



**The mediating role of Brand image and Lovemarks Brands between
Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Equity: An Empirical
Study on Fashion wear industry in Egypt**

By

Dr. Sherif Taher Mohammed Farid

Lecturer of Business Administration

Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, Faculty of business, Egypt.

Sherif-taher@hotmail.com

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Abstract:

Purpose – Many organizations consider attaining brand equity as a top priority since the brand is one of the most treasured assets of any organization. As such, considerable efforts are continuously exerted by academia to understand the factors that influence brand equity (BE) development. Although social media marketing activities (SMMA) are currently recognized as one of the pivotal aspects in attracting consumers and thus indirectly persuading them to purchase these products along with building brand equity, especially in the fashion wear industry, there is still a deficiency in empirical investigation. Hence, to narrow this gap, this paper aims to investigate the impact of brand image (BI) and lovemarks (LM) as mediating variables on the association between SMMA and BE. Furthermore, fashion innovativeness (FI) is also assessed as a mediator in the correlation between SMMA and LM.

Design/methodology/approach – The design of this research is descriptive and quantitative, where two data kinds were used; Secondary Data – Aiming at a theoretical overview, collection of secondary data was done from various websites, and research papers, which discussed the topics connected to the research question. Primary Data – Primary data were needed to attain the research objectives and were collected through the E-Questionnaire method introduced by Google models for applying the questionnaire through the Internet and filling it out by different people, with obtaining a total of 335 valid responses. Hypotheses were tested using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS V26) for basic descriptive statistics, and (Smart PLS 3.2.7) for SEM-PLS modelling.

Findings – The results revealed that perceived SMMA have a positive significant impact on BE through the mediating variables as an indirect impact. Surprisingly, SMMA were observed to have no direct effect on brand equity BE. Also, the correlation among perceived SMMA and BE was found to be mediated by BI and LM. Similarly, the link among perceived SMMA and brand LM was noticed to be moderated by FI. Furthermore, findings indicated that the indirect effect of perceived SMMA on BE via LM is moderated by FI.

Originality/value – This research further broadened the current knowledge by displaying the mediating role of BI and LM in the effect of perceived SMMA on BE. Also, this research allows for developing and testing a parsimonious model, which is useful, especially for practitioners by utilizing the strength of PLS–SEM in managing higher-order constructs.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Image, Lovemarks, Fashion Innovations, Brand Equity, Fashion Wear Industry

Paper Type: Research paper

1. introduction:

Social media marketing activities (SMMA) have been drawing the attention of many academic researchers as well as practitioners, to the opportunities and challenges in the process of brand management. Brand equity is primarily viewed as a matter of electronic word-of-mouth across an online environment, which is highly controlled by a variety of allied consumers (**Severi et al., 2014**). Previously, researchers have noticed that social messages could positively affect the current spending habits of customers and building brand image (**Goh et al., 2013; Kumar et al., 2016**). Consequently, marketers mostly use different social media platforms like social network (e.g., Facebook), platforms of photo-sharing (e.g., Instagram), video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube), microblogging (e.g., Twitter), as well as branded blogs to advertise their stuff and interact with both actual and potential consumers who follow fashion brands via these channels (**Kim & Ko, 2012**). Also, through social media, information about fashion brands is shared by consumers with their peers (**Stileman, 2009; Mangold & Foulds, 2009**). Additionally, the growing platforms of digital marketing (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) make the companies reachable to customers.

For organizations, social media is a competitive platform for marketing, in terms of building brand image, love, and respect, targeting brand consciousness, and increasing brand equity, especially in the fashion wear industry, which is one of the most lucrative and lively industries around the world. It represents around three trillion dollars and approximately 2% of the world's total domestic product (**Fashion United Group, 2017**), with fashion-wear retailing representing up to 39%, which is a large portion of this industry, showing a substantial possibility to grow in the future (**Kambrugamuwa, 2015**). Having all that glitz and glamour that any person can dream of, the fashion wear industry is perfectly suitable for SMMA and hence, using them to develop brand value and image fashion brands (**Ahmad et al., 2015; Godey et al., 2016**). Today, social media is becoming a fast advancing and most important medium to connect and stay informed about fashion products (**Rishi and Sharma, 2017**). Moreover, the increased use of SMMA by fashion brands highly necessitated to quantitatively analyze the social media effects on fashion brand equity.

Brand image (BI) has been defined in many various ways. In general, it is one of the concepts that was firstly developed to explain how the consumers' acceptance of a brand can be influenced by their perceptions, attitudes, mindsets, and behaviours. **Bearden & Etzel (1982)** along with **Park & Arinivasan (1994)** stated that BI is closely linked to the exclusive classification of a particular product. A robust brand image creates grander brand messages of a specific brand over the competing brand, which in turn will affect and determine customer's behaviour (**Burmann et al., 2008**). A strong brand also may help organizations enhance their brand equity that represents the growing market strength of brands.

As suggested by **Roberts (2005)**, to build both customer loyalty and brand equity, a company needs to go beyond just building a brand and continue to be creating lovemarks. According to Roberts' view, lovemarks concept is described as a blend of excessive brand love and respect, which produces a state of "loyalty beyond reason". While lovemarks' concept entails consumer contributions that lead to high levels of both brand love and respect, on the other hand, a brand indicates an offering that leads to only a high respect level, but a low brand love level. The current study integrates Roberts' concept of lovemarks, including high levels of brand love and respect, into a model that uses consumer-centred brand equity as a mediating variable.

Brand equity (BE) is a significant marketing concept to both academics and practitioners, for its capacity to offer a competitive advantage to organizations. Due to the impact that BE aspects have on consumers' perceptions and behaviours, fashion wear market firms aim to recognize the role these aspects play to design and implement an effective brand strategy. Moreover, BE is the overall strength of the brand (**Aaker, 1991**). Several studies have been investigating the impact that social media marketing has on BE, together with testing the relationship between SMMA and BE (**Naveed, 2012**), and found that social media, as an element in the communication mix, could be identified as a significant influencer on brand image, compared to the traditional media that focuses on brand awareness (**Godey et al., 2016**). In this study, BE has been measured based on Keller's

brand equity components. Additionally, lovemarks (LM) and brand image (BI) have been considered as mediating variables and fashion innovativeness (FI) has been used as a moderator variable between (SMMA) and lovemarks (LM). Finally, From the researcher's acquaintance with the previous studies that will be presented in the literature review, the academic aspect of the study problem is that there is a research gap represented in the absence of Arab studies that measured the relationship between the variables of the study combined. Accordingly, the problem of the study is in the following questions: Is there a significant positive effect of social media marketing activities (SMMA) on the brand equity (BE) in the Egyptian fashion wear industry in addition to measuring the mediating effect of the brand image (BI) and lovemarks brands (LM) in the relationship between (SMMA) and (BE).

2- Literature Review:

2.1 Social media marketing activities (SMMA):

Social media marketing activities (SMMA) have been recognized as one of the most influential sources of marketing for reaching a greater audience and increasing brand equity (BE). The appearance of social media sites has altered the way marketers interact with consumers. Marketing using social media is seen as a broad spectrum for advertising spending, which includes advertising across the social network, product reviews that are generated by users, virtual worlds, blogger authorization, RSS content feeds together with podcasts, social news sites, games, and advertising generated by the consumer (**Tuten, 2008**). When customers positively identify SMMA of a brand, meaning consumers perceiving various SMMA conducted in the context of e-commerce, brand loyalty is strengthened through brand as well as value awareness (**Ismail, 2017**). Thus, having effective SMMA is essential in positively building consumer-centred brand equity and boosting brand love and respect, especially in the fashion industry (**Roseler, 2015**). Extending this idea, earlier studies done on brands of luxury fashion proved that SMMA can enhance customer intimacy and trust, improve brand image (**Kim & Ko, 2010; Kim & Lee, 2017; Chu et al., 2019**), act as a generator for revenues (**Phan et al., 2011**) together with the equity of connection, value and luxury brand (**Kim & Ko,2012**). Social

media was stated as Internet-based applications' cluster that relies on the ethical and technical Web foundations and allows for creating and exchanging content generated by users (**Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010**). These internet-based applications include social blogs, weblogs, microblogging, pictures, podcasts, wikis, ratings and social bookmarking and videos. Through all practices of social media, fashion products can be promoted by businesses, instant support can be provided, and an online community of brand devotees can be created (**Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Weinberg, 2009**). Generally, social media brand page engagements help businesses survive and thrive through information sharing and interaction with new and current consumers in the hope of establishing brand awareness and developing brand image, therefore boosting their sales (**De Vries et al., 2012; Choi et al., 2016; Yadav et al., 2016; Kunja and GVRK, 2018**).

Consumer's innovativeness can be defined as the tendency of consumers to purchase or approve new products (**Midgely and Dowling, 1978**) that is important in building equity, especially for brands relying on frequent innovation of product to drive consumer demand (e.g., fashion-related brands). Customer innovativeness results in implementing product innovations, which in turn build brand love and grow purchase trust in the novel product by other people in the adoption cycle of the product (e.g., early majority customers) (**Kim et al., 2011**). The present study was intended to inspect the role of fashion innovativeness (FI), defined as one's readiness to discover and try a novel fashion product before other society associates (**Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992**), as a moderating variable in the correlation among SMMA and LM.

Digital marketing communications, in their different forms, can serve several purposes for a variety of consumers (**Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Piskorski, 2011**). For instance, Facebook has been stated to have around two billion active users every day, while Instagram, has about one billion active users every day (**West, 2019**). Also, organizations are provided with the opportunity to directly communicate with their clients using the elements of social media activities (**Yadav and Rahman, 2018**). These communication activities might even include handling of customers' complaints that can have a positive

influence on their way of decision-making (**Tuten and Solomon, 2017**). Interestingly, up to 93 percent of social media users believe that all industries need to engage in social media rather than conventional advertising media (i.e., radio, newspaper and magazine) as the former is more cost-effective and presents better outreach when compared to the latter (**Amersdorffer et al., 2012**). Extending this idea, social media marketing activities (SMMA) of brands allow reducing misunderstanding and bias toward brands and raise brand value through creating a platform for the online exchange of information and ideas between people (**Kim & Ko, 2012**). Besides, social media could be used to increase sales, word-of-mouth, return on investment, and propagate information about brands (**Yu et al., 2013**). As customers receive information and interact with the brand on social media, they form a relationship with the brand that would, with a strong favourable attitude towards advertising and promotions, lead to brand love and respect together with positively influencing brand image and equity (**Cambria et al., 2012**). Likewise, it was found that SMMA affect brand awareness, brand attitude, brand preference, loyalty, and the readiness to pay a quality price (**Jin, 2012; Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2019**). Based on that, this research assumes that successful SMMA are highly expected to lead brand equity.

H1. Perceived social media marketing activities have a significant positive effect on brand equity.

2.2 Brand Image (BI):

Brand image (BI) represents one of the most vital aspects of marketing activities such as branding, and market presenting with various definitions as well as approaches to its concept (**Martinez and Pina, 2003**). Also, marketing research has previously identified brand image, meaning the feelings and perceptions of customer towards a brand, as a vital concept that can determine both the brand and the product choices of customers, according to their evaluation of it (**Gardner & Levy, 1955; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 2001**).

Brand image (BI) is defined as concepts, insights, beliefs, opportunities and mental descriptions of a service or a product in consumers' minds (**Zembick, 2015**). Those interconnected concepts of BI were classified into either a functional or symbolic/hedonic BI (**Park and Srinivasan,1994; Zhang, 2015; Homer, 2008**). While functional brand image describes the perceptions that are related to brand's attributes (e.g., satisfaction, value and quality), hedonic brand image, on the other hand, explains the type of connections related to imagery, emotional or non-functional brand attributes (**Park and Srinivasan, 1994; Bruhn et al., 2012**). The association of a strong brand image involves figurative meaning and function that represent either perceptible or elusive quality traits of produces' attributes (**Persson, 2010**).

Marketing researchers have hypothesized brand image in numerous ways, involving a representation of visible and elusive attributes as well as brand benefits, focusing mainly on the cognitive dimensions (**Esch et al., 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Kim, Kim, & An, 2003; Park & Rabolt, 2009**), with less focus on the brand image affective dimensions (**Esch et al., 2006**). Consequently, current brand image scales have their focus on cognitive dimensions, with only a few scales tapping emotional and/or sensory dimensions (**Low & Lamb,2000; Chang & Chieng, 2006**). However, to create a whole brand image measure of both noticeable and subtle attributes and gains, cognitive, sensory, together with affective dimensions must be captured.

Thoughts, service, product attributes, performance, and brand figurative or psychological value are all a reflection of mystery, which is the cognitive aspect of brand image (**Keller, 1993; Lassar et al., 1995; Low & Lamb, 2000; Roberts, 2005; Chang & Chieng, 2006**), while sensuality, which is the sensory aspect of brand image, describes a consumer's connections related to multisensory features of the brand, as its texture, visual look, or scent. Intimacy, on the other hand, is the affective aspect of brand image that includes feeling the organization's empathy, customer commitment, and satisfaction from possessing a brand or interacting with it (**Roberts, 2005**).

Roberts postulated that these three components promote a lovemarks experience, which is a term meaning strong relationship, involving brand love and respect among customers and a brand. Also, they become more critical when it comes to having to pick a brand over other rival brands (Anwar et al., 2011).

Previous studies (Bruhn et al., 2012; Schivinski, 2011; Zailskaitė-jakstė and Kuvykaite, 2012; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015; Hanaysha, 2016) have all showed that communications via social media and marketing activities, which are scattered and fixed on different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter), share in brand equity development by building a strong brand image. These social media platforms are becoming increasingly important for organizations to help spread information related to their brand and engage their consumers in marketing activities (Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Kidd, 2011). Besides, these platforms have been proven to be the mainstay for conveying several forms of marketing communications to consumers (Rohm et al., 2013). Additionally, a few studies have focused on the implicit effect of brand image to explain the effect of social media marketing activities (SMMA) on consumers' perceived brand equity (BE). Hence, the following hypotheses are formed.

H2. Perceived social media marketing activities have a significant positive influence on brand image.

H3. Brand image has a significant positive influence on brand equity.

H4. Brand image mediates the relationship between perceived social media marketing activities and brand equity.

2.3 Lovemarks Brands (LM):

The lovemarks theory was developed by Roberts (2005), where he suggested that “lovemarks brands” aim high at two lovemarks aspects “love” and “respect”, which reinforce the connection between a customer and a brand, and sequentially, can positively influence brand equity. The term lovemarks, in this study, implies the lovemarks experience that a consumer enjoys through having a strong association of love and respect with fashion brands, using social media marketing activities (SMMA).

Also, **Roberts (2005)** distinguished between products, trends, lovemarks, and brands depending on both love and respect levels experienced by a customer. Products were remarked as having low levels of both love and respect, but fads were noted to have an elevated level of love but a low level of respect, whereas brands were found to have a low level of love but an elevated level of respect and lovemarks were claimed to have elevated levels of both love and respect (**Pawle and Cooper, 2006**). Brands become “lovemarks brands” by developing and increasing emotional connections between brands and customers (**Pawle and Cooper, 2006**). Moreover, **Roberts (2005)** identified three fundamental characteristics of a lovemarks (**Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008**) to develop their unique emotional significance: mystery, intimacy, and sensuality (**Antequera 2016**).

Brand love was defined in numerous ways. According to **Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)**, it is identified by the point of emotional passionate attachment, which a contented customer has for a certain trade name, while according to **Keh et al. (2007)**, it is the intimate, loving, and committed connection between a consumer and a brand that is characterized by its mutual, goal-directed, complex, and dynamic features. Another definition was proposed by **Rossiter (2012)**, who stated that brand love could only be achieved when ‘deep affection’ and ‘separation anxiety’ are mutually felt regarding the prospective love object. For products to become lovemarks, they also require respect as well as earning customers’ love (**Roberts, 2005**). Brand communication, using social media marketing activities (SMMA) can create either remarkable encouraging experiences with a brand or with personally important messages, each of which may promote brand respect. Definitively, the lovemarks theory may clarify the reason behind consumers’ feelings of loyalty and connection to one brand and not to another. Lovemarks provide great performance beyond expectations and reach the heart, gut, and mind, generating intimate and emotional connections. Take a brand away and people will find a replacement (**Antequera 2016**). Hence, the following hypotheses are formed.

H5. Perceived social media marketing activities have a significant positive influence on Lovemarks (brand love. brand respect).

H6. Lovemarks (brand love. brand respect) has a significant positive influence on brand equity.

H7. Lovemarks (brand love. brand respect) mediates the relationship between perceived social media marketing activities and brand equity.

2.4 fashion innovativeness (FI):

Fashion innovativeness (FI) is linked to an increased interest level in fashion brands and styles (**Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006; Workman and Cho, 2012**), leading to augmented knowledge acquisition about new fashion brands and styles (**Goldsmith et al., 1996**). Though consumers with high FI comprise only a small portion of the global customer market, their quick adoption acts as a catalyst for mass adoption of brands / products (**Goldsmith and Flynn, 1992; Goldsmith et al., 1999**). Moreover, those consumers with high FI participate in searching for information about new products/brands on social media platforms (**Muzinich et al., 2003; Cho and Workman, 2014**).

Customers who buy fashion wear new items are called fashion innovators. They play an integral role in promoting brands to others and controlling fashion approval and distribution among a social group (**Goldsmith & Stith, 1993; Jordaan & Simpson, 2006**). Consequently, fashion retailers are required to develop an efficient communication network for consumers to provide their feedback on the various processes of the product development using social media marketing activities (SMMA) and thus earn consumers' love and respect (**Gruner & Homburg, 2000; Ricotta & Costabile, 2007**)

Fashion Innovativeness represents a major concept in customer behaviour. It is identified as theory that is generally used to explore the process of fashion distribution and brand success. Consumers with a high FI are concerned about achieving effective benefits as shopping proficiency and monetary investments, so they devote much time and effort to search for information that is linked to price and promotions (e.g., bargains and sales) prior to purchasing a fashion product (**Kim and Hong, 2011; Workman and Cho, 2012**).

Thus, brands can enhance their experience by using SMMA, which improve and build brand equity. Hence, the following hypotheses are formed.

H8. Fashion innovativeness moderates the relationship between perceived social media marketing activities and Lovemarks, such that the relationship is stronger when. Fashion innovativeness is high.

2.5 Brand Equity (BE):

Formerly, brands and brand equity concepts have been extensively studied by academics (**Keller,1993**), including the role that marketing plays in developing brand equity (**Sriram et al., 2007; Stahl et al., 2012**) and the role that brand equity plays in expanding brand's market share, boosting customers' readiness to pay a premium together with enhancing organization's profits and revenues (**Ailawadi et al., 2003; Srinivasan et al., 2005**). **Keller (1993)** has created a conceptual framework that approaches brand equity from the consumer perspective. According to him, brand equity is indicated when the customer is accustomed to the brand and retains some positive, powerful, and distinctive brand connections in memory (**Keller, 1993**). Brand equity comprises five dimensions (i.e., brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand image, and brand loyalty), that have been broadly conceptualized, in the literature, as essential dimensions of customer-centred brand equity.

Brand equity has been described as the additional value that is given to a product by a brand name. It is directly associated with marketing concepts and consists of multiple dimensions (**Yasin et al., 2007; Jung & Sung, 2008; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012**). Also, SMMA can create both behavioural and perception-related elements of brand equity (**Aaker, 1991; Delassus & Descotes, 2012**). Regarding perception-related components, researchers have noted an array of factors that make them (**Delassus & Descotes, 2012**). Furthermore, brands that get actively involved with their customers through social media can catch their attention and fondness.

So, this research assumes that efficient SMMA are more expected to drive customer-centred brand equity by the mediating effect of brand image, love, and respect.

Finally, social media marketing (SMMA) can affect brand equity by including the brand in the customer's consideration set and influencing customers to be devoted to the brand (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). As marketers positively introduce their brand, social media conveys that positive brand image, monitored by marketers. Therefore, we can declare that a positive evaluation of social media marketing activities SMMA constructively affects brand equity. The research model is shown in Figure 1.

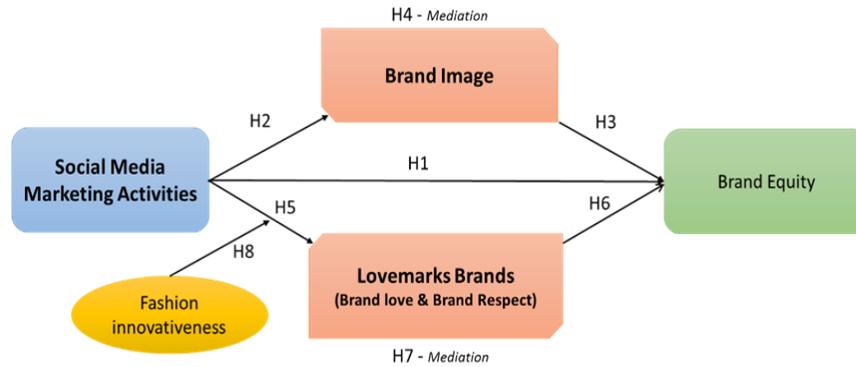


Figure 1

Conceptual diagram explaining the Research Model

3- Research Methodology

The present study is mainly built on the analytical descriptive method that involves library surveying by reference to former research, for constructing a theoretical basis for the conducted study, using some qualitative research approaches along with the field survey scheme for collecting data by applying a targeted survey.

3-1: Data Collection and Sample

In this research, the survey questionnaire approach was utilized for collecting data via the post-positive lens for model testing. The present study, thus, employed non-probability sampling, precisely, the purposive sampling procedure. To incorporate the technique of the purposive sampling into the process of collecting data, the respondents were required to follow, at minimum, one brand's social media page on any of the social media platforms in addition to the study was limited to consumers of fashion wear products in Egypt during the study period.

Owing to the customer population's large size, the time factor, and cost considerations, which act as restraints in research, the sampling method was chosen for collecting data needed for the consumer field study. The sample size was verified and estimated at 384 individuals, following the act of large numbers.

Data collection was done using the E-Questioner method presented by Google models for applying the questionnaire through the internet. To measure each attitude item, a five-point Likert-scale that ranges from strongly disagree (1) till strongly agree (5) was utilized. We collected 350 responses, 335 of which were retained for analysis. The data collection process lasted approximately (5) months from May. 2020 to Sep. 2020. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS and the Smart-PLS 3.2.7 software.

The questionnaire comprised three major portions. The cover letter, which constitutes the first section, indicated the research's purpose and significance, together with the information of the researcher. The brand anchor that represents the second section, demanded the respondents to assert a brand they pursued on any of the social media platforms, without restrictions for the brand selection regarding particular product categories. Consequently, they were requested to utilize that brand as a fixed reference to reply to the following questions related to the concepts of interest incorporated in the questionnaire. That approach was coherent with earlier behaviour studies, conducted online (**Laroche et al., 2013; Ismail, 2017**). Finally, the demographic data represents the last portion of the questionnaire and it asked about personal information of the respondent (i.e., gender and age).

3-2: Measures

To test this study model, the technique of Partial Least Squares (PLS) was applied, using the Smart-PLS 3.2.7 software (**Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015**). A two-stage analytical procedure was followed as recommended by reflective constructs (**Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Ramayah, Lee, & In, 2011**). Accordingly, the measurement model test (constructs' validity and reliability) was conducted, followed by an investigation of the structural model (testing of the hypotheses) (**Ramayah, Jasmine, Ahmad, Halim, & Rahman, 2017**). A bootstrapping technique was utilized to test the path coefficients' significance and for the loadings (**Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017**).

To obtain the measurement of involved variables and the number of items, some previous studies are considered as shown in Table (1). The study included four kinds of variables, social media marketing activities (independent variable), brand equity (dependent variable), brand image and lovemarks (mediating variables) and the fourth type fashion innovativeness (moderating variable). The items and questions used were constructed and refined centred on literature and the responses were measured on a five-point Likert-scale. The scale used for measuring perceived SMMA was adapted from **Yadav and Rahman (2017)**. Perceived SMMA were measured using eight items, brand image was measured using seven items, while lovemarks variables (brand love & brand respect) were measured with six items and brand equity was measured by four items. Finally, Fashion innovativeness was measured using three items.

Table (1) The measures are used in the study

Variable	Number of items	Reference
Social Media Marketing Activities	8	(Yadav and Rahman ,2017) (Kim & Ko, 2012) (Ismail, 2017)
Fashion Innovativeness	3	(Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006) (Workman and Cho, 2012)
Brand Image	7	(Esch et al., 2006) (Zembick, 2015) (Bruhn et al., 2012)
Lovemarks	6	(Pawle and Cooper, 2006) (Roberts, 2005)
Brand Equity	4	(Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012) (Jung & Sung, 2008) (Yasin et al., 2007).

After data collection and extraction from the survey software, it was input into SPSS. The data was then cleaned by deleting invalid responses, incomplete questionnaires, or by editing data with the presence of a clear case of misinterpretation or lack of attention. For missing entries, the fields were left blank.

4- Results and Findings:

This part presents the data analysis part of this paper. The analysis of this paper was performed by the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS V. 26) for basic descriptive statistics, and (SmartPLS 3.2.7) for SEM-PLS modeling. The first section deals with data preparation. The measurement model was assessed for the reliability and validity of the instruments in section two. Several descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are constructed in section three. Subsequently, the structural model for testing moderator and mediator variables was constructed in section four. Finally, Smart PLS was used to conduct data analysis for numerous reasons. Firstly, the complexity of the research model that included several higher-order structures. Secondly, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of perceived SMMA on brand equity versus theory confirmation.

4.1 Respondents' Demographics

The demographic characteristics of respondents are reported in table (1). It can be noticed that females were (171) with 52% of the sample, while males were (157) with 48% of the sample. About 70% of the sample has income between (5000) and (10000), 14% have income between (10001) and (15000), 8% have income between (15001) and (20000), and 9% have income more than (20000).

Table (2): Descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics

Variable	Category	Freq uenc y	Percent	Valid Percent
Gender	<i>Female</i>	171	51.0	52.1
	<i>Male</i>	157	46.9	47.9
	<i>Total</i>	328	97.9	100.0
Income	<i>5000-10000</i>	187	55.8	69.5
	<i>10001-15000</i>	38	11.3	14.1
	<i>15001-20000</i>	21	6.3	7.8
	<i>More than 20000</i>	23	6.9	8.6
	<i>Total</i>	269	80.3	100.0
Age	<i>20-30</i>	244	72.8	76.5
	<i>31-40</i>	40	11.9	12.5
	<i>41-50</i>	19	5.7	6.0
	<i>More than 50</i>	16	4.8	5.0
	<i>Total</i>	319	95.2	100.0
Marital Status	<i>Engaged</i>	2	0.6	0.6
	<i>Married</i>	78	23.3	24.5
	<i>Single</i>	239	71.3	74.9
	<i>Total</i>	319	95.2	100.0

Most of the respondent's ages were between 20 and 30 by almost 77%, while 13% ranged from 31 to 40 years old, 6% ranged from 41 to 50 years old, and finally, 5% were aged more than 50 years old. Between the respondents, there were singles by 75%, married by about 25%, and engaged by 0.6%.

4.2 Data Examination

Hair et al. (2017) emphasized that the issues of collected data, including missing data, outliers, and common method bias (CMB), should be inspected. Therefore, those primary data issues are examined using SPSS. The issue of missing data was inspected and found that some indicators have missing percent less than 5%, so according to the literature, we impute missing data using the EM algorithm method (**Hair et al., 2017**) since it provides the most accurate estimates at all levels of missing data (**Little and Rubin, 2019**). No outliers were detected in our dataset. CMB can be detected through running Harman's single-factor test, which is common to use by researchers, the percentage of the factor's explained variance determines whether the bias is present or not. If the total variance of the factor is less than 50%, then the common approach bias does not affect data. It was indicated that the first factor explained 34.5% of the total variance. As the value was below 50%, it can be concluded that the issue of CMB had not been detected. Besides, the values of VIF were less than 3.3 confirming the absence of this problem (**Kock, 2015**).

4.3 Measurement model Assessment

The assessment of the reflective measurement model was shown in this section. It requires evaluating the internal consistency, along with reliability, discriminant validity and convergent validity. Table (2) shows the results of both internal reliability and convergent validity through item loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The previous criteria were established since the item loadings were above 0.4, CR greater than 0.7, and AVE above 0.5 (**Hair et al., 2017**). Table (2) also shows the descriptive statistics for the selected constructs as well as the correlation with the dependent variable (BE).

Table (3): Results of Reliability and validity analysis, descriptive statistics, and correlation

Construct	Item	Reliability and Validity			Descriptive Statistics			Correlation with BE
		Loading > 0.4	CR > 0.7	AVE > 0.5	Mean	SD	CV	
Social Media Marketing Activities (Independent Variable)	SMMA1	0.693	0.893	0.513	3.739	0.753	20.13%	.382***
	SMMA2	0.599						
	SMMA3	0.7						
	SMMA4	0.681						
	SMMA5	0.74						
	SMMA6	0.79						
	SMMA7	0.828						
	SMMA8	0.675						
Fashion Innovativeness (Moderator Variable)	FI1	0.705	0.771	0.532	2.962	0.901	30.43%	.257***
	FI2	0.836						
	FI3	0.631						
Brand Image (1st Mediator Variable)	BI1	0.546	0.874	0.501	3.675	0.698	18.99%	.577***
	BI2	0.598						
	BI3	0.698						
	BI4	0.727						
	BI5	0.794						
	BI6	0.79						
	BI7	0.763						
Brand Love (2nd Mediator Variable [1st Dimension])	BL1	0.852	0.913	0.778	3.858	0.857	22.22%	.567***
	BL2	0.904						
	BL3	0.891						
Brand Respect (2nd Mediator Variable [2nd Dimension])	BR1	0.718	0.818	0.6	3.730	0.746	20%	.470***
	BR2	0.829						
	BR3	0.773						
Brand Equity (Dependent Variable)	BE1	0.78	0.872	0.631	3.539	0.834	23.56%	-
	BE2	0.829						
	BE3	0.789						
	BE4	0.777						

as follows: for *SMMA* we have ($M = 3.74, SD = 0.753, CV = 20.13\%$) with direct medium correlation with *BE* since ($r(335) = .382, P < 0.001$), for *FI* we have ($M = 2.96, SD = 0.901, CV = 30.43\%$) with direct week correlation with *BE* since ($r(335) = .257, P < 0.001$), for *BI* we have ($M = 3.68, SD = 0.698, CV = 18.99\%$) with direct medium correlation with *BE* since ($r(335) = .577, P < 0.001$), for *BL* we have ($M = 3.86, SD = 0.857, CV = 22.22\%$) with direct medium correlation with *BE* since ($r(335) = .567, P < 0.001$), for *BR* we have ($M = 3.73, SD = 0.746, CV = 22\%$) with direct medium correlation with *BE* since ($r(335) = .470, P < 0.001$), and finally for *BE* we have ($M = 3.54, SD = 0.834, CV = 23.56\%$).

Table (4): HTMT values

	BE	BI	BL	BR	FI	Moderating Effect 1
<i>BI</i>	0.694					
<i>BL</i>	0.678	0.947				
<i>BR</i>	0.651	0.815	0.789			
<i>FI</i>	0.391	0.607	0.617	0.505		
<i>Moderating Effect 1</i>	0.132	0.182	0.214	0.206	0.281	
<i>SMMA</i>	0.459	0.623	0.58	0.77	0.402	0.064

Discriminant validity examines how much a construct differs from other constructs. Discriminant validity is established using Hetrotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) in table (3). The HTMT value should be lower than 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). Following these guides, the discriminant validity was constructed since all the constructs have HTMT values less than the defined threshold except for the bold number between *BL* and *BI*.

4.4 Structural model Assessment

Examining the structural model includes path coefficients, collinearity diagnostics, effect size (f^2), coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and goodness of fit criteria. Figure (1) shows the estimated model with the estimated path coefficients along with the corresponding p-value.

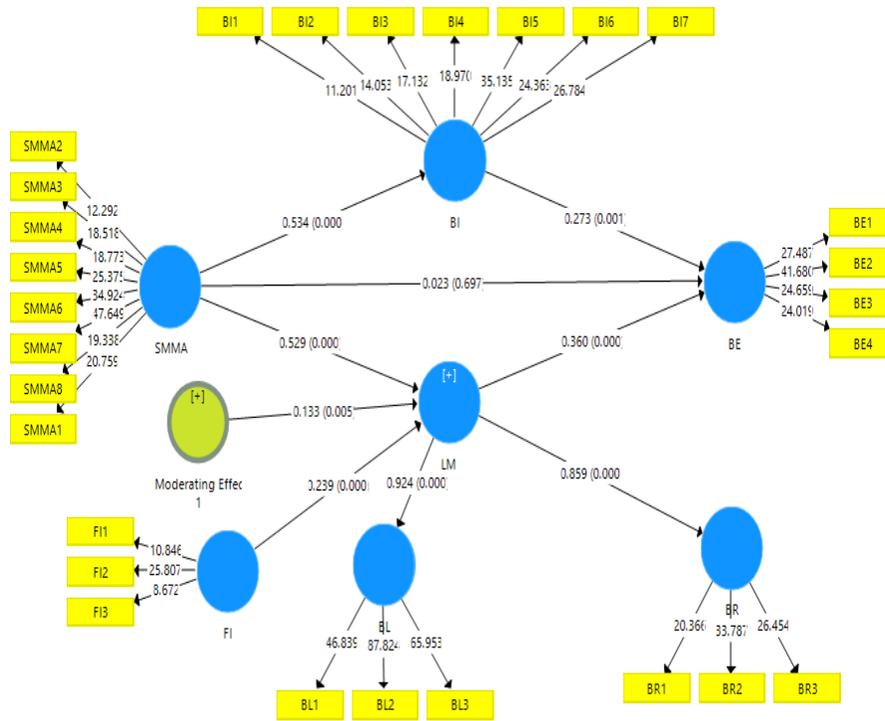


Figure (2): Path Coefficients with Corresponding P-value

Table (5): Hypothesis Testing

Paths	β	t-value	P-value	95% CI		Decision
				LL	UL	
Direct Effect						
H ₁ : SMMA -> BE	0.023	0.39	0.697 ^{NS}	-0.093	0.13	Not Supported
H ₂ : SMMA -> BI	0.534	13.58	0.000 ^{***}	0.458	0.612	Supported
H ₃ : BI -> BE	0.273	3.45	0.001 ^{***}	0.12	0.421	Supported
H ₅ : SMMA -> LM	0.529	11.982	0.000 ^{***}	0.442	0.617	Supported
H ₆ : LM -> BE	0.36	4.432	0.000 ^{***}	0.201	0.508	Supported
Indirect Effect (Mediating Role)						
H ₄ : SMMA -> BI -> BE	0.146	3.325	0.001 ^{***}	0.065	0.238	Supported
H ₈ : SMMA -> LM -> BE	0.191	4.048	0.000 ^{***}	0.103	0.287	Supported
Moderating Role						
H ₇ : Moderating Effect -> LM	0.133	2.782	0.005 ^{**}	0.039	0.22	Supported

*P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001, ^N Not Significant

The results of hypothesis testing in table (4) show that; social media marketing activities have no effect on brand equity since ($\beta = 0.023, t = 0.39, P > 0.05, 95\% CI for \beta = [-0.093, 0.13]$), so the 1st hypothesis is rejected. The results also show that social media marketing activities construct yielded a significant positive effect on brand image; since ($\beta = 0.534, t = 13.58, P < 0.001, 95\% CI for \beta = [0.458, 0.612]$), so the 2nd hypothesis is accepted. Brand image has a significant positive effect on brand equity since ($\beta = 0.273, t = 3.45, P < 0.001, 95\% CI for \beta = [0.12, 0.421]$), so the 3rd hypothesis is accepted. Social media marketing activities construct has a significant positive effect on lovemarks since ($\beta = 0.529, t = 11.982, P < 0.001, 95\% CI for \beta = [0.442, 0.617]$), so the 5th hypothesis is accepted. Love marks construct has a significant positive effect on brand equity since ($\beta = 0.36, t = 4.432, P < 0.001, 95\% CI for \beta = [0.201, 0.508]$), so the 6th hypothesis is accepted.

The mediation analysis yielded a significant effect of SMMA on BE through the first mediator variable (BI) since ($\beta = 0.146, t = 3.325, P < 0.001, 95\% CI \text{ for } \beta = [0.065, 0.238]$), so the 4th hypothesis is accepted. The results also show that love marks construct mediates the correlation between SMMA and BE since ($\beta = 0.191, t = 4.048, P < 0.001, 95\% CI \text{ for } \beta = [0.103, 0.287]$), so the 7th hypothesis is accepted. The results of these steps indicate indirect-only mediation, implying full mediation (Zhao et al. 2010). The moderation analysis indicates that FI moderates the relationship from SMMA to LM since ($\beta = 0.133, t = 2.782, P < 0.01, 95\% CI \text{ for } \beta = [0.039, 0.22]$). Figure 2 shows the interaction plot of the mediating role of FI on the path from SMMA to LM, it can be concluded from the graph that the moderator variable “FI” strengthens the positive relationship between SMMA and LM.

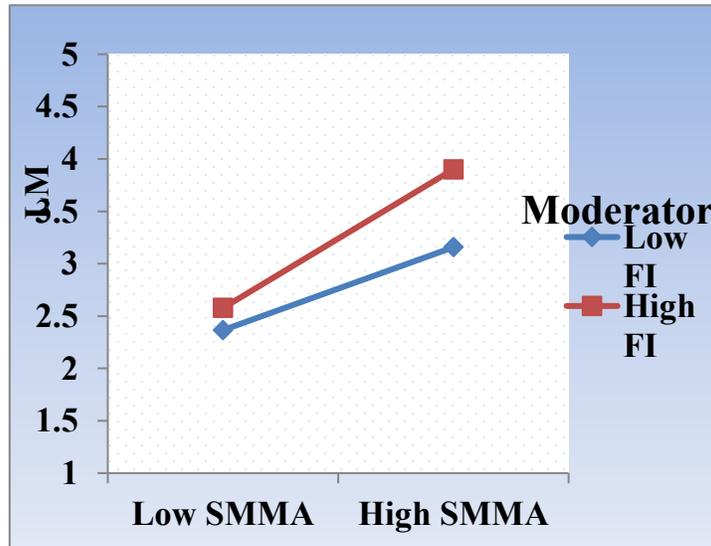


Figure (3): Interaction Plot

The Results in table (5) indicate that 29% of the variation in BI is explained by the variation in SMMA with Cohen’s effect size ($f^2 = 0.399$) that is greater than 0.35, which indicates a strong effect. Also, there are 45% of the variation in LM, explained by the variation in SMMA with Cohen’s effect size ($f^2 = 0.464$) that is greater than 0.35, which indicates a strong effect. The effect size of the moderating variable equals ($f^2 = 0.032$) that is greater than 0.02, implying a small effect. Social media marketing activities have no direct effect on BE since Cohen’s effect size ($f^2 = 0.001$) is less than 0.02. Finally, there are 38% of the variation in BE is explained by the variation in both BI and LM with Cohen’s effect size ($f^2 = 0.043, 0.066$) respectively, these values were greater than 0.02, indicating a small effect.

Table (6): Structural model assessment measures

	BE		BI		LM	
	Effect Size	VIF	Effect Size	VIF	Effect Size	VIF
<i>BI</i>	0.043	(2.803)				
<i>FI</i>					0.091	(1.145)
<i>LM</i>	0.066	(3.163)				
<i>Moderating Effect</i>					0.032	(1.046)
<i>SMMA</i>	0.001	(1.596)	0.399	(1)	0.464	(1.097)
<i>R Square</i>	0.378		0.285		0.45	
<i>Q²</i>	0.229		0.134		0.242	

All values of variance inflation factor (VIF) were below 5, suggesting the absence of collinearity problem. We evaluated predictive relevance by evaluating Stone-Geisser’s Q^2 . Blindfolding is a sample reuse technique that can be used to calculate Q^2 values for latent variables. We executed the blindfolding procedure and calculated the Q^2 values for BI ($Q^2 = 0.134$), LM ($Q^2 = 0.242$), and BE ($Q^2 = 0.229$). All values were greater than zero,

thus indicate predictive relevance for endogenic latent variables in our PLS path model (Hair et al. 2017). Tenenhaus et al. (2005), proposed the Goodness of Fit (GoF) as a global fit indicator. The criteria of GoF for deciding whether GoF values are not acceptable, small, moderate, or high to be regarded as a globally appropriate PLS model. The GoF index can be calculated as follow:

$$GOF = \sqrt{R^2 \times AVE} = \sqrt{0.371 \times 0.5925} = 0.469.$$

The value of the GOF (0.469) is greater than 0.36 indicating a high fit, so, it can be safely concluded that the GoF model is large enough to be considered as a sufficient valid global PLS model.

5- Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the results obtained from this study shed light on the way perceived SMMA could affect brand equity by the mediating role of brand image and lovemarks. Moreover, fashion innovativeness was found to moderate the effect of perceived SMMA on lovemarks. Additionally, the current study descriptive results show that most respondents are using LC Waikiki (the most-used fashion wear brand) with a percentage of 32.1%. Most of the respondents were single with a percentage of 73.4% with their ages ranging from (20-30) with a percentage of 76.2% and most of them have a bachelor's degree- as an educational level- with a percentage of 50.2%, as their salaries vary from (5000 to 10000) LE/Month with percentage 69.5%.

The results of this study show that LC WAKIKI (32.1%), Defacto (15.5%) and Zara (13.6%) are the most used brands from the Egyptian consumers and that is because they are using (SMMA) effectively as the study reveal that social media pages of these brands are easy to use and up to date which reflect on (BI).

(55,2%) from survey respondents mention that information available on social pages of LC WAKIKI and Defacto are detailed and inclusive which increase their desire to follow all new in fashion and have an interest in fashion innovativeness (FI).

The study reveals that (53.2%) of survey respondents feel (BE) depends on (BI) in the market and its usage of (SMMA). Additionally, the women are more interested in following fashion and browsing on social media than men with percentage (67%) and their ages vary from (20-30) years old with percentage (67%) while (> 50) years old are not interested in fashion and social media.

This study revealed the effects of BI and LM as mediating variables affecting the correlation between SMMA and BE. Firstly, SMMA was found to have no significant effect on BE (H1 was not accepted) this differs from **(Koay et al., 2020; Godey et al., 2016)**. However, SMMA affected BE through the mediating effect of BI and LM (H4 & H7 was accepted). In this research, multiple regression analysis results suggest that SMMA has a positive and a statistically significant influence on BI and LM, holding other factors constant (H2 & H5 were accepted) this is consistent with **(Sharma et al., 2020; Raji et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2015)**. Besides, BI and LM have a positive and statistically significant effect on BE (H3 & H6 were accepted) this is consistent with **(Gilal et al., 2021; Pawle and Cooper, 2006; Srinivasan et al., 2005)**. Moreover, it was found that FI moderates the influence of SMMA on LM (H8 was accepted). Thus, the model's validity and its practical implications can be supported by the presence of that positive correlation between all independent and dependent constructs in this model.

Based on theoretic contributions, the present work aims to explore more about SMMA and their effect on brand equity (BE), and thus provides administrative contributions to marketers and particularly, to fashion marketers. Also, this study presents a substantial insight into the fashion wear industry, offering tools to identify the role of both brand image (BI) and lovemarks (LM) in the fashion industry and assist managers, marketers, and policymakers in understanding the role of SMMA on Egyptian customers. The research obtained findings, also have key administrative implications and illustrations as they draw a comprehensive picture for the entire situation, where brand equity (BE) is constituted by SMMA, brand image (BI), lovemarks (LM), and fashion innovativeness (FI). Egyptian customers are usually aware that by spending on fast fashion, they would

be purchasing items that might be promptly out of season. Therefore, it can be assumed that while being an important factor for the Egyptian customer, social media activities (SMMA) are not the major drive for buying. Egyptian customers tend to assess brand equity (BE) based on the brand image (BI) along with the brand lovemarks, meaning that they tend to see the brand quality as a whole. Aside from the direct relationship between SMMA and BE, the entire outcomes from each construct in both aspects of the research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative, were positive. The companies ought to pay further attention to those activities to ensure that their brand can express a consistent, distinctive message, deliver the brand's value to the customers and get a better competitive advantage. Consumers are now focusing on finding out whether they can trust their favourite brands and if they consider their consumer interests. That is why brand managers are required to create a distinct brand image (BI) by creating online communities for their brands, using social networking, or by organizing events that take care of target market consumers' interests. The communication the firm conveys by itself is the only communication form across social media that is recognized as essential for brand image (BI) and lovemarks (LM). A more constructive consumers' appraisal of how an organization's brand communicates results into greater awareness/associations to that brand. For instance, customers would be able to distinguish that brand from other rivals. This might be principally vital in the initial phase of the product life cycle, suggesting no need for involving other parties in producing brand communication, for example, agencies who provide their members' comments on a brand to be perceptible to consumers as intentional comments of other brand consumers. Brand administrators especially, those who aim to build lovemarks brand must focus on bettering lovemarks experience by increasing brand respect and love that can be obtained from improving social media activities (SMMA).

The organization's marketing plans must be accompanied by strategies on social media platforms to increase networking, community building and conversation between the brands and consumers. Typically, social media customers rely on commercial messages through pictures, product reviews, ratings, and comments on social media sites. So, to

increase profits in the long run and strengthen brand image (BI), it is suggested to inform and update the consumers about the products on networking sites, blogs, news sites and forums, and to build relationships with customers through online communities. Since consumers are either brand-conscious or value-conscious, social media marketing efforts should be different for the two. Offers for 'low prices and quality products' on social media sites would be effective for value-conscious consumers and would increase their interest in buying. Thus, this study provides a basis for brand managers to advance their involvement and engagement with customers through various social media platforms. Finally, future studies may include other mediating variables such as brand personality, brand loyalty, as well as the effect of different demographic characteristics as moderated variables. The same variables can also be measured with changing the practical application to other products such as beauty care products, sports products, as well as comparing results and determining conclusions and indications related to that.

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الدور الوسيط للصورة الذهنية للعلامة التجارية والعلامات المحببة في العلاقة بين أنشطة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والقيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية بالنسبة للمستهلك

دراسة تطبيقية على منتجات أزياء الموضة في مصر

د. شريف طاهر محمد فريد

مدرس إدارة الأعمال، أكاديمية السادات للعلوم الإدارية، القاهرة، مصر

Sherif-taher@hotmail.com

ملخص الدراسة

تعتبر القيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية بالنسبة للمستهلك واحدة من أهم أصول القيمة لأي مؤسسة، ولذلك يسعى الأكاديميون والمسوقون في الشركات العالمية وخاصة في قطاع ازياء الموضة لفهم وتحديد العوامل المؤثرة علي القيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية بالنسبة للمستهلك وبالرغم من ان أنشطة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تعتبر من أهم العوامل المحورية لجذب المستهلكين وبناء القيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية لا يزال هناك نقص في الدراسات الأكاديمية والتطبيقية التي تبحث اثر أنشطة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي علي القيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية وخاصة في مجال الازياء والموضة . ومن ثم، لتضييق هذه الفجوة البحثية تهدف الدراسة الي بحث أثر أنشطة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي علي القيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية من خلال توسيط الصورة الذهنية للعلامة ونظرية المنتجات المحببة بالإضافة الي استخدام الاهتمام بالموضة كمتغير معَدّل، وقد تم الاعتماد على قوائم استقصاء الكترونية قومها ٣٣٥ مفردة من مستخدمي شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي لمنتجات ازياء الموضة في مصر وذلك لجمع البيانات الاولية اللازمة لاختبار فروض الدراسة.

وقد توصلت الدراسة الي عدم وجود تأثير معنوي ايجابي مباشر لأنشطة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والقيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجاري بالنسبة للمستهلك ولكن يوجد تأثير معنوي ايجابي غير مباشر بين هذين المتغيرين من خلال استخدام الصورة الذهنية للعلامة التجارية ونظرية العلامات التجارية المحببة كمتغيرات وسيطة.

الكلمات الدالة المفتاحية: أنشطة التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الصورة الذهنية للعلامة التجارية، نظرية العلامات المحببة، الاهتمام بالموضة، القيمة المعنوية للعلامة التجارية، أزياء الموضة.