The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Customers' Brand Loyalty

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Abstract

Nowadays, customers' loyalty is a key to commercial success. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the effect of social media marketing on customers' brand loyalty. In this regard, a conceptual framework which considered advertising campaign, providing relevant content, updating content, providing popular content among friends, and providing applicable programs as marketing indexes in social media is presented. This was an applicable research in terms of its purpose, and a descriptive-survey research in terms of its nature. Data were collected through library resources and field resources using questionnaire. Questionnaire validity and reliability were confirmed through face validity and Cronbach's alpha coefficient, respectively. Statistical population consisted of Cloob Website users from which 196 people were considered using simple random sampling. The results of Pearson correlation test and regression test indicated a positive significant relationship between social media marketing and customers' brand loyalty. Furthermore, it was confirmed that there was a positive significant relationship between the dimensions of social media marketing and brand loyalty. ANOVA test results indicated that educational degree and gender have a significant effect on respondents' opinion about loyalty, while educational degree did not have any significant effect on respondents' opinion about marketing independent variables. According to Friedman test results the mean score of popular content among friends and advertising campaign was more than the other factors, while the mean score of relevant content was less than the other factors.

Keywords: Marketing, Social media, Customer's loyalty, Brand

1. Introduction

Internet, as one of the most important invention in recent century, has influenced different sectors of human life by its various and vast features and functions. The main objective of internet is to eliminate geographical gap between people across the world and revolutionize communications and information exchange field. Since internet has a unique characteristic, companies have realized that they should redefine and rebuild their markets and branding strategies. Internet has changed capacity and circumstances of the old game rules (Simmons, 2007).

Internet social networks have been one of the most influential services offered on internet and Web, which lead to a dramatic change in the social system around the world in recent years.

Social networks are a new generation of sites which have been at the center of attention of the World Wide Web users these days. These sites work based on online organization, each of them gets together a set of internet users with special characteristic. Social networks are such a social media which make it possible to achieve a new form of communication and content sharing on the Internet.

Brand is an important and brief guide of identity, originality, products characteristics and differences and a function by which product will be recognized. So, creating a brand in this new (virtual) space cannot be ignored (Kappherer, 2006).

Nowadays, competition is more intense in the manufacturing and services sectors, which makes customer's loyalty role more prominent than past. In todays point of view, marketing includes customer developing i.e. considering satisfaction and quality from customer's point of view, customer's loyalty and effective communication whit them; therefore, organizations try to have loyal customers (Heidarzadeh and Hoseini, 2008).

Customers' brand loyalty leads to a positive face to face advertising (Hoseini and Ahmadinejad, 2008), creating substantial obstacles for opponent, invigorating company in responding competitive threats, creating more sales and more revenue and declining customers' sensitivity to opponents' marketing efforts (Matzler et al., 2008).

Nowadays, attracting customers' loyalty and maintaining this brand loyalty is considered as a challenge in competitive markets. Due to increasing internet penetration rate in the world and the general use of these tools, especially among new generation, as well as social network growth in cyberspace with regard to its functions and individuals impressibility from same group in this space, the necessity of noticing social media marketing and planning for it is undeniable. Many marketing researchers, such as marketing performers, have emphasized on the main role of interpersonal relationships effect on creating a positive attitude toward desired brand and strong connection between customers and brand (Brexendorf et al., 2009). With regard to up-growing social networks in our country virtual space, the necessity to study the level of social networks influence on individuals' brand loyalty should be strengthened. Hence, providing a conceptual model, this study aims to measure the level of social media marketing influence on customers' brand loyalty.

2. Literature review

Marketing is one of the main pillars of the economy by which economic prosperity will return to society, but the performance in various stages of marketing is the most important issue. In the market economy and business, marketing is as a motivating engine that can move economic gears so that smooth the process of dealing and manufacturing products (Kazemi et al., 2009).

Today, brand management is accounted as a marketing management area with increasing importance, particularly, when organizations drift their efforts toward transmitting intangible and complex messages. One of the most important issues that managers encounter is how to provide and expand a better perception of the relationship between constructs like brand and customers' loyalty, especially marketing management literatures suggest that many factors affect customer's loyalty. The marketing concept implies the belief that industry is a process of customer's satisfaction not a process of manufacturing products. An industry begins with its customers and their needs, not by royalty, raw material and sales skills. An organization can only survive if satisfies customers' needs and demands by perceiving them accurately and comprehensively, which shows the importance of studying customers' behavior (Javadin et al., 2010).

Brand loyalty is an almost dogmatic behavioral reaction in purchase process which one gains toward brand during the time and causes a certain trend toward brand in their decision making and evaluating the set of names they have in their mind. This reaction is a function of one's psychological and subjective processes in dealing with products that are equal in all respects. Customers often choose brands which they are familiar with, respect and confirm it (Vazifehdoost et al., 2010).

An economical way to increase brand awareness, brand recognition and brand loyalty is through social media. It can be said that social media help companies create brand loyalty through networking, conversation and socializing (Coon, 2010).

Having an informational solid like social media guideline is necessary to remain in rapidly changing modern business competitive environment. Hence, companies employ social media experts and consultants to make a decision about proposing their contents, features and activities in social media environment, so that involves consumers' heart and mind and makes them loyal to their brand (Gordhamer, 2009).

Social media are the media designed to interact and disseminate content on internet through social interaction, they have a very high accessibility and scalable propagation technics have been used in them (Khaniki and Babaie, 2011). Social networks generally consist of personal or organizational groups connecting to each other via one or more dependencies, which illustrate the effective function of converged networks in the context of a complex informational society. Their increasing success is, therefore, because of having social smell Social media are as a set of internet-based tools stabilized on web (Rahmanzadeh, 2010). technology and ideological basis enabling users to create content and exchange it (Kaplan and Haekline, 2010).

Social movements root in their community and think locally, while act globally and encounter owners of power emerging in communication space and global networks. Forming a self-selecting communication is a wonderful tool for social movements and individual deconstruction against dominant discourses and official institutions (khaniki and Babaie, 2011).

Social media implement marketing intelligently for each of their members. One way is to provide one's searches relevant content through filtering one's searches extraneous information and data, so that it prevents them to be exposed to irrelevant information,

hence, they find and explore their desired issues easily (Brito, 2011). By providing relevant content, one can be exposed to a lot of mental conflict toward brand and made loyal to it. Customers consider social media sites as serving channels where they can engage in real-time database of businesses. Customers prefer using social media to visit updated content (Leggat, 2010). Since rapid transfer of changes in order to update networks memory information is one of the new technology advantages, we hope that social networks desired content will be novel and updated rapidly. New technologies update developments and changes of users' demands and required products rapidly, therefore, let them decide according to todays' circumstances (Leggat, 2010), like Google which changed its search system algorithm and ranked its updated content (Freidman, 2011). Providing updated relevant content is one of the most important strategies used for brand management in social media. Communication in social network sites is a consequence of awareness and transparency. Hence, it is regular that one communicates with others via editing, developing or updating their personal page (Dalsgaard, 2008).

The popularity of social media, software grounds and content among friends is another important reason of customers to engage the brand in social media. Complex technologies are included in social networks of social media, which can give users their desired content by considering their search history and request for certain information, and also give them some relevant advertisement intellectually. This feature leads to an evolution in social media, which helps one find their desired information quickly without trying to find certain issue. In social media, it is also possible to advantage from word of mouth advertising (WOM) and providing popular content among friends with regard to the possibility of online chat and friends to help company advance its objectives (Gordhamer, 2009).

Cyber space is used widely for interaction, education, organization, sharing movements' cultural products, communication, advertisements, correlation creation, etc. by social movements. Some people have doubted full-scale and determining role of cyberspace in social movements, which refers to inequality in internet accessibility and lack of pervasiveness of movements' extent. Even if there is accessibility, some people look at the principle of its useful and democratic using quality in social movements doubtfully (Khaniki and Babaie, 2011).

There is a very serious advertising campaign to keep customers. Valid companies interact with their customers by applying online customer's loyalty programs through providing special advertisement (Mangold and Foulds, 2009). It is also possible to interact with cyber space via new mechanisms such as social networks, weblogs, e-mails, websites, chat rooms, video conferences, instant massage recording systems, post lists, discussion forums and podcast, each of them provides a certain level of interaction with respect to its characteristic. Communication mechanism is selected according to interaction target and software environment needs and necessities, so that outcomes and consequences of interaction through them will differ (Khaniki and Babaie, 2011).

Cyber social networks, as online communities, are resulted from friends and like minded groups interactions, which advantages of openness and decentralization, i.e. since cyber social networks rebuild and repair themselves continuously, one damaged element or group in networks does not shatter them. Castells (2009) suggests following network features: flexibility i.e. the ability to be rebuilt according to environment changes and considering objectives while changing elements and finding new connections, scalability, network size expansibility or contractibility which reduces the risk of network disorders, and survivability

which refers to networks abilities, as they do not have a central unit but act in a wide configuration.

3. Conceptual model

According to the research, our conceptual model is as follow:
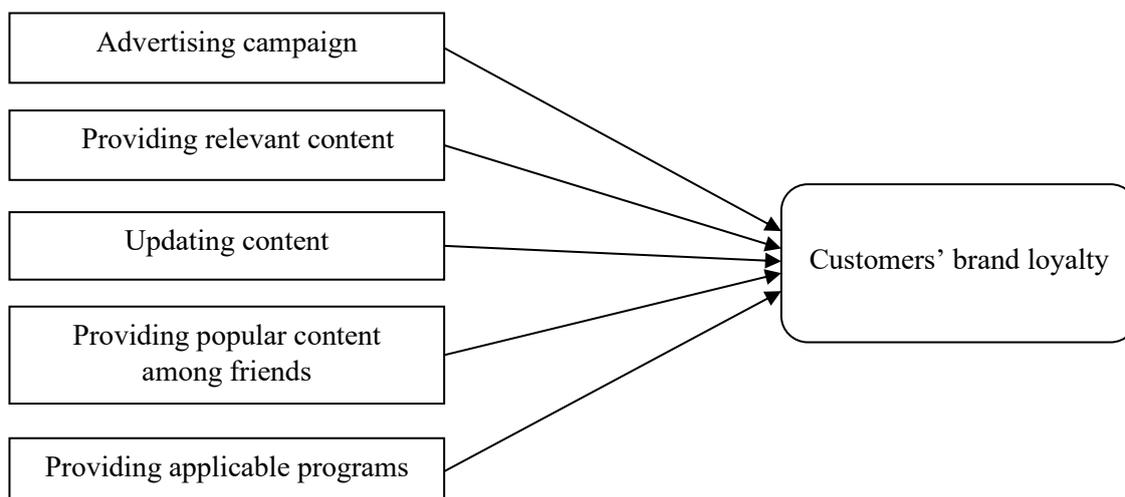
Fig. 1 Conceptual model.

4. Hypotheses

H1: Social media marketing has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H2: providing advertising campaign in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H3: Providing relevant content in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H4: Updating content in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H5: Providing popular content among friends in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

H6: Providing applicable programs in various aspects of social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

5. Research Methodology

The research population consists of 2500000 users of Cloob.com social network. In this research, simple random sampling and Cochran formula are used to determine sample and sample size, respectively. Information is collected through library resources and information global network, while data are collected using questionnaire. Hypotheses are analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS software.

6. Hypotheses test analysis

6.1. Testing variables normality

Using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test, normality situation is reviewed. KS test statistical hypotheses are as follows:

H0: Data distribution is normal.
H1: Data distribution is abnormal.

According to table 1, each variable significance level is larger than 0.05, so zero hypothesis is supported and research variables are normal.

Table. 1 KS test for reviewing research variables normality situation.

Variable	number	KS statistic	significance level	Test result
Marketing	196	1.004	0.224	zero hypothesis is supported
Loyalty	196	1.269	0.075	zero hypothesis is supported
Applicable programs	196	1.135	0.090	zero hypothesis is supported
Popular content among friends	196	1.327	0.059	zero hypothesis is supported
Updating content	196	1.240	0.074	zero hypothesis is supported
Relevant content	196	1.007	0.219	zero hypothesis is supported
Advertising campaign		1.072	0.201	zero hypothesis is supported

Reference: authors

6.2. Variables descriptive analysis

Using table 2, frequency distribution, statistical diagrams and calculation of numerical descriptors such as central indexes and dispersion indexes of the sample are investigated. In the following table research variables, the number of questions for each variable, descriptive statistics for each variable such as mean value, variance, standard deviation, minimum and maximum are provided. According to table 2, the mean value of popular content among friends and advertising campaign is more than the other variables'.

Table. 2 variables descriptive statistics.

	Marketing	Loyalty	Advertising campaigns	Relevant content	Updating content	Popular content among friends	Applicable programs
Relevant questions number	1-25	26-29	1-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	21-25
Mean value	3.6524	3.5214	3.8355	3.2487	3.6122	3.9745	3.4571
Standard deviation	0.34304	0.45714	0.48324	0.64076	0.53244	0.53946	0.54913
variance	0.118	0.209	0.234	0.411	0.283	0.291	0.302
minimum	3.04	2.20	3.00	1.75	2.50	2.50	2.00
maximum	4.60	4.60	5.12	4.75	4.75	5.00	4.60

Reference: authors

Table 3 provides Pearson correlation coefficients between social media marketing and brand loyalty. Accordingly, each of the marketing subscales have a significant correlation with brand loyalty ($p < 0.05$). Significance level of the test is less than 0.05 i.e. marketing variables have a significant correlation with loyalty. Since correlation coefficients are positive, it can be said that the higher marketing score, the higher loyalty score. Therefore, research hypotheses are supported.

Table. 3 the results of Pearson correlation coefficient for determining the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty.

		loyalty
Advertising campaign	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.371**
	Significance level (mutual)	0.000
Relevant content	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.247**
	Significance level (mutual)	0.000
Updating content	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.288**
	Significance level (mutual)	0.000
Popular content among friends	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.309**
	Significance level (mutual)	0.000
Applicable programs	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.294**
	Significance level (mutual)	0.000
Social media marketing	Pearson correlation coefficient	0.484**
	Significance level (mutual)	0.000

6.3. Variables inferential analysis

6.3.1. Regression test

Using a simple regression test, the hypotheses are tested. The results are presented in the following tables. F-test significance level is less than 0.05. Thus, all hypotheses are supported. Hence, it can be said that social media marketing and all of its components have a significant effect on brand loyalty.

Table. 4 the results of regression test of loyalty in terms of social media marketing.

model		Raw coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Significance level
		B	Standard error	Beta		
	constant	1.163	0.307		3.789	0.000
	marketing	0.646	0.084	0.484	7.714	0.000

Table. 5 the indexes of regression model of loyalty in terms of social media marketing.

Square of coefficient of determination	coefficient of determination	Modified coefficient of determination	F	Significance level
0.484	0.235	0.231	59.509	0.000

The modified coefficient of determination of this model is 0.231, therefor, 23.1 percent of brand loyalty changes can be explained by social media marketing. The following equation can be used to predict loyalty in terms of marketing

Loyalty=1.163+(0.646) marketing

According to the equation above, if social media marketing enhances a unit, 0.646 of a unit will add to brand loyalty.

Table. 6 the results of regression test of loyalty in terms of social media advertising campaign.

Model		Raw coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Significance level
		B	Standard error	Beta		
	Constant	2.175	0.244		8.920	0.000
	Advertising campaign	0.351	0.063	0.371	5.568	0.000

Table. 7 the indexes of regression model of loyalty in terms of social media advertising campaign.

Square of coefficient of determination	coefficient of determination	Modified coefficient of determination	F	Significance level
0.371	0.138	0.133	31.007	0.000

The modified coefficient of determination of this model is 0.133, therefor, 13.3 percent of brand loyalty changes can be explained by social media advertising campaign. The following equation can be used to predict loyalty in terms of advertising campaign

Loyalty=2.175+(0.351) advertising campaigns

According to the equation above, if social media advertising campaign enhances a unit, 0.351of a unit will add to brand loyalty.

Table. 8 the results of regression test of loyalty in terms of providing relevant content in social media.

Model	Raw coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Significance level
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant	2.950	0.164		17.949	0.000
Relevant content	0.176	0.050	0.247	3.543	0.000

Table. 9 the indexes of regression model of loyalty in terms of providing relevant content in social media.

Square of coefficient of determination	coefficient of determination	Modified coefficient of determination	F	Significance level
0.247	0.061	0.056	12.552	0.000

The modified coefficient of determination of this model is 0.056, therefor, only 5.6 percent of brand loyalty changes can be explained by providing relevant content in social media. The following equation can be used to predict loyalty in terms of relevant content.

$$Loyalty = 2.95 + (0.176) \text{ relevant content}$$

According to the equation above, if relevant content in social media enhances a unit, 0.176 of a unit will add to brand loyalty.

Table. 10 the results of regression test of loyalty in terms of updating content in social media.

Model	Raw coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Significance level
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant	2.628	0.216		12.193	0.000
updating content	0.247	0.059	0.288	4.192	0.000

Table. 11 the indexes of regression model of loyalty in terms of updating content in social media.

Square of coefficient of determination	coefficient of determination	Modified coefficient of determination	F	Significance level
0.288	0.083	0.078	17.573	0.000

The modified coefficient of determination of this model is 0.078, therefor, only 7.8 percent of brand loyalty changes can be explained by updating relevant content in social media. The following equation can be used to predict loyalty in terms of updating content.

Loyalty=2.628+(0.247) updating content

According to the equation above, if updating content in social media enhances a unit, 0.247 of a unit will add to brand loyalty.

Table. 12 the results of regression test of loyalty in terms of providing popular content among friends in social media.

Model	Raw coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Significance level
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant	2.481	0.232		10.690	0.000
Popular content among friends	0.262	0.058	0.309	4.525	0.000

Table. 13 the indexes of regression model of loyalty in terms of providing popular content among friends in social media.

Square of coefficient of determination	coefficient of determination	Modified coefficient of determination	F	Significance level
0.309	0.095	0.091	20.472	0.000

The modified coefficient of determination of this model is 0.091, therefor, only 9.1 percent of brand loyalty changes can be explained by providing popular content among friends in social media. The following equation can be used to predict loyalty in terms of popular content among friends

Loyalty=2.481+(0.262) popular content among friends

According to the equation above, if popular content among friends in social media enhances a unit, 0.262 of a unit will add to brand loyalty.

Table. 14 the results of regression test of loyalty in terms of providing applicable programs in various aspects of social media.

Model		Raw coefficient		Standard coefficient	T	Significance level
		B	Standard error	Beta		
	Constant	2.675	0.200		13.377	0.000
	Applicable programs	0.245	0.057	0.294	4.287	0.000

Table. 15 the indexes of regression model of loyalty in terms of providing applicable programs in various aspects of social media

Square of coefficient of determination	coefficient of determination	Modified coefficient of determination	F	Significance level
0.294	0.087	0.082	18.379	0.000

The modified coefficient of determination of this model is 0.082, therefor, only 8.2 percent of brand loyalty changes can be explained by providing applicable programs in various aspects of social media. The following equation can be used to predict loyalty in terms of applicable programs in various aspects

Loyalty=2.675+(0.245) applicable programs in various aspects

According to the equation above, if applicable programs in various aspects of social media enhance a unit, 0.245 of a unit will add to brand loyalty.

6.3.2. Friedman test

In this section, the mean values of variables are compared using Friedman test. Friedman test statistical hypotheses are as follows:

H0: the mean ranks of variables are different.
H1: the mean ranks of at least one pair have a significant difference.

According to table 16, research variables do not have the same importance, with regard to respondents' opinion. Furthermore, since significance level is less than 0.05, the mean rank of various dimensions of research is different.

Table. 16 Friedman test results.

Chi-squared test	164.004
Freedom degree	5
Significance level	0.000

Table 17 presents variables mean rank. Advertising campaign has the highest mean rank, while relevant content has the least mean rank.

Table. 17 variables mean rank

variable	Mean rank
Advertising campaign	4.28
Relevant content	2.40
Updating content	3.38
Popular content among friends	4.43
Applicable programs	3.18
loyalty	3.33

7.   Conclusion and discussion

Nowadays, competition is more intense in the manufacturing and services sectors, which makes customers' loyalty role more prominent than past. Customers' brand loyalty leads to a positive face to face advertising, creating substantial obstacles for opponent, invigorating company in responding competitive threats, creating more sales and more revenue and declining customers' sensitivity to opponents' marketing efforts. Customer's loyalty is, generally, important from various aspects. Loyal customers help organization determine predictable sale flow and an increase in revenue. Furthermore, it is more likely that customers familiar with an organization brand recommend it to their friends and relatives, hence, affect product evaluation and feedback cycle of organization, which has a vital importance in recent business environment.

Nowadays, the internet provides an unexpected possibility of individuals' and citizens' communication, which was merely a dream in past and in the history of international relationships both theoretically and practically. Internet has completely changed this pathway and has provided the possibility of communication between individuals and groups of one community with other communities. New technologies and emergence of new market approaches shift customer-company power balance toward customers. Since internet has a unique characteristic, companies have realized that they should redefine and rebuild their markets and branding strategies. Internet has changed capacity and circumstances of the old game rules. Social media implement marketing intelligently for each of their members. One way is to provide one's searches relevant content through filtering one's searches extraneous information and data, so that it prevents them to be exposed to irrelevant information, hence, they find and explore their desired issues easily. By providing relevant content, one can be exposed to a lot of mental conflict toward brand and made loyal to it. New technologies update developments and changes of users' demands and required products rapidly, therefore, let them decide according to todays' circumstances. Providing updated relevant content is one of the most important strategies used for brand management in social media. Communication in social network sites is a consequence of awareness and transparency. Hence, it is regular that one communicates with others via editing, developing or updating their personal page. According to the results of this research, updating social media content has a significant effect on brand loyalty. The popularity of social media, software grounds and content among friends is another important reason of customers to engage the brand in social media. Complex technologies are included in social networks of

social media, which can give users their desired content by considering their search history and request for certain information, and also give them some relevant advertisement intellectually. This feature leads to an evolution in social media, which helps one find their desired information quickly without trying to find certain issue. In social media, it is also possible to advantage from face to face marketing and providing popular content among friends with regard to the possibility of online chat and friends to help company advance its objectives

According to the results of this research, providing popular content among friends in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty. There is a very serious advertising campaign to keep customers. Valid companies interact with their customers by applying online customer's loyalty programs through providing special advertisement. Internet has challenged preceding economic, social and technologic base. There will be a basic revolution, hence, when it comes to end, like all successful revolutions, we will observe so many major changes. Many businesses have adapted the internet as a new way of doing business in the new information era. Information revolution, as a mass localization facilitating is able to reduce producer-consumer gap in an appropriate market. Internet leads companies to faster achieving customers' needs and demands, localizing most of products for customers' need, testing products and shortening product life cycles. According to the results of this research, providing advertising campaign in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty. Cyber social networks, as online communities, are resulted from friends and like minded groups interactions, which advantages of openness and decentralization, i.e. since cyber social networks rebuild and repair themselves continuously, one damaged element or group in networks does not shatter them. Castells suggests following network features: flexibility i.e. the ability to be rebuilt according to environment changes and considering objectives while changing elements and finding new connections, scalability, network size expansibility or contractibility which reduces the risk of network disorders, and survivability which refers to networks abilities, as they do not have a central unit but act in a wide configuration. According to the results of this research, providing applicable programs in social media has a significant effect on brand loyalty.

According to the results of this study, it is suggested that managers of organizations do social network activities, recruit members and allocate a partition of the company to social media marketing activities. People presenting in this partition should gain membership of various groups and get information about their opinion on the brand of the company, which enables managers to satisfy customers through reacting based on their opinions. Joining these groups, the staff of the company informs people of the brand features and its applications, innovations, complementary products, etc. and recommends this brand to customer to increase face to face advertising. A variety of websites with different features and specialized chat rooms for exchange ideas among the users should be created in cyberspace. To make brand viable in customers' mind, attractive and effective advertising should be provided in different social media. It is also suggested that managers of organizations provide content relevant to products introduction, application and consumption approaches as well as complementary products introduction. In this regard, they can filter information delivered by social media about brand productions. Moreover, it is recommended that managers of organizations provide information relevant to new and current products, prices, sales manner, and after sale services in social networks.

Considering this research, it is suggested that future researchers investigate the effect of products type and industry, i.e. two modifying variables, on the two factors (marketing and

loyalty). It is also recommended that they examine companies marketing performance of different industries in social media and rank industries according to general interest in internet marketing plan to help managers make a decision to select marketing channels.

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