17	10.40%
	YouTube	0	0%	3	1.80%
	Not follow or interact	41	29.30%	28	17.20%
	Total	140	100%	163	100%

## 5.2. Factor Loadings

Factor loading means the degree to which every item in the correlation matrix relates with a particular principal component. It ranges between -1.0 and +1.0, where high absolute values mean a high correlation with the principal factor. According to Hair et al. (2016), the recommended value for factor loading is 0.5 and higher.

**Table 3: Factor Loadings for Turkish sample**

Items	Brand Equity	Customer Response	SMMAAs
Brand Equity(BE1)	,863		
BE2	,836		
BE3	,837		
BE4	,888		

BE5	,864	
BE6	,879	
BE7	,859	
Customer Response (CR1)		,804
CR2		,758
CR3		,377
CR4		,911
CR5		,861
CR6		,885
CR7		,895
CR8		,924
Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs)1		,826
SMMAs2		,850
SMMAs3		,826
SMMAs4		,803
SMMAs5		,850
SMMAs6		,877
SMMAs7		,875
SMMAs8		,779
SMMAs9		,841

- Brand equity component comprises seven items and the factor loadings ranging from 0.836 to 0.888. All the factor loadings are above 0.4, therefore none of these items will be removed.
- Customer response component consists of eight items and the factor loadings ranging from 0.377 to 0.911. As we can notice, CR3 has a factor loading less than 0.4, which will lead us to delete this item.
- Social media marketing activities component contains nine items with factor loadings ranging from 0.779 to 0.875. None of the items has a factor loading less than 0.4, so all the items will be retained.

**Table 4: Factor Loadings for Moroccan sample**

Items	Brand Equity	Customer Response	SMMAs
BE1	,870		
BE2	,849		
BE3	,840		
BE4	,811		
BE5	,889		
BE6	,921		

BE7	,863	
CR1		,826
CR2		,769
CR3		,157
CR4		,901
CR5		,839
CR6		,810
CR7		,898
CR8		,931
SMMAs1		,844
SMMAs2		,897
SMMAs3		,816
SMMAs4		,820
SMMAs5		,840
SMMAs6		,865
SMMAs7		,853
SMMAs8		,775
SMMAs9		,820

- Brand equity component comprises seven items and the factor loadings ranging from 0.811 to 0.921. As we can notice, all the factor loadings are above 0.4. Hence, none of the items will be removed.
- Customer response component consists of eight items and the factor loadings ranging from 0.175 to 0.931. The item CR3 has a factor loading of 0.175, which is less than 0.4. So, CR3 will be removed.
- Social media marketing activities component contains nine items with factor loadings ranging from 0.775 to 0.897. All the items have a factor loading superior to 0.4, this is why no item will be removed.

### 5.3. Reliability Statistics

The reliability test measures the quality of the measurement tool by indicating the extent to which it gives the same results across time and across the different items in the tool. The two most used and known reliability measures are Cronbach alpha and composite reliability, which must have a value greater than 0.7 to say that the measurement instrument is reliable (Hair et al., 2011).

**Table 5: Reliability Test**

Variables	Türkiye			Morocco		
	Cronbach Alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	Cronbach Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability
Social media marketing activities	,946	,948	,955	,947	,950	,955
Brand equity	,942	,944	,953	,943	,943	,954
Customer response	,943	,954	,954	,940	,958	,951

Both indicators have values superior to 0.7 for all the variables for both Turkish and Moroccan samples, which means that the measurement tool is reliable and the construct reliability is established.

#### **5.4. Construct Validity**

##### **Convergent validity**

Convergent validity is the degree to which two or more items of the same construct are positively correlated. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), when AVE value is higher or equal to 0.5, convergent validity is established.

The results of the convergent validity presented in the table below for both Turkish and Moroccan samples shows that the AVE value for all the constructs is greater than 0.5 for both of them; which means the convergent validity is established.

**Table 6: Construct Convergent Validity (AVE)**

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
	Türkiye	Morocco
BE	,742	,746
CR	,747	,737
SMMAs	,700	,701

##### **Discriminant validity**

Discriminant validity reveals that the study constructs are highly distinct from each other. Hair et al. (2022) are particularly recommending HTMT ratio to examine discriminant validity, this is why in this study, only HTMT ratio will be reported.

HTMT ratio is about the evaluation of the correlation between constructs. According to Hensler et al. (2015), HTMT value should be less than 0.9 and every value that is above 0.9 is translated by discriminant validity lack. The table below shows that HTMT ratio is less than the limit 0.9 for both Turkish and

Moroccan samples, which confirms the establishment of discriminant validity.

**Table 7: HTMT Ratio for Turkish Sample**

	BE	CR	SMMAs
BE			
CR	,841		
SMMAs	,843	,850	

**Table 8: HTMT Ratio for Moroccan Sample**

	BE	CR	SMMAs
BE			
CR	,880		
SMMAs	,867	,833	

### 5.5. Hypotheses H1 and H2 Testing

The hypotheses analysis will be performed for every country separately.

H1: Social media marketing activities have a significant impact on brand equity.

As we can see in the table of results for H1, the p value is less than 0.05 for both Türkiye and Morocco (sig< 0.001). We can conclude that social media marketing activities have a significant effect on Brand equity for Türkiye and Morocco. Hence, H1 is supported.

**Table 9: Results for H1**

H1	Relationship	Beta Coefficients	Standard deviation	T value	P value
Türkiye	SMMAs → BE	0,800	0,028	28,801	,000
Morocco	SMMAs → BE	0,824	0,039	21,115	,000

H2: Social media marketing activities have a significant impact on customer response.

Customer Response is significantly affected by social media marketing activities for Türkiye and Morocco as the p value for both of them is less than 0.05 as it is shown in the table below (sig< 0.001). Therefore, H2 is supported.

**Table 10: Results for H2**

H2	Relationship	Beta Coefficients	Standard deviation	T value	P value
Türkiye	SMMAs → CR	0,451	0,079	5,706	,000
Morocco	SMMAs → CR	0,339	0,082	4,124	,000

### 5.6. Hypothesis H3 Mediation Analysis

The mediation effect of brand equity on the relationship between social media



marketing activities and customer response for every country will be performed by using PLS.

H3: Brand equity has a mediating effect on the relationship between social media marketing activities and customer response.

For Türkiye, the total effect of social media marketing activities on customer response was significant ( $\beta=0.811$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and with the inclusion of the mediator the direct effect was still significant ( $\beta=0.451$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The indirect effect of social media marketing activities on customer response was found significant ( $\beta= 0.360$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). So, Brand equity has a complementary partial mediating role in the relationship between social media marketing activities and customer equity.

**Table 11: The Mediation Analysis for Türkiye**

Total effect (SMMAs→CR)		Direct effect (SMMAs→CR)		Indirect effect of SMMAs on CR				
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	SD	T-value (bootstrap)	P-value	
,811	,000	,451	,000	SMMAs -> BE -> CR	,360	,062	5,777	,000

For Morocco, the total effect of social media marketing activities on customer response was significant ( $\beta=0.797$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and with the inclusion of the mediator the direct effect was still significant ( $\beta=0.339$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The indirect effect of social media marketing activities on customer response was found significant ( $\beta=0.458$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, there is a complementary partial mediating role of brand equity in the relationship between social media marketing activities and customer equity.

**Table 12: The Mediation Analysis for Morocco**

Total effect (SMMAs→CR)		Direct effect (SMMAs→CR)		Indirect effect of SMMAs on CR				
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	SD	T-value (bootstrap)	P-value	
,797	,000	,339	,000	SMMAs -> BE -> CR	,458	,079	5,832	,000

We can conclude through the mediation analysis that Hypothesis 3 is supported. Hence, brand equity is mediating the relationship between social media marketing activities and customer response.

### 5.7. Hypothesis H4 Mann Whitney U Test Results

Mann Whitney U Test is a nonparametric test that is used to compare two

groups to see if there is a difference between them or not. It is used when the data follow a non normal distribution. We will be using SPSS to perform this test.

In our study, we are comparing between Turkish and Moroccan customers to know if they have they have the same opinions about social media marketing activities of X brand.

H4: Social media marketing activities have a different effect on Turkish and Moroccan customers.

**Table 13: Mann Whitney U Test for Every Aspect of SMMAs According to the Country**

	Entertainment	Interaction	Trendiness	Customization
Sig	,032	,017	,138	,546

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test for every aspect of social media marketing presented in the table above demonstrated that there is a difference between Turkish and Moroccans customers in entertainment and interaction because the sig is lower than 0,05. And there is no difference for trendiness and customization between Turkish and Moroccan customers because the sig is superior to 0,05.

But overall there is no difference between Turkish and Moroccan customers regarding social media marketing activities according to the results stated in the table below (sig =0.077). So, Hypothesis H4 is going to be rejected.

**Table 14: Mean, Std Deviation, and Man Whitney U Test for SMMAs According to the Country**

	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
SMMAs	Türkiye	140	31,4000	8,30255	,077
	Morocco	163	33,1779	7,50220	

## 6. Conclusion

No one can deny how social media has become a part of our daily life. Most of people can't spend a day without checking their social media accounts whether to get information, to interact with other people or to share their opinion. Social media is a strategic tool that brought many advantages not only to individuals but also to businesses. The emergence of social media made a big change in the business world by using it in one of the main activities of every business, which is marketing. Many researchers has been interested in studying social media marketing and its importance for the companies.

This study aims to examine the crucial role that social media marketing play in building brand equity and developing a positive customer response in the Turkish apparel industry. This research examines the effect of social media

marketing activities on founding brand equity, presented by two dimensions, which are brand awareness and brand image. Also, it explores the impact of social media activities on customer response, specifically the effect on price premium and brand loyalty. This study investigates as well the mediating effect of brand equity in the relationship between social media marketing activities and customer response. Not to forget that this research also compares the effect of social media marketing activities between Moroccan and Turkish customers.

The conceptual framework, research questions and the survey of this study were developed based on previous literature. The obtained results are based on the 303 responses collected from Turkish and Moroccan customers of X Turkish apparel brand that we considered as a representative of Turkish apparel industry. Convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. Many analyses were performed on the data collected in order to achieve the desired results. We performed descriptive analysis, mean and standard deviations, reliability test, and confirmatory factor analysis. And to test the hypothesis, regression analysis, mediation analysis and independent samples t-test were conducted. Three of the four hypotheses were supported.

The first finding proved the significant impact of social media marketing activities on brand equity. This result is supported by Seo and Park (2018) who confirmed the positive effect of SMMA on both brand awareness and brand image. The second result confirmed the positive impact of social media marketing activities on customer response. This finding is supported by Godey et al. (2016) and Sehar et al. (2019) who proved the positive and significant effect of SMMA on consumer response. The third outcome proved the significant mediating effect of brand equity on the relationship between social media marketing activities and customer response. This finding was confirmed by Godey et al. (2016) and Sehar et al. (2019) who studied the relationship between the three variables and come to the conclusion that brand equity positively mediates the relationship between SMMA and customer response. The fourth finding didn't support the hypothesis that social media marketing activities have a different effect based on the culture of customers through a comparison between Turkish and Moroccan customers. The impact of social media marketing activities is the same on customers from Türkiye and Morocco.

## **7. Implications and Recommendations**

The results have brought to the light the importance of social media marketing activities for companies. The Turkish apparel brands should not miss the opportunity of being present on social media and use social media activities to take advantage of their benefits. The social media marketing strategies should make sure that the content is entertaining, trendy, customized and encourages the interaction and engagement with customers. The presence of these activities

in the social media accounts of the brand allows it to benefit from many advantages.

Social media marketing is bringing value to businesses by providing them with the chance of creating their brand equity, which is considered the core of building a strong brand. Social media marketing activities are a strategic tool that helps in the process of building brand equity by increasing the brand awareness, which helps the brand reaching new customers, and by developing a positive and strong brand image in the memory of the customer.

SMMAs influence customer response towards the brand, which reflects the power of these activities in increasing the loyalty of the customer and its willingness to pay a premium price. They help developing a positive opinion of the customer about the brand by making him prefer the brand over other ones. Marketers should develop advanced marketing projects that focus more and more on creating relationships with customers and enhancing the interaction between the brand and its customers.

Social media marketing activities also affect customer response through brand equity, which means that social media is one of the main ways for Turkish apparel brands to strengthen their relationship with customers. Strong and effective brand equity is surely having a significant impact on the customer response. So, the brands should ensure being on social media and exercising SMMAs properly, which will help them build a strong brand equity and then boost the customer loyalty and his readiness to pay a premium price.

### **8. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Researches**

First limitation we can talk about is how this study focused only on the Turkish apparel industry, which makes the generalization of the results for other Turkish sectors may not be relevant. Future studies can work on other sectors to confirm the results. Secondly, the sample size used in the research is 303 considered small for the generalization of the results to the whole population. Further studies might use a bigger sample size to increase the generalizability of the results. Thirdly, the comparison has been made only between Moroccan and Turkish customers so the results are limited to those two countries. Future studies can include more countries especially that Turkish apparel industry has become present in several countries. Fourthly, the research has presented brand equity by only two dimensions, which are brand awareness and brand image. Further studies can include other dimensions such as brand quality and brand associations. Lastly, including socio-demographic variables such as age or gender to the model should be considered in future studies. These variables might have a mediating effect in the studied relationships.

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