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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The impact of perceived social media interactivity on brand trust. The mediating role of perceived social media agility and the moderating role of brand value

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Abstract

Although earlier studies shed light on the significance of perceived social media interactivity, its impact on perceived social media agility and brand trust has yet to be thoroughly investigated. The current study addresses this gap by examining the complex relationship between perceived social media interactivity, brand trust, perceived social media agility, and brand value. To further unpack these complex relationships, the current study investigates the role of gender as a moderating variable on the moderation effect of brand value between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility. In this regard, an online survey (N = 275) was conducted to measure the constructs of interest. PROCESS Models 1, 3, and 4 were used to test the research hypotheses. The results show that individuals perceive highly interactive brands as more agile on social media, leading to high brand trust levels. The results also indicate that the positive link between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility is contingent on consumers' perceived brand value. The results further display that the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is moderated by consumers' gender. Most interestingly, the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is only significant for men.

Keywords Perceived brand interactivity · Perceived social media agility · Brand trust · Brand value · Gender · Process models

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Introduction

There has been a significant surge in active social media users worldwide between 2019 and 2023, with the number rising from 3.48 billion to 4.76 billion (Datareportal 2023). This dramatic increase in active social media users has altered consumer behaviors. Social media platforms provide a conducive environment for brands to engage in bidirectional communication with their customers, facilitating the generation and continuity of relationships between brands and their customers (Labrecque 2014). In other words, these platforms offer brand interaction environments where customers can bond with the brands. To facilitate this bonding process, brands need to be interactive, engaged, and social media agile (Merrilees and Fry 2003; Cheung et al. 2020a; Gligor and Bozkurt 2021). When exploring consumer behavior in social media, brand interactivity and agility have been key growing concepts in the literature for the past decade; quick adaptation of online operations to changes requires brand interactivity and agility.

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Perceived brand interactivity captures the customer's perception of the brand's willingness and desire to provide an environment where two-way communication is possible (France et al. 2016; Bozkurt et al. 2021). As such, the concepts of interactivity and agility are strongly intertwined. Being agile on social media platforms requires interactivity first and foremost. To achieve agility, brands need ongoing social media research to understand current and future customer needs (Pitafi et al. 2018; Chuang 2020). Thus, it is important to consider customers' perceptions about the brand's interactivity. This study focuses on interactivity on social media platforms. When customers perceive a brand to be highly interactive on social media platforms, they are more likely to engage with it and share their brand-related feedback, suggestions, and opinions (Cheung et al. 2020a). This two-way communication enables the brand to disseminate information, gather valuable insights, and stay informed about their customers' changing needs and expectations in the dynamic social media landscape (Schivinski and Dabrowski 2016). As a result of these interactions, the brand can respond more quickly and effectively to changing needs and expectations, demonstrating a higher level of perceived social media agility (Gligor and Bozkurt 2021).

To date, various studies have examined the effect of perceived brand interaction on customer behavior. Prior studies have empirically linked perceived brand interactivity to parasocial interaction and loyalty (Labrecque 2014), customer brand engagement (France et al. 2016), various customer engagement behaviors (Bozkurt et al. 2021), social media consumer brand engagement (Samarah et al. 2022), and behavioral outcomes like customer purchases (Gligor and Bozkurt 2022). Although earlier studies shed light on the significance of perceived social media interactivity and its effect on engagement, how interaction affects perceived social media agility and brand trust has yet to be thoroughly investigated. The interactive nature of social media can be utilized to reinforce relationships with customers (Gligor et al. 2019; Samarah et al. 2022). Being interactive on social media enables companies to establish trust through accessibility and transparency. These companies utilize social media as a means to engage with customers, address their concerns, and demonstrate their dedication to delivering value and excellence. Since brand trust plays a more prominent role in situations characterized by uncertainty and information asymmetry (Laroche et al. 2012), rapidly resolving consumers' concerns on social media with agile social media management gains importance (Gligor and Bozkurt 2021). This, in turn, can lead to increased brand trust among consumers.

Prior research in consumer behavior predominantly concentrates on the influence of social media interaction on consumer brand engagement (Cheung et al. 2020b; Ibrahim and Aljarah 2023; Attiq et al. 2022; Samarah et al. 2022). Besides, most studies focused on how social media interactions shape consumer emotional responses toward the brand, such as brand love and trust (Ibrahim et al. 2021; Attiq et al. 2022). However, it is also crucial to explore how interactions shape consumer perceptions of a company's ability to adapt to changing demands and challenges that arise with interactions. The existing body of work has often overlooked social media agility, leaving both scholars and practitioners with a conspicuous gap in their comprehension of this critical concept. To address the gap, this study aims to conduct an empirical investigation to examine the relationship between perceived social media interactivity, brand trust, perceived social media agility, and brand value in the context of rapidly growing social media users.

To achieve the research aim, this study pursues three primary objectives. First, it seeks to enhance our understanding of brand trust drivers, thus significantly contributing to our comprehension of consumer behavior within the context of the digital age. Secondly, this research aims to empirically investigate the relationship between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility, shedding light on how interactivity contributes to a brand's agility in responding to changing consumer needs. Lastly, the study examines the role of gender as a moderating variable on the moderation effect of brand value between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility. The theoretical significance of this study is proposing a new theoretical model to the established consumer behavior literature in the digital age. Besides, the new model provides practical insights that enhance practitioners' understanding of consumer behavior, social media engagement strategies, and effective brand management. Furthermore, additional theoretical and managerial implications are detailed in the latter part of the manuscript.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First, the theoretical background of the relevant constructs is discussed to develop the theoretical model and hypotheses. We continue by presenting the methodology and results. Finally, we highlight the study's theoretical and managerial implications, as well as its limitations and opportunities for further studies.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Perceived social media interactivity

Interactivity refers to the degree to which individuals can actively participate in simultaneously changing the form and content of a mediated environment (Steuer et al. 1995). It is also considered a perceptual variable and is described as the user's perception of participating in two-way communication with other parties, such as brands (Labrecque

2014). From a marketing perspective, brand interactivity is the customer's perception of the brand's willingness and desire to provide an environment where two-way communication is possible (France et al. 2016; Gligor and Bozkurt 2020). As a two-way communication platform, social media provides users an environment where they can initiate, shape, and terminate communication with brands (Sreejesh et al. 2020). Social media enables brand interactivity by facilitating collaboration and content sharing among brands and consumers through online applications, platforms, web tools, and technological systems (Cheung et al. 2020a). In addition, social media provides brands with an environment where they can reach consumers' posts related to brands and listen to and answer them at any moment. Consistent with this stream of research, in this study, we define perceived social media interactivity as consumers' perceptions of a brand's efforts to enable two-way communication (e.g., listening, responding, communicating, and encouraging) with them on social media platforms.

Brand trust

Brand trust is defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) as consumers' willingness to rely on a brand in terms of its ability to perform its functions as expected. Brand trust, in other words, is the consumers' beliefs related to the traits of a brand, such as being dependable, honest, and fulfilling its business promises (Füller et al. 2008; Wongsansukcharoen 2022). Brand trust eliminates consumers' doubts, especially during uncertainty and information asymmetry conditions, making consumers more comfortable with the brand (Laroche et al. 2012).

Brands can increase customers' trust in them by decreasing information asymmetry via communication activity. That is, brands provide their target consumers with the necessary information about the products/services or brand itself to eliminate information asymmetry, thus establishing trust in consumers' minds (Habibi et al. 2014). Today, consumers' interaction with brands has evidently increased as a consequence of brands' presence on social media platforms; this increase in the interaction between consumers and brands may have positive effects on consumers' perceptions of brands (France et al. 2016). If brands can create a perceived social media interactivity in the minds of their customers by listening carefully, responding, communicating, and encouraging their customers on social media platforms, they can build trust between their customers and themselves (Ibrahim et al. 2021). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1 Perceived social media interactivity has a positive impact on brand trust.

Perceived social media agility

Agility is described in a traditional manner as a firm's ability to quickly perceive and flexibly adapt to alterations through techniques such as information processing or analytics (Akhtar et al. 2018; Chuah et al. 2020; Chuang 2020). The agility concept has been applied to different disciplines, such as marketing, production, supply chain management, and organizational management (Zhou et al. 2019; Chuah et al. 2020; Bozkurt 2022). Gligor and Bozkurt (2021) uncovered two main attributes of the agility concept through a comprehensive literature review. These two main attributes are the abilities to *detect* and *respond*. That is, firms must first detect changes by analyzing consumer demands and market opportunities and then respond appropriately to the identified changes (Chuang 2020; Gligor and Bozkurt 2021). Chuang (2020) defined social media agility in a B2B context as a company's ability to adapt to demands and changes while using social media. Her conceptualization based on micro and macro environments captured internal and external components of social media agility. From a customer-based perspective, perceived social media agility can be defined as customers' perceptions about a company's or brand's capability to rapidly recognize and respond to the evolving landscape of social media and the changing customer needs within this interactive environment (Gligor and Bozkurt 2021).

By being responsive and adaptive, the brand can strengthen its relationship with customers and gain trust, thus maintaining a competitive edge in the market (Chuang 2020). For example, a brand could easily and rapidly respond to a brand-related rumor or negative comments through its social media accounts and thus proactively maintain the trust of its customers. Therefore, social media interactions and agility have a crucial role in building trust (Calefato et al. 2015; Hanaysha 2022). Considering these arguments, perceived social media interactivity can positively affect perceived social media agility by enabling brands to stay informed, responsive, and adaptive to the evolving social media landscape and their customers' changing needs and expectations. Perceived social media agility, in turn, can positively affect consumers' trust in the brand. This also explains the mediating role of perceived social media agility between perceived social media interactivity and brand trust. Therefore, we hypothesize the following (see Fig. 1):

H2 Perceived social media interactivity has a positive impact on perceived social media agility.

H3 Perceived social media agility serves as a mediator between perceived social media interactivity and brand trust.

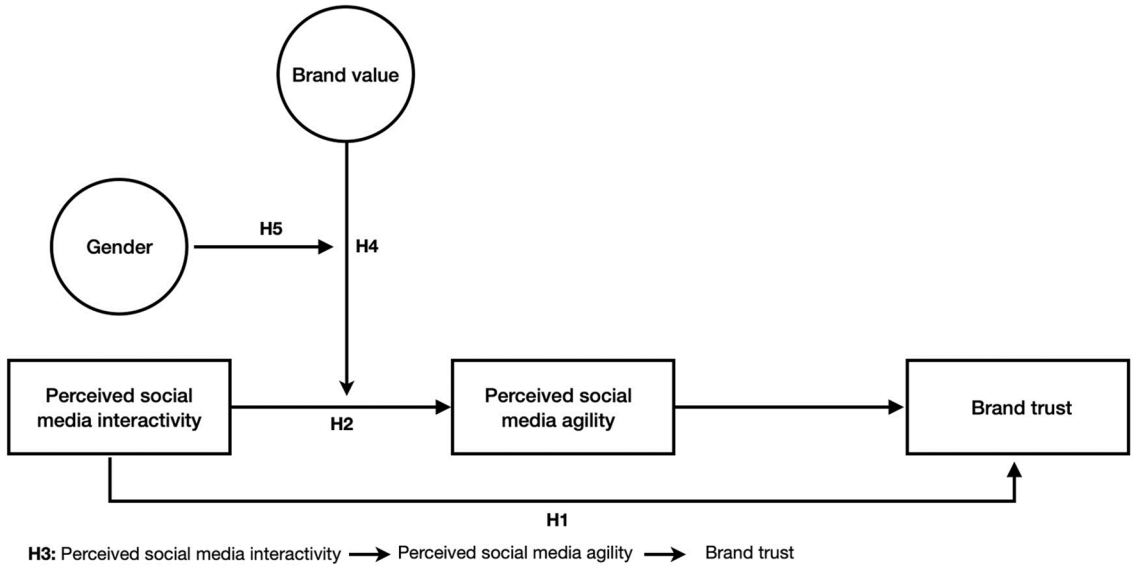

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

Moderating role of brand value

Brand value is defined as a trade-off between two parties in terms of cost and benefits (Zeithaml 1988; Leckie et al. 2018). Higher interactivity with customers helps companies increase sales and profits, achieve competitive advantage, and strengthen their brand value (Gligor et al. 2019; Islam et al. 2019; Marbach et al. 2016). Previous studies have empirically demonstrated the influence of perceived brand interactivity on perceived brand value (France et al. 2016; Tregua et al. 2015; Ramaswamy and Ozcan 2013). In today's digital world, social media has been employed by brands to communicate with customers and improve their experience by offering more interaction. Interactions and relationships with the brand during the value-creation process form brand value (Jones 2008).

Based on both brand equity theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV), brand value plays a crucial role in moderating the positive relationship between social media interactivity and agility. Brand equity theory assumes that a brand's inherent value, encompassing factors like awareness, loyalty, and trust, can significantly influence the outcomes of social media interactions (Rios and Riquelme 2008; Hafez 2021) When brands engage more with their consumers via social media, they often build a strong brand image (Sanny et al. 2020), making them better at responding quickly to new trends and issues in the digital world (Yu and Yuan 2019). Therefore, consumers who consider a brand interactive are more likely to engage with it and perceive it to be of higher value (France et al. 2016; Merrilees and Fry 2003).

The relationship between social interactions and customer engagement on social media platforms has been addressed in various studies. For instance, according to Zhang et al. (2017), customer engagement via social media increases social media interaction. Customers who highly value the brand share their experiences with others (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004); this type of behavior helps enhance the value of the brand on social media. Likewise, France et al. (2016) have indicated that engagement with customers has a significant impact on brand value. Correspondingly, Hsu and Lin (2020) stated that when developing and implementing an online marketing strategy, social media interactivity significantly impacts brand value. Furthermore, from the RBV perspective, brand value is seen as a valuable asset for companies (Chang and Ma 2015). Brands with higher value have more resources and social connections, which enables them to quickly adapt to shifts in social media trends (Chuang 2020). The brand equity theory and the RBV explain how brand value plays a crucial role in enhancing the positive effects of social media interactivity on a brand's ability to adapt in the constantly changing digital landscape. Therefore, we hypothesize the following;

H4 Brand value positively moderates the positive impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility such that the positive effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is greater when brand value is higher than when it is lower.

Moderated moderating role of gender

Different demographic parameters have an impact on online customer behavior. Individuals' age and gender play a significant role in their online consumer behavior (Kamboj

and Rahman 2016). Gender differences in online consumer behavior have received scholars' attention (Wang 2010; Awad and Ragowsky 2008; Yeh et al. 2012). According to Boneva et al. (2001), female users are considerably more concerned with societal connections and prefer maintaining close connections than male users (Boneva et al. 2001). Several studies have emphasized that women have greater brand awareness as they are more likely to examine multiple information sources and are more sensitive to information before making a decision (Gligor and Bozkurt 2022; Ladhari and Leclerc 2013).

According to previous studies, gender differences have an impact on how consumers evaluate the relationship between the characteristics of a service and perceived value, perceived quality, and customer satisfaction (Joung et al. 2016; Kwun 2011). Gender differences have been shown to play a key role in similar contexts. A study examining the relationship between customer value (for the brand) and intention to engage in continued interaction on brand pages looked at the moderating role of gender (Shi et al. 2016). Their findings indicate that gender plays a role in driving continued interaction on brand pages in social media. The findings are mixed in terms of direction; the association between information quality and continued intention to interact is stronger in men, while the association between product-related learning and continued intention to interact is stronger in women. It is also suggested that for brand pages, the continued interaction intent is more likely to be motivated by utilitarian needs in men, while women are more sensitive to emotional feelings. However, there has been no definitive body of literature that deals with the moderating effect of gender in social media. Therefore, as an exploratory analysis, to establish the direction of the moderating effect of gender and to shed light on how individuals of different genders perceive brand value in an online setting, we hypothesize the following;

H5 The moderating effect of brand value on the positive relationship between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility is moderated by customers' gender.

Methodology

In this study, we collected data from undergraduate students in Turkey in exchange for course credit. Since all scales adapted in this study were written in English, we had to translate the measures into Turkish before collecting data. Three bilingual researchers translated all measures and items separately and shared their translations. Then, we met to discuss any difference in measures' translations. After several discussions, we selected the translations that best conveyed the original meaning. Next, we conducted a pretest to eliminate translation typos, errors, or misunderstandings. Finally, we incorporated the feedback received from this pretest into the main study.

In the main study, we employed an online survey on Qualtrics with a total of 275 subjects (106 Males, 169 Females, $M_{age} = 21.88$) to test the research hypotheses. Since two of our measures are directly related to social media (perceived brand interactivity and social media agility), participants had to have a social media account and have previously interacted with a brand on social media. To ensure participants met the criteria, we asked some screening questions (e.g., "Are you a social media user?" and "Have you ever interacted with a brand through social media?") at the beginning of the survey. Those who did not meet the criteria were automatically excluded from the survey with the special function of Qualtrics. We also placed some attention-check questions (e.g., please select "somewhat disagree" and please select "strongly disagree") in the survey to eliminate careless respondents. Next, those who met the criteria were instructed to think about a brand or firm they had interacted with using social media (e.g., commenting, retweeting, liking, etc.) and to keep their interactions in mind when answering the questions. This procedure has been employed successfully in previous studies (e.g., Gligor et al. 2023; Gligor and Bozkurt 2021).

Measures

All scales were adapted from published papers. Specifically, we adapted perceived social brand interactivity from Labrecque (2014) and France et al. (2016), perceived social media agility from Gligor and Bozkurt (2021) and Bozkurt (2022), brand value from Leckie et al. (2018) and Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013), and brand trust from Laroche et al. (2012) and Grohmann (2009). We measured these constructs with multiple items on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). In addition, the constructs' reliability surpasses the recommended cutoff point for alpha (0.70) (Hair et al. 2013). (Please see Table 1 for the constructs and reliabilities).

Common method bias

Since the data was collected from a single source, common method bias may affect the results. To test whether common method bias is an issue in our study, we employed Harman's one-factor test in SPSS. We utilized the SPSS factor analysis routine to identify the first component/factor (eigenvalue) that accounts for most of the variance. The analysis results indicated that the component/factor accounts for less than 50% (47%) of the total variance. Thus, we can conclude that a common method bias is not an issue in our study.

Table 1 Measurement properties

Constructs/items	Standardized loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability	Alpha
Perceived social media interactivity (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)				
The brand will talk back to me if I post a message	0.62			
This brand would respond to me quickly and efficiently	0.79			
This brand allows me to communicate directly with it	0.79	0.61	0.90	0.90
This brand listens to what I have to say	0.84			
There is a two-way communication with this brand	0.84			
This brand encourages me to communicate directly with it	0.79			
Perceived social media agility (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)				
This brand can quickly detect changes in the social media environment	0.75			
This brand can promptly identify changes in customer needs in the social media environment	0.85			
This brand can quickly respond to changes in the social media environment	0.77			
This brand can quickly respond to changes in customer needs in the social media environment	0.81	0.55	0.88	0.88
This brand has the capacity to adjust the scale of its response to changes in the social media environment as needed (e.g., the firm being able to build a significant presence on Snapchat when customers' preferences shift from Facebook to Snapchat)	0.66			
This brand has the capacity to adjust the scale of its response to changes in customer needs in the social media environment as needed (e.g., the ability to respond to 1 customer post or 100 customer posts in a day if needed)	0.60			
Brand value (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)				
The service I get from this brand is excellent	0.88			
This brand gives me a feeling of being in control	0.77	0.67	0.86	0.87
The overall value I get from this brand is worth money and effort	0.8			
Brand Trust (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)				
I trust the brand	0.92			
I rely on the brand	0.90			
The brand is an honest brand	0.92	0.77	0.95	0.95
This brand is safe	0.89			
The brand gives me everything that I expect out of the product/service	0.85			
The brand never disappoints me	0.78			

The measurement model

We employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) utilizing full-information maximum likelihood estimation in Stata (version 15.1) to evaluate additional psychometric properties of the model constructs. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that the measurement model has an acceptable fit, as can be seen in the fit indices: X^2 (183) = 565.011, $p < 0.01$, RMSEA:0.09; CFI:0.92, SRMR: 0.07). All loading estimates are statistically significant, with each standardized estimate exceeding the value of 0.50. The average variance extracted of each construct is greater than the minimum recommended cutoff value (0.50) (Hair et al. 2013). Also, each construct's average variance extracted and composite reliability is greater than the minimum recommended cutoff values of 0.50 and 0.70, respectively (Hair et al. 2013). Overall, the results provide evidence for convergent validity (please see Table 1 for the items and their properties).

We evaluated discriminant validity based on the AVE approach. Based on this approach, if the AVE for each pair of measures/constructs is greater than the corresponding squared correlation, we can conclude that the constructs exhibit discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). As can be seen in Table 2, the AVE for each pair of constructs, shown in the diagonal in bold, is greater than the corresponding squared correlation, providing evidence for discriminant validity.

Even though Fornel and Larker approach has been used frequently to test discriminant validity (e.g., Rodriguez and Boyer 2020; Li et al. 2022; Leong et al. 2023; Nguyen and Tong 2022; Kautish et al. 2022) some researchers argue that this approach fails to reliably detect discriminant validity (e.g., Henseler et al. 2015; Hair et al. 2017), so they suggest an alternative approach, such as Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) approach. HTMT is "the ratio of the between-trait correlations to the within-trait correlations" (Hair et al. 2017, p. 118). This approach calculates an HTMT value for

Table 2 Correlation matrix

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Perceived social media interactivity (1)	4.85	1.28	**0.61**			
Perceived social media agility (2)	5.35	1.02	0.60	**0.55**		
Brand value (3)	5.00	1.30	0.52	0.39	**0.67**	
Brand trust (4)	5.30	1.22	0.49	0.43	0.78	**0.77**

Diagonal values (in bold) refer to the AVE of each construct

each pair of constructs. If an HTMT value is higher than 0.90 or 0.85 (a more conservative threshold), one can calculate a lack of discriminant validity (Henseler et al. 2015; Hair et al. 2017). As can be seen in Table 3, all HTMT values are not higher than 0.85, which is a very conservative threshold value; we can conclude that discriminant validity is further established.

Hypothesis testing

Direct and indirect effects

To test direct and indirect effects, we used PROCESS Macro (V.4.2) Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals (Hayes 2022). Since PROCESS Model 4 outputs provide direct and indirect effects in a single output, we did not conduct separate analyses for them. The results indicated that perceived social media interactivity positively impacts brand trust ($b = 0.34$, $se = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$). The result also showed that perceived social media interactivity positively affects perceived social media agility ($b = 0.48$, $se = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H1 and H2 are supported.

PROCESS Model 4 also revealed a significant indirect effect of perceived brand interactivity on brand trust through perceived social media agility. That is, when a person perceives a brand as highly interactive, they tend to display a higher level of perceived social media agility, resulting in high levels of trust for the brand. This is because the confidence interval associated with this indirect effect does not straddle zero (Indirect Effect (IE) = 0.1203; Confidence Intervale (CI) [0.0282, 0.2066]), so perceived social media agility serves as a mediator between perceived social media interactivity and brand trust (Hayes 2022), supporting H3.

The moderating role of brand value

We used PROCESS Macro (V.4.2) in SPSS Model 1 to test the moderating role of brand value on the link between perceived brand interactivity and perceived social media agility (Hayes 2022). The results revealed a significant positive perceived social media interactivity × brand value interaction for perceived social media agility ($b = 0.07$, $se = 0.03$, $p = 0.02$). This significant interaction term suggests that the positive effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is more significant when brand value is higher than when it is lower. In other words, those high on brand value find interactive brands more agile than those low on it. Thus, H4 is supported.

It is essential to accentuate that even though the interaction/moderation term is significant, we should conduct more analysis to unpack further insightful information for readers. This is because the significant interaction terms only establish that the impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is significant when perceived brand value is higher than when it is lower. However, it does not display at which values the positive effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is different from zero or at which point that effect is not (Hayes 2022; Bozkurt 2023). To gain such understanding, we probed the interaction terms employing the Johnson Neyman (JN) technique, which has been prevalent in the marketing discipline in the recent year (e.g., Bernard et al. 2020; Pahlevan Sharif et al. 2020; Lin et al. 2020; Mandl and Hogreve 2020; Sundie et al. 2020; Mai et al. 2020; Rather et al. 2023) and recommended when a moderator is a continuous variable (which is the case in our study) (Hayes 2022).

The JN technique results indicate that when brand value (W) equals or exceeds 1.41, perceived brand value positively moderates the link between perceived social media interactivity and agility (see Fig. 2). That is, the positive impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is different from zero (statistically significant) and positive when individuals' brand value level is equal to or more than 1.41. Below this point, a further decrease in brand value does not significantly impact the effect of perceived social media interactivity on agility.

Table 3 Discriminant validity-HTMT approach

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Perceived social media interactivity (1)				
Perceived social media agility (2)	0.67			
Brand value (3)	0.58	0.44		
Brand trust (4)	0.52	0.46	0.85	

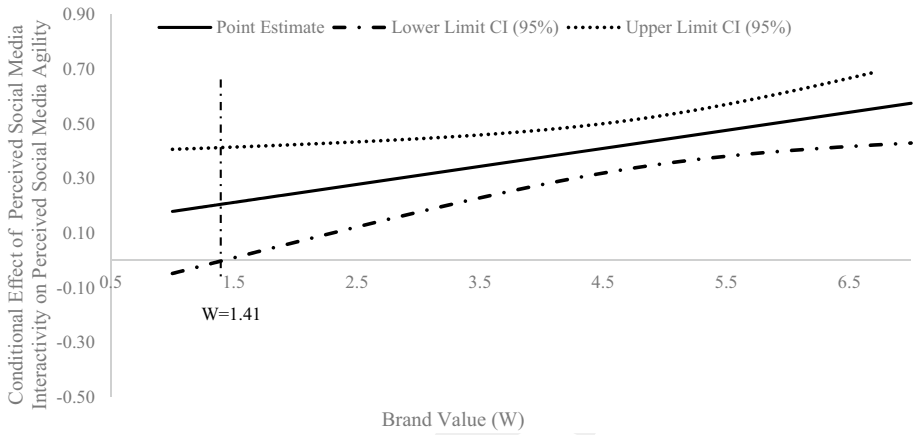

Fig. 2 Conditional impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value

The moderated moderating role of gender

To test whether gender moderates the moderating effect of brand value on the positive link between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility, we used PROCESS Macro (V.4.2) in SPSS Model 3 (Hayes 2022). The results reveal a significant perceived social media interactivity x brand value x gender interaction (three-way interaction) for perceived social media agility (b = 0.13, se = 0.06, p = 0.02). This significant three-way interaction suggests that the moderating effect of brand value on the positive relationship between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility depends on consumers' gender. That is, the conditional effect of brand interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is contingent on consumers' gender. Since the interaction term is positive, we can conclude that the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is greater for men than women. In other words, male individuals (relative to female individuals) with higher levels of brand value (relative to lower levels of brand value) tend to perceive interactive brands as more agile. As can be seen in Fig. 3, the effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is consistently positive, regardless of the levels of brand value, but the difference in its effect between low brand value and high brand value is larger among males than females.

It is important to point out that the significant three-way interaction term does establish that the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is greater for men than women. It does not establish, however, that such conditional effect is significant for men but not for women (and vice versa). To reveal such insights, we probed the interaction term using the pick-a-point approach, also called the spotlight analysis (Hayes 2022). This approach is the most popular approach to probing the interaction term (Hayes 2022; Bozkurt 2023). The PROCESS Model 3 automatically implements this approach (Hayes 2022). Following Hayes's (2022) recommendations, we used the 16th and 84th percentiles of the distribution when operationalizing relatively low and high levels of brand values.

As can be seen in Fig. 4, the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is significant for men ($\theta_{XW\rightarrow Y}$[1] $|$ (Z[2] = 2) = 0.13, p < 0.01), but insignificant for

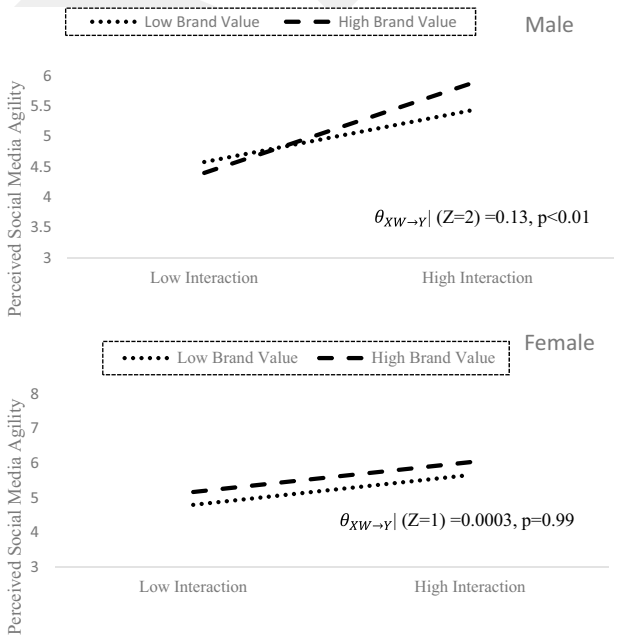

Fig. 3 The conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value and gender from a moderated moderation model

[1] The conditional effect of XW on Y. That is, the conditional effect of perceived social brand interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value.

[2] Women are coded as 1; men are coded as 2 in the dataset.

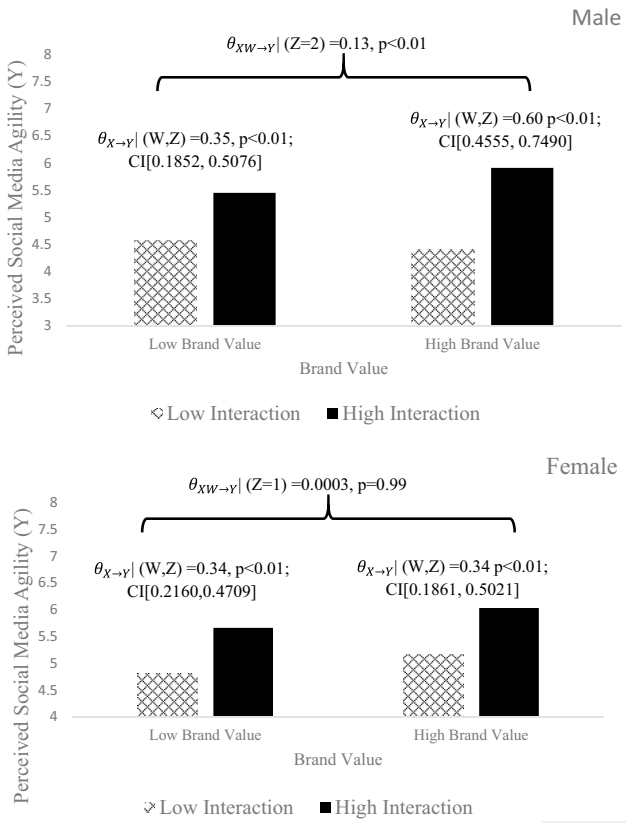

Fig. 4 The conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value and gender from a moderated moderation model

women ($\theta_{XW\rightarrow Y} \mid (Z=1) = 0.0003$, $p = 0.99$). That is, brand value moderates the link between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility for men but not women. The significant three-way interaction suggests that such conditional effect is greater in men than women. The pick-a-point results also revealed that men with high levels of perceived social media interactivity (relative to low levels of brand interactivity) display high levels of perceived social media agility at both low levels of brand value ($\theta_{X\rightarrow Y} \mid (W, Z) = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$; CI[0.1852; 5076])) and high levels of brand value ($\theta_{X\rightarrow Y} \mid (W, Z) = 0.60$ $p < 0.01$; CI [0.4555, 0.7490]) (see Fig. 4). As can be seen in Fig. 4, the conditional interaction term suggests that men with high levels of perceived social media interactivity (relative to low levels of brand interactivity) display a higher level of perceived social media agility when brand value is high than when it is low ($\theta_{XW\rightarrow Y} \mid (Z=2) = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$).

The results further indicated that women with high levels of perceived social media interactivity (relative to low levels of perceived social media interactivity) display high levels of perceived social media agility at both low levels of brand value ($\theta_{X\rightarrow Y} \mid (W,Z) = 0.3434$, $p < 0.01$; CI[0.2160, 0.4709]) and high levels of brand value ($\theta_{X\rightarrow Y} \mid (W, Z) = 0.3441$ $p < 0.01$; CI[0.1861, 0.5021]). The conditional interaction term suggests that women with high levels of perceived social media interactivity (relative to low levels of perceived social media interactivity) do not display a higher or lower level of perceived social media agility when brand value is low than when it is high, or vice versa ($\theta_{XW\rightarrow Y} \mid (Z=1) = 0.0003$, $p = 0.99$).

General discussion

We studied the direct and indirect (through perceived social media agility) effects of perceived social media interactivity on brand trust. In addition, we investigated whether brand value moderates the effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility. We further examined whether consumers' gender moderates the moderating role of brand value. Our results show that individuals perceive highly interactive brands as more agile on social media, leading to high brand trust levels. The results also indicate that the positive link between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility is contingent on consumers' perceived brand value. More specifically, the results reveal that the positive impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility is greater when brand value is higher than when it is lower. That is, those who are high on brand value tend to display a higher level of perceived social media agility toward highly interactive brands than those who are low on brand value.

The results further display that the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is moderated by consumers' gender. That is, such conditional effect is greater for men than women. Most interestingly, the conditional effect of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility as a function of brand value is only significant for men. That is, brand value moderates the link between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility for men but not women. However, such conditional effect is greater in men than women.

Theoretical contributions

Our results allow us to gain some unique insights and augment several streams of literature. First, we contribute to the literature on perceived social media agility (Chuang 2020; Gligor and Bozkurt 2021; Bozkurt 2022). Given the newness of the construct, to date, very few insights exist into the drivers and antecedents of social media agility. Specifically, Chuang (2020) identified social-information processing capability and customer co-creation as antecedents of social media agility and strength of customer-firm relationships as an outcome, while Gligor and Bozkurt (2021) found that

social media agility has a positive impact on customer-based brand equity. We expand this scarce literature by revealing that social media interactivity drives social media agility, which in turn has a positive influence on brand trust. In addition, we further unpack these relationships by revealing that social media agility mediates the relationship between social media interactivity and brand trust. Moreover, our findings show that brand value moderates the link between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility. As such, we make several noteworthy contributions to the social media agility literature by revealing additional antecedents and consequences while also shedding light on the factors that moderate these relationships.

Second, we augment the research stream on brand trust. Specifically, we complement the literature examining the drivers of brand trust. In this vein, past studies showed that brand trust is driven by various factors, such as brand predictability, innovativeness, and intimacy (Srivastava et al. 2015), customer brand identification (Rather et al. 2019), firm-created and user-generated social media communication (Khadim et al. 2018), self-efficacy and persuasion knowledge (Chen and Cheng 2020), competence and credibility (Sichtmann 2007), and brand authenticity (Hernandez-Fernandez and Lewis 2019). Our results add to this stream of research by offering unique insights in a social media context. Specifically, we show that perceived social media interactivity has a direct and indirect (via perceived social media agility) impact on brand trust.

Third, we contribute to the social media interactivity literature. In particular, we build on the literature examining the consequences of social media interactivity. Past studies found that social media interactivity influences how users process the content of an advert in terms of attention, recall, and recognition (Sreejesh et al. 2020), communication quality, work interruptions, and job performance (Liu et al. 2021), perceived partner quality (Karampela et al. 2020), and customer satisfaction (Jan and Sultan 2020). Our findings show that social media interactivity also drives social media agility and brand trust.

Finally, we contribute to the research stream on brand value. To this end, we expand on the studies investigating its moderator role. Past studies have found that brand value moderates various relationships, such as the impact of social circles on self-brand connection (Ye et al. 2015) or the influence of brand love and brand loyalty (Pan and Ha 2021). In this vein, we show that brand value also positively moderates the relationship between perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility, thus reinforcing the importance of considering the impact of brand value when seeking to understand customers' attitudes and behaviors toward a brand.

Managerial contributions

Managers can glean several actionable insights from our findings. First, managers seeking to enhance their customers' perception of the firm's social media agility should know that perceived social media interactivity drives perceived social media agility. Managers can use the survey items we offer in Table 1 to assess how their customers rank the firm from a social media interactivity perspective. Managers can survey their customers using these metrics and take corrective action if needed. To illustrate, in line with the items presented in Table 1, to enhance perceived social media interactivity, managers should seek to improve the firm's response time to customers, allow them to communicate directly with it, and better listen to what the customers have to say, to name a few actions. After these measures were implemented, the firm could assess their customers' perceived social media agility using the items in Table 1 to determine if the desired level of perceived social media agility has been met.

Second, our findings reveal to managers that brand value can amplify the positive impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility such that the effect is stronger at higher levels of brand value. Thus, simultaneously increasing the firm's social media interactivity and brand value significantly increases customers' perception of the firm's social media agility.

Third, we signal to managers the importance of considering customers' gender when seeking to maximize their perceived social media agility. Specifically, brand value amplifies the positive impact of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility, but only for men. That is, women's perception of the brand's value does not significantly enhance the positive influence of perceived social media interactivity on perceived social media agility. As such, when allocating their limited resources to enhance perceived social media agility via perceived social media interactivity, firms should be cognizant that their efforts will be more impactful when geared toward male customers.

Lastly, considering the significant influence of brand trust on customers' attitudes and behaviors, managers should be aware that perceived social media interactivity and perceived social media agility are important drivers of brand trust. Firms seeking to enhance customer trust can meet this objective by focusing on enhancing social media interactivity and perceived social media agility. Perceived social media interactivity has a direct impact on brand trust, while perceived social media agility mediates this relationship.

Limitations and future research

Our study has several limitations, which present opportunities for future research. First, we collected our data in Turkey. In order to increase the generalizability of the findings, future studies should test our model with data from other countries. Second, as it relates to the utilized sample, our data were collected from undergraduate students. While considering the topic, the sample size was appropriate as undergraduate students typically have extensive social media experience; future studies should collect data from a more demographically diverse sample. Third, we uncovered an important driver of social media agility (i.e., perceived social media interactivity); however, given that social media agility is a relatively new construct, more research is needed to uncover additional drivers of this desirable attribute. Fourth, we showed that perceived social media agility enhances brand trust. However, future research should explore additional consequences of social media agility. Considering that enhancing perceived social media agility will likely require significant resources for brands, scholars should present additional evidence that investing in social media agility pays off for brands.

Further, we took into account only one demographic factor as a moderator in this study. Future research should consider other demographics, such as ethnicity or income, as moderator variables to test whether direct or conditional effects vary by such factors. Finally, while the survey items presented in this study can help firms assess their current levels of perceived social media agility, extant literature offers a limited understanding of the concept. Future qualitative studies should specifically seek to unpack customers' understanding and interpretation of perceived social media agility. Engaging in this type of research could help uncover additional aspects of the construct and help researchers better operationalize it as a first- or second-order construct.

Declarations

Conflict of interest We have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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