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Structural Equation Modeling of the Effect of Social Media Marketing on the Revival of Heritage Brands: Examining the Mediating Role of Consumers' Psychological Responses

ABSTRACT

The expansion of social media has led to a fundamental transformation in the ways brands communicate with consumers. One of the most compelling areas in this regard is the revival of heritage brands; brands that, for various reasons, had disappeared from consumption cycles are now utilizing the capacity of social media to return to consumers' minds. Social media has become recognized as one of the most significant tools of modern marketing, fundamentally transforming the relationship between brands and consumers. With the increase in two-way interactions and the formation of brand-oriented communities on digital platforms, new opportunities have emerged for the revival of heritage brands. Brands are now able to redefine their identities through social media marketing and establish effective relationships with a new generation of consumers. The purpose of the present study was to model, through structural equation modeling, the effect of social media marketing on the revival of heritage brands by examining the mediating role of consumers' psychological responses. In this study, the researcher employed a quantitative research method and a structural equation modeling approach to answer the research questions. The statistical population consisted of consumers of heritage brands (National Shoe products). Due to the unlimited size of the population, a sample size of 180 participants was determined using Cochran's formula. Descriptive statistics and SPSS version 24 were used to analyze demographic data and extract central tendency indices, while inferential statistics were analyzed using structural equation modeling through Smart PLS version 3. The findings indicated a positive and significant effect of social media marketing, with an emphasis on the role of consumers' psychological responses, on the revival of heritage brands. The results of this study can provide valuable guidance for managers of brands seeking to revive forgotten brands by relying on the capacities of the digital social environment.

Keywords: Social media marketing, heritage brands, revival of discontinued brands, consumers' psychological responses

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and communication platforms has fundamentally transformed the nature of marketing activities and the interaction between brands and consumers. Among these developments, social media has emerged as one of the most influential communication infrastructures, reshaping how organizations create, maintain, and revive brand relationships. Social media marketing is no longer limited to promotional communication; rather, it has become a strategic mechanism for creating emotional engagement, strengthening consumer participation, and reconstructing brand identity in competitive markets [1, 2]. The interactive nature of digital platforms allows consumers not only to receive brand messages but also to actively participate in content creation, brand storytelling, and online advocacy. This transformation has

increased the strategic importance of consumer-generated interactions in shaping brand perceptions and long-term brand value [3, 4].

One of the emerging areas within contemporary branding literature is the revival of heritage or discontinued brands. Brand revival refers to the process through which previously discontinued, neglected, or weakened brands are reintroduced into the market with renewed identity, positioning, and consumer relevance. In highly competitive markets characterized by rapid innovation and changing consumer preferences, many firms have recognized that dormant brands may still possess valuable symbolic capital, emotional associations, and nostalgic memories among consumers [5, 6]. Consequently, organizations increasingly attempt to reactivate old brands instead of creating entirely new ones, as heritage brands often benefit from pre-existing consumer familiarity and emotional attachment. The revival of such brands has become particularly significant in industries where tradition, cultural identity, and collective memory influence purchasing behavior [7, 8].

The contemporary digital environment has substantially changed the mechanisms through which brand revival occurs. In the past, brand resurrection depended primarily on traditional advertising campaigns and distribution strategies. However, the emergence of social media ecosystems has created new pathways for reconnecting consumers with heritage brands through interactive communication, storytelling, nostalgia-based campaigns, and online communities [9, 10]. Social media enables brands to revive historical narratives, communicate authenticity, and establish emotional resonance with both older and younger generations of consumers. Through visual content, user-generated experiences, and digital engagement, organizations can strategically reconstruct the symbolic meaning of heritage brands and reposition them within contemporary cultural contexts [4, 11].

Research in the field of social media marketing has consistently emphasized the role of digital engagement in strengthening consumer-brand relationships. Consumer engagement on social media platforms is often associated with increased brand trust, loyalty, emotional attachment, and advocacy behaviors [12, 13]. In the context of brand revival, these interactions become particularly important because heritage brands rely heavily on emotional memory and psychological attachment. Consumers frequently associate old brands with personal experiences, family traditions, cultural nostalgia, and collective identity. Social media platforms provide opportunities for consumers to share these experiences publicly, thereby amplifying emotional resonance and encouraging collective participation in brand revival movements [14, 15].

Nostalgia has emerged as one of the central psychological mechanisms underlying brand resurrection strategies. Nostalgic marketing appeals stimulate emotional memories associated with the past and create feelings of comfort, familiarity, continuity, and authenticity. Previous studies have demonstrated that nostalgic advertisements can significantly influence consumer support for discontinued brands and strengthen willingness to participate in brand resurrection campaigns [16, 17]. Social media platforms further intensify the effectiveness of nostalgia because digital communities allow users to collectively reconstruct memories and emotionally engage with historical brand identities. The sharing of old logos, advertisements, product designs, and consumer stories can reactivate dormant emotional bonds and contribute to positive attitudes toward revived brands [13, 15].

Another important concept in the literature on brand revival is psychological reactance. Psychological reactance refers to consumers' emotional and cognitive responses when they perceive that a valued brand or consumption choice has been removed or threatened. Consumers may experience frustration, resistance, and a desire to restore access to discontinued brands. Social media has amplified this phenomenon by enabling collective activism and organized online campaigns aimed

at bringing deleted brands back to the market [18, 19]. Consumers can now mobilize digital communities, create petitions, and publicly express dissatisfaction regarding brand discontinuation. Such collective digital behavior demonstrates that consumer psychology plays a critical mediating role in the relationship between social media marketing and brand revival outcomes.

The role of consumer psychology in branding has become increasingly prominent in recent years. Modern consumers often perceive brands not merely as functional products but as symbolic extensions of identity and self-expression. The concept of the extended self explains how consumers incorporate brands into their personal and social identities, particularly in digital environments where online self-presentation is highly significant [20]. Heritage brands often possess symbolic meanings associated with authenticity, trustworthiness, continuity, and cultural identity. As a result, consumers may develop strong emotional attachments to these brands, even after their disappearance from the market. Social media marketing strategies that effectively activate such psychological associations may substantially increase the likelihood of successful brand revival [3, 21].

Authenticity has also become a critical determinant of consumer responses toward revived brands. In the digital era, consumers increasingly seek authentic and transparent brand communications, particularly when organizations attempt to reintroduce heritage brands into the market [4]. Authenticity reflects the degree to which consumers perceive a brand as genuine, credible, and consistent with its historical identity. Revived brands that fail to maintain authenticity may encounter skepticism and rejection from consumers. Conversely, brands that successfully preserve their historical essence while adapting to modern expectations are more likely to gain consumer trust and engagement [3, 11]. Social media platforms provide opportunities for organizations to communicate authenticity through storytelling, interactive dialogue, historical narratives, and transparent communication practices.

Consumer engagement constitutes another essential factor influencing brand revival success. Engagement refers to consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with a brand across digital environments. Engaged consumers are more likely to share brand-related content, recommend brands to others, and participate in online brand communities [2, 12]. In the context of heritage brand revival, engagement behaviors can strengthen brand visibility, increase emotional attachment, and facilitate positive word-of-mouth communication. Social media marketing strategies that encourage interaction, participation, and co-creation can therefore play a significant role in restoring discontinued brands to market relevance [9, 10].

Several studies have highlighted the strategic importance of integrating psychological and emotional dimensions into brand revival strategies. Research has shown that emotional attachment, nostalgic feelings, perceived legitimacy, and identity congruence significantly affect consumer attitudes toward revived brands [22, 23]. Consumers are more likely to support heritage brands when they perceive them as culturally meaningful, emotionally familiar, and socially prestigious. In addition, digital engagement and interactive communication may strengthen these psychological perceptions by allowing consumers to participate directly in the reconstruction of brand meaning [20, 24].

The revival of heritage brands has also gained increasing attention in emerging economies, where traditional brands often possess strong cultural and historical significance. In many developing markets, heritage brands symbolize national identity, collective memory, and trust accumulated over decades. Consequently, consumers may exhibit stronger emotional reactions toward discontinued local brands compared with newly introduced foreign competitors [5, 25]. In the Iranian market, for

example, brands such as Melli Shoes represent not only commercial products but also cultural symbols associated with earlier generations and social experiences. Therefore, understanding how social media marketing influences the psychological responses of consumers toward such brands is of substantial practical and theoretical importance.

Despite the growing body of research on social media marketing and brand revival, several theoretical and empirical gaps remain unresolved. First, many previous studies have examined brand resurrection primarily from advertising or nostalgic marketing perspectives while paying limited attention to the broader role of social media ecosystems in facilitating consumer interaction and digital engagement [14, 17]. Second, although psychological factors such as nostalgia, attachment, and reactance have been studied individually, fewer studies have investigated their integrated mediating role in the relationship between social media marketing and heritage brand revival [19, 21]. Third, most prior research has been conducted in Western or international contexts, while limited empirical evidence exists regarding heritage brand revival in Middle Eastern and emerging market environments [25, 26].

Furthermore, recent developments in digital communication technologies have intensified the need for updated conceptual models explaining how social media interactions contribute to brand revitalization. Contemporary consumers increasingly rely on social media platforms for information exchange, peer recommendations, emotional expression, and identity construction. As a result, the success of brand revival initiatives depends not only on product quality or nostalgic advertising but also on the extent to which brands can establish authentic, emotionally meaningful, and psychologically engaging digital relationships with consumers [1, 2]. Understanding these relationships requires comprehensive analytical frameworks capable of integrating social media marketing activities with consumer psychological processes and brand revival outcomes.

The present study contributes to the existing literature by examining the effect of social media marketing on the revival of heritage brands while specifically investigating the mediating role of consumers' psychological responses. By focusing on consumers of Melli Shoes as a representative heritage brand, this research seeks to provide empirical insights into how digital interactions, emotional engagement, and psychological mechanisms contribute to successful brand revitalization in contemporary markets. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to model the structural relationships between social media marketing and the revival of heritage brands with emphasis on the mediating role of consumers' psychological responses.

Methodology

This study is descriptive-survey in terms of methodology and applied in terms of purpose classification. The statistical population consisted of consumers of heritage brands, specifically National Shoe products. Considering the unlimited population size, a sample size of 250 participants was determined using Cochran's formula. The sampling method employed in this study was random sampling, and the data were collected through field research.

The data collection instrument was a standardized questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through face validity and expert opinions from academics and specialists in the field. Its validity was further verified using content validity, while its reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire variables, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each variable, and the results indicated that the average Cronbach's alpha values for all variables exceeded 0.70. In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to

examine the relationships among the model components, and Smart PLS software was utilized for confirmatory factor analysis.

Findings and Results

In this study, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data. If the data distribution is normal, inferential statistical tests can be applied. To examine the normality assumption, the null hypothesis states that the data follow a normal distribution. This test was conducted at a 5% significance level. If the significance value is greater than or equal to 0.05, there is no reason to reject the null hypothesis; therefore, the data distribution can be considered normal. The statistical hypotheses for testing data normality were formulated as follows:

H0: The research variables follow a normal distribution ($S \geq 0.05$).

H1: The research variables do not follow a normal distribution ($S < 0.05$).

Table 1

Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test Results for Research Variables

Variable	Social Media Marketing	Revival of Heritage Brands	Consumers’ Psychological Responses
Z Value	3.701	3.567	3.853
Significance Level	0.000	0.000	0.000

To test the hypotheses, the outer and inner models were first evaluated. For assessing the outer model, two criteria were used: Dillon–Goldstein’s rho (composite reliability) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). For evaluating the inner model, the predictive relevance criterion, also referred to as the Q² coefficient, was applied. If the Q² coefficient is positive, the structural model can be considered to possess acceptable quality.

Table 2

Evaluation of the Research Outer Model

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social Media Marketing	0.938	0.946	0.594
Revival of Heritage Brands	0.925	0.947	0.816
Consumers’ Psychological Responses	0.914	0.931	0.631

Table 3

Assessment of the Inner or Structural Model Quality

Variable	Sum of Squares of Observations (SSO)	Sum of Squares of Prediction Errors (SSE)	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Social Media Marketing	3336.000	3336.000	0.565
Revival of Heritage Brands	1112.000	626.751	0.436
Consumers’ Psychological Responses	2224.000	1858.121	0.165

Initially, the adequacy of the data for factor analysis was examined using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test. In addition, Bartlett’s test was used to ensure sampling adequacy.

Table 4

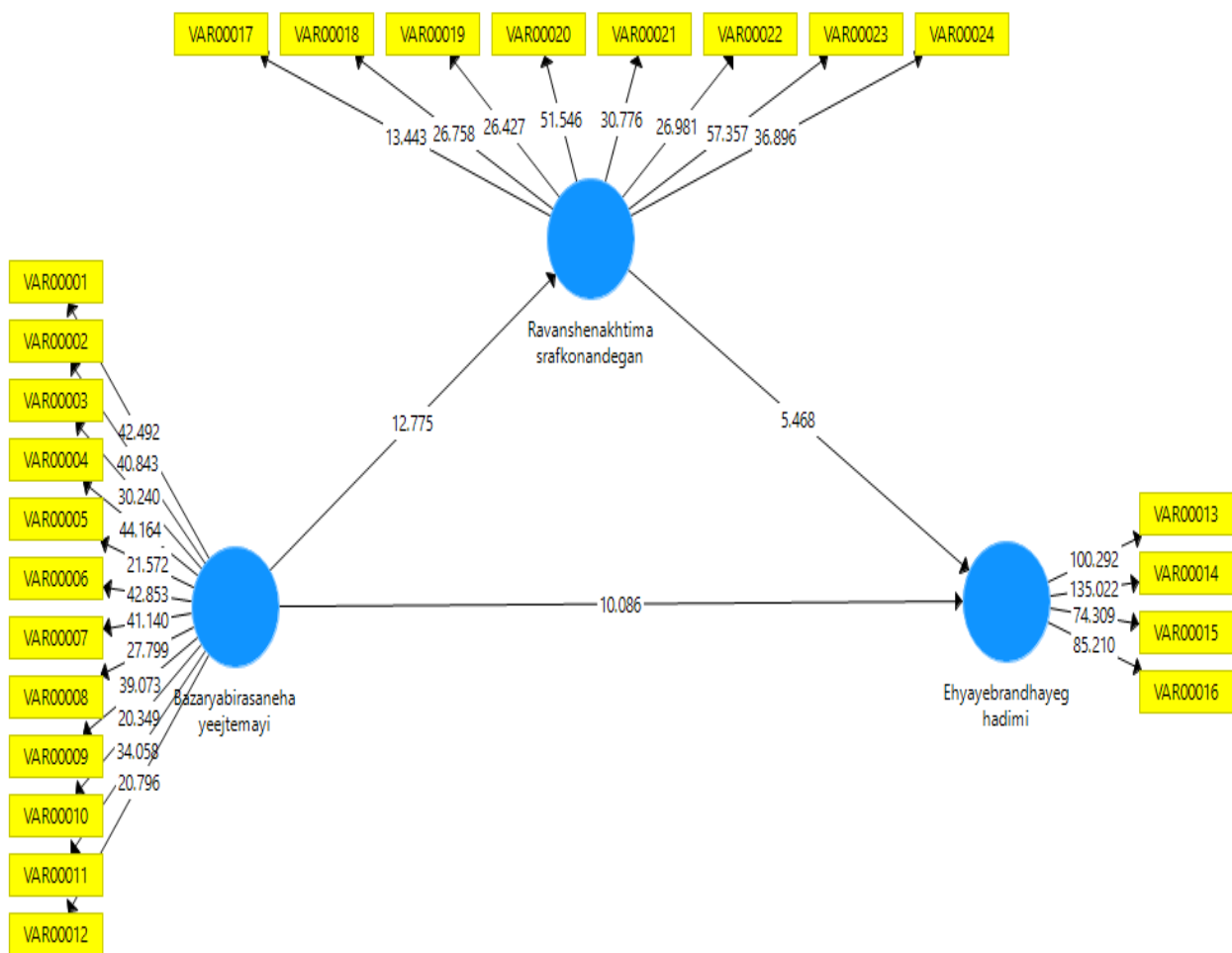
KMO and Bartlett’s Test Results

Test	Value
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)	0.820
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Chi-Square)	1050.128
Degrees of Freedom	76
Significance Level	0.000

To test the hypotheses, structural equation modeling using Smart PLS software was employed. In the structural equation modeling system, each variable can be considered both an endogenous and an exogenous variable. Figure 1 presents the t-values for the measurement model (t-values for the questionnaire items and their related variables) and the structural model (t-values for the proposed paths among variables). In PLS path models, the significance of paths is tested through the bootstrapping method, which is a resampling technique. Based on bootstrapping, the related hypotheses can be tested. In the corresponding outputs, the path coefficient and the extracted t-statistics are presented. Since the significance level defined in this study was 0.05, t-values greater than 1.96 indicate hypothesis acceptance.

Figure 1

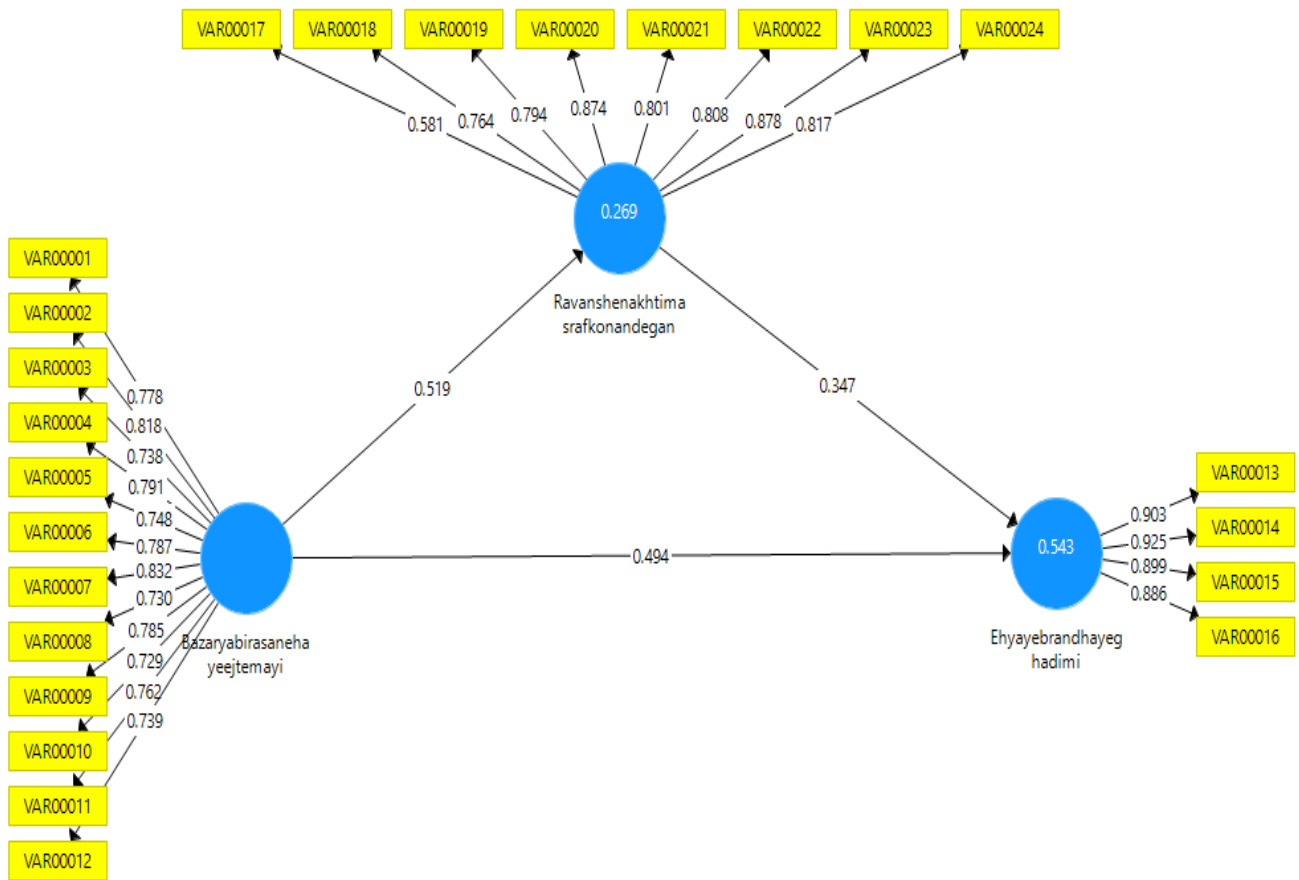
Tested Model of the Research Variables (Path t-Values)



This model demonstrates the significance of the relationships among latent variables. If the calculated t-value at the 0.05 significance level does not fall within the non-significant interval (-1.96 to +1.96), a significant relationship exists between the two latent variables. Figure 2 illustrates the standardized coefficients for the measurement model (standardized coefficients for the questionnaire items and their related variables) and the structural model (path coefficients among the variables).

Figure 2

Tested Model of the Research Variables (Path Coefficients)



Finally, the results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Effect Coefficient	t-Test Statistic	Significance Level	Result
Social media marketing has an effect on the revival of heritage brands.	0.49	10.08	$p < 0.05$	Significant
Social media marketing has a significant effect on the revival of heritage brands with emphasis on the mediating role of consumers' psychological responses.		6.94	$p < 0.05$	Significant

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of social media marketing on the revival of heritage brands with emphasis on the mediating role of consumers' psychological responses. The findings demonstrated that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on the revival of heritage brands. In addition, the results confirmed that consumers' psychological responses significantly mediate the relationship between social media marketing and heritage brand revival. These findings indicate that digital interactions and online engagement mechanisms are capable of strengthening consumer attachment, reconstructing brand meaning, and increasing consumers' willingness to reconnect with previously discontinued or weakened brands.

The findings of the first hypothesis revealed that social media marketing significantly influences the revival of heritage brands. This result is consistent with the studies of [9], [10], [2], and [1], all of which emphasized the transformative role of social media in developing interactive brand relationships and generating brand value in digital environments. Social media platforms have changed the traditional unidirectional communication process into a participatory and collaborative system in which consumers actively shape brand narratives and contribute to brand identity formation. In the context of heritage brands, these interactive mechanisms are particularly influential because such brands often rely on emotional memory, symbolic identity, and historical familiarity rather than solely on functional attributes.

One possible explanation for this finding is that social media marketing enables organizations to reconstruct the historical and emotional dimensions of heritage brands through continuous communication and storytelling. Consumers who encounter nostalgic content, historical product images, and user-generated experiences on social media are more likely to reconnect emotionally with dormant brands. In digital environments, brand-related memories become socially shared experiences, increasing collective attachment toward the revived brand. This interpretation aligns with the findings of [15] and [14], who demonstrated that nostalgia-oriented social media campaigns can significantly strengthen emotional attachment and support consumer-driven brand resurrection movements.

The positive effect of social media marketing on heritage brand revival can also be explained through the concept of digital engagement. Social media allows consumers to interact with brands in real time, share experiences, provide feedback, and participate in online brand communities. Such interactions increase consumers' perceived involvement and strengthen psychological ownership toward the brand. According to [12], entertainment, utility, and interaction in digital media environments substantially increase consumer brand engagement. Similarly, [13] emphasized that social media environments strengthen consumer-brand relationships by intensifying nostalgic experiences and emotional communication. Therefore, the revival of heritage brands is no longer limited to corporate advertising strategies but increasingly depends on consumers' active participation in digital communication ecosystems.

The findings also support the argument that revived brands derive substantial value from authenticity and symbolic continuity. Heritage brands possess accumulated symbolic capital formed over years of consumer experiences and cultural familiarity. Social media marketing provides opportunities for organizations to preserve and communicate this authenticity while simultaneously adapting brands to contemporary market expectations. This finding is consistent with the work of [4] and [3], who argued that transparency, authenticity, and trust are critical determinants of successful digital brand interactions. Consumers are more likely to support revived brands when they perceive them as authentic continuations of the original brand identity rather than purely commercial reproductions.

The present findings additionally align with the research of [7], which demonstrated that traditional and heritage brands can achieve renewed market relevance when they successfully integrate historical identity with modern communication strategies. In many cases, heritage brands represent cultural continuity and collective memory. Social media platforms facilitate the transmission of these symbolic meanings across generations by enabling consumers to share personal stories, memories, and emotional experiences associated with the brand. Such processes strengthen intergenerational brand legitimacy and contribute to the long-term sustainability of revived brands.

The results of the second hypothesis confirmed the mediating role of consumers' psychological responses in the relationship between social media marketing and heritage brand revival. This finding suggests that social media marketing

does not influence brand revival directly alone; rather, its effectiveness depends substantially on the psychological and emotional reactions generated among consumers. These reactions include nostalgia, emotional attachment, psychological ownership, identity congruence, trust, and psychological reactance. This result is consistent with the studies of [18] and [19], which highlighted the role of psychological reactance in motivating consumers to participate in social media activism for restoring deleted brands.

Psychological reactance theory suggests that consumers may experience emotional discomfort when valued brands disappear from the market. Such feelings often generate a desire to restore access to the lost brand. Social media platforms intensify this process by enabling consumers to publicly express dissatisfaction, organize collective campaigns, and encourage others to support brand resurrection movements. In this regard, social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a psychological environment where collective emotions and consumer activism emerge. Consequently, the success of heritage brand revival strategies depends largely on organizations' ability to stimulate and manage these emotional responses effectively.

The mediating role of consumers' psychological responses can also be explained through emotional attachment theory. Emotional attachment refers to the strong affective bond consumers develop with brands over time. Heritage brands often possess emotional significance because they are associated with consumers' childhood memories, family traditions, cultural experiences, and social identity. Social media marketing campaigns that reactivate these memories may increase emotional attachment and strengthen positive attitudes toward revived brands. This interpretation is supported by the findings of [16], [17], and [15], who demonstrated that nostalgia-based communication strategies positively influence consumers' support for brand resurrection.

The findings are also compatible with the concept of the extended self proposed in consumer behavior literature. According to [20], consumers often incorporate brands into their personal identity structures, especially within digital environments where symbolic self-presentation is highly significant. Heritage brands may function as symbolic markers of identity, continuity, and authenticity. When such brands disappear, consumers may perceive the loss as a disruption of personal or collective identity. Social media marketing strategies that reactivate identity-related meanings can therefore strengthen consumers' emotional connection with the revived brand and increase behavioral support for brand restoration initiatives.

Another explanation for the mediating role of psychological responses relates to legitimacy perceptions. Revived brands may initially face skepticism regarding their relevance, innovativeness, or capability to compete in modern markets. However, social media interactions can gradually reconstruct legitimacy by increasing visibility, reinforcing authenticity, and generating positive electronic word-of-mouth communication. The findings correspond with the study of [22], who found that aged brands can overcome perceptions of incompetence through legitimacy associations and symbolic reinforcement. Consumers who perceive revived brands as legitimate and culturally meaningful are more likely to develop favorable attitudes and purchasing intentions.

The current findings also support the perspective that successful brand revival requires balancing nostalgia with innovation. While heritage brands benefit from historical familiarity and emotional attachment, consumers also expect them to adapt to contemporary market expectations regarding quality, design, functionality, and digital communication. This interpretation aligns with the findings of [8], which emphasized that Nokia's revival was influenced not only by past

recognition but also by perceptions of innovativeness. Similarly, [23] argued that brand image, quality, and prestige remain essential determinants of consumer acceptance even for historically established brands. Therefore, social media marketing strategies should simultaneously emphasize historical authenticity and modern relevance.

The findings further reinforce the growing importance of consumer-centered approaches in brand management. Contemporary consumers no longer passively receive marketing messages; instead, they actively participate in shaping brand meanings and influencing market dynamics. The revival of heritage brands increasingly depends on collaborative interactions among firms, consumers, and online communities. This interpretation is consistent with the conclusions of [24], who emphasized the role of value-expressive attitudes and social adjustment functions in shaping consumer-brand relationships. Social media platforms strengthen these processes by facilitating identity expression, community participation, and symbolic consumption.

The results are also consistent with studies conducted in emerging market contexts. Heritage brands in developing economies often possess strong cultural and historical significance that extends beyond functional product value. Research by [25], [6], and [5] emphasized that consumer familiarity, emotional attachment, and cultural memory are among the most important determinants of successful brand revival. In the context of Melli Shoes, consumers may perceive the brand as part of national commercial history and collective memory, increasing their emotional responsiveness toward revival initiatives. Social media marketing campaigns that emphasize these symbolic dimensions may therefore achieve stronger psychological and behavioral effects among consumers.

In addition, the findings contribute to the broader literature on brand deletion and brand resurrection. According to [27], research on brand deletion has increasingly recognized the importance of understanding consumer reactions to discontinued products and brands. The current study extends this literature by demonstrating that social media marketing can effectively transform negative reactions associated with brand disappearance into positive engagement and revival support. Furthermore, the findings correspond with the meta-synthesis perspective proposed by [26], which emphasized the multidimensional antecedents and consequences of brand revival processes.

Finally, the present findings support the argument that heritage brand revival is not merely a marketing activity but also a socio-psychological and cultural process. Revived brands succeed when they can reconnect consumers with meaningful memories, symbolic identities, and authentic experiences while simultaneously adapting to modern digital communication environments. Social media platforms facilitate this process by enabling continuous interaction, emotional storytelling, and collective participation. Therefore, organizations seeking to revive heritage brands should pay close attention to consumers' psychological responses and design digital marketing strategies capable of generating emotional attachment, trust, authenticity, and community engagement.

One limitation of the present study was that the statistical population was restricted to consumers of a single heritage brand, namely Melli Shoes, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries and cultural contexts. In addition, the study relied on self-report questionnaire data, which may be influenced by response bias and subjective interpretation. The cross-sectional design of the research also prevented the examination of long-term changes in consumer attitudes and psychological responses toward revived brands over time.

Future research could examine the role of additional psychological and behavioral variables such as consumer trust, perceived authenticity, brand love, and electronic word-of-mouth in the brand revival process. Comparative studies across

different industries, countries, and cultural environments may also provide deeper insights into how social media marketing influences heritage brand revival under varying market conditions. Furthermore, future researchers may employ longitudinal and experimental designs to investigate the long-term effectiveness of digital revival strategies and the evolution of consumer-brand relationships over time.

From a practical perspective, managers of heritage brands should design social media marketing strategies that emphasize emotional storytelling, nostalgia, authenticity, and consumer participation. Organizations should actively engage consumers through interactive campaigns, user-generated content, and online brand communities to strengthen emotional attachment and collective brand identity. In addition, firms should ensure that revived brands maintain a balance between preserving historical identity and adapting to modern consumer expectations regarding innovation, quality, and digital communication.

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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

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

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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