Determining the Validity of the Model for Enhancing the Reputation of Online Brands

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ABSTRACT

In the competitive world of electronic commerce, achieving a strong online reputation plays a key role in attracting customers and sustaining business performance. The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the validity of a model for enhancing the reputation of online brands. Based on its purpose, this research is classified as fundamental–applied and was implemented using a quantitative descriptive–survey method. The statistical population consisted of customers of the online brand Digikala in Khuzestan Province. Given that the population exceeded 10,000 individuals, a sample of 384 participants was selected based on Morgan's table, and sampling was performed using a convenience sampling method. The data collection instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity was confirmed using convergent and discriminant validity criteria, and its reliability was verified with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .971. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 3 software and structural equation modeling. According to the findings, the model for enhancing the reputation of online brands comprises ten main factors (cultural factors, customer experience management, website quality, website security, store social responsibility, social media marketing, content marketing, targeted and intelligent advertising, product and service quality, and customer satisfaction). The GOF value of the model was calculated as .416, indicating strong model fit and validity.

Keywords: Reputation, Brand, Online Brand, Model Validity

Introduction

In the contemporary digital economy, brand reputation has emerged as one of the most influential intangible assets shaping consumer behavior, organizational performance, and competitive sustainability. With the rapid expansion of e-commerce platforms and online customer communities, brands increasingly depend on their digital presence and credibility to influence purchasing decisions, foster trust, and build long-term relational value with stakeholders. The accelerated shift toward digital ecosystems has compelled organizations to prioritize online reputation management as a strategic imperative, particularly since the interactions of consumers with digital content significantly influence their perceptions of quality, authenticity, and reliability. Scholars emphasize that the multidimensional nature of brand reputation integrates social, psychological, technological, and managerial factors, creating a complex system of signals that shape how a brand is recognized, evaluated, and preferred within online

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environments (1). The proliferation of user-generated content, online reviews, and social media engagement has transformed traditional reputation-building processes, generating new opportunities and challenges for brand managers seeking to maintain legitimacy and relevance in increasingly competitive markets (2).

In digital marketplaces, reputation functions not only as a symbolic asset but also as a key determinant of consumer choice due to the reduced physical cues and increased information asymmetry inherent in online transactions. The economic importance of reputation stems from its role in reducing consumer uncertainty and signaling brand credibility in contexts where direct product experience is limited or deferred (3). As online users increasingly depend on ratings, comments, and digital word-of-mouth, brands must adopt sophisticated strategies to monitor, manage, and enhance their reputational capital. The literature indicates that online information, including both formal marketing efforts and informal peer exchanges, can significantly influence firms' pricing strategies and profit margins, with these effects moderated by the existing level of brand reputation (4). Therefore, high-reputation brands not only attract a larger share of informed consumers but also retain greater pricing power due to the trust they command in the marketplace.

Brand reputation is generated through a combination of organizational actions, customer experiences, value co-creation, and corporate social responsibility practices. Reputation derives from sustained investments in consumer relationships, aiming to align brand values with customer expectations and societal norms (5). Previous studies demonstrate that brand reputation is strengthened when consumers perceive strong alignment between brand identity and their own values, experiences, and aspirations. In this context, the brand's digital presence plays an essential role in creating consistency, transparency, and coherent messaging across platforms (6). With the ubiquity of social media and digital communication, visibility, interactivity, and responsiveness are crucial components of online reputation building, enabling brands to maintain a dynamic relationship with consumers and to adapt quickly to market trends.

Social media has fundamentally reshaped how brand reputation is created, shared, and contested. Digital platforms facilitate the rapid dissemination of impressions, opinions, and evaluations, making reputation an ongoing, co-constructed process influenced by both brand-led communication and consumer-driven discourse. Research shows that interactions with brand-related social media content significantly heighten engagement, which in turn predicts stronger brand commitment and improved perceptions of brand trustworthiness (1). Moreover, reputational effects generated through social media have been found to shape purchase intention more directly than traditional advertising techniques, especially in industries where consumers rely heavily on peer feedback and online reviews for product evaluation (7). Consequently, the management of social media communication has become a central component of brand strategy, influencing brand equity, customer loyalty, and competitive positioning.

The complexity of online brand reputation is further amplified by the growing importance of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and influencer-driven content, which often serves as a primary source of information for digital consumers. Studies confirm that e-WOM exerts significant impact on perceptions of brand trust, brand quality, and the likelihood of purchase, especially within industries characterized by high involvement and perceived risk (8). Because online environments allow consumers to instantly share personal experiences with global audiences, brand reputation can fluctuate rapidly in response to both positive and negative events. This dynamic volatility highlights the need for strategic, proactive reputation management systems that integrate monitoring tools, analytical frameworks, and consumer-centric communication tactics.

In addition to customer-driven dynamics, brand reputation is shaped by organizational values, ethical behavior, and social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a critical dimension of reputation formation, particularly in digital contexts where transparency and accountability are highly scrutinized. Empirical evidence indicates that CSR activities significantly influence employees' and consumers' perceptions of brand reputation, ultimately strengthening brand equity and fostering long-term trust (9). CSR-driven reputation models emphasize the role of shared value creation, sustainability commitments, and ethical conduct in differentiating brands within highly competitive markets. For industries such as banking—where trust and reliability are essential components of consumer relationships—CSR initiatives have been shown to play a pivotal role in shaping reputational outcomes and customer loyalty (10).

The integration of CSR principles into brand reputation models has gained increasing attention in emerging markets such as Iran, where rapid digitalization and expanding e-commerce sectors require organizations to refine their reputation-building strategies. In Iranian industries, especially the financial and service sectors, brand reputation has been identified as a strategic asset that supports consumer confidence and institutional legitimacy. For instance, recent studies in Iran have emphasized the need for digital brand reputation frameworks in banking to improve customer interaction, digital service quality, and online trust (11). These frameworks highlight the importance of technological readiness, transparency, and customer-centric digital services in sustaining brand credibility within competitive environments.

Reputation in online environments is also influenced by cultural dynamics, personalization, and the congruence between brand identity and user experience. In global contexts such as luxury fashion, digital brand reputation is affected by factors including brand storytelling, exclusivity, and the coherence of visual and textual content across digital touchpoints (12). Luxury hospitality brands similarly depend on strong online brand identity, which must harmonize with customer-generated reviews and traditional brand symbolism to create a cohesive and credible digital presence (13). These interdisciplinary approaches indicate that online reputation is deeply embedded within the broader branding ecosystem and is shaped by multiple, interrelated forms of communication.

Within the Iranian context, the importance of online brand reputation for organizations such as banks, universities, and e-commerce platforms has been widely recognized. Academic brands, for instance, must maintain a reputation based on participation, identification, and strategic alignment to foster credibility and stakeholder trust (14). Similarly, reputation-building strategies for banking services rely on customer experience, digital service innovation, and the alignment of brand promises with actual service delivery (15). Research indicates that customers evaluate brands using a combination of functional cues—such as service quality and technological efficiency—and symbolic cues, including cultural alignment and social recognition (16). Therefore, organizations must adopt holistic and context-sensitive approaches to reputation management that address both functional and emotional dimensions of consumer perceptions.

Moreover, the relationship between brand reputation and consumer behavior is strongly mediated by psychological, social, and contextual determinants. Research on entrepreneurship behaviors highlights that opportunity pursuit is influenced by perceived barriers and signals of credibility within the environment, which similarly applies to consumer assessments of brand reputation in digital marketplaces (17). A strong brand reputation reduces perceived risk and motivates consumers to engage more readily in purchasing decisions and long-term relational exchanges. Additionally, online branding strategies must consider visibility, credibility, and

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interactivity to ensure that consumers perceive the brand as trustworthy and valuable in competitive digital settings (18).

Given the multiplicity of variables influencing online brand reputation—such as user experience quality, security, content marketing, cultural dynamics, CSR, social media engagement, and brand identity—scholars argue that integrated and multidimensional models are necessary to evaluate brand reputation effectively (7). These models allow for systematic assessment of the factors shaping brand perception and support organizations in designing targeted strategies that align with consumer expectations and market trends. Furthermore, reputation-tracking with visualization tools has gained importance in ensuring that brands remain responsive to emerging risks and opportunities in real-time digital environments (7).

Overall, the literature consistently emphasizes that building and maintaining online brand reputation requires a strategic blend of technological capability, customer engagement, ethical practice, content excellence, and cultural adaptation. Yet, despite the proliferation of research, there is a need for comprehensive empirical models specifically tailored to the online brand ecosystem to guide managerial decision-making. Therefore, the aim of this study is to validate a comprehensive model for enhancing the reputation of online brands.

Methods and Materials

The present study was designed and conducted as a quantitative investigation with the aim of validating the model for enhancing the reputation of online brands. Since the objective of the research was to test hypotheses and examine the relationships among the variables of the conceptual model, a deductive research approach was adopted. This approach enabled the collection of reliable quantitative data and the execution of statistical analyses required for model validation, aligning fully with the research purpose of assessing and confirming the conceptual structure.

The statistical population consisted of customers of the online brand Digikala in Khuzestan Province. The selection of this province was based on the researcher's access and the feasibility of collecting data directly and reliably. Considering the approximate population of more than 10,000 individuals, the sample size was determined as 384 participants using Morgan's table to ensure adequate representativeness and maintain the generalizability of the findings. Sampling was carried out through convenience and online methods to enable rapid distribution of the questionnaire and precise data collection.

The data collection instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire designed based on the findings from the qualitative phase of the study and interviews with experts in online branding. The questionnaire consisted of 123 items, each directly representing one of the components and categories of the online brand reputation model. It was designed to ensure full coverage of the model's dimensions and to allow for precise statistical analysis and assessment of relationships among variables. The development of the questionnaire was grounded in initial qualitative analyses and the extraction of categories and codes related to brand reputation to ensure content validity and alignment with the research objectives.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a group of specialists in digital marketing and branding. Content validity was assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the qualitative evaluation, expert feedback on the clarity, accuracy, and relevance of each item to the research objective was collected and incorporated into questionnaire revisions. In the quantitative evaluation, two indices were used: the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and the Content Validity Index (CVI). Each item was rated by experts on a three-point scale ("essential,"

"useful," "non-essential"), and the results indicated that all items had a CVR greater than 0.62 and a CVI greater than 0.79, confirming the questionnaire's appropriate content validity. Moreover, construct validity was assessed using factor analysis within the framework of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine convergent and discriminant validity and confirm the conceptual structure of the model.

Regarding reliability, the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency among items and indicated a satisfactory level of inter-item correlation. Composite reliability was calculated using SmartPLS software and was found to exceed 0.7 for all constructs, demonstrating strong internal stability and high reliability of the measurement instrument. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as 0.971, indicating a high level of trustworthiness for testing the model's hypotheses.

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. In the descriptive analysis, measures such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used to provide an overview of the population and characteristics of the respondents. This analysis enabled the researcher to identify data distribution patterns and obtain preliminary information for inferential analysis. Inferential analyses were conducted using SmartPLS software and the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. This method enabled the simultaneous examination of relationships among variables, assessment of construct validity and reliability, and validation of the conceptual model. Due to its capacity to process complex models with first-order and second-order constructs, SEM was particularly suitable for this research. Through this analysis, the researcher was able to evaluate model fit and determine the effects of independent variables on the dependent variable, thereby testing the study's hypotheses.

The research followed a cross-sectional time horizon, meaning that data were collected within a specific and relatively short period corresponding to 2023–2024. This approach allowed for an assessment of the current status and validation of the model within a defined timeframe and was consistent with the research aim of evaluating the conceptual model.

In summary, the present study employed a valid and reliable researcher-developed questionnaire, an appropriate sample of Digikala's online brand customers, and both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to provide the necessary conditions for validating the online brand reputation model. The selection of instruments and analytical methods was aimed at ensuring accuracy, validity, and generalizability of the findings so that the results could offer a scientifically reliable foundation for practical application in brand management and digital marketing. This methodology enabled a precise examination of relationships among model variables, hypothesis testing, and the development of practical strategies for enhancing the reputation of online brands, consistent with the standards of rigorous and scientific quantitative research.

Findings and Results

In this study, a sample of 384 participants was analyzed. In terms of education, 20.6% (79 individuals) had a high school diploma, 29.9% (115 individuals) held an associate degree, 36.5% (140 individuals) had a bachelor's degree, and 13% (50 individuals) held a master's degree or higher, indicating a concentration at intermediate to higher educational levels. The sample was predominantly male: 70.3% (270 individuals) were men, and 29.7% (114 individuals) were women. Regarding age distribution, 45.1% (173 individuals) were under 30 years old, 19.3% (74

individuals) were between 31 and 40 years old, 27.6% (106 individuals) were between 41 and 50 years old, and 8.1% (31 individuals) were over 51 years old.

To examine the questionnaire's validity, confirmatory factor analysis was used. For model validation, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 3 software was employed. To justify the use of this test, skewness and kurtosis indices were assessed, indicating that the variable was non-normal. To evaluate the reliability of the outer model, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability criteria were used.

Table 1. Results of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (α > 0.7)	Composite Reliability (CR > 0.7)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.5)
Store Social Responsibility	0.852	0.881	0.522
Store Foreign Certificates or Standards	0.725	0.879	0.784
Participation in Social and Public-Benefit Events	0.752	0.889	0.801
Brand Sponsorship in Charity or Sports Campaigns	0.726	0.878	0.782
Offering Organic Products in the Store	0.799	0.881	0.713
Alignment with Community Concerns	0.770	0.897	0.813
Participation in Environmental Social Campaigns	0.847	0.929	0.867
Website Security	0.828	0.868	0.526
Protection of Website User Privacy	0.731	0.880	0.786
Creation of Useful Links on the Website	0.761	0.893	0.807
Confidentiality in Information Transfer and Processing	0.792	0.906	0.828
Use of Blockchain Technology to Improve Website Cybersecurity	0.877	0.925	0.805
Website Quality	0.893	0.910	0.507
Mobile-Friendly Website	0.7979	0.908	0.831
Customer Purchase Tracking Capability	0.749	0.856	0.666
Allocation of Appropriate Platform Speed for Customer Convenience	0.853	0.932	0.872
Website Search Engine Optimization	0.813	0.914	0.842
Creating a Simple, Secure, and Pleasant Environment for Customers	0.756	0.891	0.804
Understanding User Characteristics and Needs	0.742	0.886	0.795
Fast and Accurate Online or Offline Customer Support	0.788	0.876	0.703
Cultural Factors	0.832	0.868	0.502
Tendency for In-Person Service After Close Product Inspection	0.722	0.878	0.783
Alignment of Products and Services with Community Culture	0.731	0.847	0.650
Respect for Cultural Values and Norms of the Target Society	0.725	0.878	0.783
Informing the Target Community About the Offered Product	0.733	0.882	0.789
Changing Traditional Views Regarding Product Purchases	0.798	0.908	0.832
Content Marketing	0.848	0.879	0.507
Optimization of Website Text Content Using SEO	0.705	0.871	0.772
Targeting and Strategy in Content Production	0.841	0.926	0.863
Use of a Specialized Content Production Team	0.791	0.905	0.826
Providing Attractive and Professional Content	0.747	0.856	0.664
Attention to the Target Audience in Content Creation	0.778	0.869	0.689
Targeted and Intelligent Advertising	0.885	0.903	0.525
Brand Advertising on Popular and Credible Social Media Platforms	0.797	0.879	0.709

Use of Google Ads or Local Advertising Platforms	0.722	0.845	0.649
Publishing Videos and Podcasts on the Website	0.710	0.871	0.772
Accurate Competitor Analysis	0.776	0.870	0.691
Use of Sponsored Advertorials	0.848	0.929	0.868
Holding Online Contests and Advertising Campaigns	0.767	0.896	0.811
Social Media Marketing	0.868	0.892	0.501
Conducting Suitable and Extensive Advertising Campaigns	0.757	0.892	0.805
Creativity in Platform Design, Advertising, etc.	0.803	0.910	0.835
Email Marketing	0.742	0.886	0.795
Integration of Skill, Knowledge, and Creativity in Marketing	0.783	0.874	0.698
Continuous and Regular Activity on Social Media	0.749	0.888	0.799
Sending Promotional and Bulk SMS Messages	0.705	0.871	0.772
Customer Experience Management	0.903	0.919	0.553
Simplifying Website Use for Different Users	0.727	0.879	0.785
Offering New and Updated Products and Services	0.868	0.919	0.791
Personalized Services for Target Customers	0.838	0.925	0.861
Creating Customer Clubs for Offering Various Discounts	0.799	0.908	0.832
Facilitating Product and Service Purchase Flow	0.825	0.919	0.851
Encouraging Customer Participation	0.882	0.944	0.894
Customer Satisfaction	0.881	0.904	0.657
After-Sales Services	0.811	0.914	0.841
Proper Product Pricing	0.706	0.872	0.773
Value Creation for Customers	0.745	0.887	0.797
Creating Customer Safety and Trust	0.824	0.895	0.740
Product and Service Quality	0.907	0.921	0.649
Compliance with National and International Standards	0.802	0.910	0.834
Production of Environmentally Friendly Products	0.748	0.856	0.666
Use of a Specialized Service Team	0.745	0.887	0.797
Consistency Between the Delivered Product and Website Description	0.851	0.931	0.870
Use of Technological Equipment	0.756	0.860	0.673
Online Brand Reputation	0.971	0.973	0.537

As shown, the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all variables are within the acceptable range and above 0.7. Furthermore, the AVE values for all variables exceed the threshold of 0.5. Therefore, it can be inferred that the reliability and convergent validity of the variables under study are at an acceptable and desirable level.
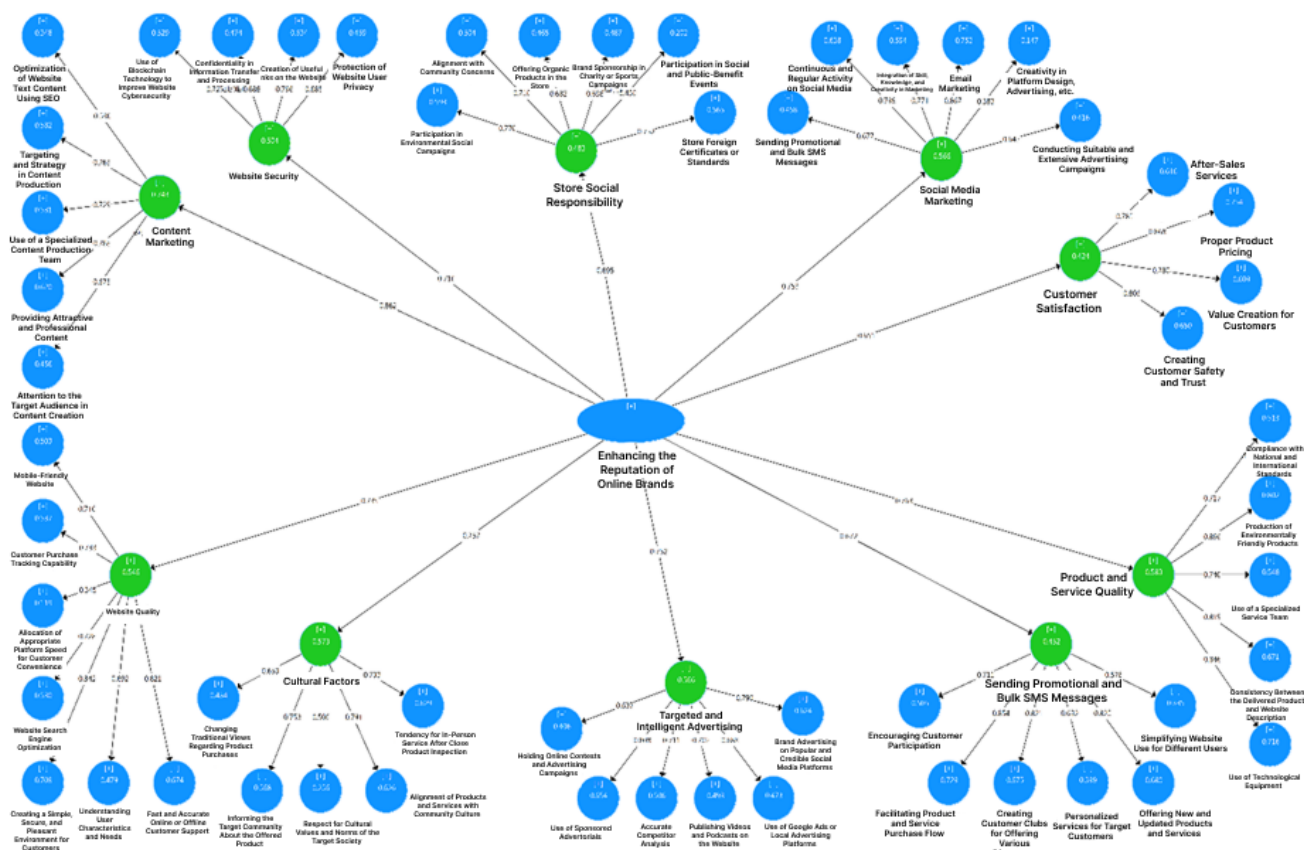
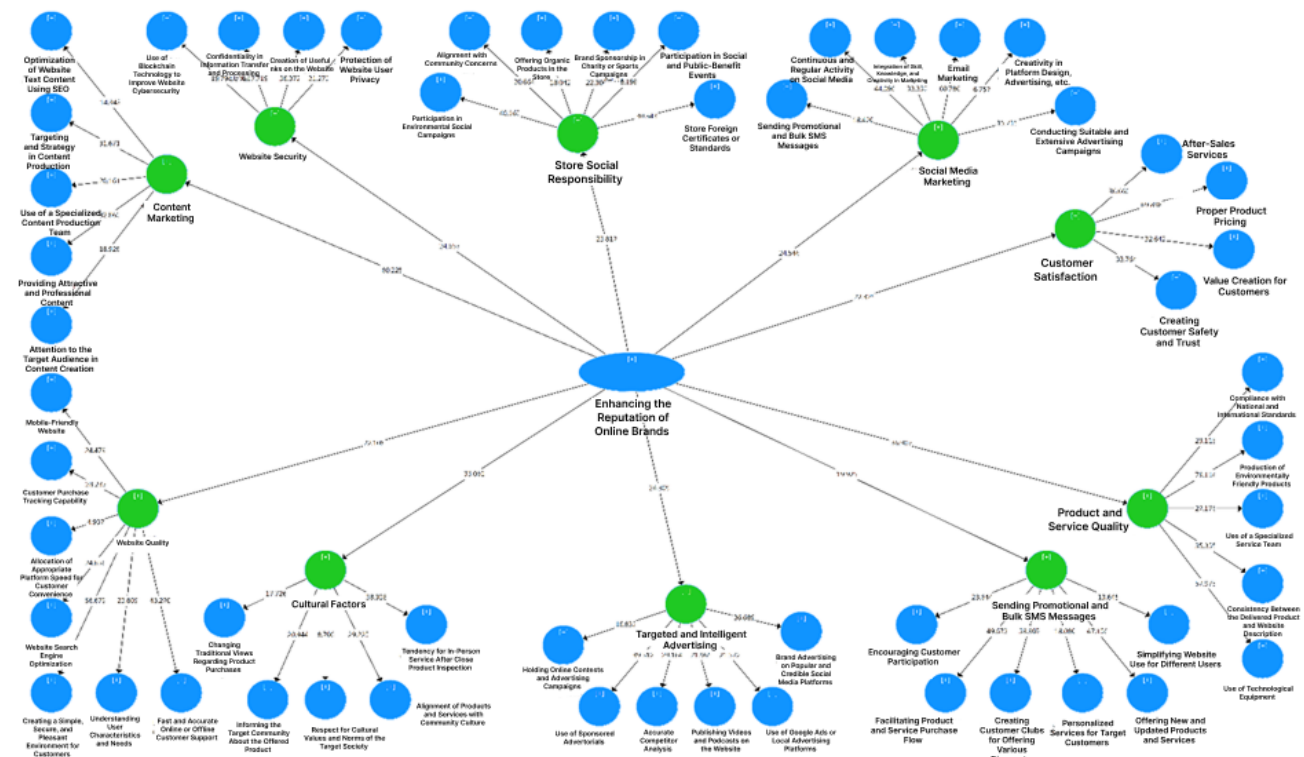Figure 1. Standardized Path Coefficients in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model

Figure 2. t-Statistics in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model

Table 2. Model Fit Indices Along with Path Coefficients and t-Values for the Relationships Among Model Variables

Paths	Path Coefficient	t-Value	Significance Level	R² of Dependent Variable	Q² of Dependent Variable
Brand Reputation → Store Social Responsibility	0.695	23.817	0.00	0.483	0.225
Brand Reputation → Website Security	0.710	24.653	0.00	0.504	0.256
Brand Reputation → Website Quality	0.739	22.108	0.00	0.546	0.275
Brand Reputation → Cultural Factors	0.757	33.061	0.00	0.573	0.286
Brand Reputation → Content Marketing	0.862	60.225	0.00	0.743	0.368
Brand Reputation → Targeted and Intelligent Advertising	0.752	24.305	0.00	0.566	0.292
Brand Reputation → Social Media Marketing	0.753	24.546	0.00	0.566	0.281
Brand Reputation → Customer Experience Management	0.672	19.925	0.00	0.452	0.245
Brand Reputation → Customer Satisfaction	0.651	22.325	0.00	0.424	0.276
Brand Reputation → Product and Service Quality	0.763	36.907	0.00	0.583	0.372

GOF = $\sqrt{\text{Mean Communalities} \times \text{Mean R}^2} = \sqrt{0.323 \times 0.536} = 0.416$

SRMR = 0.087

As shown in the table above, the reputation of online brands has been examined from ten dimensions or factors. Using the t-values and significance levels, decisions regarding confirmation or rejection of this factor structure were made. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the relationships between the variables are statistically significant. It is also noteworthy that each of the ten mentioned factors included several subcomponents, and all relationships between these subcomponents and their main variables were statistically confirmed ($p < .05$).

To evaluate the model's goodness-of-fit in the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method, a criterion known as GOF (Goodness of Fit) is used. The GOF index was introduced by Tenenhaus et al. (2004) and is calculated according to the formula shown in the table. Values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are considered weak, moderate, and strong levels of GOF, respectively. As indicated, the calculated GOF value of 0.416 is above the threshold for a strong model fit, demonstrating the high goodness-of-fit of the research model.

Furthermore, the SRMR index is also at an acceptable and desirable level. Therefore, the proposed model is appropriate for addressing the needs of users in value-creating smart banking and demonstrates strong explanatory power.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that online brand reputation significantly and positively influences a wide range of organizational reputation-building factors, including store social responsibility, website security, website quality, cultural factors, content marketing, targeted and intelligent advertising, social media marketing, customer experience management, customer satisfaction, and product and service quality. The strong path coefficients across all ten components demonstrate that online brand reputation is a multidimensional construct shaped by technological, social, cultural, and relational determinants. These results align with contemporary literature emphasizing that digital brand reputation emerges from a combination of firm-generated content, user-generated content, technological features of digital platforms, and perceptions shaped through online interaction environments. In this regard, the significant effect of brand reputation on website security and quality echoes

previous evidence showing that consumer perception of online information reliability and platform safety is foundational to digital trust and online engagement (4). Secure, well-functioning, and reliable sites provide essential cues that reduce uncertainty and enhance consumer willingness to purchase online, which reinforces the theoretical expectation that technical integrity directly strengthens reputational signals in the digital marketplace.

The results further demonstrate that online brand reputation strongly predicts content marketing and social media marketing, which is consistent with studies arguing that social media presence, visibility, and consumer interaction significantly shape the overall digital reputation of brands. Findings from the present study corroborate evidence that brand engagement on social media platforms influences brand perception, increases consumer trust, and enhances purchase intention by providing dynamic, interactive experiences (18). Additionally, the very strong relationship identified between brand reputation and content marketing aligns with previous findings demonstrating that search-engine-optimized content, high-quality messaging, and engaging digital materials are among the most influential drivers of brand legitimacy in online environments (1). This suggests that online brand reputation is not merely an outcome of consumer perceptions but is continually co-constructed through ongoing digital communication strategies designed to shape consumer meaning-making.

The results also highlight the significant role of cultural factors in shaping brand reputation, indicating that digital brands must remain sensitive to community norms, cultural expectations, and shared values. This finding supports studies emphasizing that cultural congruence is essential for digital brands seeking acceptance within diverse local contexts, especially where consumers evaluate the alignment between organizational identity and societal norms (16). The strong path coefficient between reputation and cultural factors also supports interdisciplinary work showing that brand identity, brand image, and online representation must be harmonized with cultural values to sustain reputation in competitive digital sectors (13). As such, digital reputation is strengthened when brands actively respect cultural norms, address societal concerns, and engage meaningfully with their target community.

Customer experience management was also found to be a significant outcome of online brand reputation, confirming that a strong digital reputation promotes positive customer interactions, enhances usability perceptions, and increases perceived service quality. This aligns with research suggesting that customer engagement, personalization, and seamless digital experiences are essential components of digital brand reputation (3). Prior work also confirms that digital user experience—especially usability, responsiveness, and personalization— substantially influences perceptions of reliability and trustworthiness (6). Moreover, the strong relationship between reputation and customer experience in this study is consistent with findings showing that brands with higher digital reputation are more likely to invest in customer-centric innovation and service enhancements, resulting in continuous reputation reinforcement loops (14).

A particularly notable finding in this study is the strong effect of brand reputation on content marketing and targeted advertising. This finding aligns closely with research showing that digital consumers increasingly rely on online reviews, influencer content, and targeted messaging when forming brand impressions in retail and service sectors (7). In sectors such as apparel, cosmetics, and online retail, targeted advertising and digital storytelling have been shown to shape consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions, confirming that reputation-sensitive industries must use precise, data-driven communication strategies to maintain their competitive advantage (8). In addition, our results support arguments that targeted advertising not only amplifies brand visibility but also strengthens reputational associations through repeated exposure, relevance, and perceived personalization of content (5).

Another major finding concerns the strong predictive path from brand reputation to product and service quality. This supports previous work in luxury branding and hospitality demonstrating that online brand reputation is strongly grounded in perceived product authenticity, service consistency, and adherence to quality standards (12). Research also shows that consumers depend heavily on online reputational cues to assess product reliability in markets where products cannot be physically inspected before purchase (9). These results suggest that online reputation acts as a cognitive shortcut through which consumers infer quality, consistency, and brand reliability. This effect has been noted particularly in competitive service markets such as banking, where a strong reputation is essential to strengthening customer trust and long-term loyalty (15). In line with this, our findings support earlier results showing that brand reputation in banking and financial services is shaped by transparency, digital service quality, and ethically grounded organizational behavior (11).

The significant relationship between brand reputation and customer satisfaction further underscores reputation's influence on consumer trust, commitment, and perceived value. Prior studies have identified satisfaction as a mediating factor through which brand reputation enhances customer loyalty and repeat purchase intention, particularly in online commerce contexts where customer experience perceptions strongly influence behavioral outcomes (10). Our findings support these studies by demonstrating that digital brand reputation enhances satisfaction by signaling trust, value creation, and customer-centric service orientation. Satisfied customers subsequently serve as brand advocates who reinforce reputation through positive digital interactions and reviews, further supporting a reputational feedback cycle widely discussed in online reputation literature (2).

The predictive power of brand reputation on social responsibility-related factors also aligns with global research emphasizing the importance of CSR in digital reputation building. Studies consistently show that consumers increasingly evaluate brands based on social responsibility, environmental stewardship, ethical conduct, and community engagement (9). Our findings confirm that perceptions of CSR significantly reinforce brand reputation, supporting previous results from Iranian banking and financial sectors demonstrating that CSR activities enhance public trust and strengthen long-term reputational capital (10). This highlights the importance of integrating ethical communication, sustainability commitments, and transparency into digital brand strategy.

Overall, the strong model fit (GOF = 0.416) demonstrates that the proposed model successfully explains the core components influencing online brand reputation. This supports the theoretical argument that online brand reputation is an integrated, multidimensional construct shaped by technological capability, content quality, organizational ethics, customer experience, cultural alignment, and social engagement. These results contribute to the existing literature by offering a comprehensive empirical model applicable across diverse digital contexts, including e-commerce, banking, academic branding, and service industries. Furthermore, the consistency of the findings with studies across different industries—from luxury fashion to financial services—suggests that online brand reputation follows similar structural dynamics across diverse market settings (7, 13).

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was restricted to customers of a single online brand within one geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the results to broader populations or other industries. Second, the cross-sectional nature of data collection prevents the establishment of causal relationships and limits the ability to track changes in brand reputation over time. Third, the use of self-report questionnaires introduces potential response bias, particularly in the evaluation of subjective constructs such as satisfaction, trust, or perceived quality. Fourth, the study did not incorporate behavioral or observational data, which could complement self-reported perceptions with objective indicators of digital engagement or usage. Finally, although the model

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includes ten comprehensive components, other relevant factors—such as emotional branding, influencer effects, and algorithmic personalization—may also influence online brand reputation but were beyond the scope of this analysis.

Future studies should explore online brand reputation using longitudinal designs to better capture its dynamic nature and to observe how reputational shifts occur over time in response to organizational actions or market events. Comparative studies across industries and regions would help validate the applicability of the model in different cultural or technological contexts. Researchers may further expand the model by integrating behavioral analytics, such as clickstream data or machine-learning-driven sentiment analysis, to complement perceptual measures. Future research might also investigate moderating variables such as brand age, industry type, platform characteristics, or consumer digital literacy, which could influence the strength of relationships observed in this study. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into consumer meaning-making processes related to online brand reputation.

Organizations should invest in strengthening their digital infrastructure, ensuring both technical reliability and user-friendly design to build trust and reduce customer uncertainty. Brands must also prioritize content strategy, crafting relevant, high-quality, and engaging materials that resonate with their target audience across multiple platforms. Social responsibility initiatives should be integrated into branding strategies, as ethical conduct and transparency increasingly influence consumer perceptions. Digital experience must be personalized, consistent, and responsive to customer needs, emphasizing seamless interaction and proactive service. Finally, managers should closely monitor digital feedback ecosystems, using analytics to identify emerging reputational risks and opportunities and adjusting their strategies accordingly.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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