

Developing a Digital Platform-Based Model in the Sharing Economy: A Focus on Consumer Behavior, Participation Level, and Brand Community

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Abstract

This study aims to develop a model based on digital platforms within the sharing economy, focusing on consumer behavior, participation level, and brand community. Methodologically, the research adopts a mixed-method and developmental design. The qualitative phase employed a case study approach, while the quantitative phase was conducted through a survey. Participants in the qualitative phase included senior managers and employees of Digikala as well as university professors in management. A total of 16 individuals were purposefully selected after reaching theoretical saturation. The statistical population of the quantitative phase consisted of users with purchasing experience from Digikala, among whom 405 respondents were randomly selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, analyzed using thematic analysis in the qualitative section, and through confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling using SPSS and SmartPLS in the quantitative section. The validity and reliability of the findings were confirmed through various methods. Results revealed that ethical perception, customer experience, brand community personality, and relationship quality play central roles in shaping consumer behavior. Findings also indicated that ethical perception significantly influences both customer engagement and relationship quality in Digikala. Brand image, product knowledge, advertising content, brand community identity, relationship quality, and customer loyalty each contribute to engagement levels, which ultimately affect purchase behavior.

Keywords: Sharing Economy, Brand Community, Brand Engagement and Loyalty, Customer Participation

1. Introduction

An online brand community is a specialized, non-geographically bound community structured around social relationships among brand enthusiasts (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Such a community possesses unique characteristics and lacks geographical

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barriers (Wellman, 1979). It is formed based on shared commercial interests and tends to be relatively stable. Members demonstrate strong commitment to the goals and themes of one another (Cova, 1997) and exhibit a high degree of brand awareness and identification (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Organizations are motivated to facilitate the formation of brand communities because these communities perform valuable functions related to brand management (Habibi et al., 2014). For example, customers in a brand community can serve as a strong source of product improvement and innovation (Füller et al., 2010). They can assist one another in solving brand-related problems, thereby supporting the firm's customer service (Schau et al., 2009). Consequently, consumers may act as brand advocates, defending their preferred brands (Habibi et al., 2014) and even functioning as informal marketers by influencing non-members (Schau et al., 2009; Movahed et al., 2024).

Consumers join and engage with brand communities to derive both hedonic and utilitarian values from their participation (Schau et al., 2009). By engaging with brand communities, they enjoy sharing interests and simultaneously gain information about their favorite brands (Zaglia, 2013). Customer-brand engagement encompasses all interactions occurring within the brand community (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Nozari, 2024) and is defined as a customer's readiness to participate actively and interact with a focal object such as a brand, organization, or community (Islam & Rahman, 2016).

Online brand communities are managed either by companies or by individuals who share mutual enthusiasm for the brand. They participate to establish stronger loyalty with customers (Weman, 2011). Hence, most brand communities allocate a significant portion of their marketing budgets to social media announcements on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This is perceived as a transparent marketing investment aimed at creating long-term relationships with customers (Baldus et al., 2015). This marketing strategy enhances multinational corporations' performance and encourages consumers to participate in brand communities. It also reduces operational costs and increases profitability. Consequently, it helps brands develop products and compete effectively, representing a competitive advantage strategy that fosters long-term customer relationships—particularly in customer relationship management (Kane et al., 2009).

Over the past decade, brand community, engagement, and community personality have been significantly influenced by digital platforms—phenomena particularly tangible within the sharing economy. Although research on the sharing economy has grown rapidly, knowledge about its key participants remains limited (Bucher et al., 2016). Prior studies have identified several motivations for participation, including financial benefits (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2015), environmental concerns (Möhlmann, 2015), social values (Perera et al., 2017), hedonic motivations (Hamari et al., 2016), and utility (Hellwig et al., 2015). Nevertheless, ambiguity persists, and certain research gaps remain (Davidson et al., 2018).

Existing studies have often been conceptual (e.g., Belk, 2007, 2010; Benoit et al., 2017) or have focused narrowly on single sectors such as mobility or housing (Barnes & Mattsson, 2017; Möhlmann, 2015; Nozari et al., 2025). Moreover, most previous work has overlooked the distinction between users as consumers and as providers, potentially resulting in ambiguous findings (Davidson et al., 2018).

Further, earlier studies have typically examined individual attitudes and motivations determining collaborative consumption, neglecting the roles of socio-demographic and personality factors—particularly in empirical research. Psychology literature provides

evidence for the interrelationship between psychological and socio-demographic variables in shaping consumer behavior (Egea & de Frutos, 2013). Mundek et al. (2010) emphasize that situational and environmental factors must also be considered to understand underlying behavioral mechanisms. Participation in the sharing economy is shaped primarily by attitudes, but interactions among variables also play crucial roles. In summary, existing knowledge is largely conceptual, lacking a holistic approach and failing to differentiate between providers and consumers. It has focused narrowly on attitudes and motivations as primary determinants of participation while neglecting factors such as social-demographic traits, personality characteristics, engagement, and brand community personality. Accordingly, this study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive understanding of the driving forces behind participation in the sharing economy. It specifically seeks to answer the following question: How can a digital platform-based model in the sharing economy be explained based on consumer behavior, engagement, and brand community personality?

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the most relevant domestic and international studies related to the research topic. After summarizing the prior works, the conceptual model of the study is presented.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Studies

No.	Authors	Title	Key Findings
1	Esmaeili et al. (2024)	Identifying the Dimensions and Consequences of Digital Customer Experience Using a Phenomenological Approach	Analysis of findings yielded 705 codes categorized under three main components of customer digital experience: convenience and learning, satisfaction with online shopping, and repurchase intention.
2	Kordenaeej et al. (2022)	Identifying the Antecedents of Value Co-Creation in Sharing Economy Startups	The study revealed eight overarching themes: consumers' ethical perceptions, brand power, relationship marketing, expected value, customer experience, sustainability, business growth and development, and infrastructure.
3	Aznab et al. (2020)	Brand Image Creation: Examining the Role of Instagram User Experience in Sharing Economy Platforms	Customer experience serves as a significant motivational factor for content creation on Instagram, leading to brand image formation in sharing economy platforms.
4	Khalaj et al. (2020)	Identifying Dimensions and Components of the Sharing Economy in Production Systems	Key dimensions include: sharing parties, shareable resources, modes of sharing, methods of identifying and connecting parties, conditions of access and ownership, identification of surplus capacities, benefits for stakeholders, and the role of social factors.
5	Khanifar et al. (2017)	The Role of Brand Personality in Stimulating Mobile Purchase Decisions: Considering the Mediating Role of Brand Trust and Advertising Content	Three dimensions of brand personality (responsibility, dynamism, and emotionality) significantly affect brand trust and advertising content, which in turn influence consumer purchase decisions.
6	Jiang et al. (2024)	Customer Empowerment and Engagement on Sharing Platforms in Retail: Mediating	Customer empowerment, service innovation, and platform trust significantly affect customer engagement on sharing platforms.

		Effects of Service Innovation and Platform Trust	
7	Yuan et al. (2024)	The Role of Interaction in Increasing Customer Engagement in Sharing Economy Platforms	Two-way communication and participation enhance customer engagement, while joint problem-solving remains ineffective.
8	Li et al. (2024)	Disruption in the Sharing Economy at the Individual Consumer Level: How Consumer Reflexivity Drives Re-engagement	Economic utility, social value, and perceived sustainability potential affect consumers' intentions to re-engage in sharing practices.
9	Lin et al. (2024)	The Impact of Co-created Value Proposition on Consumer Engagement through Brand Community Sense	A co-created value proposition strengthens consumer engagement and enhances brand community identity.
10	Alibakhshi et al. (2024)	A Win-Win Situation: Enhancing Sharing Economy Platform Brand Equity through CSR and Gamification	Involving business owners in CSR via gamification can enhance the brand equity of sharing economy platforms.
11	He et al. (2023)	Understanding Multi-Competing Brand Community Engagement: A Mixed-Methods Approach	Consumers' multi-brand community engagement can be categorized as information-oriented, socially-oriented, or oppositional. Product knowledge correlates positively with multi-brand engagement, which is linked to brand-switching intentions.
12	Securato et al. (2023)	Consumer Participation in the Sharing Economy: A Perspective on Crowdsourced Delivery Services	Brand value, participation in other sharing services, delivery security, and product quality significantly influence participation in crowdsourced delivery.
13	Li et al. (2023)	Disruption in the Sharing Economy: How Consumer Reflexivity Drives Re-engagement	Economic benefits, social value, and perceived sustainability influence re-engagement and brand loyalty, mediated by consumer reflexivity.
14	Cai & Bae (2023)	Antecedents of Engagement in Online Sharing Economy Communities	Community identification, relationship commitment, and in-group trust positively affect online sharing community engagement and identity.
15	Sharif et al. (2022)	Brand Loyalty Determinants Using Brand Personality as a Moderator in Social Media Brand Communities	Brand loyalty is formed through user interactions such as sharing, commenting, liking, and reviewing on brand social media platforms.
16	Barrow et al. (2022)	Examining Participation in the Sharing Economy through the Role of Individual Characteristics	Socio-demographic factors (gender, age, education), personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness), and attitudes (collectivism, materialism, perceived economic support) significantly relate to participation in the sharing economy.
17	Kurtz & Dastidar (2022)	Developing a Conceptual Framework for B2B Customer Engagement via Brand Personality on LinkedIn	Exposure to LinkedIn posts enhances likes, clicks, and shares, influencing perceptions and engagement behaviors. The brand personality of posts impacts customer engagement behaviors.
18	Huntzen et al. (2022)	The Role of Content Format and Social Media Platform in	Content categorized as rational, emotional, or transactional influences user engagement differently across Facebook and Instagram.

		Customer Engagement in the Tourism Industry	
19	Ballester et al. (2021)	The Impact of Pleasure on Consumer Perception	Perceived pleasure and authenticity of eco-friendly restaurant Instagram posts positively affect women's emotional engagement and behavioral intentions.
20	Martínez-López et al. (2021)	The Role of Online Brand Community Engagement in the Consumer-Brand Relationship	Online brand community engagement directly contributes to participation, co-creation, and positive word-of-mouth, and indirectly enhances brand loyalty.

The literature review indicates that the majority of prior studies have addressed isolated determinants of consumer engagement, brand loyalty, or participation in the sharing economy—often focusing on single variables such as trust, utility, or sustainability. However, there remains a lack of integrated models that simultaneously account for consumer behavior, engagement levels, ethical perception, brand community personality, and relationship quality within digital platforms.

This gap justifies the present study's aim to conceptualize and empirically test a digital platform-based model of the sharing economy that reflects the behavioral, emotional, and social mechanisms driving consumer participation and brand community formation.

3. Method

A. Qualitative Section

This study, in terms of data nature, is categorized as a mixed-method research (qualitative–quantitative), and in terms of purpose, it is developmental. Regarding the method of data collection, it was based on semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the interview protocol was first designed, and after being approved by experts, the interview process was initiated.

(Some examples of interview questions included: What factors and indicators lead individuals and customers to become engaged in the sharing economy? How can startups promote customer engagement in their respective fields of activity? What kind of performance and behavior should startups demonstrate to create customer engagement? How can brand community personality lead to customer engagement? How does brand community personality directly and indirectly influence individuals' engagement in the sharing economy? What would be the impact if brand personality did not exist within a community on individuals' engagement and participation in the sharing economy? How can customers' ethical perceptions lead to engagement in the sharing economy? What factors, when combined with ethical perceptions, can result in greater participation in the sharing economy? and so forth.)

The participants in this study consisted of senior managers and employees of Digikala (with at least five years of work experience and a minimum of a master's degree) and professors in the field of management (with at least five years of teaching experience and a Ph.D. degree). The sampling method was purposive, specifically criterion-based and snowball sampling, and the end of data collection was determined based on theoretical

saturation. In this regard, after 13 interviews, theoretical saturation was achieved, and the total number of interviews reached 16.

Data collection was carried out using the interview instrument, and data analysis was performed through the thematic analysis technique developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). To ensure the accuracy and validity of the study, the data triangulation method was used. Triangulation refers to examining a subject from multiple sources and through multiple methods. Accordingly, in this research, various sources such as marketing management experts were used to validate the interview content, previous academic studies and marketing documentation were reviewed, and more than one researcher was involved in the data collection process, with two independent coders engaged for data analysis.

B. Quantitative Section

In this section, the research method, in terms of purpose, is applied, and in terms of data collection, it is descriptive–survey.

Regarding the statistical population in the quantitative section (after designing the questionnaire), it included all individuals who had experience purchasing through the Digikala platform in the city of Tehran. Due to the unlimited size of the population, a sample of 405 individuals was selected randomly from the population.

The content validity of the questionnaire was assessed through expert opinions, while the construct validity was confirmed using factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, and since the coefficient for each item exceeded 0.70, the instrument was considered reliable.

For data analysis, SPSS and SmartPLS software were employed.

4. Findings

The research findings are presented and explained in two parts: the qualitative and quantitative sections.

A. Qualitative Section

After reviewing the related literature, the interview protocol was developed. Then, by identifying the experts who agreed to participate in the interviews, the interviews were conducted. Upon reaching theoretical saturation, the recorded audio files of the interviews were transcribed, and key statements were extracted from the documents.

Accordingly, the three main steps of thematic network analysis were performed: coding, categorization of main and sub-themes, and theme integration. A total of 313 initial concepts were obtained during open coding. After eliminating overlapping codes, 153 fundamental concepts remained, which were categorized into 14 main themes. Moreover, data analysis was conducted iteratively several times to ensure theoretical saturation for both the main and sub-themes.

Table 2. Categorization of Main and Sub-Themes

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Sharing Economy	Digital economy, communal economy, people-centered economy, group economy, online economy, large-scale economy, decentralized economy, platform economy, gig economy, on-demand services, demand-based economy, participatory economy, product–service systems, peer economy
Customer Engagement	Cognitive, emotional, behavioral
Brand Experience	Sensory experience, emotional experience, cognitive experience, behavioral experience
Brand Personality	Sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness
Brand Community Identity	Brand reputation, brand affection, brand satisfaction
Ethical Perception	Security, privacy, shared value, cultural alignment, fairness, environmental responsibility, social support
Marketing Content	Exciting, attractive, humorous
Relationship Quality	Brand trust, customer satisfaction, customer commitment
Brand Loyalty	Repeat purchase rate, brand advocates, degree of interaction with brand
Motivation for User-Generated Content	Informative (awareness creation), persuasive and promotional, interactive (building connections)
Consumer Product Knowledge	Awareness of product features, brand recognition and market positioning, prior experience and usage
Purchase Behavior	Purchase frequency, expenditure level
Brand Image	Consumer perception, brand differentiation from competitors
Social Support	Emotional, informational

B. Quantitative Section

In the descriptive section, demographic information showed that among the 405 respondents to the questionnaire, 210 (51.9%) were women and 195 (48.1%) were men. The age distribution indicated that 85 participants were under 25 years old, 71 were aged 26–30, 80 were aged 31–35, 66 were aged 36–40, 49 were aged 41–45, and 54 participants were over 45 years old. Regarding education, 94 respondents had a high-school diploma or below, 55 held associate degrees, 167 had bachelor’s degrees, 81 had master’s degrees, and 8 had doctoral degrees.

In the inferential section, to determine whether the sample size was adequate for factor analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was applied, yielding a value of 0.876, which indicates satisfactory sampling adequacy. Additionally, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Next, the relationships among the variables were examined using second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through SmartPLS software.

As observed in Table 3, the overall validity of the indicators and items is confirmed. According to the information in Table 3, the t-values of the indicators and research variables are all higher than their critical value at the 0.05 significance level (1.96); therefore, the validity of the indicators and items can be confirmed.

Table 3. Validity of Items

Indicators	Factor Loading	Standard Deviation	t-value	P Values	VIF
a1 <- Generated Content Motivation	0.882	0.011	81.333	0.000	1.765
a2 <- Generated Content Motivation	0.812	0.022	37.755	0.000	1.582
a3 <- Generated Content Motivation	0.714	0.032	22.167	0.000	1.282
b1 <- Brand Image	0.783	0.023	34.137	0.000	1.373
b2 <- Brand Image	0.773	0.023	32.893	0.000	1.384
b3 <- Brand Image	0.846	0.016	52.788	0.000	1.567
d1 <- Customer Engagement	0.821	0.021	38.895	0.000	1.990
d2 <- Customer Engagement	0.877	0.017	50.578	0.000	2.497
d3 <- Customer Engagement	0.878	0.014	62.553	0.000	2.368
d4 <- Customer Engagement	0.830	0.022	37.681	0.000	2.008
f1 <- Brand Community Identity	0.796	0.023	34.629	0.000	1.436
f2 <- Brand Community Identity	0.825	0.023	36.450	0.000	1.565
f3 <- Brand Community Identity	0.844	0.021	40.321	0.000	1.674
h1 <- Social Support	0.855	0.015	58.640	0.000	1.598
h2 <- Social Support	0.819	0.022	36.574	0.000	1.579
h3 <- Social Support	0.792	0.028	28.760	0.000	1.470
k1 <- Relationship Quality	0.838	0.015	56.725	0.000	1.390
k2 <- Relationship Quality	0.733	0.036	20.440	0.000	1.321
k3 <- Relationship Quality	0.791	0.025	31.815	0.000	1.378
m1 <- Advertising Content	0.859	0.018	47.468	0.000	1.313
m2 <- Advertising Content	0.789	0.029	27.218	0.000	1.328
m3 <- Advertising Content	0.392	0.078	5.055	0.000	1.017
n1 <- Consumer Product Knowledge	0.627	0.066	9.536	0.000	1.257
n2 <- Consumer Product Knowledge	0.772	0.045	17.152	0.000	1.347
n3 <- Consumer Product Knowledge	0.823	0.032	25.876	0.000	1.167
r1 <- Ethical Perception	0.765	0.024	31.661	0.000	1.659
r2 <- Ethical Perception	0.819	0.019	44.220	0.000	2.001
r3 <- Ethical Perception	0.808	0.024	34.013	0.000	2.040
r4 <- Ethical Perception	0.795	0.023	34.800	0.000	1.948
r5 <- Ethical Perception	0.730	0.029	25.037	0.000	1.491
s1 <- Brand Community Personality	0.724	0.037	19.610	0.000	1.604
s2 <- Brand Community Personality	0.740	0.034	21.710	0.000	1.588
s3 <- Brand Community Personality	0.698	0.036	19.196	0.000	1.340
s4 <- Brand Community Personality	0.673	0.035	19.396	0.000	1.331
s5 <- Brand Community Personality	0.615	0.038	15.984	0.000	1.148
t1 <- Customer Experience	0.777	0.022	35.777	0.000	1.416
t2 <- Customer Experience	0.861	0.017	51.128	0.000	1.787
t3 <- Customer Experience	0.822	0.018	44.603	0.000	1.560
v1 <- Brand Loyalty	0.736	0.032	23.012	0.000	1.259
v2 <- Brand Loyalty	0.835	0.020	42.689	0.000	1.598
v3 <- Brand Loyalty	0.813	0.023	35.635	0.000	1.483

y1 <- Purchase Behavior	0.813	0.047	17.202	0.000	1.195
y2 <- Purchase Behavior	0.745	0.060	12.318	0.000	1.193
y3 <- Purchase Behavior	0.437	0.111	3.941	0.000	1.007

As mentioned in the previous section, the factor loading (impact coefficient) of all items was confirmed. This is because the t-value of all items was above the critical value (1.96) at the 95% confidence level.

In Table 4, the statistical information related to the relationships between the variables has been analyzed.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Effect Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-value	P Value	Result
Ethical Perception → Customer Engagement	0.358	0.056	6.386	0.000	Supported
Ethical Perception → Relationship Quality	0.361	0.045	8.089	0.000	Supported
Motivation for User-Generated Content → Brand Image	0.404	0.044	9.153	0.000	Supported
Motivation for User-Generated Content → Customer Engagement	0.207	0.062	3.361	0.001	Supported
Customer Experience → Motivation for User-Generated Content	0.637	0.029	22.063	0.000	Supported
Customer Experience → Brand Image	0.721	0.026	27.702	0.000	Supported
Brand Image → Customer Engagement	-0.159	0.058	2.752	0.006	Supported
Social Support → Customer Engagement	-0.030	0.050	0.605	0.546	Not Supported
Consumer Product Knowledge → Customer Engagement	0.192	0.077	2.504	0.013	Supported
Customer Engagement → Purchase Behavior	0.316	0.047	6.715	0.000	Supported
Brand Community Personality → Advertisement Content	0.582	0.034	16.933	0.000	Supported
Brand Community Personality → Brand Community Identity	0.068	0.023	2.997	0.003	Supported
Brand Community Personality → Relationship Quality	0.127	0.040	3.186	0.002	Supported
Advertisement Content → Customer Engagement	0.164	0.061	2.683	0.008	Supported
Advertisement Content → Brand Loyalty	0.197	0.063	3.130	0.002	Supported
Brand Community Identity → Customer Engagement	0.217	0.068	3.198	0.000	Supported
Brand Loyalty → Customer Engagement	0.138	0.062	2.232	0.026	Supported
Relationship Quality → Customer Engagement	0.154	0.058	2.651	0.006	Supported
Relationship Quality → Brand Community Identity	0.538	0.039	13.775	0.000	Supported
Relationship Quality → Brand Loyalty	0.403	0.062	6.461	0.000	Supported

As shown in Table 4, the relationships between the variables are supported, confirming the research model.

Overall Model Fit:

Table 5. Overall Model Fit

Variable	R ²	Communality
Motivation for User-Generated Content	0.405	0.259
Brand Image	0.617	0.391
Customer Engagement	0.466	0.327
Purchase Behavior	0.180	0.141
Advertisement Content	0.339	0.166
Brand Community Identity	0.290	0.191
Brand Loyalty	0.294	0.182
Relationship Quality	0.546	0.330
Average	0.392	0.248
GOF		0.312

As observed in the table above, the goodness-of-fit (GOF) index is 0.312, indicating a strong and satisfactory fit of the model.

Table 6. Results of Cronbach's Alpha Test, Composite Reliability, and Average Extracted Variance

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.7$)	Composite Reliability (CR > 0.7)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.4)	Result
Ethical Perception	0.843	0.888	0.615	Confirmed
Motivation for Generated Content	0.727	0.846	0.649	Confirmed
Customer Experience	0.757	0.861	0.673	Confirmed
Brand Image	0.720	0.843	0.642	Confirmed
Social Support	0.762	0.862	0.677	Confirmed
Consumer Product Knowledge	0.721	0.787	0.555	Confirmed
Customer Engagement	0.874	0.913	0.725	Confirmed
Purchase Behavior	0.797	0.714	0.569	Confirmed
Brand Community Personality	0.726	0.820	0.578	Confirmed
Advertising Content	0.772	0.737	0.505	Confirmed
Brand Community Identity	0.760	0.862	0.676	Confirmed
Brand Loyalty	0.709	0.838	0.633	Confirmed
Relationship Quality	0.739	0.831	0.622	Confirmed

Based on the obtained results, the final research model can be illustrated as follows.

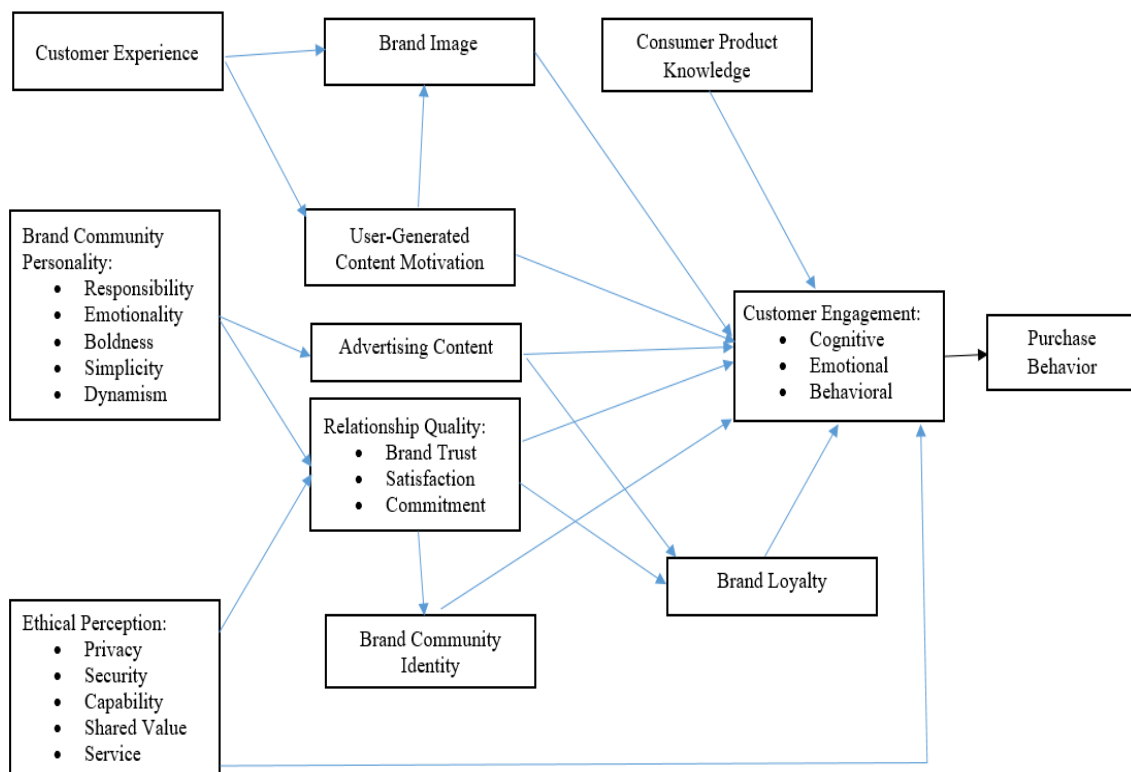


Figure 3. Final Research Model

- Accordingly, it can be stated that:
- Ethical perception has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.358.
- Ethical perception has a significant effect on relationship quality among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.361.
- Motivation for generated content has a significant effect on brand image among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.404.
- Motivation for generated content has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.207.
- Customer experience has a significant effect on motivation for generated content among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.637.
- Customer experience has a significant effect on brand image among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.721.
- Brand image has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.159.
- Consumer product knowledge has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.192.
- Customer engagement has a significant effect on purchase behavior among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.316.
- Brand community personality has a significant effect on advertising content among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.582.

- Brand community personality has a significant effect on brand community identity among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.068.
- Brand community personality has a significant effect on relationship quality among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.127.
- Advertising content has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.164.
- Advertising content has a significant effect on brand loyalty among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.197.
- Brand community identity has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.217.
- Brand loyalty has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.138.
- Relationship quality has a significant effect on customer engagement among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.154.
- Relationship quality has a significant effect on brand community identity among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.538.
- Relationship quality has a significant effect on brand loyalty among Digikala platform customers, with a path coefficient of 0.403.

5. Discussion and Conclusion:

The results led to the identification of a digital platform-based model in the sharing economy, focusing on the description of behavior, engagement, and brand community personality. Accordingly, it can be stated that in today's world, where the digital economy is rapidly expanding, digital platforms play a fundamental role in interactions between suppliers and consumers. In this context, traditional marketing and consumer behavior models are no longer sufficient to address complex and dynamic needs. This is especially true in the sharing economy, where the key characteristic is the active participation of users in creating and distributing value. Therefore, analyzing user behavior through comprehensive models is essential. Digikala, as the largest e-commerce platform in Iran, represents a prominent example of a digital platform within the sharing economy. This platform not only provides a marketplace for buying and selling goods but also enables users to write reviews, rate products, respond to each other, and share content, effectively creating a space for co-creation of value. Hence, examining consumer behavior, their level of engagement with the brand, and the personality formed by the brand community in users' minds is highly important.

Firstly, it should be noted that consumer behavior on digital platforms has become deeper, more complex, and multi-dimensional compared to traditional purchasing. On Digikala, users are not merely buyers; by writing reviews, uploading images or videos of products, responding to others' questions, and sharing their experiences on social media, they actively contribute to shaping the experiences of other customers. These interactive behaviors are a direct result of users' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with the brand.

Customer engagement in this context acts as a key mediating variable. The better users understand the brand, the stronger their sense of belonging and the greater their motivation to participate in the brand community. This engagement can stem from various factors, such as the quality of brand-customer relationships, targeted and relevant advertising content, and even the mental image and identity the brand creates for its users.

One of the important concepts in this context is brand community personality. On platforms like Digikala, the brand is not merely a logo or a trade name; it possesses a “social personality.” Users assign personality traits to the brand based on their experiences and interactions with other users. If Digikala is perceived as fair, responsive, precise, and innovative, over time this fosters trust and loyalty. Brand personality develops through collective experiences and establishes a shared identity among users. Moreover, the quality of relationships between the brand and users deeply influences loyalty, engagement, and the collective identity of the brand. When users feel that the brand attends to their needs and feedback, provides a smooth shopping experience, offers proper support, and combines human interaction with technology, they naturally develop stronger trust in the brand. This trust and satisfaction lay the foundation for long-term relationships and loyalty.

At a further stage, customers who have positive experiences with the brand enter a phase of collective identity formation. They perceive the brand as part of their lifestyle, become attached to it, and even volunteer to defend it against negative criticism. At this stage, the brand transforms into a “community,” and the customer becomes a “member” of that community. Long-term Digikala users spontaneously respond to new users’ questions, write analytical reviews, and produce high-quality content to introduce products. This level of participation is not possible without a collective identity.

Advertising content also plays a role in shaping and reinforcing engagement and loyalty. When brand advertisements go beyond commercial purposes to provide awareness, education, clear product information, and communicate brand values, users perceive them as useful, honest, and trustworthy. In this case, advertising not only stimulates purchase but also enhances emotional engagement with the brand.

Ultimately, all these factors collectively contribute to brand loyalty. Importantly, in sharing economy platforms, loyalty is not limited to repeat purchases. True loyalty manifests as supporting the brand, recommending it to others, providing fair reviews, and producing content. Such loyalty constitutes a sustainable asset for the brand and provides a strong competitive advantage in the digital market.

Based on the findings and the proposed digital platform-based model in the sharing economy, the following recommendations are offered:

- Given the significant impact of ethical perception on engagement and relationship quality, Digikala should strengthen the image of an ethical brand by providing transparent information about sales processes, product authenticity, support for domestic production, and fairness in vendor rankings.
- Positive customer experience greatly influences user-generated content. Digikala can encourage active participation by optimizing the review submission process, photo/video uploads, and rating mechanisms.
- Considering the role of motivation for generated content in brand image, creating a content creator club could be effective. Users who produce impactful content (reviews, videos, responses to questions) could receive points, discounts, or digital badges, thereby enhancing brand image and fostering a more active community.
- Given the strong effect of customer experience on brand image and content creation, Digikala should implement a comprehensive customer experience management system covering all stages from entry to post-delivery.
- In the sharing economy, user participation in creating brand experiences is crucial. Digikala could develop a system awarding active users honorary badges or social ranks (e.g., professional guide, experienced reviewer, trusted buyer) to support the

development of brand community personality. These badges should be visible on user profiles and alongside their comments or responses to inspire trust and participation from others.

- To increase users' cognitive and emotional engagement and promote participatory behavior, it is recommended that Digikala establish a "Brand Community Discussion Forum" where users can freely exchange ideas on various topics (e.g., laptop buying guides, brand comparisons, purchase experiences, product reviews).

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