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Digital Marketing Model and Its Impact on Social Media for the Development of Foreign Trade

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Abstract
The study was conducted with the aim of offering a social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade. This is an applied-developmental research in nature, following a mixed-method approach in terms of data. Information was gathered through library research, and data collection was conducted via fieldwork. In the qualitative section, the variables, components, and indicators of the model were identified and extracted using content analysis. The qualitative statistical population consisted of 17 marketing managers from exporting companies in the detergent, cosmetic, and hygiene product sectors, selected through non-probability, purposive, and theoretical sampling using the snowball technique. The quantitative statistical population included 151 managers, experts, and marketing experts randomly selected based on stratified sampling. Data collection was done through fieldwork, and the tool for gathering data was a researcher-made questionnaire. The qualitative content analysis results identified the model variables as: "Social Media Trade Strategy in International Markets", "Marketing Communications in Social Media in International Markets", "Social Messaging Strategy in Social Media in International Markets", "Marketing Actions in Social Media in International Markets", "Customer Value Creation in Social Media", and "Export Trade Development". Interpretive-structural modeling was used to generate the model, and the findings from this section indicate that the structural model consists of five levels, with "Social Media Trade Strategy in International Markets" and "Marketing Actions in Social Media in International Markets" being the most influential and independent variables. The variables "Marketing Communications in Social Media in International Markets" and "Social Messaging Strategy in Social Media in International Markets" are interconnected, and finally, "Customer Value Creation in Social Media" is the most dependent and affected variable, with a sequential effect on the others. Subsequently, the relationships within the generated model were tested using SEM. The validation findings demonstrated on export development were positively and significantly confirmed in the model. The results of this study suggest that to enhance social media marketing for export development, customer value creation should be strengthened through marketing communications and the implementation of social media marketing.
Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Foreign Trade Development*

Introduction

Social media marketing has evolved into a trend where exporting companies utilize social media to reach global audiences. Social media marketing encompasses marketing initiatives conducted through online social platforms. Despite the rapid growth of social media and the excitement surrounding social media advertising in global markets, there is limited theoretical and practical knowledge about the effectiveness of social media marketing and

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export development in international markets. With the advancement of sophisticated technologies, social media emerged, and due to the ease of sharing information (Curiel, 2020) and the facilitation of content creation by individuals (Tajvidi & Karami, 2021), the number of global users has steadily increased. This has created an opportunity for companies to grow and expand in foreign markets through these platforms (Almeida & Santos, 2020). Currently, many companies rely on information technology and the internet to improve international coordination, manage customer service, and enhance company performance (Alarcón et al., 2016). In cross-border trade, communication with relevant players in foreign markets (such as providers, distributors, and customers) is conducted electronically (Eid et al., 2020). Recent advancements in e-commerce have led to improvements in the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance of exporters in foreign markets, and the sale of goods through these means continues to grow (Ferreira et al., 2021& Zedgan, et al. 2023). As a result, online marketing management has gained the attention of marketers (Alarcón et al., 2016).

Social media encompasses a vast volume of user-generated content, which helps organizations better understand consumer behavior (Saari et al., 2022). It eliminates barriers of time and distance and can assist exporting companies by reducing market delays through simultaneous knowledge exchange. This technology has the potential to provide greater access to customer information, either directly through company-customer interactions or indirectly through customer-customer interactions (Alarcón et al., 2016). Additionally, it enhances customer relationship management and flexible responsiveness to new international market opportunities (del Carmen Alarcón et al., 2015) while facilitating the sharing of news about products (Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al., 2020). Social media reduces marketing costs and can be utilized for marketing efforts

(Almeida & Santos, 2020). Moreover, this type of technology serves as a way to gather ideas for improving products and services and for expanding businesses (Virglerová et al., 2022).

Establishing social media marketing is essential for modern organizations seeking to serve suppliers and customers, increase business performance, enhance competitiveness, and achieve customary success in global trade (Kasemsap, 2018a). Companies with international activities need to understand how social media functions in an international environment and how it can be leveraged (Saari et al., 2022). Researchers are exploring how companies use social media for communication, customer support, stakeholder engagement, marketing, and sales, research and development, human resource management, and market penetration in an international context (Pogrebnyakov et al., 2017). Therefore, they must invest in social media marketing and expand their social media marketing efforts to develop international markets (Curiel, 2020).

Recently, businesses and researchers have begun to pay more attention to social media, particularly in the context of international business, as well as the opportunities that social media provides for enhancing and expanding business operations globally (Fraccastoro et al., 2021). However, the topic of social media marketing for international markets continues to suffer from a lack of publications, both in the academic and business worlds. It remains largely an unexplored territory (Curiel, 2020). Specifically, knowledge about the drivers of cross-border e-commerce performance for exporters is limited, which makes it difficult to analyze digital marketing tactics (Goldman et al., 2020). Many corporate functions where social media plays a role have received relatively little attention. Exporting companies face marketing and sales challenges in competitive environments when entering international markets, as spatial and temporal distances make it difficult to reach their targets. This is one

reason why many companies have not succeeded in expanding their businesses in foreign markets (Nazari, et al. 2023). Amidst these challenges, advanced social media technologies have emerged, providing a potential opportunity for marketing managers to assist them in their marketing efforts. However, marketers are still not fully aware of the opportunities that social media marketing presents in global markets and have not fully capitalized on its benefits. The challenge that managers face is determining which features of social media they should focus on to achieve their goals of trade development in international markets. The central research question of this study is "what dimensions of social networks lead to increased sales and export development in global markets through social media?" To answer this question, a content analysis approach was adopted. Overall, this study can contribute to advancing the literature by combining the results of previous studies on the dimensions of social networks in facilitating customer engagement and creating value through social networks. Additionally, the findings of this study provide insights that can guide industry and business owners toward the targeted use of social network capabilities to enhance customer engagement.

Theoretical Foundation and Research Background

Theoretical Background

Digital Marketing: The growth of the internet and technology has turned digital marketing into an extremely popular strategy used by almost all marketers worldwide, making the internet a forward-looking marketplace (Ardani, 2022). E-marketing is a strategic process that involves developing, distributing, promoting, and pricing goods and services in target markets via the internet or digital devices such as smartphones. E-marketing is now considered one of the most effective and efficient advertising mediums, particularly for digital products like music, videos, and similar items (Adiyono et al., 2021). Digital marketing consists of a set of marketing strategies conducted through the internet or online platforms. With relatively low investment costs, this form of marketing can yield satisfactory results. The primary goal of digital marketing strategies is to increase visibility, facilitate access for customers and potential consumers, and enhance the exposure of products or services. One of the added values of this marketing strategy is its user-friendly nature (Amalia & Khoirotunnisa, 2023).

Several digital marketing strategies, as mentioned by experts in the field, include: search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, content marketing, influencer marketing, email marketing, paid advertising, viral content, community engagement, affiliate marketing, and the use of podcasts (Maulana & Saefudin, 2023; Taheri et al., 2021).

Social Media and Sales: In general, social media is widely used in business for marketing, customer relationship management, product innovation, branding, and ultimately sales, due to its broad accessibility to extensive social networks and the ease of mutual interactions between users (Salo, 2017). Factors such as management attitudes and beliefs about social media, the competence of companies related to social media, the use of social media by supplying companies and customers, and cross-functional collaborations determine the actual adoption of social media by companies for selling products and services (Guesalaga, 2016). Other researchers have identified individual characteristics of salespeople, such as age, social identity, motivations, voluntariness, past performance, attitudes, and beliefs about social media, as key factors influencing individuals' use of social media (Itani et al., 2017). Both companies and sales personnel play a role in the effective use of social media in sales. The literature has identified and documented the significant role of social media usage in sales. For instance, Mangold and Faulds (2009) were among the first researchers to highlight the crucial role of social media in marketing and sales, arguing that social media should be an

integral part of a company's promotional mix. Social media has been identified as a generational and global sales interface that fosters strong connections between sellers and customers, serving as a dominant sales tool that revolutionizes buyer-seller relationships. Therefore, social media can be a useful learning tool for both sellers and companies. Researchers have suggested that social media is an innovative resource in the sales process for companies in communication activities and a strategic resource for executing effective business networking efforts (Bocconcelli et al., 2017).

Social Media Marketing: Marketing through social media (social media marketing) is a form of direct or indirect marketing aimed at creating awareness and engagement for a brand, business, individual, or other entity, using tools from the social web, such as blogging, microblogging, social networks, social bookmarking, and content. The term "social media marketing" refers to the practice of using social networks for marketing purposes. Constantinides and Fountain (2008) proposed a classification based on different types of applications that can be used as social media marketing channels for delivering and promoting social media services. This includes blogs, such as personal online journals; social networks, which are applications like Facebook; content forums, which are websites designed to organize and share specific types of content (like YouTube); message boards/bulletin boards, and content aggregators (Eid et al., 2020).

Social Media and International Marketing: Social media helps companies understand how to adjust to foreign markets and accurately identify the habits of foreign customers and collaborates in real-time. By offering instant access to target foreign audiences, which has a positive impact on international marketing campaigns, social media serves as a key element for business development and effective internalization. While social media can provide specific details about potential business contacts and common characteristics of the audience,

companies can create a database and identify their top contacts to streamline and enhance the efficiency of the entire international sales process (Eid et al., 2019). As a result, companies can improve both the quality and quantity of their contacts throughout the internalization process. Social media contributes to creating a competitive advantage for companies in foreign markets by monitoring competitors, increasing advertising and traffic, and raising brand awareness. For these reasons, internalization and digitalization are powerful drivers of export performance for companies (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

Empirical Background

In reviewing the empirical background of previous studies, Asaryan et al. (2023) developed an indigenous social media marketing model for online stores using a mixed-method approach. The result of the data analysis was the presentation of a paradigmatic model that includes six components: causal conditions (information and communication technology, time management, and cost management), contextual conditions (infrastructure of online stores), intervening conditions (sanctions and economic problems, and risk management), strategies (utilization of specialized human resources and influencers), the central phenomenon (social media marketing), and outcomes (sustainability in the use of social networks, brand equity). Several indicators were also identified for each of the main categories. The quantitative results showed that the proposed research model has appropriate validity. Moradi (2022) examined the impact of social media marketing on the export development of companies. The findings indicated that perceived ease of use, perceived relative advantage, and subjective norms significantly affect social media marketing. However, visibility does not have a significant impact on social media marketing. Social media marketing positively and significantly affects brand awareness, export development, international

business contacts, and competitive perception. Furthermore, brand awareness, international business contacts, and competitive perception significantly influence export development, while customer understanding does not have a significant impact on export development. Amini (2022) explored the impact of social media resources and export performance with the mediating role of trust and commitment. The results of this study show that social media resources and marketing capabilities directly impact export performance through commitment and trust. This study aimed to use an integrated model (resource-based view and trust-commitment theory) to understand and explain an international marketing phenomenon. Focusing on Ghana, this research offers new insights into the path followed by exporting companies in emerging markets. Alhamami et al. (2023) examined the impact of using foreign social media on the business performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia, with the mediating role of market orientation. This study examines how the use of foreign social media impacts the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia. The results from Smart PLS 4 showed that foreign social media has a positive impact on business performance, profitability, customer satisfaction, and market orientation. Market orientation also influenced business performance, profitability, and customer satisfaction and partially mediated the effect of foreign social media on business performance, profitability, and customer satisfaction. Having a high level of foreign social media usage and market orientation is critical for improving the business of SMEs. The use of foreign social media can be a useful tool for SMEs in Saudi Arabia to enhance their business performance (Alhamami et al., 2024). Zhou et al. (2023) explored how the use of social media in B2B export sales affects sales performance. Despite the increasing interest in the role of social media usage in improving performance, few studies have examined its

effect on sales performance specifically in the context of B2B export sales. However, the underlying mechanisms of such effects have yet to be fully explored. Drawing on Media Synchronicity Theory, the study suggests that social media usage in sales first affects intercultural communication performance, which in turn influences sales performance. Training and experience are the allocated factors for using social media in sales (Toudeh Bahambari, 2022). The results indicate that intercultural communication performance fully mediates the impact of social media usage in sales on sales performance, and training and experience are prerequisites for utilizing social media in sales. The overall effect of training on sales performance, through social media usage in sales and intercultural communication, is stronger than the effect of experience (Zhou et al., 2023).

As the theoretical and empirical background of the studies shows, in recent years, with the growth of smart technologies such as social platforms, managers have been leveraging this opportunity to enhance their sales and seek profits in international markets to maximize these opportunities. In this regard, theoretical studies by academics and researchers have also grown, and they consistently strive to assist managers in this area. Previous studies, both domestic and international, have focused on social media marketing in the development of foreign trade. Moreover, most prior studies have looked at the correlation between social media usage and the performance of domestic companies (e.g., Gabandi & Iyamu, 2022; Tarascou et al., 2020; Maleki Shirababdi, et al. 2022) and the export of foreign markets (e.g., Zamroudi & Il Hyun, 2022; Del Carmen Alarcon et al., 2015; Alarcon Del Amo et al., 2016; Imran & Jian, 2018). The inference drawn from past studies is that researchers have paid less attention to the aspects and dimensions of international social media marketing and its role in export development. The marketing value of social media in developing international market trade has not been comprehensively studied.

Since foreign trade development leads to economic growth and is crucial for increasing a country's gross domestic product (GDP), understanding how to leverage social media for international marketing and boosting sales is essential for both academics and business managers. Thus, given the lack of comprehensive studies on identifying the aspects of social media marketing in improving international sales, this research addresses this issue to reveal its outcomes for decision-makers. In conclusion, we state that the innovation of this research lies in identifying the aspects of international social media marketing and its role in export development. Past studies, in domestic and foreign literature, have paid attention to social media marketing in the development of foreign trade. Most of the previous studies focused on the correlation between the use of social media and the performance of domestic companies. But the conclusion that comes from the past studies is that the researchers have paid less attention to the aspects and dimensions of international marketing of social media and their role in the development of marketing and the marketing values of social media in the development of business in international markets as a whole and saturation has not been studied. Considering that the development of foreign trade leads to economic growth and is important for the country's economy in terms of increasing the gross national product, so how to benefit from social media for international marketing and to strengthen sales in this way for both academics and managers. Implementation is essential. Therefore, due to the lack of comprehensiveness of previous studies regarding the identification of social media marketing aspects in improving international sales, we have addressed this issue in this research to reveal its consequences for decision makers. In the end, we declare that the innovation of the current research is to identify the marketing aspects of international social media and their role in export development. Therefore, to fill this research gap, this study seeks to answer the question: Does digital marketing influence social media to develop foreign trade, and how does this impact manifest?

Research Methodology

The present research is applied and developmental in nature according to its objective, and mixed-method (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of data type. The data collection is cross-sectional. In terms of nature and qualitative method, it employs content analysis and data coding techniques, while the quantitative phase is causal and correlational. In the qualitative section, the nature and method of the research involve content analysis. In this section, the theoretical foundations and literature of the research were reviewed, and semi-structured interviews with experts were conducted using content analysis techniques. After identifying the variables and components obtained from the expert interviews, a theoretical model was presented using the inductive approach and data coding techniques.

In the quantitative section, the nature and method of the research are causal. The study lacks predefined hypotheses or predictions, so the interpretive-structural modeling (ISM) technique was employed based on expert opinions to design the relationships between the identified variables and the conceptual model. Additionally, the causal relationships between the model's components were derived using the fuzzy cognitive map method, which justifies the causal nature of the research methodology. Finally, the designed model was validated using structural equation modeling (SEM) with the partial least squares (PLS) technique, in a population sample, making this section of the research correlational as well.

The qualitative research population consists of senior managers and marketing managers from exporting companies in the detergent, cosmetic, and hygiene product sectors. A non-probability purposive and theoretical sampling method was used, appropriate to the method of the research. The main criterion for determining the

sample size was theoretical saturation. In sampling, the iterative process continued until content adequacy was reached, bringing the study to a level of theoretical abstraction and the discovery of a theory (or valid hypothetical propositions). Given the exploration and description of the opinions and attitudes of the interviewees, and considering the time and resources available, 17 experts were purposefully and theoretically interviewed until theoretical saturation was achieved. The statistical population of this section includes 45 exporting companies in the detergent, cosmetic, and hygiene sectors, which use social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, WeChat, Clubhouse, Pinterest, and Telegram for marketing and selling goods in international markets. The sample consisted of 225 senior managers, managers, senior experts, and marketing and commerce experts, of whom 142 were randomly selected based on Cochran's formula. Finally, considering a 10% probability of non-response error, 156 electronic questionnaires were sent to respondents, and 151 were fully completed and prepared for analysis. Reliability of the qualitative part is examined using validity, reliability, adaptability, transferability and originality. In terms of validity, interview questions were critically validated by reference groups to obtain appropriate rich data. In a small part, the content validity index has been used for the validity of the indicators. It's CVI index was presented by Waltz and Bassel. To calculate CVI, experts are asked to determine the degree of relevance of each item with a four-part spectrum including "not relevant", "needs basic revision", "relevant but needs revision", "completely relevant". The number of experts who selected the option "relevant but needs revision", "completely relevant" is divided by the total number of experts. If the resulting value is smaller than 0.7, the item is rejected. If it was between 0.7 and 0.79, it should be revised, and if it was greater than 0.79, it is acceptable.

The data collection tool in the qualitative section was the use of semi-structured interviews to construct the model and gather expert opinions. In this phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 experts, and theoretical saturation was achieved as no new codes were added by subsequent experts. Hence, the interview process was not continued further. It is worth mentioning that each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, and the interview process took place during the winter of 2023.

In the quantitative section, a questionnaire was used. At this stage, to collect data, a researcher-designed questionnaire with closed-ended questions was utilized. The foundation for the questionnaire was based on the components and indicators identified in the qualitative section, which were derived from the interview topics. In this research, six questionnaires were used: The first questionnaire was for calculating the Content Validity Index (CVI). The second questionnaire was for examining the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of the indicators and determining them using the Lawshe coefficient. The third questionnaire was for screening the components of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade, based on the qualitative content analysis. The fourth questionnaire was used to determine the causal relationships between the model components using the fuzzy cognitive map technique. The fifth questionnaire was designed to produce the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade by specifying the internal relationships among the model's variables using the interpretive-structural modeling (ISM) technique. The sixth questionnaire was used for analyzing structural equation modeling (SEM).

Research Findings

As described in the methodology section, a combination of inductive and deductive content analysis methods was used to identify the components and indicators. Data were extracted from the interview transcripts using

inductive content analysis, and key points were coded based on the suggestions by Glaser (1992) from the 17 experts. In this method, instead of coding each individual word, key points were identified and coded. Thus, in this study, in the first stage, key points from the interviews were converted into open codes, and these codes were then transformed into concepts related to the research topic. In the second stage, axial coding involved two phases: reviewing and forming categories. The first phase included reviewing the coded summaries, while the second phase considered the validity of the categories in relation to the data set. The concepts derived from open coding were compared, and those with similar meanings and relevance to a common theme were grouped into categories, leading to the formation of the components. The next step was selective coding or the third level of coding. Based on the concepts obtained from the previous stage, in this stage, after multiple rounds of study and review and back-and-forth comparison between concepts and categories, the concepts were classified into five categories, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

The indicators, components, and variables extracted in the content analysis section

Variables (Selective Coding)	Components (Axial Coding)	Indicators
Social Media Trade Strategy in International Markets	Utilizing social media	Recognizing the popular social media platforms of the target country
		Number and type of social platforms for marketing
		Leveraging social media capabilities for identifying and delivering services
		Flexibility in organizational structure for social media marketing
		Integration of the company's existing systems with social media requirements
	Implementing social media marketing	Cultural shifts within the organization to support social media marketing
		Human resource requirements (e.g., skills, training) to support social media marketing
		Management and leadership style for supporting social media marketing
		Connection with social marketing networks
		Methods for targeting the audience
	Global networking on social media	Effective management of multiple target groups on social media
		Coordination with advertising campaigns
		Coordination with suppliers and distributors
Marketing Communications in Social Media in International Markets	Customer relationship management in social media	Collecting information and needs of international customers
		Establishing, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with international customers
		Accessing internationally branded customers
		Factors influencing foreign customer preferences
		Public relations
		Monitoring trade practices with customers
		Analyzing consumer attitudes and behaviors
		Supporting international customers
	Customer engagement in social media	Capability to engage international customers
		Continuous emphasis on customer engagement

Variables (Selective Coding)	Components (Axial Coding)	Indicators
Social Messaging Strategy in Social Media in International Markets	Social media advertising strategy	Sharing information and knowledge with customers
		Accurate transfer of information and knowledge
		Interaction with international customers
		Motivating customers to engage
		Sharing true value
		Determinants for identifying the most effective social influencers
		Raising brand awareness and international branding
		Monitoring competitors' social media ads and content in international markets
		Electronic word-of-mouth marketing by international customers
		Sales incentives through social media
	Advertising content in social media	Advertising tools on platforms (e.g., Hashtag use on Instagram)
		Assessing the effectiveness of social media ads in international markets
		Localized images and videos for international brand awareness
		Effective localized messages and content in international branding
		Functional and emotional appeal in advertising content
		Relevance and alignment of content with international ads
		Introducing the product and highlighting pros and cons in advertising content
		Volume of messages in advertising content
Marketing Actions in Social Media in International Markets	Marketing aspects of social media	Differentiating content from competitors' brands internationally
		Providing and supporting services for international customers
		Attention to cultural factors among foreign customers
		Considering institutional and regulatory influences of countries
		Appropriate market segmentation using social media
		Providing suitable social media marketing tactics for the target country
		Targeting and positioning strategies for the target countries
	Social media marketing analysis	Changes in international targeting strategy in social media
		Identifying international audiences for products and services
		Analyzing customers based on their social media data
		Social media tools and capabilities for data analysis
	Social media marketing strategy	Marketing strategy and tactics based on social media feedback
		Insights into international competitors' social media strategies

Variables (Selective Coding)	Components (Axial Coding)	Indicators
Customer Value Creation in Social Media	Customer experience in social media	Market foresight based on social media predictions
		Capacity to implement international marketing strategies
		Reducing the time spent on searching for customer information
		Feedback and responsiveness to international customers
		Personalizing the customer experience
		Creating positive customer attitudes towards usefulness
		Assessing the experience of social media content
		Providing up-to-date news and information on the platform
		Respecting the privacy of international customers
	Customer trust in social media	Evaluating and managing risks in advertising content
		Ensuring credibility and authenticity
		Attending to the perceived value of international customers
		Ensuring data security for sharing
		Building trust through fulfilling commitments
Export Trade Development	Export development	Contribution of social media to total export profits
		Contribution of social media to foreign market share
		Contribution of social media to export sales

At this stage, the components of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade, identified in the qualitative section through coding, were screened. To finalize the variables of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade, the fuzzy Delphi method was employed. In the fuzzy Delphi method, after three rounds, the level of disagreement among the experts in the second and third stages for the remaining options was less than 0.2, and thus, the survey was stopped at the third stage. The results showed that all the components of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade were ranked in the high range in the surveys, and due to the majority agreement of the experts, they remained in the conceptual model of the research. Therefore, after three rounds of the survey, 13 components of the conceptual theoretical model of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade were confirmed. Fig. 1 demonstrates the results of the qualitative section, confirming the variables, components, and indicators of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade.
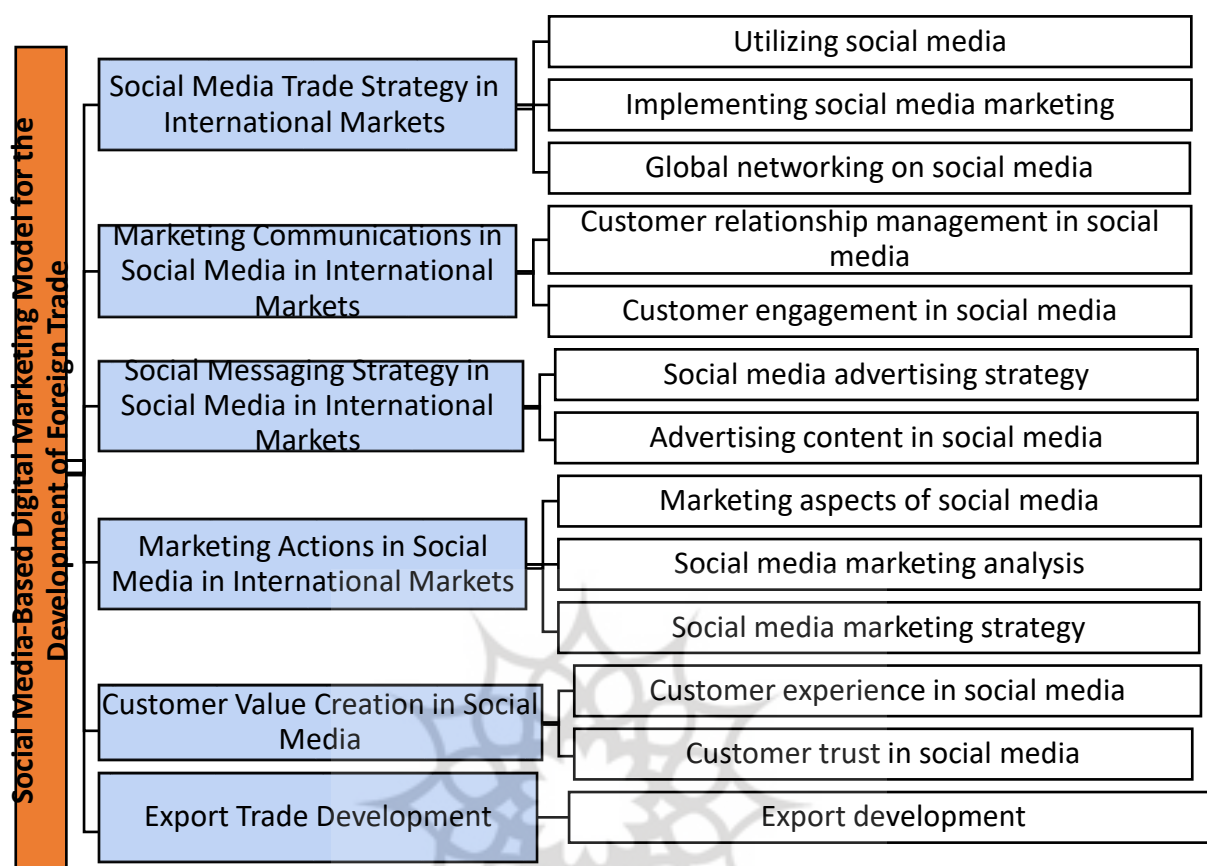
Fig. 1. *Variables and Components of the Social Media-Based Digital Marketing Model for the Development of Foreign Trade*

At this stage, we use the ISM (Interpretive Structural Modeling) method to analyze the relationship between the defined variable characteristics of the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade. After determining the relationships and the level of the variables, a network structure model was drawn using the extracted data. To this end, the variables were initially arranged from top to bottom based on their levels. These relationships can be seen in Fig. 2.
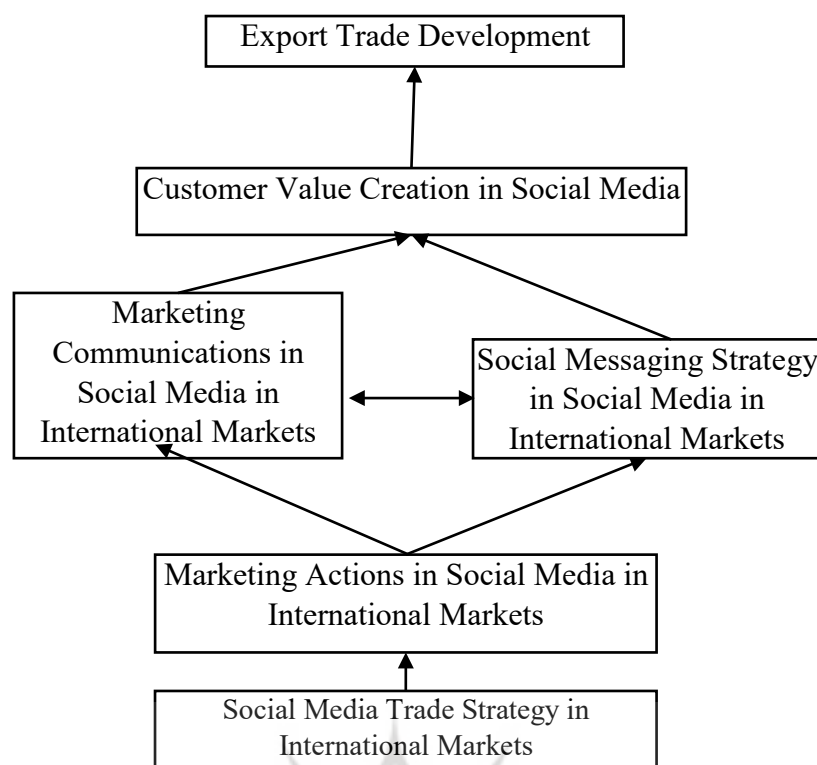
Fig. 2. *Interpretive-Structural Model of the Social Media-Based Digital Marketing Model for the Development of Foreign Trade*

As shown in Fig. 2, the interpretive-structural model consists of five levels. At the base level, Level 5, is the variable "Social Media Trade Strategy in International Markets", with the most significant impact on social media-based digital marketing for the development of foreign trade. Marketing must start from this variable. This variable is the most influential and affects all other variables. Hence, to strengthen social media-based digital marketing for the development of foreign trade, managers must first focus on this variable. Having a strategy helps us achieve our goals. At Level 4, the variable "Marketing Actions in Social Media in International Markets" is placed, influencing the subsequent variables in the structural model. Before utilizing social media in international marketing, actions to achieve sales goals must be defined. At Level 3, there are two variables, "Social Messaging Strategy in Social Media in International Markets" and "Marketing Communications in Social Media in International Markets", affecting the next variable. At Level 2, the variable "Customer Value Creation in Social Media" is located, which affects Level 1, where the variable "Export Trade Development" is situated. This variable is influenced by the five other variables. Thus, the most influential variable in social media-based digital marketing for foreign trade development is export trade development itself, which is dependent on the improvement of the other variables.

Since one of the objectives of the present research is to determine causal relationships as well as the impacts of direct or inverse relationships between components, the fuzzy cognitive map approach was employed in this study. The causal relationships and node sizes are based on the closeness centrality of a component to other components of the social media-based digital marketing model for foreign trade development, indicating the strength of the components' relationships. In fact, a component with higher centrality indicates its closeness to other components. In other words, these components have the strongest connections to other components, and information flow occurs mostly through them. Any change in these components leads

to changes in the entire system. The intermediate strength of the components in the model is shown in color and highlighted in Fig. 3. Accordingly, with higher centrality and strength, the component "Networking on Social Media" is connected to 18 other components. After that, the component "Social Media Marketing Strategy" is connected to 17 other components, indicating the strength of its connection. These findings suggest that focusing on networking and marketing strategy accelerates the flow of information through the system and enhances marketing effectiveness.
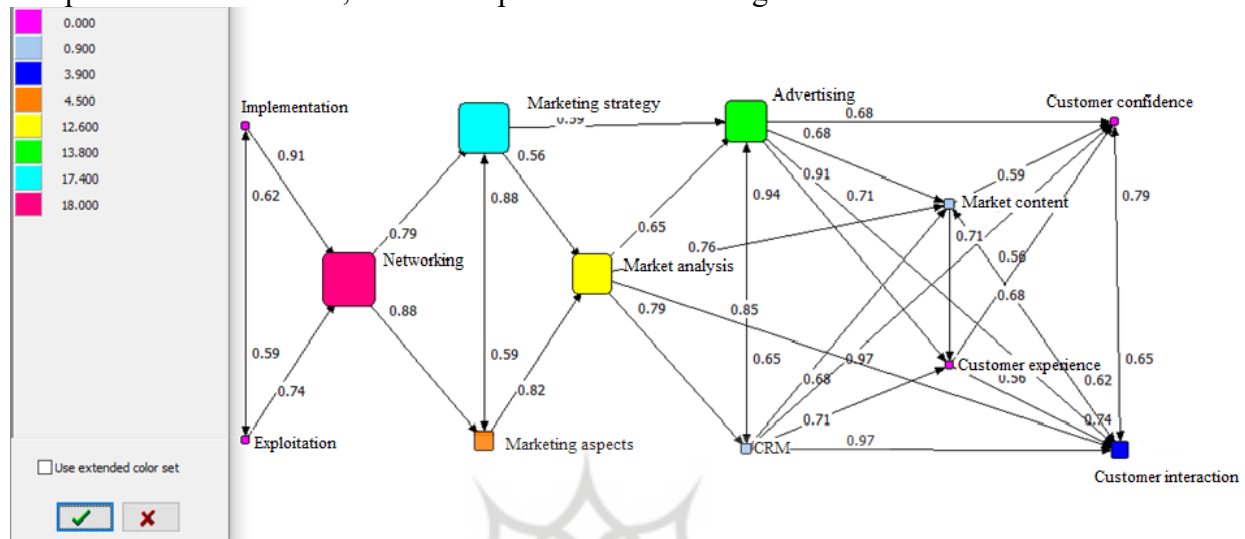
Fig. 3. *Causal Relationships and Node Sizes Based on Closeness Centrality of the Components in the Social Media-Based Digital Marketing Model for the Foreign Trade Development*

For validating the generated model, structural equation modeling (SEM) and the Smart PLS software were used. The interpretive-structural model, created earlier, was selected as the expert-based model, and the relationships between the model's variables were tested using structural equation modeling. The hypotheses proposed in this study, derived from the model, are presented below. The model is then evaluated using empirical data, and the results are discussed:

✓ The social media trade strategy in international markets has a significant impact on marketing actions in social media in international markets.
✓ Marketing actions in social media in international markets have a significant impact on the social messaging strategy in social media in international markets.
✓ Marketing actions in social media in international markets have a significant impact on marketing communications in social media in international markets.
✓ The social messaging strategy in social media in international markets has a significant impact on marketing communications in social media in international markets.
✓ The social messaging strategy in social media in international markets has a significant impact on customer value creation in social media.
✓ Marketing communications in social media in international markets have a significant impact on customer value creation in social media.
✓ Marketing actions in social media in international markets have a significant impact on export trade development.
✓ Marketing communications in social media in international markets have a significant impact on export trade development.
✓ The social messaging strategy in social media in international markets has a significant impact on export trade development.

✓ Customer value creation in social media has a significant impact on export trade development.

Fig. 1 displays the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model and structural equation modeling (SEM) in the estimation of standardized coefficients for the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade. As previously mentioned, the factor loadings indicate the reliability coefficient between the indicators and the variables, which should exceed 0.6. According to Fig. 4, all questions have factor loadings above 0.6, and the factor loadings for all model variables have been confirmed. These findings indicate that the respondents believe that the indicators can construct the variables and that the variables may be evaluated using these indicators.
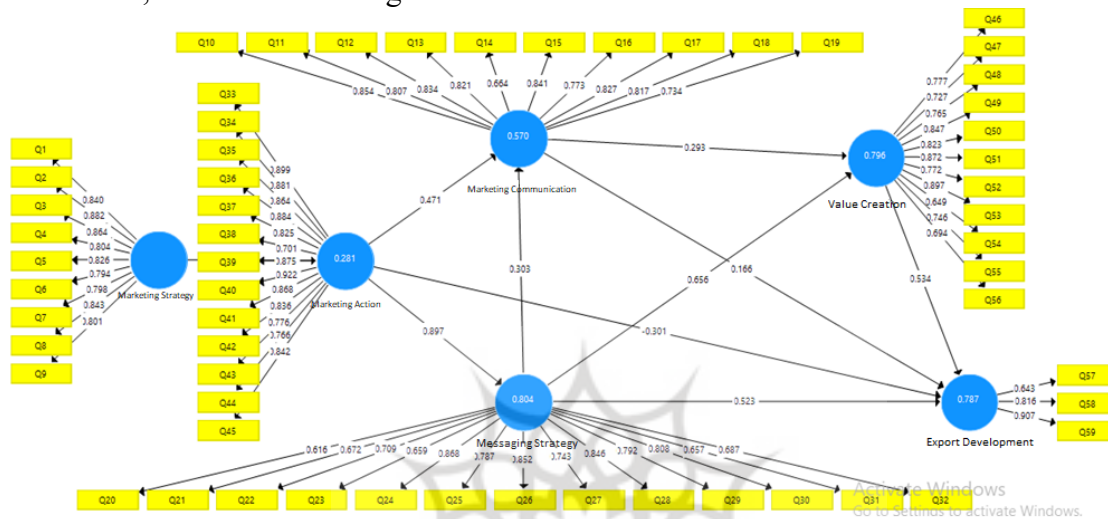

Fig. 4. *Measurement Model and Factor Loadings*

Fig. 5 presents the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling in the estimation of standardized coefficients, showing that the t-statistic is greater than 1.96, and the path coefficient is significant at a 95% confidence level, thus confirming the model.
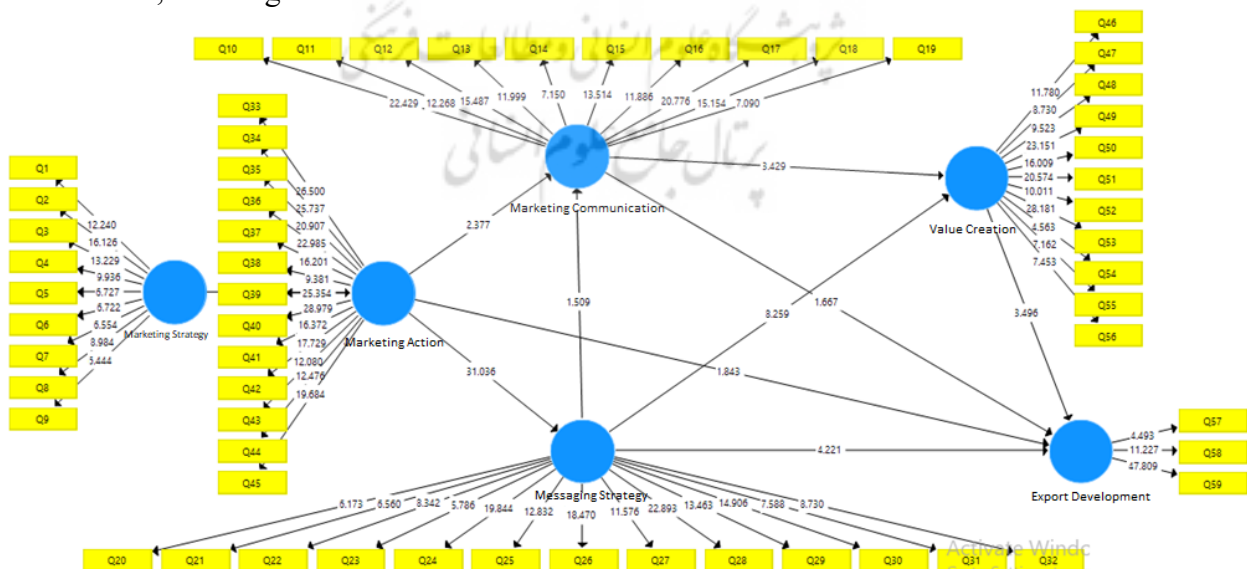

Fig. 5. *Standardized Coefficients of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model*

Table 2 shows the calculated values for evaluating the confirmation indicators of the model, extracted from Smart PLS software. To measure the model, we assessed indicator reliability, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Construct reliability was tested using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. The decision rule for composite reliability is that the reliability score should exceed 0.7. For all constructs, this value was higher than 0.8, indicating that the constructs were reliable, i.e. meeting this criterion. Cronbach's alpha (α) was also higher than 0.75, confirming the model. Convergent validity was tested using the average variance extracted (AVE), which, according to Table 4-26, has a coefficient greater than 0.5 and is confirmed. Thus, in summary, the construct reliability, indicator reliability, and convergent validity of the constructs were satisfactory.

Table 2.
Measurement Model: Factor Loadings and Convergent Validity and Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Convergent Validity Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Marketing communications	0.937	0.946	0.639
Value creation	0.936	0.945	0.612
Trade strategy	0.948	0.952	0.686
Messaging strategy	0.934	0.943	0.563
Marketing action	0.966	0.970	0.711
Export development	0.716	0.836	0.634

To assess discriminant validity, the Fornell and Larcker method was used, and the findings are shown in Table 3. As observed in the results of this table, at a 95% confidence level, the variables in this study exhibit an acceptable level of correlation with each other. This is because the values on the diagonal are greater than the values below them. The numbers on the diagonal of the matrix are the square roots of the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) index.

Table 3.
Correlation Coefficients and Discriminant Validity between Research Variables

	Marketing communications	Value creation	Trade strategy	Messaging strategy	Marketing action	Export development
Marketing communications	0.799					
Value creation	0.769	0.782				
Trade strategy	0.418	0.614	0.829			
Messaging strategy	0.726	0.769	0.554	0.750		
Marketing action	0.743	0.777	0.531	0.797	0.843	
Export development	0.733	0.753	0.521	0.738	0.761	0.796

After confirming the measurement model, the structural model was tested to examine the direct effects. Fig. 3 presents the hypothesis testing, and Table 4 shows the results of the direct effects. A greater significance value was considered for testing significance. These findings demonstrate that the use of information in social media by companies exporting detergent, cosmetic, and hygiene products contributes to the enhancement of foreign trade development. Table 3 provides a summary of the results of the relationship tests between variables in the social media-based digital marketing model for the foreign trade development.

Table 4.

The results of structural equations and test of the model's relationships

Relationships	Beta	t -Test	P-Values	Result	Relation direction
Trade Strategy → Marketing Actions	0.531	3.513	0.000	✓	+
Marketing Actions → Messaging Strategy	0.897	31.036	0.000	✓	+
Marketing Actions→Marketing Communications	0.471	2.377	0.018	✓	+
Messaging Strategy→Marketing Communications	0.303	1.509	0.132	×	
Messaging Strategy → Value Creation	0.658	8.259	0.000	✓	+
Marketing Communications → Value Creation	0.293	3.429	0.001	✓	+
Marketing Actions → Export Development	-0.301	1.843	0.066	×	
Marketing Communications → Export Development	0.166	1.667	0.096	×	
Messaging Strategy → Export Development	0.523	4.221	0.000	✓	+
Value Creation → Export Development	0.534	3.496	0.001	✓	+

|t|>1.96 Significant at P<0.05, |t|>2.58 Significant at P<0.01,

Marketing Communications

Value Creation

Messaging Strategy   Marketing Actions

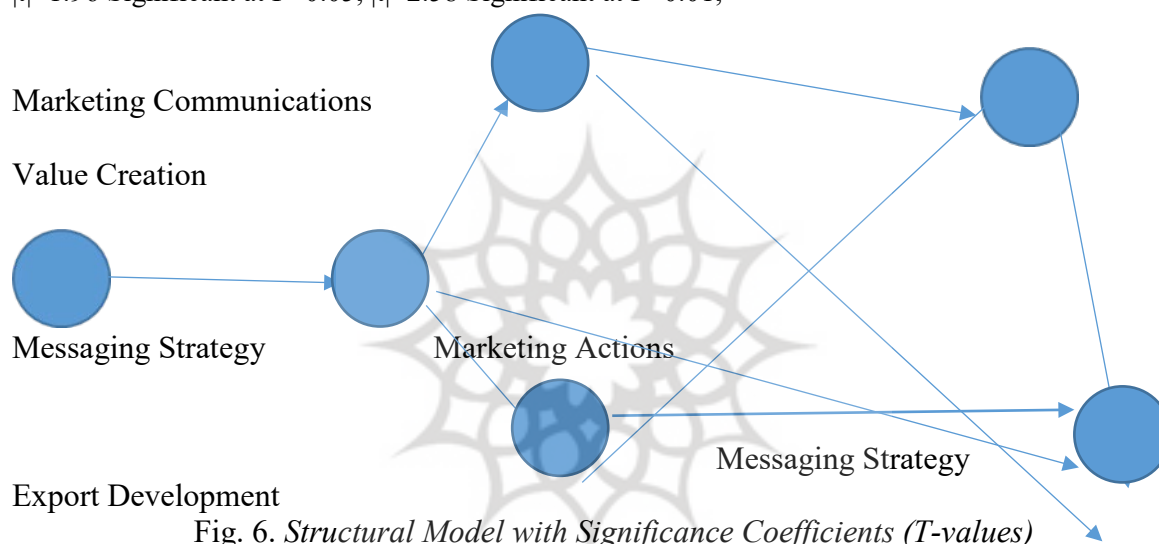Messaging Strategy

Export Development

Fig. 6. *Structural Model with Significance Coefficients (T-values)*

Discussion and Conclusion

In today's highly competitive environment, where companies aim for profit and seize the potential opportunities provided by foreign markets, entering international markets through digital marketing has become increasingly important. This significance is magnified by the rapid growth of social media in global markets, prompting marketing managers to seek appropriate digital marketing strategies to penetrate global markets and reap the benefits. However, marketers are not yet fully aware of the opportunities that social media marketing offers in global markets, nor are they fully utilizing its benefits.

The challenge for managers is determining which aspects of social media to focus on in order to achieve their trade development goals in international markets. To address this issue, the present study has examined social media-based digital marketing for the development of foreign trade. Initially, an inductive content analysis approach was used to extract the social media-based digital marketing model for the development of foreign trade, followed by coding to create the theoretical model. The findings of this section revealed that the theoretical model comprises 6 variables, 13 components, and 71 indicators.

Next, the content validity of the indicators was evaluated using the CVI (Content Validity Index) and CVR (Content Validity Ratio) techniques. In summary, the relevance of the indicators was first assessed with CVI,

and after they were confirmed, their necessity was evaluated using CVR. The findings of this section indicated that 12 indicators were not essential and were removed from the model. After confirming the indicators, the importance of the components was assessed using the fuzzy Delphi method. The opinions of 17 experts regarding the importance of the components were collected, and adjustments were made. The theoretical model is presented in Fig. 4.

The results showed that the theoretical digital marketing model includes five variables: "Social Media Trade Strategy in International Markets", "Marketing Communications in Social Media in International Markets", "Social Messaging Strategy in Social Media in International Markets", "International Marketing Actions in Social Media", and "Customer Value Creation in Social Media." These are influential in social media marketing for the development of foreign trade. It is expected that focusing on these dimensions can improve global trade development. In fact, social media-based digital marketing activities, such as marketing communications, customer engagement, monitoring and analyzing customer behaviors and feedback, and uncovering hidden customer needs, contribute to increased product sales in target countries, ultimately leading to the development of global trade.
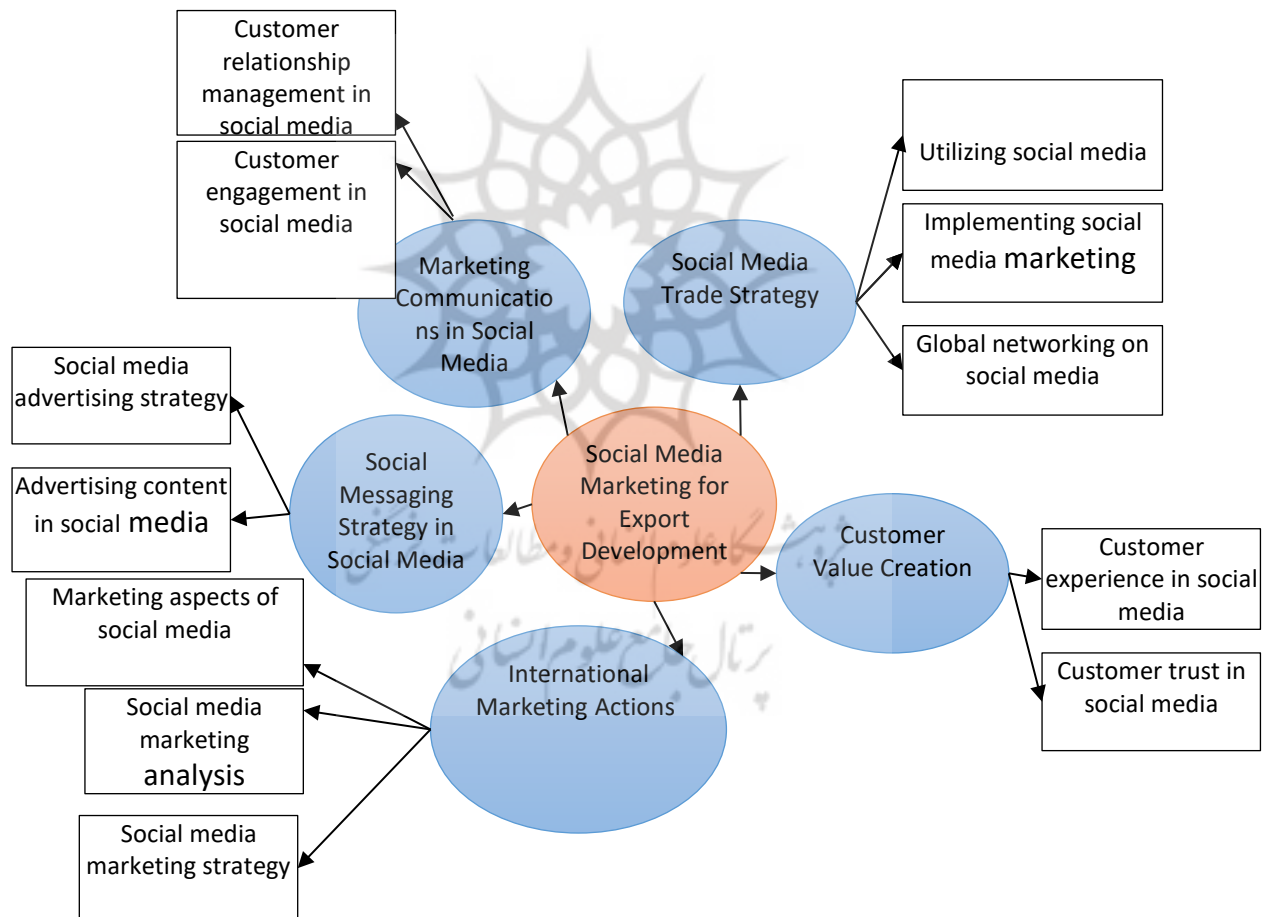

Fig.7. *Structural Equation Modeling Results and Direct Relationship Tests of the Model*

In the section "Social Media Trade Strategy in International Markets", exporting companies must adopt an appropriate strategy for utilizing social media to enter global markets. Many managers do not take advantage of the potential benefits of social media in marketing their products to target countries, even though the popular social media platforms in each country have the marketing potential to encourage and

persuade customers to purchase products. In this regard, many researchers, such as Amalia and Khoirotunnisa (2023) and Azizah and Siswahyudianto (2022), believe that social media marketing strategies are a very low-cost path that facilitates access to potential customers and is the best digital platform to establish effective communication with customers, especially in overcoming time and distance constraints with target countries. Therefore, using international e-commerce platforms can expand sales channels and make purchasing easier for global customers.

The next variable, "Marketing Communications in Social Media in International Markets", can be effective in social media marketing for export development. Social media is a digital platform based on interpersonal communication, where individuals interact virtually. In this regard, experts emphasize that customer relationship management and customer engagement on social media are two key components that play a significant role in marketing communications. Social media communications are highly effective in attracting users, and enhancing these communications is considered essential by marketing managers. Fraccastoro et al. (2021) emphasized that marketing communications lead to increased customer engagement, heightened awareness, and facilitate the sharing of news about products.

In the proposed theoretical model, the variable "Social Messaging Strategy in Social Media in International Markets" can also play a role in the development of global trade. This variable comprises two components: the social media advertising strategy and the social media advertising content, both of which can convey product and service information to social media users. These messages motivate customers to make purchases. In this context, Chung et al. (2019) show that social networks can effectively convey a company's messages to its foreign customers.

Another variable that experts consider important in social media marketing for global trade development is "International

Marketing Actions in Social Media." Digital marketing on social media can provide in-depth analytical data on customers, which managers can use to identify markets, understand consumer preferences, and develop more effective marketing strategies. According to Saputra (2023), a detailed analysis of the global digital business environment, along with appropriate strategies, can help companies optimize their digital marketing potential at an international level.

Finally, the last variable is "Customer Value Creation in Social Media", seeking to create value for customers by providing a positive experience and fostering trust. Given the unfamiliar virtual environment of social media, it is expected that customers will be aware of the risks associated with online interactions, making them more cautious when engaging with other users on social platforms. Therefore, companies must strive to build trust in their interactions with customers. In this regard, Saputra (2023) emphasizes that maintaining consumer trust and adhering to international privacy standards are critical aspects of successful digital marketing. Yadav & Rahman (2018) have also demonstrated that online buyers often make purchasing decisions based on the availability of sufficient and reliable information on e-commerce websites or social media platforms, in the form of product details, ratings, and reviews.

Research Limitations

In general, the researcher in this research has faced scientific and practical limitations in conducting the research, which are mentioned below:

1. This study used a cross-sectional survey to collect data from cosmetics exporting companies, it is expected that the generalization of these findings in terms of time or to other domestic and exporting companies should be done with caution.

2. Environmental and infrastructural factors such as social media filters or restrictions on internet speed and financial transactions with the target countries

have not been addressed in this study, while these factors can be effective in improving digital trade and developing exports.

3. One of the other limitations of this research is the uncertainty in the responses of the experts, which may influence the answers due to the different conditions and their responses.

Suggestions for future Research

1. According to the findings of this model, the marketing strategy in social media is one of the influential factors in the development of global trade, so it is suggested that researchers present a model for social media marketing strategy.

2. Also, according to the findings of this study, value creation for the customer is one of the influential factors that the success of the system depends on, which requires more studies in this field. Therefore, it is suggested that researchers provide a model for creating customer value in social media.

3. Advertising strategy in social media is one of the other effective factors that have been emphasized in this research. It is suggested that the researchers design the advertising strategy model and contact with the customer through emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and their role.

4. In this research, the drivers of digital marketing have been discussed, considering that every system faces obstacles and challenges, so it is suggested that researchers analyze and investigate the challenges and obstacles of marketing in social media of international markets.

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