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Investigating the effect of marketing based on local cultural values on brand attachment with the mediating role of group identity (Students of the Faculty of Media - University of Baghdad)

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Abstract:

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effect of marketing based on indigenous cultural values on brand attachment with the mediating role of group identity among students of the Faculty of Media at the University of Baghdad. This study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational and quantitative in terms of method. The statistical population consisted of 240 students of the Faculty of Media, who were randomly sampled. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling using partial least squares using Smart PLS version 4 software. The results of the study confirmed all hypotheses. Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a positive and significant effect on brand attachment and group identity; group identity also directly and indirectly (as a mediator) strengthens brand attachment. The findings show that emotional bonds and consumer loyalty become deep and sustainable when brands use indigenous cultural values and symbols in their messages and provide platforms for consumers to feel group belonging. Accordingly, the proposed hybrid culture-identity-belonging model can be considered an effective framework for understanding the cultural mechanism of brand attachment formation in societies with indigenous value contexts. The addition that this paper will provide is to study the impact of marketing based on local cultural values through the opinions of a sample of students from the faculty of media / University of Baghdad.

دراسة تأثير التسويق القائم على القيم الثقافية المحلية في الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية مع الدور الوسيط لهوية الجماعة (طلبة كلية الإعلام – جامعة بغداد)
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المستخلص

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى بحث تأثير التسويق القائم على القيم الثقافية الأصيلة في الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية، مع الدور الوسيط لهوية الجماعة، لدى طلبة كلية الإعلام في جامعة بغداد، وتعد هذه الدراسة تطبيقية من حيث الهدف، ووصفية-ارتباطية وكمّية من حيث المنهج، وتكون المجتمع الإحصائي من 240 طالبًا من طلبة كلية الإعلام، تم اختيارهم عشوائيًا، وأُجري تحليل البيانات باستخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية بأسلوب المربعات الصغرى الجزئية (PLS) عبر برنامج Smart PLS الإصدار 4، وأكدت نتائج الدراسة جميع الفرضيات، إذ إن التسويق القائم على القيم الثقافية الأصيلة له تأثير إيجابي ودال إحصائيًا في الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية وفي هوية الجماعة؛ كما أن هوية الجماعة تعزز الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية بشكل مباشر وغير مباشر (بوصفها متغيرًا وسيطًا)، وتظهر النتائج أن الروابط العاطفية وولاء المستهلكين تصبح أعمق وأكثر استدامة عندما تستخدم العلامات التجارية القيم والرموز الثقافية الأصيلة في رسائلها، وتوفّر منصات تمكّن المستهلكين من الشعور بالانتماء الجماعي، وبناءً على ذلك، يمكن اعتبار النموذج الهجين المقترح (الثقافة-الهوية-الانتماء) إطارًا فعّالًا لفهم الآلية الثقافية لتشكّل الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية في المجتمعات ذات السياقات القيمية المحلية، وتتمثل الإضافة التي تقدمها هذه الورقة في دراسة أثر التسويق القائم على القيم الثقافية المحلية من خلال آراء عينة من طلبة كلية الإعلام/جامعة بغداد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسويق القائم على القيم الثقافية الأصيلة؛ الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية؛ هوية الجماعة؛ الهوية الاجتماعية؛ العلامة التجارية الثقافية.

Introduction

In recent decades, the marketing paradigm has moved beyond the purely economic and transactional level and has become a socio-cultural domain; a domain in which the brand's relationship with the consumer is formed not only through the functional characteristics of the product, but also through identity, value and cultural themes (Scarano et al, 2023). In many transitional societies, including Iraq, the importance of understanding and utilizing local cultural values in marketing messages has become increasingly evident. Therefore, a marketing approach based on local cultural values, as a new strategy that is compatible with the cultural and social realities of society, can play a key role in creating an emotional and lasting connection between the brand and the audience. In this context, the brand is no longer just a commercial symbol, but is considered a carrier of meaning and cultural identity that reflects the values, beliefs and sense of belonging of individuals (Rachmad, 2025).

Brand attachment is a multidimensional concept rooted in the individual's sense of psychological and social connection to a brand, distinct from the obvious distinction between consumer satisfaction and long-term brand commitment. Attachment refers to the internal and emotional experience of "self-branding"; where an individual sees the brand not merely as a means to satisfy a need, but as part of their personal or social identity (Ahmadian et al, 2023). In academic settings, especially among media students, this concept takes on double significance. This young, informed, and active group is not a passive audience for advertising; rather, they are analysts, critics, and in many cases producers of content and meaning. Students at the School of Media in Baghdad, due to their exposure to a multi-voiced media environment and exposure to diverse cultural discourses, show a special sensitivity to marketing messages. Accordingly, a brand can create a sense of belonging among them when it respects and reflects the cultural values, indigenous symbols, and semantic system of their society at deeper levels (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021).

On the other hand, group identity, as a mediating and sociological component, plays a fundamental role in explaining the process of cultural marketing's impact on brand belonging (Fazli-Salehi et al, 2024). Humans find meaning within social groups, and their consumption choices are often a response to their need to represent and maintain group identity (He, 2023). In the context of marketing and consumer behavior studies, group identity means an individual's sense of belonging to a set of values, beliefs, and symbols that are formed within the context of a common group. This group can be familial, ethnic, cultural, or professional. When a brand can make the values of a particular group appear valid and respectable, the consumption of that brand becomes a sign of membership in that group, and as a result, brand belonging is strengthened (Mousstain & Belkadi, 2024).

In the indigenous context of Iraq, especially in Baghdad, brands face a multi-layered challenge: on the one hand, they must rebuild social trust in the post-war and challenging environment of Iraq, and on the other, they must present a modern yet indigenous image. This conflict between market modernity and cultural tradition, especially among the younger generation, has created a kind of cognitive dissonance, which results in a decrease in mental and emotional engagement with brands. In such an environment, the application of marketing principles based on indigenous cultural values can have a restorative role, because it provides the basis for rebuilding trust and belonging by using narrative patterns, symbols, and communication forms appropriate to the local culture (Abdullah, 2023).

The importance of the present study is that it makes the missing link between the three elements analyzable. In many previous studies, the relationship between cultural marketing and brand attachment has been

examined directly, without considering the mediating role of social variables such as group identity. However, in a multicultural society like Iraq, the effect of cultural marketing on brand attachment cannot be expected to be explained without the mediation of a sense of group belonging. Therefore, analyzing group identity as a mediating variable can provide a deeper understanding of the real mechanism of the formation of brand-culture bonds and open a more coherent theoretical path for future studies. Finally, it can be said that the gap between common marketing strategies and the cultural expectations of Iraqi consumers is a fundamental challenge for brand management in this country. Many brands have not yet been able to establish a meaningful communication model between themselves and a young and academic audience. This failure is due, above all, to a lack of deep understanding of the cultural value system and identity of the society. Marketing based on indigenous cultural values can be an effective tool to overcome this obstacle; but its realization requires a detailed understanding of the dynamics of group identity and the psychological mechanisms of brand attachment. The main challenge of the present study is that effective indigenous models for aligning Iraqi cultural values with brand strategies have not been developed so far. As a result, brands operating in the academic environment are often unable to create the mental and emotional involvement necessary to form attachment. This situation raises the need to design a new conceptual model in which marketing based on indigenous cultural values is analyzed as an independent variable, brand attachment as a dependent variable, and group identity as a mediating variable.

The main research question is formulated on this basis: How does marketing based on indigenous cultural values affect brand attachment among students of the Faculty of Media at the University of Baghdad, and what is the role of group identity in mediating this relationship?

literature Review

1. Marketing based on indigenous cultural values

Marketing based on indigenous cultural values is an approach that attempts to establish a link between the cultural identity of a community and the commercial strategies of a brand. In this view, culture is considered as an interpretive framework for understanding consumer behavior and designing marketing messages. The conceptual roots of this approach can be found in cultural marketing theories, intercultural communication, and sociology of consumption. According to this view, consumers make their decisions not solely based on economic benefits or product performance characteristics, but also on the meanings, symbols, and values that brands convey through their advertising and communications (Chen, 2022). In this

framework, indigenous cultural values include a set of beliefs, habits, symbols, language, rituals, and traditions that have been institutionalized in the collective mind of a nation through the process of history and social interaction. When a brand can authentically, honestly, and respectfully reflect these values in its messages, a sense of trust and cultural affinity is formed in the consumer's mind. This feeling is a key prerequisite for creating positive attitudes, brand preference, and long-term loyalty (Lambert et al, 2024).

Marketing based on local cultural values is actually a response to the inefficiency of global and standardized marketing models that often neglect the cultural context of the consumer. By focusing on localizing content, design, and brand narrative, this type of marketing attempts to make the brand a member of the community rather than an outsider (Gupta et al, 2025). One important tool in this direction is the use of cultural signs and narratives; for example, the use of colloquial language, traditional symbols, music, clothing, or local moral values in advertising can create a wave of cultural empathy that is many times more effective than purely commercial messages (Love & Hall, 2024). However, the effective implementation of such an approach requires a deep understanding of the cultural dynamics of the community. The main challenge here is to maintain a balance between respecting tradition and responding to modern consumer needs. Successful cultural marketing turns a brand into a bridge between the past and the future, thereby not only increasing competitiveness in the local market, but also enriching the brand's cultural identity (Manero et al, 2022). Ultimately, when a brand speaks the language of the people's culture, audiences perceive it not as a seller of a product, but as a "narrator of their own culture." Such cultural alignment provides the foundation for the formation of a sense of belonging, trust, and lasting emotional connections between the brand and the individual (Moggridge et al, 2021).

2. Brand attachment

Brand attachment is one of the most advanced concepts in branding and consumer behavior studies, directly addressing the emotional and psychological dimension of an individual's relationship with a brand. Unlike brand loyalty, which focuses more on repeat purchase behavior, brand attachment refers to an individual's emotional and internal connection to a brand; a type of "identity attachment" that makes the brand feel like a part of the individual's self. This concept lies at the intersection of psychological attachment theories, social identity, and self-expansion theory (Parris & Guzmán, 2023).

According to attachment theory, people tend to form bonds with objects and symbols that create a sense of security and meaning. Brands can play such a role; in such a way that consumers experience a sense of closeness,

intimacy, and trust when interacting with the brand. At the cognitive level, brand attachment increases mental involvement with the brand and the desire to defend it in the face of competitors or criticism. At the emotional level, consumers experience a sense of pride or inner satisfaction when using the brand, which leads to the stability of the relationship in the long term (Agu et al, 2022).

However, creating such a feeling requires that the brand has authenticity and integrity. If the consumer feels that the brand image is fake or just advertising, emotional connection will give way to distrust. Therefore, the brand must provide the basis for attachment through authentic storytelling, real social responsibility, and alignment between displayed values and intrinsic values (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022).

In today's experience-based economy, brand attachment has become a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Brands that can create a meaningful emotional and cultural narrative rather than focusing solely on product features will be more successful. This sense of belonging ultimately leads to the formation of virtual brand communities, emotional loyalists, and even voluntary brand advocates. For this reason, research in the field of mechanisms for forming and maintaining brand loyalty has gained a special place in the marketing management literature (Sohaib & Han, 2023).

3. Group identity

Group identity refers to the sense of belonging, solidarity, and shared self-image that individuals have toward membership in a social group. This concept is based on social identity theory, which states that part of the "human self" is defined through membership in groups. In other words, individuals define themselves based on their affiliation with specific groups—ethnic, cultural, organizational, gender, or professional—and regulate their behavior in line with the interests and values of that group (Spears, 2021).

Group identity is formed when individuals perceive a clear distinction between "ingroup" and "outgroup." This distinction provides a source of self-esteem and meaning and strengthens social cohesion. In consumer settings, the same mechanism can explain brand-oriented behavior. Individuals tend to choose brands that symbolize or confirm their membership in their preferred groups; In fact, the brand becomes a tool for expressing group identity (Brass, 2024). From a psychological perspective, group identity consists of three components: cognitive (conscious perception of group membership), affective (positive feelings towards the group), and evaluative (the importance that the individual attaches to their membership). The strength of these three components determines the extent to which an individual's behavior is shaped in line with the collective interests. When the emotional and evaluative bond with the group is high,

the individual's willingness to accept the messages or symbols emitted by the group increases (Steffens et al, 2021).

In the field of marketing, group identity plays a mediating role because it causes individuals to prefer brands that reflect the values and symbols of their group. The greater the overlap between brand values and group values, the greater the likelihood of forming a positive attitude, trust, and ultimately belonging. From this perspective, the brand functions not as an economic object but as a "collective identity symbol" (West & Iyengar, 2022).

Group identity also plays an important role in cultural and social dynamics. In modern societies where traditional identity boundaries have become blurred, individuals reconstruct their sense of meaning and belonging through membership in virtual, brand-based, or lifestyle-based groups. Therefore, the ability of a brand to align its values with consumers' group identities has become a determining factor in the success of marketing communications. Ultimately, group identity can be said to be a bridge between the individual and society; a factor that guides perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors and provides a vital context for explaining the link between brand and culture. Deep understanding of the mechanisms of group identity formation, consolidation, and weakening can help brand managers design more effective cultural strategies and elevate their communications from the message level to the meaning level (Brass, 2024).

Explanation of assumptions and conceptual model
The impact of marketing based on indigenous cultural values on brand attachment

Marketing based on indigenous cultural values is the point of contact between collective cultural meanings and the perceived identity of the brand. When a brand can reflect the values, symbols, and cultural codes of the society in its communication messages, the consumer feels that the brand is part of his cultural and emotional environment, not an imposed or alien entity. This semantic congruence leads to the formation of a sense of trust, respect, and closeness that later manifests itself in the form of an emotional bond with the brand (Gupta et al, 2025). On the other hand, indigenous cultural values give the brand richness and authenticity and create a lasting image from it. The experience of consuming brands that use the language of indigenous culture creates a sense of "identity recognition" in the consumer; that is, the individual sees the brand as a mirror of his beliefs and cultural history. This feeling of recognition forms the psychological foundation of belonging to the brand. Therefore, it can be argued that the more a brand uses indigenous cultural values in its marketing strategies, the more likely it is to create an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral bond with the consumer (Hadikusumo, 2025).

*Accordingly, **Hypothesis 1** is proposed: Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on brand loyalty.*

The impact of marketing based on indigenous cultural values on group identity

Culture and group identity are two intertwined constructs, because individuals define and experience membership in social groups through shared culture. Marketing based on indigenous cultural values is effective when it can use shared cultural elements to create a sense of solidarity and identity unity among consumers. When a brand uses values and symbols that are collectively known and respected, consumers feel that they are part of a group that shares common concerns and meanings. In this way, the brand becomes a kind of "collective identity symbol." In fact, cultural marketing operates not only at the individual level, but also at the social level; because by displaying elements of indigenous culture (language, customs, symbols, family or social values), it strengthens the sense of belonging to the in-group. As a result, the brand becomes a carrier of meaning beyond the product and increases the level of group solidarity by shaping collective experiences and representing a common identity. Therefore, it is expected that there is a significant relationship between a brand's effort to use indigenous cultural values and the strengthening of its audience's group identity (Chen, 2022).

*Accordingly, **Hypothesis 2** is stated: Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on group identity.*

The impact of group identity on brand attachment

Group identity is a mental and emotional framework that shapes the sense of community, mutual support, and solidarity among group members. When an individual considers themselves to belong to a group and the brand acts as a symbol or expression of the values of that group, brand consumption becomes a means of expressing membership in that group. In this situation, the consumer establishes a relationship with the brand not because of the functional characteristics of the brand, but because of its social and identity meanings. The strength of this relationship increases when the brand can play the role of "representative of collective identity" in the minds of group members. In such a situation, the brand becomes part of the social identity system of individuals and they unconsciously maintain their social position through emotional and behavioral support of the brand. The feeling of pride resulting from the brand's connection with the group arouses a sense of belonging and emotional loyalty at a deep level. Therefore, there is a direct and dynamic relationship between the strength of group identity and the intensity of attachment to the brand (Shimul & Phau, 2023).

*Accordingly, **Hypothesis 3** is proposed: Group identity has a significant effect on brand loyalty.*

The mediating role of group identity in the relationship between marketing based on indigenous cultural values and brand attachment

The relationship between local cultural marketing and brand attachment is a multifaceted one that traverses multiple psychological and social pathways. One of the most important of these pathways is group identity. When a brand uses local cultural values to evoke a sense of community and empathy among its audience, it creates a context for understanding a shared group identity. This shared identity then leads consumers to perceive the brand as an "in-group symbol." In this situation, brand support is interpreted as support for the group itself, and from this bond, a sense of emotional and cognitive attachment to the brand is formed. In other words, cultural marketing first strengthens group identity by stimulating shared cultural components, and then, through this sense of group attachment, increases brand attachment. If the brand is successful in creating a collective identity, the final effect on attachment is multiplied because the emotional bond with the brand goes beyond the individual level and becomes social. Thus, group identity acts as a bridge between the brand's cultural values and the audience's emotional feelings (Sharma et al, 2022).

*Accordingly, **Hypothesis 4** is stated: Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on brand attachment with the mediating role of group identity.*

Thus, the conceptual model of the research is as shown in Figure 1:
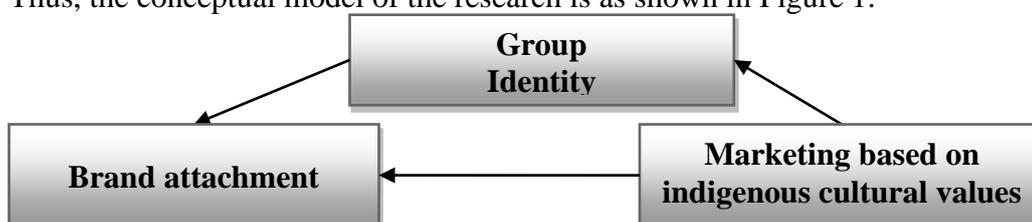
Fig.1: Conceptual model

Research methodology

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in nature, because its aim is to examine the relationships between marketing variables based on indigenous cultural values, group identity, and brand attachment among students. In terms of implementation approach, the research was conducted quantitatively and data were collected using a standard questionnaire. The data analysis method is based on structural equation modeling with a partial least squares approach (PLS-SEM), and SmartPLS version 4 software was used to perform the analyses. The PLS method was chosen due to the predictive nature of the model, the relatively medium size of the population, and its ability to simultaneously analyze direct and indirect relationships between variables.

The statistical population of the study includes all students of the Faculty of Media, which, based on recorded statistics, numbered 240. The sampling method was random and the number of people was estimated to be 148 through the Cochran formula.

The data collection tool was a structured questionnaire that included four sections: demographic information, items related to marketing based on indigenous cultural values, items related to group identity, and items related to brand affiliation. International standard scales were used for each variable, whose scientific validity has been proven in previous research. The marketing variable based on indigenous cultural values was measured using the Lee and Lee (2011) scale in the field of "Cultural Value-Based Marketing". This tool has 6 items in the form of a five-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) and assesses the key dimensions of cultural identification, respect for indigenous values, and compatibility of the brand message with the culture of the society. This scale has been used in several studies to analyze the role of culture in cross-cultural marketing strategies, and its reliability with Cronbach's alpha has been reported to be higher than 0.8.

The brand attachment variable was measured based on the validated scale of Park, MacInnis, and Priester (2006) called the Brand Attachment Scale. This questionnaire consists of 10 items and measures three main dimensions of cognitive attachment, emotional attachment, and the desire to continue the relationship with the brand. In numerous marketing studies, this scale has been recognized as one of the basic tools for measuring the emotional bond between the brand and the consumer, and its composite validity index has been reported to be more than 0.9.

The group identity variable was also measured using the standard tool of Mael and Ashforth (1992) called the Organizational Identification Scale, which in this study, the concept of "social group" has been replaced by the organization due to the subject of the study. This scale has 6 items on a five-point scale and measures the dimensions of membership perception, sense of belonging, and pride in the group. The aforementioned questionnaire is one of the most widely used scales for measuring group identity in organizational research and social marketing, and its construct validity has been confirmed in numerous studies.

To ensure the content and face validity of the questionnaire, the initial version was reviewed by several marketing professors and brand management experts to ensure the appropriateness of the language, clarity of concepts, and the compatibility of the items with the cultural context. After making minor corrections, the final questionnaire was provided to the statistical sample. Also, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) indices were used to measure internal reliability, and the average variance

extracted (AVE) indices and the Fresnel-Larker criterion in SmartPLS software were used to examine convergent and divergent validity. All indices were within the standard suggested thresholds (alpha > 0.7, CR > 0.7, AVE > 0.5), thus confirming the reliability and validity of the instrument.

In the data analysis section, direct and indirect relationships between variables were examined using the PLS algorithm to assess the significance of the paths at the 5% error level. Path coefficients, t-statistics, and coefficient of determination (R^2) values were calculated for endogenous variables. In addition, Q^2 and f^2 indices were used to assess predictive power and effect size.

Finally, the set of these steps enabled the research model to explain, with the least error and the most accuracy, the mechanism of the effect of marketing based on local cultural values on brand attachment with the mediating role of group identity. The present methodology is consistent with the standards of contemporary research in the field of brand and marketing in terms of statistical accuracy, theoretical compatibility, and reliability of the instruments.

Table 1 examines the characteristics of the audience group, including gender, age, and level of education.

Table 1: Characteristics of the study sample

	Description of features	frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	83	56.1
	Female	65	43.9
Ege	Under 20 years old	5	3.4
	21-30	98	66.2
	31-40	32	21.6
	Over 50 years old	13	8.8
Literacy	Bachelor's	97	65.5
	Master's	39	26.4
	Ph.D	12	8.1

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics related to the research variables.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of research variables

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	Sig.
Marketing based on indigenous cultural values	1.167	5	3.825	0.685	0.083	0.000
Brand Attachment	1.800	5	3.920	0.602	0.109	0.000
Group Identity	1.000	5	3.613	0.836	0.108	0.000

Based on the results obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test presented in Table 2, the research variables are not normal, therefore, the

partial least squares method using SmartPLS3 software was used to examine the research hypotheses.

Research findings

To confirm the validity of the measurement tool, content validity, construct validity, convergent validity, and divergent validity were examined. Content validity is established by ensuring the consistency between the measurement indicators and the existing literature, this validity was achieved by a survey of professors. Construct validity is to examine the accuracy and significance of the selected indicators, which shows whether the indicators provide appropriate factor structures for measuring the studied constructs in the research model. To examine this issue, t-values are used, which if greater than 1.96, at a 95% confidence level, the indicators provide appropriate factor structures for measuring the studied dimensions in the research model. Convergent validity refers to the principle that the indicators of each construct have a moderate correlation with each other. According to Fornell and Larker (1981), the criterion for convergent validity is that the average output variance (AVE) is greater than 0.5. Also, in this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR) were used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Values above 0.7 of these coefficients indicate the reliability of the questionnaire. Table 3 shows the complete results of the reliability and validity of the measurement tool.

Table 3: Reliability and validity of the measurement tool

Variables	scale item	Factor Loading	T-Value	Ave.	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Marketing based on indigenous cultural values	The brand in question reflects the cultural values of our society in its advertising.	0.832	31.223	0.569	0.767	0.727
	Brand messages are in harmony with people's customs, symbols, and cultural beliefs.	0.750	25.544			
	Native language or imagery is used in brand marketing content.	0.723	22.802			
	Family values, respect, and cultural authenticity are evident in the brand's messaging.	0.652	14.757			
	The brand's communication style is consistent with the social and cultural norms of society.	0.636	12.984			
	The brand creatively	0.900	37.888			

	uses traditional cultural elements to promote its products.					
Brand Attachment	The brand has personal meaning and importance to me.	0.531	8.985	0.520	0.793	0.761
	I feel satisfied and excited about interacting with this brand.	0.624	13.075			
	It would be unpleasant for me to part with this brand.	0.804	29.021			
	This brand is my first mental option in purchasing decisions.	0.501	12.092			
	I feel that this brand is part of my identity.	0.888	32.671			
	I feel a special love or affection for the brand.	0.674	13.298			
	I feel proud to advocate or recommend this brand to others.	0.793	23.217			
	I have positive memories with the brand that are meaningful to me.	0.876	31.614			
	I feel a failure or criticism of this brand as a personal criticism.	0.780	17.172			
	I would like to stay with this brand even if there were alternatives.	0.616	14.666			
Group Identity	I feel proud to belong to the group of consumers of this brand.	0.797	24.010	0.574	0.890	0.858
	When the group associated with this brand succeeds, I consider myself successful.	0.762	17.282			
	I view criticism of the brand as criticism of myself.	0.771	14.679			
	I consider the values and goals of this brand as my own values and goals.	0.748	13.868			
	I feel part of the community of fans of this brand.	0.811	31.322			
	Belonging to the group associated	0.647	15.926			

	with this brand is very important to me.				

Finally, divergent validity is the third criterion for measuring validity in the PLS method. In this study, the method of Fornell and Larker (1981) was used to examine divergent validity. Acceptable divergent validity indicates that a construct in the model interacts more with its indicators than with other constructs. Fornell and Larker state that divergent validity is acceptable when the AVE for each construct is greater than the shared variance between that construct and other constructs, or in other words, the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation coefficients. This matrix is shown in Table 4. This model has acceptable divergent validity if the numbers in the main diagonal (square root of the AVE) are greater than the values below it:

Table 4: Discriminant validity analysis

|	**Marketing based on indigenous cultural values**	**Brand Attachment**	**Group Identity**
Marketing based on indigenous cultural values	0.755		
Brand Attachment	0.569	0.721	
Group Identity	0.617	0.609	0.758

According to the above matrix, since the AVE root value for each construct is greater than the correlation values between them, it can be said that the model constructs interact more with their indicators than with other constructs. In other words, the divergent validity of the model is at an appropriate level. According to the results of Tables 3 and 4, it can be concluded that the measurement tools have appropriate validity (content, convergent, divergent structure) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability).

Goodness of fit

Figures 2 and 3 of the research model are related to the research hypotheses. The coefficients in these graphs are divided into two categories. The first category is the relationship between the latent variables (ellipses) and the manifest variables (rectangles), which are called factor loadings, and the second category is the relationship between the latent and latent variables, which are called path coefficients and are used to test the hypotheses. All coefficients are tested using the t-statistic. This statistic (t-value) is significant when its absolute value is greater than 1.96.
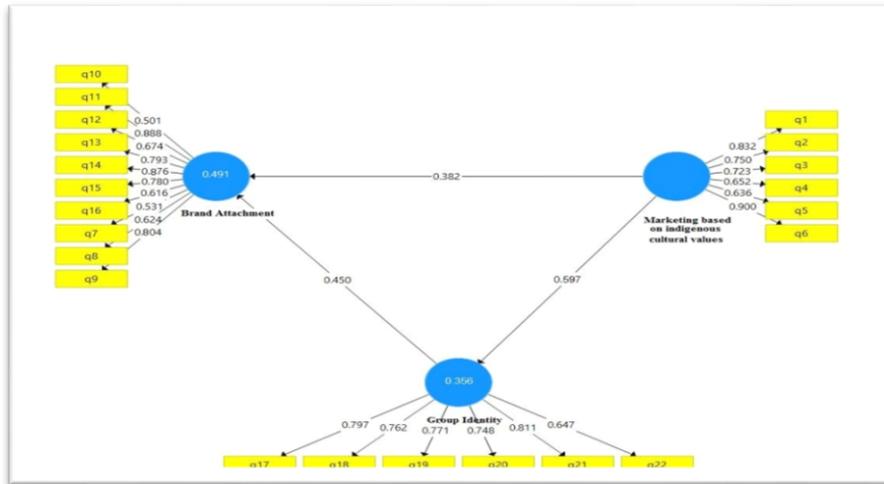
Fig. 2: Factor coefficients and path coefficient of the research model
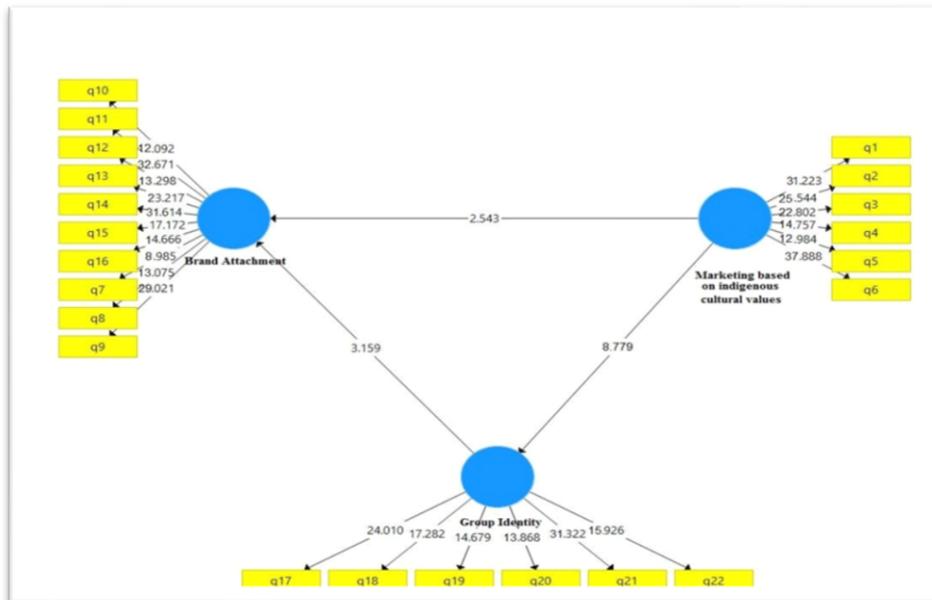
Fig. 3: Significance of the path coefficients of the research model

According to the data analysis algorithm in the PLS method, after fitting the measurement models, the fit of the structural model of the research is examined. The purpose of model fit is to determine to what extent the model is consistent and agrees with the relevant data. In structural equation analysis, after estimating the parameters and before interpreting them, the model's fit must be ensured. For this purpose, the coefficient of

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determination (R^2), the Stone-Geisser criterion (Q^2) and the goodness-of-fit test (Gof) have been used.

The predictive power of the designed model is analyzed using the explained variance (R^2) value for the dependent variables. Coefficient of determination analysis helps to understand how much of the variance of the dependent variable can be determined by a set of predictors (Sekaran, 2007) (three values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 are used as criteria for the coefficient of determination values, which indicate a weak, moderate and strong coefficient of determination, respectively. (Chin, 2003). Another criterion for the predictive power of the model is the Q^2 criterion. If the Q^2 value for an endogenous construct (dependent variable) obtains three values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35, it indicates a weak, moderate and strong predictive power of the exogenous construct or constructs related to it, respectively.

Table 5: Model fit indices

	R^2	Q^2
Brand Attachment	0.491	0.209
Group Identity	0.356	0.172

According to the results obtained in Table 5, the suitability of the structural model is confirmed.

The overall measure of goodness of fit that encompasses both the measurement and structural model components is called (Gof). The goodness of fit value is obtained from the following formula:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\overline{AVE} * \overline{R^2}}$$

In this relation $\overline{(AVE)}$ means the average of the extracted variance and $\overline{(R^2)}$ is the average coefficient of determination.

$$GOF = \sqrt{0.555 * 0.424} = 0.485$$

Considering the values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 as weak, medium, and strong values, the value of 0.485 indicates a strong fit of the overall model.

Results from the hypotheses

In this section, the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable is examined. The significant effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variables is determined using the T-statistic. If the absolute value of this statistic is greater than 1.96, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 6: Examining research hypotheses

Paths	Beta	Std. error	t	Sige
Hypothesis 1: Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on brand loyalty.	0.382	0.150	2.543	acceptance
Hypothesis: Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on group identity.	0.597	0.068	8.779	acceptance

Hypothesis 3: Group identity has a significant effect on brand loyalty.	0.450	0.142	3.159	acceptance
Hypothesis 4: Marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on brand attachment with the mediating role of group identity.	0.269	0.132	2.035	acceptance

According to Table 6, it can be stated that the result of the first hypothesis test, with a path coefficient of 0.382 and a T statistic of 2.543, shows that marketing based on local cultural values has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty. In the second hypothesis test, with a path coefficient of 0.597 and a T statistic of 8.779, it was concluded that marketing based on local cultural values has a significant positive effect on group identity. In the third hypothesis test, with a path coefficient of 0.450 and a T statistic of 3.159, it was concluded that group identity has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty.

In examining the effect of group identity on the relationship between marketing based on indigenous cultural values and brand attachment, based on the Bootstrapping method, the path coefficient is 0.269 and the t-statistic is 2.035. It was concluded that marketing based on indigenous cultural values has a significant effect on brand attachment with the mediating role of group identity. In other words, the indirect effect of marketing based on indigenous cultural values on brand attachment is significant. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis of the study is accepted.

To examine the effect of the mediating variable, the VAF (variance-affected factor) index is used. If its value is less than 0.2, the mediation effect is weak, if it is between 0.2 and 0.8, the mediation effect is partial, and if it is more than 0.8, the mediation will be complete.

$$VAF = \frac{\text{Direct effect value}}{\text{Direct effect value} + \text{⟳Direct effect}} = \frac{0.269}{0.269 + 0.382} = 0.413$$

Considering that the variance inclusion value is equal to 0.413, it is less than 0.8, resulting in partial mediation.

Table 7: Indirect impact in the research model

Paths	Direct path coefficient	Indirect path coefficient	Total path coefficient
Interactive marketing on Instagram on customer loyalty	0.382	0.269	0.651

Research Conclusion

The final findings from structural equation modeling showed that all hypotheses proposed in the study were confirmed; meaning that marketing based on indigenous cultural values had a significant effect on both variables of "brand affiliation" and "group identity" and in addition, group identity also had a direct and effective effect on brand affiliation. Also, the results of the indirect path showed that group identity plays a significant

mediating role in the relationship between indigenous cultural marketing and brand affiliation. Acceptance of all these relationships indicates theoretical and empirical coherence between cultural, social, and emotional dimensions in the formation of brand bonds.

At the first level, confirming the impact of marketing based on local cultural values on brand attachment showed that brands that respect the cultural values and signs of the community in their communication strategies provide the basis for creating deep emotional bonds with consumers. When the brand reflects images of local traditions, symbols, and values in its message and identity, the audience feels that the brand is not an alien economic entity, but rather part of the semantic and social context of their lives. This sense of cultural familiarity and recognition strengthens the emotional dimension of the brand bond and causes consumers to show reactions that go beyond mere behavioral loyalty. The result of this process is a deep and internal attachment that makes the consumer consider the brand as part of himself and his identity. From a strategic marketing perspective, this finding indicates that the genuine, rather than superficial, use of cultural elements can be a source of emotional differentiation of the brand in the market.

At a second level, the confirmation of the impact of indigenous cultural marketing on group identity highlights the importance of the social dimension of marketing. Many marketing activities affect not only the individual audience, but also the formation of collective identity and a sense of belonging. When a brand speaks of values that a group of people jointly hold dear (such as respect for family, loyalty, national pride, or honesty), the audience feels that the brand is their collective voice. In this way, the brand appears as a "shared social symbol" that represents and reinforces group identity. The results of this study confirm the idea that brands can act as "cultural agents" and strengthen social cohesion through their indigenous messages. Conceptually, this finding strengthens the bridge between cultural marketing and social identity theory, as it shows that cultural relevance not only creates competitive differentiation, but also consolidates a sense of cultural unity at the group level.

At the third level, the confirmation of the relationship between group identity and brand affiliation is a clear reflection of social identity theory in the field of branding. When individuals feel that the brand represents the values and goals of the group to which they belong, their connection with the brand goes beyond the level of consumer preference and is elevated to the level of collective identity. In this situation, brand consumption is not simply an expression of personal choice, but a symbol of membership in a particular community or group. Group identity gives meaning to the brand, and by supporting, recommending, or defending the brand, the consumer is

in fact defending his or her group. The present finding emphasizes that the power of a brand in the marketplace is conveyed by the degree to which it overlaps with group identity; a brand that can evoke a sense of pride and social belonging will make its consumers' support structure more sustainable.

But one of the most profound results of this research is the confirmation of the mediating role of group identity between local cultural marketing and brand attachment. The analysis of indirect paths showed that part of the effect of cultural marketing on brand attachment is transmitted through the strengthening of group identity. More precisely, when a brand reflects shared cultural values in its message, it first creates a sense of unity and solidarity among the audience, and then this collective feeling creates a platform for the development of a deeper emotional bond with the brand. This normative path shows that audiences experience affection and attachment to the brand through "being us" at the group level. The aforementioned finding indicates that strong brand attachment is not simply a consequence of the representation of culture in marketing, but also the result of the reproduction of social bonds through the brand.

From a theoretical perspective, the results of the present study have several important implications. First, the findings move towards expanding the concept of cultural marketing from the level of "reflection of culture" to the level of "creation and reproduction of collective identity". The traditional understanding of cultural marketing sees the brand as a tool for adapting to the existing culture; whereas this research shows that cultural brands can themselves become a factor in reconstructing social identity. Second, the presented model emphasizes the necessity of a multi-layered understanding of the consumer-brand bond: a bond that is formed first at the cognitive level (perception of values), then at the emotional level (sense of belonging), and finally at the social level (group identity). Third, the simultaneous acceptance of all hypotheses serves as confirmation of the structural validity of the hybrid culture-identity-belonging model and emphasizes that cultural and social dimensions play a fundamental role in explaining consumer loyalty in non-Western societies.

From a practical perspective, the results remind brand managers and marketers that effective marketing strategies in specific cultural environments (such as Middle Eastern societies) require a deep look at local values and collective narratives. Brands that simply translate global messages are unable to create a sense of authenticity and belonging. In contrast, brands that are able to utilize local cultural elements such as language, music, symbols, and social values in designing brand identity are likely to be more successful in creating lasting emotional bonds. Furthermore, the findings show that the formation of brand associations,

online communities, or group activities around the brand can play a vital role in strengthening group identity and, consequently, increasing audience attachment. From this perspective, community-based branding is one of the key levers for enhancing brand emotional capital in close-knit cultural environments.

At the socio-cultural level, these results are also significant. When brands operate within the local cultural context and reflect the values of their community in their messages, they not only improve their commercial performance but also play a role in reproducing and strengthening local culture. This phenomenon is of double importance in societies such as the Middle East or North Africa, where cultural identity is an integral part of the experience of social life. In such societies, the brand can act as a mediator between tradition and modernity; that is, it can remain the bearer and protector of local cultural values while moving in a globally competitive environment.

Finally, it can be said that the presented model and its results indicate the formation of a kind of "cultural chain of belonging"; meaning that local cultural marketing strengthens the sense of group identity by recreating a shared cultural meaning, and this shared identity, in turn, strengthens the emotional bond between the individual and the brand. In such a case, the brand is not just a commercial symbol but also part of the cultural and social memory of the society. Full acceptance of the assumptions shows that the link between culture and brand is a stable and two-way link; culture that gives meaning to the brand, and the brand that represents and recreates culture.

From a research perspective, these results open new horizons for future studies, as future research can examine the role of other cultural-perceptual dimensions in strengthening or weakening collective brand identity by adding new variables such as "brand authenticity," "cultural trust," or "brand aesthetic experience" to the current model. At the same time, the results can provide a model for comparative research among societies with different cultural structures to better reveal the specific contribution of local culture to the sustainability of brand attachment.

Overall, the findings of this study clearly indicate that in today's world, where brands operate beyond products, only those brands that can be embedded in the cultural core of consumers, evoke a sense of shared identity, and in this way create deep and lasting attachment will survive. Such brands will establish their place not only in the competitive marketplace, but also in the minds and hearts of society.

Given the impact of marketing based on local cultural values, the researcher recommends the need to adopt this culture, especially from the available media, and this is what the sample indicated, which was one of the

reasons for choosing that the students of the Faculty of media are the best media for marketing.

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