



The Effect of Instagram Advertising on the Advertisements Acceptance of Sports Customers during the COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Consumer attitude towards advertising is one of the effective indicators of advertising effectiveness; the consumer's cognitive ability towards advertising appears in their thoughts and feelings and consequently will affect their acceptance of advertising. The present study investigated the impact of Instagram advertising on the advertisement's acceptance in the Covid-19 pandemic course in sports clubs' customers.

Methodology: The research method is descriptive correlation and survey in data collection. A total of 273 customers of sports clubs completed the following questionnaires: a combination of questionnaires for Instagram advertising, Taylor & Todd's Attitude to advertising questionnaire (2002), and the Merisavo advertisements acceptance questionnaire (2007). Structural equation modeling based on the partial least squares was used to analyze the data.

Findings: The results showed that the modified model had a good fit (GOF=0.717). We indicated that Instagram advertising and its components (Entertainment, Interaction, new and Up-to-date, and Usefulness) positively and significantly affect customers' attitudes and acceptance of advertisement. Also, the attitude towards advertising as a mediating variable significantly affects advertisement acceptance ($P=0.001$).

Originality: In this article, we examine the modeling of Instagram advertising in the sports industry using structural equation modeling (SEM).

Keywords

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1. Introduction

Extensive human communication is a distinguishing characteristic of the contemporary world. The spread of communications, particularly electronic communications, has created a new civilization that is so distinct from prior societies that the new age is known as the age of communication, and today's society is known as the information society (Beheshti, 1997). As essential components of communication in such a society, the media and mass communication tools are crucial. Mass communication media have the most prominent cultural impact on society's behavior and are successful in promoting new habits and alterations in people's beliefs and conduct. Social networks are a modern phenomenon generated by integrating several communication technologies (McAlexander & Schouten, 1998). Physical advertising is no longer successful due to public gathering restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, so the usage of virtual networks has increased (Norouzi et al., 2021).

Instagram advertising is among the most effective social media ads since they significantly impact user advertisement acceptance (Veladdy, 2019). Customer's acceptance of advertisements is a significant and crucial aspect of the profitability of businesses. Acceptance is the decision to utilize a good, service, or concept both temporarily and permanently (Kotler & Keller, 2005). Instagram advertising is regarded as one of the most effective commercials on social networks; as a result, brands place a high value on Instagram. According to data, millions of Iranians have accounts in this program, and a more significant proportion of individuals follow their preferred brands through this network. Companies that are active on major social networks may multiply the impact of their advertising by several by selecting the best approach and applying marketing concepts (Robertson, 2018). Researchers in this discipline have looked at it from many angles since virtual network advertising is now a top focus for many businesses, changing how customers view items or services. According to Mehta (2000), customers' attitude toward commercials is an efficient measure of the efficacy of advertisements (Mehta, 2000). It follows that the consumer's acceptance of advertising will be influenced by how well-aware they are of advertising from the perspective of their ideas and feelings (Kiani & Nazari, 2022; Mostaghimi, 2017). In addition to improving the quality of advertisements and reducing costs, providing advertisements based on the factors influencing users' attitudes has additional benefits, including customer satisfaction, attraction, loyalty (Ball et al., 2006; Mostaghimi, 2017; Sarlab & Farid Fathi, 2021), increased product and service awareness, tremendous success in new product launches, and an increase in the number of target audiences (Mostaghimi, 2017).

The views and attitudes of consumers regarding advertising are crucial indications of the efficacy of advertising. Understanding advertising ideas and attitudes are crucial because they influence customers' brand perceptions and buy intentions. Beliefs regarding advertising influence consumers' attitudes towards advertising in general (Mir, 2012). The study's findings indicate that the correct advertisements result in a good attitude toward them, and when the clients have a positive attitude, they readily accept them. According to Wolin et al. (2002), most Internet users have a positive view of Internet advertising (Wolin et al., 2002). Lai and Liu (2020) studied the effects of content liking, content

validity, and social media interaction on the amount of user acceptance of product placement in mobile social networks. They discovered that content liking precedes social media engagement and content validity. Engagement on social media influences the credibility of the content. User acceptance of product placement on social media is strongly influenced by the content's likeability, credibility, and social media participation (Lai & Liu, 2020).

E-commerce can offset potential losses caused by this unfavourable situation and keep the business on track, given that it is unclear how long the coronavirus disease will continue to spread and how the living conditions will proceed even after this worldwide crisis ends. During an epidemic of coronavirus disease, individuals fear getting and transmitting the illness to their families. Individuals and athletes attend gyms less frequently due to this fear, which negatively impacts the gyms' ability to generate revenue. Instagram, a major social network in the country, is one platform for advertising to solve this issue. Therefore, to re-attract members and players to sports facilities, special attention should be devoted to advertising virtual networks, particularly Instagram, and the presence of people and athletes in gyms should be assured by respecting public and personal hygiene. Unfortunately, gym management in Ahar does not put much effort into attracting customers through Instagram advertising, and little attention is devoted to advertising in virtual spaces. Several authors and academics have stressed the significance of online advertising and its influence on consumers' attitudes about and advertising acceptance in boosting corporate performance in many cultures and industries. As a result, this study investigates the issue in the sports industry and communities. This study's researchers discovered that there is limited research on the topic at hand and that no research has been conducted in the field of sports marketing, particularly in the researched community within the country. As a result, this is the first attempt to study the target factors of this research in sports marketing. The influence of the factors has been researched independently in most national studies. However, in the current study, a model for three variables of Instagram advertising, attitude toward advertising, and advertising acceptance is proposed and simultaneously assessed using structural equation modeling. This study aims to determine if Instagram advertising influences the attitudes and acceptance of advertisements among sports club members in Ahar. Based on the theoretical literature and the research examined, a model relating to the research variables has been established. The research hypotheses and the conceptual model of the research are presented below (Figure 1):

- **First hypothesis:** Instagram advertising influences advertising acceptability.
- **Second hypothesis:** Instagram advertising influences the attitudes of sports club members in Ahar.
- **Third hypothesis:** Advertising acceptability is influenced by the attitude toward commercials.
- **Fourth hypothesis:** Instagram advertising influences advertising acceptability via the mediating variable of advertising attitude.

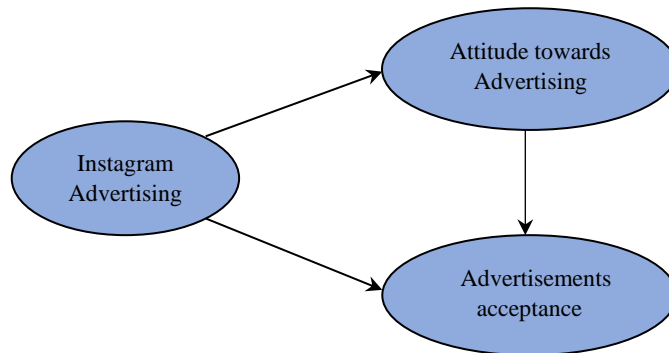


Figure 1. Research conceptual model.

2. Methodology

This research is descriptive of the correlation type and is practical in terms of its purpose and data collection method. All members of Ahar sports clubs constituted the statistical population for this study. Because the number of clients was unknown, the statistical population was deemed uncertain. According to the table created by Krejcie and Morgan, the sample size was 384. Simple random sampling was employed in this study. Out of the 384 surveys, 273 were fully completed and returned. A questionnaire was utilized to obtain the following information:

Instagram Advertising Questionnaire: A combination of questionnaires from (Kim & Ko, 2012), (Seo & Park, 2018), and (Marti-Parreño et al., 2013) were utilized to obtain information on the Instagram advertising variable. This questionnaire consists of ten items and four components: entertainment (2 items), interaction (3 items), novelty and currency (2 items), and utility (3 items) on a 5-Point Likert Scale (Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1). According to Kim and Ko (2012), the questionnaire's validity is positive, and its reliability is shown by Cronbach's alpha values of 0.94 for the entertainment component, 0.87 for interaction, and 0.83 for novelty and up-to-dateness. In addition, Marti-Parreño et al. (2013) found that the questionnaire's validity was positive and that its reliability, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, for the usefulness component was 0.81.

Attitude towards Advertising Questionnaire: The advertisement attitude questionnaire developed by (Taylor & Todd, 1995) was used. This survey has four items in 5-point Likert scale (Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1). In their study, Taghavi et al. (2017) reported the convergent validity of the questionnaire with AVE criteria of 0.708 and the reliability of the questionnaire with a combined reliability method of 0.906 (Taghavi et al., 2017).

Advertisements Acceptance Questionnaire: The advertisement acceptance questionnaire by Merisavo et al. (2007) was used. This questionnaire has 3 items in the 5-Point Likert Scale spectrum (Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1). Merisavo et al. (2007) has indicated that the questionnaire's validity is favorable, the factor loading of its items is at least 0.70, and the

questionnaire's Cronbach's alpha reliability is more than 0.70. [Yang et al. \(2013\)](#) also stated that the questionnaire's validity was favorable, and its Cronbach's alpha reliability was more than 0.67.

Seven professors of sports marketing and sports management reviewed and validated the face and content validity of all three surveys in this study. SmartPLS software used the partial least squares method to fit and evaluate hypotheses using structural models.

3. Results

The age group of 30 to 40 years with 41.1%, women with 54.2%, married persons with 57.9%, and bachelor's degree holders with 38.1% had the highest frequency, according to the descriptive statistics. The largest frequency of attendance at the sports club, with 42.1%, was twice per week. According to 23.8% of those surveyed, one to two hours a day are spent using Instagram.

Checking the pattern's fit before evaluating the study hypotheses is the first step in the method of structural equations using the partial least squares approach (PLS-SEM) pattern analysis ([Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013](#)). Fitting the measurement patterns, the structural pattern, and the overall pattern was the three aspects of pattern fit that were evaluated.

3.1. Measurement model fit

The measurement pattern was examined using two reliability and convergent validity criteria. The model's reliability was measured using factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha. During path analysis, factor loading is a quantitative number indicating the strength of the association between a latent variable (construct) and its related manifest variable (index) ([Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013](#)). [Table 1](#) illustrates that the factor loading of Instagram advertising, attitude towards advertisements, and acceptance indicators have good validity (above 0.8).

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability and is appropriate for assessing internal stability. Internal stability demonstrates a structure's link and associated indicators ([Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013](#)). In PLS analysis, composite reliability is a more recent metric than Cronbach's alpha, and it is preferable to Cronbach's alpha in that it measures the reliability of structures in terms of their correlation with one another rather than in absolute terms. According to [Table 2](#), all Cronbach's alpha values and the latent variables' combined reliability have appropriate values; therefore, the measurement model's reliability may be confirmed.

The second criterion for evaluating measurement model fit is convergent validity, which assesses the degree of correlation between each construct and its questions (indices). AVE measures the average variance shared by each concept and its respective indicators ([Barclay et al., 1995](#)). According to [Table 3](#), AVE values of latent variables are larger than 0.5, indicating a high degree of convergent validity ([Fornell & Larcker, 1981](#)). In other words, there is a strong correlation between each structure and its indicators; thus, the measurement models have a better fit, and their applicability is confirmed.

Table 1. Model reliability assessment through factor loadings.

Variables	Indicators	Factor loadings
Instagram advertising	Entertainment	0.897
	Interaction	0.882
	New and up-to-date	0.880
	Utility	0.904
Attitude towards advertising	Item 1 (NT1)	0.910
	Item 2 (NT2)	0.922
	Item 3 (NT3)	0.959
	Item 4 (NT4)	0.928
Advertisements acceptance	Item 1 (PT1)	0.912
	Item 2 (PT2)	0.926
	Item 3 (PT3)	0.944

Table 2. Measuring the reliability of the model through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

Latent variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficients (Alpha > 0.7)	Composite reliability (CR > 0.7)	Average variance extracted (AVE > 0.5)
Instagram advertising	0.913	0.939	0.793
Attitude towards advertising	0.948	0.962	0.865
Advertisements Acceptance	0.918	0.949	0.860

3.2. Structural model fit

In the research, the PLS method uses R Square or R^2 coefficients and the Q^2 criterion to assess the structural model's fit. R^2 is a criterion that links the measurement and structural components of structural equation modeling, demonstrating the exogenous variable's influence on the endogenous variable (criterion). Q^2 is a criterion that determines the model's predictive power (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013). According to Table 3, R^2 values have been determined for the research's endogenous constructs.

Table 3. R^2 and Q^2 coefficients of endogenous variables.

Endogenous variables	R^2	Q^2
Attitude towards advertising	0.758	0.623
Advertisements acceptance	0.825	0.677

3.3. Overall model fit

After assessing the fit of the measurement component and the structural part of the model, the GOF criterion is used to determine the model's overall fit (Tenenhaus et al., 2004). This criterion is determined using the following relationship.

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{communalities} \times \overline{R^2}} = 0.717$$

GOF has been assigned the values weak (0.01), medium (0.25), and strong (0.36) (Wetzels et al., 2009). The overall research model exhibits a strong fit by having a value of 0.717 for GOF.

3.4. Hypothesis testing model

After assessing the fit of the structural and general models, the PLS data analysis algorithm indicates that it is feasible to investigate and test the research hypotheses and arrive at the research findings. When the values of the path coefficient (t) exceed $|1.96|$, it demonstrates the relevance of the relevant factor and, therefore, the validation of the study hypothesis (Vinzi et al., 2010). The four model hypotheses are confirmed based on the value of the significant coefficient found for the paths between the variables. The second hypothesis (the influence of Instagram advertising on the attitude toward advertisements) and the first hypothesis (the effect of Instagram advertising on the acceptance of advertisements) both had significance coefficient values of 4.204 and 47.442, respectively. Therefore, Instagram advertising has a direct and significant effect on advertisements acceptance and attitude towards advertisements. The third hypothesis (the influence of attitude toward advertisements-on-advertisements acceptance) has a significant coefficient with a value greater than 13.088. This article demonstrates how the acceptance of advertisements is influenced by one's attitude toward advertisements, confirming the third hypothesis. The fourth research hypothesis (the mediation of attitude toward advertisements in the link between Instagram advertising and advertisements acceptance) is confirmed as a result of the second and third research hypotheses. After determining if the study hypotheses are significant, we should determine how significant the impacts are. The elements of Instagram advertising directly account for 82.5% of the variable measuring acceptance of advertisements and 75.8% of changes in attitudes toward advertisements, according to the determination coefficients in Figure 2.

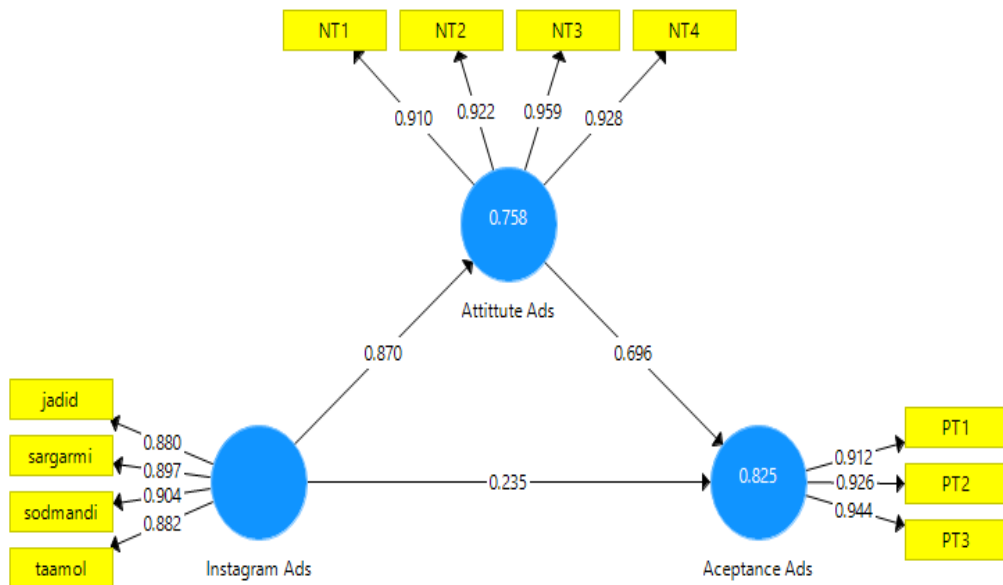


Figure 2. Revised model with standardized path coefficients.

Table 4. Results of partial least squares analysis and hypothesis testing.

Research hypotheses	Path coefficient (β)	t	P-Value	Result of the research hypothesis test
Instagram advertising \rightarrow Advertisements acceptance	0.235	4.204	0.001	Confirmed
Instagram advertising \rightarrow Attitude toward advertising	0.870	47.442	0.001	Confirmed
Attitude towards advertising \rightarrow Advertisements acceptance	0.696	13.088	0.001	Confirmed
The mediating role of attitude towards advertisements \rightarrow Advertisements acceptance	0.606	12.747	0.001	Confirmed

4. Discussion and conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the effect of Instagram advertising on advertisement acceptance during the Coronavirus disease in Ahar gyms. The results showed that Instagram advertising positively and significantly affects advertisement acceptance. This study's findings accord with those of (Gaheri Tabrizi, 2018; Lai & Liu, 2020; Momeni Safa, 2019). Instagram advertising during the Coronavirus pandemic could facilitate client acceptance. Marketers need to leverage social networks as a communication channel since the coronavirus disease outbreak has reduced people's ability to attend social gatherings. Assume that Instagram advertising is entertaining, thrilling, and delightful and that it is done to satisfy customers' demands. Customers would be more likely to receive advertising messages through Instagram if they had a positive attitude toward Instagram advertising. The managers of the gyms are advised to raise the number of social media advertisements for the sports clubs and use up-to-date and amusing advertisements to increase the number of people who frequent the sports facilities, in addition to enhancing the quality of the services. If customers see that health protocols are given a special attitude in gyms, and if these concerns are also stressed in sports club advertisements, this may provide them a lasting presence by enhancing their trust.

The results revealed that Instagram advertising positively and significantly affects customers' attitudes towards advertisements. This section's findings are compatible with those of (Gaber et al., 2019; Haghgoo, 2019; Shekari et al., 2020; Zhao & Wang, 2020). Instagram is a fast-growing social network, and its viewership in Iran is rising on a daily basis; therefore, it is regarded as a free online platform to reach prospective new customers. On Instagram, the user interaction rate is much higher compared to other social networks. Therefore, if the advertisement is aesthetically appealing, it will likely positively affect the viewers' attitude. Haghgoo (2019) research demonstrated that advertisements that are appealing and memorable, particularly on Instagram, and have a lasting impact on customers' thoughts might purchase sports brand products as a habit. Marketing on social networks and Instagram is a new method to engage with customers, and marketers must adapt rapidly and pay attention to social networks and online activity (Haghgoo, 2019). The rise of coronavirus and limits on meetings, particularly in gyms, have created an excellent chance to view advertisements on Instagram. If the most recent material is utilized in Instagram advertising, customers are supplied with sufficient

information, and they can express their demands through an interchange of ideas, a positive attitude will be generated in their thoughts, and proper advertising will be done through them to their friends.

The results demonstrated that advertising attitudes considerably and favorably influence advertising acceptance. This study's results agree with those of (Chung & Kim, 2021; Khalvati, 2019). Kotler and Keller (2006) defined attitude as a person's steady positive or negative evaluation, emotional feelings, and practical tendencies toward certain objects and ideas. People's attitudes can create their thinking and cause them to like or dislike something (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Three things distinguish attitudes: first, they are focused on a certain thing, person, or viewpoint. Second, they are value-based, and there is a belief in being acceptable or inappropriate, good or bad. Third, they typically have substantial stability and endurance, contributing to the advertisement's acceptance (Karimi, 2009). Acceptance has a crucial role in whether a project succeeds or fails; therefore, it is crucial that social media advertising be done as effectively as possible (Hejab Doost, 2016). Khalvati (2019) findings showed that customers' attitudes, quality, and credit towards advertisements effectively consider them useful and acceptable. Additionally, customers' attitudes regarding advertisements influence their purchasing and attendance decisions (Khalvati, 2019). Customers prefer virtual spaces on social networks due to the low cost of advertising, especially in the era of the coronavirus disease. We may expedite consumers' advertisements acceptance if we improve customers' economic perceptions about advertising by decreasing the cost of products and services and we, linking social benefits with customers' wants and desires, and finally, making advertisements helpful by expanding customer information about products and services and answering their queries.

The findings demonstrated that Instagram advertising, through the mediating variable of attitude toward advertisements, has a positive and significant impact on the acceptability of advertisements. This study's findings are compatible with (Shekari et al., 2020; Zhao & Wang, 2020). Many individuals are captivated inadvertently by cleverly lighted advertising with creative photographs, videos, and beautiful phrases that allure people and encourage them to develop false needs. Effective advertising on Instagram has a positive influence on client disposition. In addition, attitude is a person's favorable or unfavorable sentiments about doing an activity, as well as their feelings, assessments, and usually steady dispositions toward a subject (Sahaf zadeh et al., 2016). A positive attitude toward advertising might facilitate client acceptance. In their study, Zhao and Wang (2020) determined that the perceived ease of use of advertising substantially impacts its usefulness, attitude, acceptability, and purchase intent. Haghgoo (2019) research demonstrated that advertising that is appealing and memorable, particularly on Instagram, and has a lasting impact on buyers' brains could alter their opinions (Haghgoo, 2019). During the stressful period of coronavirus disease, it can motivate individuals to attend gyms for exercise, recreation, and amusement. Considering that, in the period of coronavirus disease, individuals pay more attention to ads through social networks, the content and format of advertisements should be given extra consideration. Weak, poor-quality and haphazard ads may result in a lack of advertisement acceptance. Customers' opinions about advertisements are likely to improve if Instagram advertising is

entertaining, new, timely, and informative and if they prioritize customer connection. During the pandemic, the favorable attitude of consumers enhances the impact of advertisements, leads to advertisement acceptance, and ultimately encourages their presence at the gym or their return.

Overall, it can be claimed that consumers' attitudes about commercials are one of the most reliable measures of advertisements' efficacy. As a result, the customer's acceptance of ads will be influenced by how they process advertisements in their thoughts and feelings. Acceptance is a crucial aspect of a project's success or failure. The customer decides to utilize the new product fully and logically at this level. We must pay specific attention to Instagram advertising and its constituents, particularly its usefulness. If Instagram advertising is effective, clients' views about items and services will improve, and they will readily embrace them. This research, like any research, had limitations; for instance, its statistical population comprised all Ahar gym members. As a result, the generalizability of the research's findings is restricted to the investigated statistical population. If the findings are used in other gyms of a similar kind, the cultural and social context of such gyms should be considered, and the findings should be applied with greater caution.

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تأثیر تبلیغات اینستاگرامی بر پذیرش تبلیغات مشتریان ورزشی در دوران کووید-۱۹

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کلیدواژه

باشگاه‌های ورزشی
پذیرش تبلیغات
سرگرمی
نگرش به تبلیغات
مصرف‌کننده ورزشی

نوع مقاله

پژوهشی اصیل

چکیده

هدف: نگرش مصرف‌کنندگان نسبت به تبلیغات یکی از شاخص‌های موثر در اثربخشی تبلیغات است؛ زیرا توانایی شناختی مصرف‌کننده نسبت به تبلیغات در افکار و احساسات آنها ظاهر شده و متعاقباً بر پذیرش آنها نسبت به تبلیغات تأثیر خواهد داشت. هدف پژوهش حاضر، مطالعه تأثیر تبلیغات اینستاگرامی بر پذیرش تبلیغات مشتریان ورزشی در دوران کرونا (کووید-۱۹) بود.

روش: روش تحقیق مطالعه حاضر، توصیفی-همبستگی است که به صورت پیمایشی انجام شده است. ۲۷۳ نفر از مشتریان باشگاه‌های ورزشی، پرسشنامه‌های تبلیغات اینستاگرامی، نگرش به تبلیغات تیلور و تاد (۱۹۹۵) و پذیرش تبلیغات مریساوو (۲۰۰۷) را تکمیل نمودند. جهت تحلیل داده‌ها از آزمون معادلات ساختاری مبتنی بر حداقل روش مربعات جزئی در نرم افزار Smart PLS استفاده شد.

یافته‌ها: نتایج نشان داد مدل ارائه شده پژوهش از برازش مناسبی برخوردار است ($GOF=0/717$). همچنین، نتایج نشان داد تبلیغات اینستاگرامی و مولفه‌های آن (سرگرمی، تعامل، جدید و به روز بودن، سودمندی) تأثیر مثبت و معناداری بر نگرش و پذیرش به تبلیغات کاربران اینستاگرامی در دوران کرونا دارند. نگرش به تبلیغات به عنوان متغیر میانجی تأثیر مثبت و معناداری بر پذیرش تبلیغات مشتریان را نشان داد ($P=0/001$).

اصالت و ابتکار مقاله: در این مقاله به مدلسازی تبلیغات اینستاگرامی در صنعت بازاریابی ورزشی با روش معادلات ساختاری پرداخته شده است.

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