The Role of Social Media in Building Brand Equity: A Study on the Facebook Pages of the Airlines Sector in Egypt[1]

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ABSTRACT

Airlines are continuously searching for better approaches to engage with their current and potential passengers. Social networking sites with its interactive nature have allowed these corporations to engage with customers in a two-way online dialogue. This article aims at investigating the role of the content that are created by airlines on their Facebook pages as well as the content that is posted by passengers in enhancing customer-based brand equity and purchase intention in the airline industry. A quantitative study was adopted for data collection through questionnaires. An online questionnaire was posted on a number of Facebook pages of three Egyptian airlines. Testing of the proposed conceptual framework was performed using the partial least squared structural equation modeling approach (PLS-SEM). The results indicated that the content that is created by the airlines only affected the brand awareness component of brand equity. As expected, the findings showed that the content that is posted by the passengers on the Facebook pages of the airlines significantly influenced all dimensions of brand equity. Finally, the findings confirmed the significant impact of these four dimensions on passengers' purchase intention. The paper contributes to online marketing field by examining the roles that different forms of social media content have in enhancing passengers' relationships with the airlines. Also, it underscores the critical value of user-generated content on social media in affecting passengers' opinions about the airline companies. Moreover, it provides some guidelines for airlines to fully utilize the power of social media marketing.

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1- Introduction

Given the rapid global penetration of social media, the world has seen dramatic changes in the ways businesses communicate with consumers (Cheung et al., 2020). The social networking sites enabled businesses to communicate with their current and prospective customers in an interactive way. This have allowed consumers to have a say in the products and services they consume (Badrinath & Shastry, 2020). Also, this has contributed to the consumer empowerment where consumers have been more knowledge about different products and brands. This is different from the traditional modes of marketing communication where consumers where only passive recipients of marketing messages (Tuten, 2020).

With the high popularity of social networking sites among users, many marketers across most industries have been interested in using these innovative websites in marketing (Santini et al., 2020). This can be attributed to a group of reasons. For instance, social media allows companies to save in their marketing and advertising costs by making their advertising more targeted. This has been possible with the strong targeting capabilities of various social media platforms. Secondly, many corporations are searching for innovative approaches to target consumers who have been developing a high level of advertising avoidance towards traditional modes of marketing (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2020). One of the most industries that are heavily relying on the social media marketing is the airlines industry (Seo & Park, 2018). This industry depends on social media networks to build long-lasting relationships with travellers (Leung et al., 2013). Airlines utilise fan pages on social media, e.g. Facebook, where they post a wide range of informative content in these brand communities about their offers and prices (Loo, 2020). Moreover, they post entertaining and interactive posts with the aim of engaging passengers with the firm-created content and in conversations with other users (Baghirov et al., 2019).

With the rapid industry use, the social media literature has seen a continuous growth in the past few years. For instance, there has been a

huge interest by academic scholars to study the factors that can make the social media marketing more effective (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017). Another group of studies examined the factors that enhance consumers' interest in social media ads and brand communities embedded in social media (Gaber et al., 2019). However, little research has been done to investigate the effect of the two forms of social media content which are the content that is created by organisations on their Facebook pages and the content that are posted by users on developing customer based brand equity (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017; Sadek et al., 2018).

1-1 Research Problem

With the rapid adoption of Facebook marketing by airline companies in Egypt, questions have been raised about the effectiveness of these innovative marketing techniques in the context of the airline industry (Baghirov et al., 2019; Phuthong, 2019). For instance, in the current study, the researchers conducted an exploratory study by conducting four in-depth interviews with marketing managers working in three different airlines in Egypt. The exploratory study showed that the airline companies suffer from the lack of clear strategies when adopting social media marketing. Additionally, these managers indicated that with their rapid usage of Facebook brand pages in marketing to passengers, they need to deeply understand the impact of these brand communities on the consumer-brand relationships. These views are supported by the findings of some recent articles in the marketing literature which showed that there is still a need for examining the effectiveness of the social media communication on customer-based brand equity (Koay et al., 2020; Jayasuriya et al., 2018). Also, these views are supported by the 2020 social media marketing industry report which showed that one of the major problems that face marketers is to know how to engage customers on different social media marketing platforms and to determine the effectiveness of their social media marketing campaigns (Social media examiner, 2020). From these discussions, we conclude the following research problem:

What are the impacts of the firm-created and user-generated social media content on customer based brand equity dimensions and purchase intention in the context of the airlines industry in Egypt?

1-2 Research Objectives

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, it examines the impacts of the two forms of social media marketing content which are the firm-generated content and the user-generated content on the various dimensions of customer based brand equity namely: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty in the context of the airline industry in Egypt. Secondly, it investigates the impact of the various dimensions of brand equity on consumers' purchase intention. This study is considered important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the marketing literature has been always focusing on the firm initiated content on social media while largely ignoring the importance of user-generated content (Sadek & Mehelmi,2017). On social media, consumers can interact with other consumers before the purchase or even after purchasing. Thus, it is critical to examine whether the two forms of social media content have an impact on consumers' relationships with brands. Another importance of the article is that it focuses on the social networking website Facebook. This social networking website is considered the biggest social network in terms of number of users with more than 2.7 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2020). This makes it one of the most widely used platform in social media marketing. Finally, the study focuses on consumers in a developing country which is Egypt, where the literature have largely focused on consumers' relationships with brands in developed countries (Gaber et al., 2014). This can contribute towards our knowledge about marketing practices and consumers' perceptions regarding social media marketing in that country. In Egypt, most companies of various sizes use Facebook marketing to engage with their current and prospective customers (Saad & Badran, 2017). However, due to the rapid industry use of social media by marketers, academic literature has not been able to follow the rapid industry use (Gaber et al., 2019). This makes conducting a research about consumers' perceptions for social media marketing in Egypt valuable for both the literature and practice (Gaber et al., 2021).

1-3 Research Importance

This article contributes to the marketing literature by filling some important research gaps. For instance, the extant literature shows some

shortcomings regarding the relationships between different forms of social media marketing communication and brand equity dimensions and purchase intention in the context of the airline industry (Menon et al., 2019). Much of the existing literature has only focused on studying the impact of social media marketing on the performance of airline companies (Elemonie, 2020). Thus, our study contributes by examining the impact of these innovative marketing techniques from the customer perspective. Another importance is that our study is conducted on Egyptian passengers, where the marketing literature have mainly focused on the social media marketing that are conducted by airlines in developed countries (de Oliveira & Caetano, 2019). Hence, our study adds to the body of knowledge by examining customers' perceptions regarding social media marketing in a developing country which is Egypt. Finally, our article contributes by providing some recommendations to the airlines industry to follow when adopting Facebook marketing.

The article is organized according to the following sections: Firstly, a comprehensive review of the marketing literature that discusses the concept of the customer-based brand equity is presented. Then the proposed conceptual framework together with the research hypotheses are introduced. Secondly, the research methodology that was used to gather and analyse the data is explained. Then the data analysis and research findings are introduced. Finally, the theoretical and practical recommendations of the article are discussed.

2- Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2-1 Developing Customer- based Brand Equity

Branding of products and services is conducted to differentiate it from other offers from competitors. It also facilitates consumers' purchasing decisions by helping them choose products and services that have satisfied them in the past purchases (Murphy, 1992). Additionally, brands can enhance consumers' identification by allowing them to show to others who they are or who they wish to be like (Tuškej et al., 2013). Companies have been always eager to enhance the strength of their brands by associating them with functional and emotional benefits (Lee et al., 2011). By building a strong brand, companies can enjoy the benefit of creating a sustainable competitive advantage and can have the

advantage of creating entry barriers for competitors. Moreover, if companies succeed in building strong brands, they would enjoy the advantage of creating entry barriers for competitors, offering legal protection and securing a price premium (Kotler, 1999).

The idea of customer based brand equity has been introduced by Keller (2002) to describe consumers' relationships with brands. Kamakura & Russell (1991) argued that this concept is related to the positive impact that brand knowledge has on customers' actions towards any marketing communication by the brand. Developing strong brand equity is considered critical to companies as it allows organizations to build long term relationships with consumers. Also, brand equity secures a price premium for brands and enhances the positive word of mouth communication (Kotler, 1999)

The marketing practice indicates that brands can have whether positive or negative brand equity. A product has a positive customer-based brand equity when consumers react in a favorable way to all marketing communication from that brand. Also, they are willing to pay more for these brands. On the other hand, consumers react unfavorably to any marketing communication from brands with negative customer based brand equity (Kotler, 1999). For these reasons, marketers have been applying the holistic marketing approach that allows them to enhance the value of their brands. This approach builds on the idea of improving all the brand contact points that a brand has with its customers (Choi et al., 2015).

One of the main contact points that has been increasingly used in approaching customers and engaging with them is the social media (Neudecker et al., 2015). Marketers and continuously using various social media platforms such as Facebook for enhancing consumer engagement (Gaber et al., 2019). They use these online networks for connecting with their customers, listening to their feedback and continuously posting about new products and offers (Dessart et al., 2015). For instance, Facebook allows companies to establish online communities that gather millions of customers who wish to be identified with certain products or services. These communities enable marketers to listen to the consumers' comments and to engage with customers. On

the other hand, consumers can establish communities on social media for certain brands. These communities gather thousands of consumers who are interested in these brands (Banerjee& Chua, 2019). Consumers are able to communicate with each other about the brands and ask for consultations for the actual purchasers or owners (Chang & fan, 2017). This makes all platforms on social media an essential tool in establishment of equity for brands. In the current article, we focus on several dimensions of brand equity namely: perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty. We aim to study the impact of firm created and user generated social media content of the various dimensions of brand equity and purchase intention as shown in the proposed conceptual model in Figure 1. The following sections discuss the proposed hypotheses.
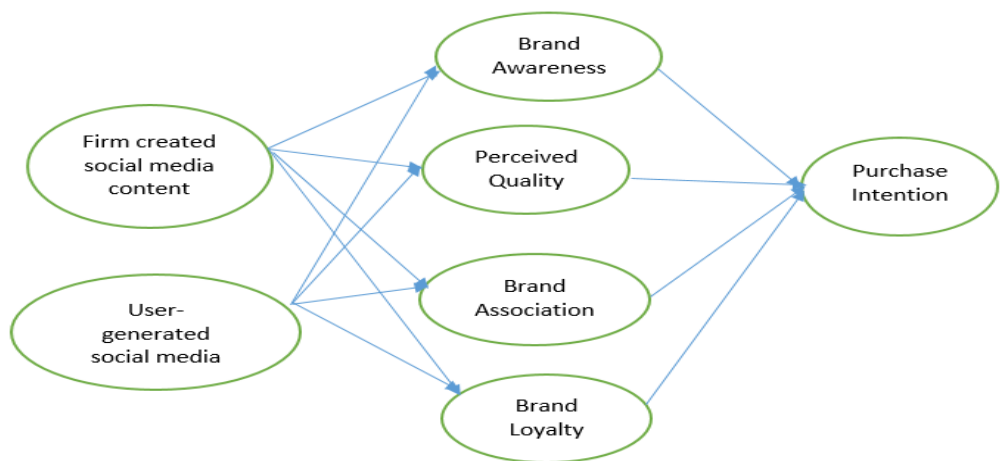

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

2-2 Perceived Quality

Keller (2003) defined perceived quality as a customer's evaluation about the quality or superiority of a product or service over its competing brands. In other words, when customers think that a certain brand is superior than other brands or substitutes in terms of performance, it is said that it has positive perceived quality (Yoo, et al., 2000). Pappu, et al. (2005) indicated that perceived quality is not necessary related to the actual quality of the product but it relates to consumers' evaluation of quality of the brand in their minds. Perceived quality is one of the most important brand equity dimensions where it has a major role in securing

price premium (Netemeyer, et al. 2004). Also, it has a great role in enhancing the brands ability in brand extension (Aaker, 1991). Moreover, customers' perceived quality has been associated with high intent of customers to buy the brand (Gaber, et al., 2014). Despite the importance of perceived quality, there has been a scarcity in studies that examine the effect of the content posted on social media in enhancing consumers' perception of quality of brands (Sadek et al., 2018).

Since Yoo, et al. (2002) indicated that advertisements have a big role in building consumers' perceptions of quality of brands. Therefore, it is expected that firm initiated content and the posts that are created by other users on fan pages to have a significant effect on consumers' perceived quality of the brands. Consumers engage with a variety of brands on social networking sites. Continuous interactions that consumers have online from brand communication as well as discussions with likeminded consumers might enhance consumers' relationships with brands and perception of their quality. In other words, the current article argues that the continuous exposure of passengers to brand-related content on airline fan pages has a positive role in enhancing passengers' perception for quality of the services introduced by these airlines. From the prior literature, our study introduces these hypotheses:

H1: Social media content that is posted by the airline significantly influences passengers' perceived quality of the airline.

H2: User-generated content that is posted by the customers significantly influences passengers' perceived quality of the airline.

2-3 Brand Awareness

Consumers' awareness of brands represents an important dimension in building brand equity. Brand awareness implies the instant recognition of the product or service as well as the instant recall of its performance (Gustafson, 2007). Marketers have been always to create high levels of brand awareness through different marketing communication plans (MacInnis, et al., 1999). Brand awareness can result from brand knowledge. Brand knowledge is usually formed as a result of consumers' beliefs, thoughts, feelings, as well as previous experience with the brand consumption (Kotler, 1999).

Customers' awareness plays a major role in improving the intent of customers to try products. Thus, most companies make sure that different communication media have informational content that describe the different aspects of brand consumption. The social media literature provides some insights about the importance these new media in enhancing consumers' awareness and knowledge about brands (Hutter, et al., 2013). For instance, many companies use communities on social networking sites such as fan pages to post informative content about the brands. This content can include posts that tell consumers about the different components of the marketing mix such as the brand location, pricing, and product features (Gaber, et al., 2014). Thus, it is expected that informative content that focus on brand related attributes can contribute towards creating brand awareness and knowledge (Monica & Balas, 2014). Moreover, consumers can ask questions to the brand about the different aspects of brand consumption. Additionally, they can get some important informative content from other consumers on social media that deepen their knowledge about brands (Suki & Sasmita, 2015).

From the above discussion, we can propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Social media content that is posted by the airline significantly influences passengers' brand awareness for the airline.

H4: User-generated content that is posted by the customers significantly influences passengers' awareness for the airline.

2-4 Brand Association

Consumers' association with brands is an important factor in conceptualization of brand equity. It refers to a connection that develops in the minds of consumers with the brands. It involves thoughts that customers' have in their brains when they remember a certain product or service. It refers to all related images, experiences, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that consumer have towards a certain brand (Kotler, et al., 2019). Thus, it is the major critical factor in establishment of strong brands. Brand association can be related to consumers' experiences with brands or with organizations that produce these brands (Chen, 2001). Companies have been always eager to create strong brand associations in their efforts for building brand image and their role in creating brand extension. Also, it was found that brand association is strongly linked to

behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Gladden & Funk, 2002). On social media, marketers can post content that stresses the hedonic aspects of brand consumption. For example, they can associate their brands with high degree of exclusivity, power or scarcity. Marketers often use celebrity endorsements and influencers that enhance the emotional connection between brands and consumers (Jin et al., 2019). Also, brand association is important in creating brand identification (Coelho et al., 2018). Consumers can like pages and posts on social media which consequently are shown to their friends on these social networks. This allows consumers to become associated with brands that enhance their social image (So et al., 2018). From the above discussion, the researchers propose the following hypotheses:

H5: Social media content that is posted by the airline significantly influences passengers' brand association for the airline.

H6: User-generated content that is posted by the customers significantly influences passengers' brand association for the airline.

2-5 Brand Loyalty

Customer loyalty to a brand refers to consumers rebuy of a certain brand as a result of a satisfying experience (Oliver, 1999). Similarly, Aaker (1991) indicated that brand loyalty can be defined a strong attachment that consumers have towards some brands that will result in continuous purchase. Companies have been always interested to create brand loyalty to be able to gain a differentiation in the marketplace and to enhance their brand value (Sadek ,et al., 2018). Brand loyalty is considered one of the most famous constructs that have attracted the interest of researchers in the marketing literature. This is attributed to the power of this concept of loyalty in building long lasting relationships with consumers (Ismail, 2017).

It has been reported that customers who possesses high levels of brand attachment will continue to invest effort and money to continue their relationship with brands, thus brand loyalty can be a strong predictor for customer life time value (Park, et al., 2008). Companies can have some advantages from having loyal customers. For instance, customers' loyalty can result in the ability of companies to increase their prices, lower switching behavior and decreasing costs of retaining their customers

(Yoo & Donthu, 2002). Also, brand loyalty has been associated with high levels of positive word of mouth (Elen, et al., 2017).

Social media can contribute towards the development of brand loyalty as it is regarded as a critical component in building equity for brands (Kamboj & Rahman,2016). The continuous exposure of the customers to marketing messages from the firms on social media as well as from other customers can enhance their emotional bonding with the brands, this might contribute towards enhancing brand loyalty (Gaber, et al., 2019). Also, since social media allows consumers to interact with the company and give reviews to the brand and other consumers, they are more likely to become bonded to brands that manage satisfying experiences on social media (Kamboj & Rahman,2016). From the previous assumptions, this article hypothesizes the following:

H7: Social media content that is posted by the airline significantly influences passengers' loyalty for the airline.

H8: User-generated content that is posted by the customers significantly influences passengers' loyalty for the airline.

2.6 Customer-based Brand Equity and Purchase Intention

Many companies are eager to enhance their brand equity for its critical role in making reasonable monetary profits for these organizations (Lassar, et al., 1995). The marketing literature shows some positive outcomes for creating brand equity. For example, brands that have succeeded to create high levels of brand equity have enjoyed an ability to increase their prices where consumers talk in a favorable way about them, brand loyalty and an ability to resist bad news and information about them (Laroche, et al., 2013).

Fishbein & Ajzen (1977) argued that an individual's intention is one of the main drivers of his/her behavior. Thus, we argue in this article that travelers' purchase intention can be a predictor to be actual buying, this intention might result from their continuous interaction with airlines on social media. Purchase intention indicates the possibility that consumers will purchase brands later and their tendency to purchase a specific marketing offering (Diallo, 2012).

In this article, we argue that when consumers develop high degrees of brand equity on brand pages are more likely to buy these brands. This might be attributed to the positive emotional connection that develops from the continuous engagement of consumers with brands online (Alalwan, 2018). In other words, we expect that high levels of brand awareness of the airline, brand association of the airline, brand loyalty to the airline as well as perceived quality of the airline are associated with high levels of consumers' intention to purchase tickets from these airlines. From the above discussion, these four hypotheses are presented:

H9: Passengers' awareness with the airline has a significant role in enhancing their purchase intention.

H10: Passengers' perceived quality of the airline has a significant role in enhancing their purchase intention.

H11: Passengers' brand association of the airline has a significant role in enhancing their purchase intention.

H12: Passengers' brand loyalty for the airline significantly impacts their purchase intention.

3- Methodology

Our study adopted a quantitative research method using an online survey. A questionnaire was developed based on scales that were validated in prior marketing literature and it was adapted to suit the airline industry. The questionnaire was revised by three marketing experts who are specialized in tourism marketing to ensure its content validity (Sireci, 1998). The items of the survey and its sources are displayed in Table 1.

The online questionnaire consisted of four parts: the first section introduced the aims of the study to the participants where it asked them to answer the questionnaire in an anonymous manner, the second part contained a group of questions about the passengers' duration of membership in the Facebook pages, whereas the third part included questions that asked the respondents about the main research objectives. The 5-item Likert scale was adopted to capture the study's items. The Likert scale has the advantage of being an interval scale that

varies from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Also, it allows the researchers to perform a wide variety of statistical analysis (Albaum, 1997). The final part consisted of few questions asking about the passengers' demographic data including their gender, age and income.

Since the population of the study is the airlines passengers in Egypt and the study investigates their perceptions towards marketing communication on social media, the study adopted an online questionnaire for data collection. Online questionnaires are better than other data collection technique where consumers feel a high degree of anonymity, where they have a total freedom to take part in the study (Lefever, et al., 2007).

In order to capture consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards social media marketing, a link to the survey was placed on three Facebook pages of three Egyptian airlines which are Egypt air, Air Cairo and Nile air. The official Facebook pages where identified using the official company websites. Collecting surveys by posting links on Facebook pages have become popular data collection technique in several recent articles in the Facebook marketing literature (Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2014). Table 1 shows the total followers of the three airline pages. After multiple posting over a period one month in October 2020, 374 complete questionnaires were collected. The self-selection sampling technique was adopted in the current study where the researchers didn't force any participant to take part in the study. This increases the accuracy of the findings where the respondents participate voluntarily in the research and are willing to provide information without any pressure from the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009). The responses were stored in an online database for further analysis. The partial least square structural equation modeling using SmartPLS 3.0 was adopted to analyze the collected responses. PLS-SEM was chosen because it doesn't require normal distribution as opposed to other covariance based SEM techniques (Hair et al, 2014). Also, it is very powerful in the analysis of complex models with many variables. The researchers using the bootstrapping approach to calculate the path coefficients, significance and t-values.

Table 1: Items of the Questionnaire

Firm-created social media content	Sources
▪ FCSM1: The content that is posted by this airline on their Facebook page satisfies me. ▪ FCSM2: The content that is posted by this airline on their Facebook page is up to my expectations. ▪ FCSM3: The content that is posted by this airline on their Facebook page attracts me. ▪ FCSM4: The content on the airline page is better than the content posted in other airline' pages.	Sadek et al. (2018); Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015).
User-generated social media content	
▪ UGSM1: The content that are posted by other Facebook users on the airline page satisfies me. ▪ UGSM2: The posts that are sent by other Facebook users on the airline page satisfy my expectations. ▪ UGSM3: The posts by other members of the airline's fan page are considered attracts my attention. ▪ UGSM4: I have a sense of deep friendship towards other members of the airline fan page.	Sadek et al. (2018); Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015).
Brand awareness	
▪ BA1: This airline has high brand awareness. ▪ BA2: When I think of travelling, I consider to book flights with this airline. ▪ BA3: This airline is recognizable among other airlines. ▪ BA4: I know many things about this airline. ▪ BA5: I am familiar with the services provided by this airline. ▪ BA6: Recalling the performance of the services provided on this airlineis easy for me.	Yoo et al. (2000); Kumar et al. (2013)
Brand perceived quality	
▪ BPQU1: This airline possesses a high quality when compares to other airlines. ▪ BPQU2: This airline is considered better than other airlines. ▪ BPQU3: This airline provides unique services if we compare it to other airlines in Egypt. ▪ BPQU4: This airline provides a unique quality to its passengers. ▪ BPQU5: The airline services have a sense of excellence. ▪ BPQU6: The airline services impress me every time I travel.	Yoo et al. (2000); Buil et al. (2013
Brand loyalty	
▪ BLOY1: I am loyal to this airline. ▪ BLOY2: When I choose to purchase airline tickets, I think of this airline. ▪ BLOY3: I never travel with other airlines if there is availability of tickets by this airline. ▪ BLOY4: I will continue travelling with this airline in the next years.	Yoo et al. (2000); Sadek et al. (2018)

▪ BLOY5: I encourage my friends and family to book tickets on this airline. ▪ BLOY6: If this airline increases the prices of its tickets, I will continue travelling with it.	
Brand associations	
▪ BASS1: I usually recognise some features of this airline. ▪ BASS2: I can easily recall the logo and slogan of this airline. ▪ BASS3: Its easy to recall the airline brand in my mind. ▪ BASS4: This airline possesses some unique images. ▪ BASS5: Passengers who travel with this airline have unique characteristics. ▪ BASS6: This airline has a unique positioning. ▪ BASS7: This airline has a positive image in the minds of its passengers.	Yoo et al. (2000) ; Tong & Hawley (2009)
Purchase Intention	
▪ PI1: I have positive feelings when travelling with the airline. ▪ PI2: I intend to travel with this airline in the future. ▪ PI3: Travelling with this airline is a good idea.	Lee & Lee (2009)

Table 2: Official Facebook pages of Egyptian airlines and the total of followers

Airline Facebook Page	Total followers on the official Facebook page
EgyptAir	1,443,514
Air Cairo	106, 000
Nile Air	383,546

4- Results

4-1 Descriptive Statistics

From the 374 passengers who answered the online questionnaire, 175 were males and 199 were females. Regarding the age of the participants, 182 were between 18 and 34 years, 131 were between 35 and 50 years while 61 participants were above 50 years. Regarding the household income of the participants the majority of participants have an income above 10000 LE. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive analysis for the demographic criteria of the participants who answered the survey.

Table 3: Demographic criteria of the sample

Demographic Criteria		Number of answers	Percentage of answers (%)
Gender	Male	175	46.79 %
	Female	199	53.20 %
Age	18-34	182	48.66 %
	35-50	131	35.02 %
	Above 50	61	16.31 %
Income	2000-5000 LE	23	6.14 %
	5001-10000 LE	141	37.70 %
	Above 1000 LE	210	56.14 %
Duration of following the airline page	Less than 1 year	89	23.79 %
	1-2 years	145	38.77 %
	More than 2 years	140	37.43 %

4-2 Assessment of the Model

The researchers used PLS-SEM on two steps to evaluate the conceptual framework. Firstly, assessment of the model was evaluated through PLS 3.0 to examine the reliability and validity of the research variables. Secondly, bootstrapping approaches were conducted to evaluate the structural (inner) model and to evaluate the study's hypotheses.

4-3 Measurement Model

Before using PLS-SEM, it is required to check the uni-dimensionality of each construct. This was conducted through ensuring that the research's items have composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α) values over the recommended value of 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi ,1988). As it is apparent in Table 4, the values of composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α) were above 0.7 which shows that the adopted scales have strong reliability. The researchers further assessed the outer loading of the manifest variables to ensure that each item adequately loaded on its relevant variable. An item loading above 0.7 signals its reliability. Examination of the item loadings with SmartPLS indicated that each item loaded on its relevant construct which ensured its reliability. The loadings of the scales' items are shown in Table 4.

After the reliability of the study's constructs were checked, the researchers examined the validity of the study's constructs. For that purpose, the values of the discriminant and discriminant validity were investigated. Convergent validity of the constructs was confirmed, where

the values of the Average Variance extracted (AVE) of the study's variables were greater than suggested value of 0.5 by Fornell & Larcker (1981). The values of the AVE appear in Table 4. Also, the discriminant validity of the study's construct was ensured through adopting the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) tests suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). From the HTMT values of the research variables, the researchers concluded that all the variables have strong discriminant validity, will values that didn't exceed the value of 0.85 that was proposed by Henseler et al. (2015).

Table 4: The findings of the estimation of the measurement model

Latent variable	Manifest variable	Loading	Composite Reliability (CR) value	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Firm-created social media communication	FCSM1 FCSM2 FCSM3 FCSM4	0.832 0.864 0.885 0.891	0.879	0.887	0.815
User-generated social media communication	UGSM1 UGSM2 UGSM3 UGSM4	0.921 0.916 0.945 0.930	0.974	0.981	0.832
Brand awareness	BA1 BA2 BA3 BA4 BA5 BA6	0.921 0.932 0.912 0.942 0.921 0.934	0.931	0.953	0.889
Brand Perceived Quality	BPQU1 BPQU2 BPQU3 BPQU4 BPQU5 BPQU6	0.931 0.974 0.914 0.855 0.796 0.812	0.928	0.934	0.721
Brand Loyalty	BL1 BL2 BL3 BL4 BL5 BL6	0.895 0.865 0.924 0.946 0.902 0.875	0.897	0.912	0.815
Brand associations	BASS1 BASS2 BASS3	0.974 0.921 0.845	0.921	0.932	0.864

	BASS4	0.876			
	BASS5	0.854			
	BASS6	0.923			
	BASS7	0.921			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.921	0.914	0.925	0.834
	PI2	0.876			
	PI3	0.895			

4-4 Assessment of the Model

After validating the measures of the model, the testing of the research hypotheses was conducted using the bootstrapping approach using the PLS-SEM. The findings indicate that the content that was created by the airlines has an insignificant impact on consumers' perceived quality of the airline (β=0.021, t=0.542, p=0.721), thus H1 is rejected. On the other hands, the findings show the content that was generated by the passengers on the airline pages significantly influences perceived quality of the airline (β=0.124, t=10.817, p=0.000), thus H2 was supported. H3 was accepted as well as the findings showed a significant influence of firm created social media content on brand awareness (β=0.217, t=14.217, p=0.000). Surprisingly, the findings showed the content that are posted by passengers on the fan page insignificantly influences awareness of the airlines (β=0.234, t=11.531, p=0.000), indicating the rejection of H4. The findings showed that the posts that are created by the airlines have insignificant impact on consumers' brand association of the airline (β=0.012, t=0.214, p=139), thus H5 was rejected. On the other hand, the results showed that the content that are initiated by the users of the fan page has a significant positive impact on brand association (β=0.321, t=13.211, p=0.006), thus H6 was rejected. Moreover, the results indicated that posts that are initiated by the airlines have insignificant impact on brand loyalty (β=0.074, t=0.497, p=0.313), thus H7 was rejected. The analysis further indicated that user generated social media posts has a significant influence on brand loyalty (β=0.231, t=9.565, p=0.000), thus H8 was supported. The findings showed that brand awareness significantly influences passengers' purchase intention (β=0.171, t=10.05, p=0.001), thus H9 was supported. Moreover, the findings indicated significant positive impact of perceived quality on purchase intention (β=0.278, t=7.85, p=0.003), thus H10 was supported. Additionally, the results showed that passengers' brand association

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significantly influences their purchase intention from these airlines (β=0.133, t=11.15, p=0.000), thus H11 was supported. Lastly, the results confirmed a positive significant impact of brand loyalty on purchase intention (β=0.212, t=16.92, p=0.000), thus H12 was supported. Table 5 summarizes the findings of the hypotheses testing.

Table 5: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

	Hypotheses	Path coefficient β	t-value	Significance value *p*	Results
H1	FCSM ⟹ PQ	0.021	0.542	0.721	Rejected
H2	UGSM ⟹ PQ	0.124	10.817	0.000	Accepted
H3	FCSM ⟹ BA	0.217	14.217	0.000	Accepted
H4	UGSM ⟹ BA	0.234	11.521	0.001	Accepted
H5	FCSM ⟹ BAS	0.012	0.214	0.139	Rejected
H6	UGSM ⟹ BAS	0.321	13.211	0.006	Accepted
H7	FCSM ⟹ BL	0.074	0.497	0.313	Rejected
H8	UGSM ⟹ BL	0.231	9.565	0.000	Accepted
H9	BA ⟹ PI	0.171	10.05	0.001	Accepted
H10	PQ ⟹ PI	0.278	7.85	0.003	Accepted
H11	BAS ⟹ PI	0.133	11.15	0.000	Accepted
H12	BL ⟹ PI	0.212	16.92	0.000	Accepted

The R-square of the perceived quality was 0.171 which indicates that 17.1 percent of the change in the perceived quality is determined by the content created by airlines as well as the content generated by users on the airline Facebook pages. The R-square of the brand awareness was 0.321 which indicates that 32.1 percent of the change of brand awareness is determined by both types of content. The R-square of the brand association was 0.213 which indicates that 21.3 percent of the change in brand association is determined by both types of content. The R-square of the brand loyalty was 0.124 which indicates that 12.4 percent of the change in brand loyalty is determined by both content types. Finally, the R-square of the purchase intention was 0.315 which indicates that 31.5 percent of the change in purchase intention is determined by the four components of brand equity.

5- Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this article are important for several reasons. Firstly, the paper contributes theoretically to the marketing literature by investigating the effect of the two types of social media content on the dimensions of brand equity and purchase intention. Mainly, it concentrates on the content that is created by airlines and user-generated content on Facebook pages of the airline industry in Egypt. This fills a gap in the marketing literature where there have been some shortcomings in studying the effect of marketing on social media on the consumption behavior (Hutter, et al., 2013). Another important contribution is that the article differentiated between the two forms of social media content, where most articles focused on studying only the effect of the marketing communication that is performed by corporations on their fan pages (Gaber et al. 2019, Dessart, et al., 2017). On the other hand, the findings show that the marketing content that is created by airlines has less impact on the brand equity dimensions than the user-generated content. The analysis shows that the firm generated content only influences the brand awareness dimension of brand equity. This shows that consumers read the posts from the airlines on Facebook to get knowledgeable about various offers and destinations. Hence, it is very clear that passengers join the Facebook pages of the Egyptian airlines to get updated about various offers, destinations and availability of tickets. On the other hand, the findings showed that the content that is posted by users has a positive significant effect on all dimensions of brand equity that were investigated in our study which are: perceived quality, loyalty, association and awareness. These findings provide fresh contributions by underscoring the critical value of user-generated content in enhancing brand relationships with consumers. Social media with its interactive nature have provided consumers with opportunities to exchange opinions and reviews about the brands they consume (Tuten, 2020). Thus, it is apparent that these conversations provide a reference for consumers when they decide to purchase tickets. Hence, it is very evident that the content that are posted by consumers on Facebook has an important value in shaping travelers' attitudes and opinions about airline companies.

Finally, the findings showed that brand equity dimensions have a critical value in enhancing travelers' purchase intention. This indicates that critical role that the brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality plays in enhancing the intention of travelers to purchase airline tickets. These findings are in line to the findings from prior marketing studies that indicated the critical influence of brand equity dimensions on passengers' intention to buy tickets from airlines (Chen & Chang, 2008).

6- Managerial Implications

Adding to the originality of the theoretical contribution that this article presents, it provides new insights to marketers of the airline industry. Our article underscores the critical value of social media in developing the relationships between airlines and the travelers. Firstly, since our study recommends that airlines should manage their Facebook pages in a professional way to enhance passengers' brand awareness. This can be achieved through making sure that the Facebook pages are updated with useful information to passengers. This can include content that tells customers about new offers and destinations. Also, it can include information about the reservations process and prices. Airlines can include videos that can make travelers able to know more about the services provided by these companies. Another important recommendation is to make sure to answer the customers' inquires and complaints in a fast and a professional manner to enhance travelers' knowledge and information about the provided services. The power of social media lies in its ability to generate a two-way dialogue between airlines and customers. Thus, it provides a golden opportunity for airlines to answer the comments. Thus, it is critical for airlines to hire professional marketing agencies to manage their marketing campaigns on their fan pages. Moreover, it is very critical for airlines to make sure to update their pages on a daily basis, where the companies can put live information about departures and arrivals of the planes together with a link to their websites.

On the other hand, since our article shows the critical role that the user-generated content plays in enhancing brand equity and purchase intention of travelers, airline companies should make sure to give a space

to consumers to put their opinions and suggestions. Also, they should make sure to answer all questions and complains from the travelers. Leaving the negative comments from the customers on the Facebook page might result in major problems regarding brand equity and purchase intention. Finally, airlines should work hard to enhance customer engagement with their Facebook pages by focusing on posts that will increase the number of comments, shares and likes. This can be utilized as a powerful tool in generating positive electronic word of mouth which has been proven to be more credible than marketing communications from the airlines in prior scholarly research (Seo, et al., 2020). After the covid-19 pandemic, many airlines are faced with many challenges together with the tourism sector (Gössling, et al., 2020), thus, they can use Facebook to show passengers about the security measures they take. Also, they rely on engaging posts that give opportunities for customers to participate in contests and competitions. In other words, the airlines should utilize the power of the two-way communication that social media provides in building long-term relationships with their current and prospective passengers. This is considered important especially for generation Z who have become very dependent on social media for information acquisition (O'Carroll & Rooney, 2020).

7- Research Limitations and Future Research

In spite of the theoretical and practical insights that this article provides, it is not without limitations that give possibilities for further research, study and investigation. Firstly, our article investigated passengers' perceptions and attitudes towards the official Facebook pages in Egypt. Despite the importance of Facebook as the most popular social media platform that is adopted in Egypt by consumers, some social networks have been growing dramatically in terms of numbers of users such as Instagram. Future research can examine consumers' attitudes towards airlines communication on other social networks that are becoming popular among generation Y and Z. Another important limitation is the quantitative approach that this study used for collecting data through an online questionnaire. Although the importance of online surveys in capturing the perceptions of consumers and their purchase intentions, future research can adopt qualitative research to provide a deep understanding of the motivations that enhance consumers' usage for the

Facebook pages. Also, a netnographic research approach can be used to analyze the various forms of content that is available on these pages and consumers' engagement behaviors with the different content type. Another limitation is that this article only investigated the consumer perspective where it aimed to understand how social media communication enhances brand equity and purchase intention in the context of airline Facebook pages. Despite the importance of the findings of these article, future research can examine the firm perspective where both qualitative and quantitative studies can be conducted to explore why airlines are adopting Facebook marketing. This would be helpful in executing better social media marketing campaigns on various social media platforms. Finally, this article only examined the impact of the two forms of communication on brand equity dimensions and outcomes. Despite the critical value of the brand equity concept in scholarly research (Buil, et al., 2013), further research can investigate the influence of social media communication on boosting the emotional connection with brands. This can be possible through examining the mechanisms by which online brand communities such as Facebook fan pages enhance consumers' brand love and brand attachment. A final limitation is that the study only examined airlines operating in Egypt as an example of developing countries, future research can examine consumers' perceptions towards Facebook pages in other developed and developing countries. Also, future research can be conducted qualitatively by using in-depth interviews or focus groups to deeply understand why travelers are adopting online communities and their expectations from their engagement on these sites. This would provide an opportunity to probe the different motives travelers' have that encourage their usage for these websites. Finally, our article didn't examine how the demographic and behavioral dimensions affect consumer attitudes towards the pages of the airlines. Further research can examine the impact of the age, gender, education as well as other demographic factors on travelers' purchase intention. Also, more studies need to be conducted to differentiate between travelers' behavior based on their lifestyle and personality.

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دور وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي في بناء قيمة العلامة التجارية: دراسة على صفحات الفيسبوك لقطاع الطيران في مصر

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ملخص البحث باللغة العربية

تبحث شـركات الطيران باسـتمرار عن أفضـل الطرق للتعامل مع عملائها الحاليين والمحتملين. سـمحت مواقع التواصـل الاجتماعي بطبيعتها التفاعلية لهذه الشـركات بالتفاعل مع العملاء في حوار ثنائي الاتجاه عبر الإنترنت. تهدف هذه المقالة إلى دراسـة أثر دور المحتوى الذي تنشـئه شـركات الطيران على صـفحاتها على الفيس بوك بالإضـافة إلى المحتوى الذي ينشـره العملاء على تلك الصـفحات على تعزيز بناء العلامة التجارية ونية الشـراء. اعتمد هذا المقال منهج البحث الكمي حيث تم جمع البيانات من خلال الاستبيانات حيث تم نشر استبيان إلكتروني على عدد من صفحات الفيسبوك لثلاث شركات طيران مصـرية. لقياس فرضـيات البحث تم اسـتخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية باسـتخدام المربعات الصـغرى الجزئية (PLS– SEM). أشـارت النتائج إلى أن المحتوى الذي تضـعه شـركات الطيران لم يؤثر إلا على عنصـر الوعي بالعلامة التجارية في نموذج قيمة العلامة التجارية بالنسـبة للعملاء. على جانب اخر، أظهرت النتائج أن المحتوى الذي ينشـره المسـتخدمون على صـفحات الفيسـبوك لشـركات الطيران يؤثر بشـكل كبير على جميع الأبعاد الأربعة لنموذج قيمة العلامة التجارية بالنسـبة للعملاء. أخيرا، أكدت النتائج أن هناك تأثير كبير لهذه الأبعاد الأربعة على نية الشـراء لدى العملاء. تسـاهم هذه الورقة البحثية في مجال التسـويق عبر الإنترنت من خلال فحص الدور الذي تلعبه الأشـكال المختلفة لمحتوى الوسـائط الاجتماعية في تعزيز علاقات الركاب مع شـركات الطيران. كما تؤكد النتائج على الأهمية الفائقة للمحتوى الذي يتم إنشاؤه بواسـطة المسـتخدمين على وسـائل التواصـل الاجتماعي في التأثير على آراء الركاب حول شـركات الطيران. علاوة على ذلك، يوفر هذا البحث بعض الإرشادات لشركات الطيران للاستفادة من قوة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في التسويق للمسافرين.

الكلمات الدالة: مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي؛ قيمة العلامة التجارية؛ نية الشـراء؛ الفيسـبوك؛ الخطوط الجوية؛ التسـويق عبر الإنترنت.

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