

Building a Strong Brand for an Online Travel Agency Company in Egypt

Bc. Mostafa Selim

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Introduction

Define the objectives and the application used in the master's thesis.

I. Theoretical part

- Prepare a literature review about building a strong brand for a company.

II. Practical part

- Describe of almatar company.
- Analyze of almatar company's branding strategies and Egyptian travelers' consumer behavior toward Online Travel Agency brands.
- Develop a project to improve almatar's branding strategies.
- Elaborate on the cost, time and risk factors of the project.

Conclusion

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Vedoucí diplomové práce: doc. Ing. Miloslava Chovancová, CSc.
Ústav managementu a marketingu

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L.S.

prof. Ing. David Tuček, Ph.D.
děkan

doc. Ing. Michal Pilík, Ph.D.
garant studijního programu

Ve Zlíně dne 5. února 2024

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ABSTRAKT

Tato studie si klade za cíl prozkoumat proces budování silné značky pro online cestovní kancelář v Egyptě se zaměřením na případ společnosti almatar. Budování silné značky je pro společnosti nezbytností, protože přináší různé finanční výhody, jako je zvýšená loajalita zákazníků, odolnost vůči konkurenčním akcím a příležitosti pro prémiové ceny a rozšíření značky. Studie zkoumá strategie značky almatar a analyzuje spotřebitelské chování egyptských cestovatelů vůči značkám online cestovních kanceláří. Kromě toho je vyvinut projekt zaměřený na zlepšení strategií značky almatar s ohledem na náklady, čas a rizikové faktory. Vyhodnocením současných strategií značky almatar a provedením důkladné analýzy preferencí a vnímání egyptských cestovatelů si tato studie klade za cíl poskytnout praktická doporučení pro posílení identity značky almatar a postavení na trhu.

Klíčová slova: Branding, Equity značky, Silná značka, Online cestovní kancelář, almatar, Egypt, Positioning, Identita značky, Osobní branding, Interní branding, Equity založené na zákaznících.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the process of building a strong brand for an online travel agency company in Egypt, focusing on the case of almatar company. Building a strong brand is imperative for companies, as it yields various financial benefits such as enhanced customer loyalty, resilience to competitive actions, and opportunities for premium pricing and brand extensions. The study investigates the branding strategies of almatar and analyzes Egyptian travelers' consumer behavior towards online travel agency brands. Furthermore, a project aimed at improving almatar's branding strategies is developed, considering cost, time, and risk factors. By evaluating almatar's current branding strategies and conducting a thorough analysis of Egyptian travelers' preferences and perceptions, this study aims to provide actionable recommendations for strengthening almatar's brand identity and market positioning.

Keywords: Branding, Brand Equity, Strong Brand, Online Travel Agency (OTA), almatar, Egypt, Positioning, Brand Identity, Personal Branding, Internal Branding, Customer-Based Brand Equity.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this master's thesis to the soul of my grandmother, who sadly passed away recently. Her memory continues to inspire me, and I know she would be incredibly proud of this achievement.

I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

Mostafa Selim,

Zlín, Czech Republic.

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INTRODUCTION

Building a strong brand is a key objective for many companies due to its potential financial benefits. Strong brands enjoy greater customer loyalty, are less affected by competitive actions or crises, can command higher prices, receive better support from intermediaries, have more effective marketing communications, and can explore opportunities for licensing and brand extensions (Keller, 2001).

Brand equity, a prominent concept in marketing since the 1980s, has brought both positives and negatives for marketers. On the upside, it has emphasized the importance of brands in marketing strategy, prompting increased managerial focus and research. However, the concept's various definitions and purposes have led to confusion. Brand equity, at its core, is about giving products and services the power to stand out. Despite differing views, most agree that brand equity refers to the unique marketing effects directly linked to a brand, explaining why branded products or services yield different results than unbranded ones (Keller, 2003).

The increase in corporate marketing and branding has highlighted the vital role of employees in these processes (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Since corporate branding involves various stakeholders interacting with the organization's employees, its success heavily depends on the attitudes and behaviors of employees in fulfilling the brand promise to external stakeholders (Schultz & Chernatony, 2002).

Objectives and Methods of Master Thesis Processing

The main objective of this Master's thesis is to develop a project aimed at enhancing the branding strategies of almatar, an OTA company in Egypt. The study employs a mix of theoretical and practical approaches to achieve this goal.

The theoretical part begins with a comprehensive literature review on building a strong brand for a company.

In the practical part:

- Included describing almatar's characteristics.
- Conducted a Strategic Brand Analysis.
- An External Factor Evaluation (EFE) and Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) analyses.
- Competitor analysis is also performed to gain insights into the competitive landscape.
- Empirical data is gathered through a questionnaire distributed to Egyptian travelers and analyzed using SPSS software.
- Cost, time, and risk analyses are performed to develop the project, with time analysis utilizing QM for Windows, PERT-CPM Module.

The study aims to provide actionable recommendations for almatar's branding strategies, contributing to its success in the online travel market.

I. THEORY

1 Brand Definitions

Upon reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that brand definitions vary widely, ranging from technical descriptions to more psychological perspectives. Esteemed marketing academic Philip Kotler offers his own definition, emphasizing the significance of differentiation from competitors "A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 1997).

Another comprehensive definition of a brand, provided by de Chernatony and McDonald (1998), expands on its functions: "A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person, or place, enhanced in a manner that allows the buyer or user to perceive relevant, unique added values that closely align with their needs.

(Melin, 1999) outlines the first of five brand functions from a brand owner's viewpoint, describing it as the brand serving as an information carrier, a function often considered fundamental. In this capacity, brands convey factual details about a product, including its content, quality, and price. These facts are derived from the product's functional attributes and are typically presented through rational arguments.

1.1 Brand equity

Aaker (1996) describes it as "a set of assets (and liabilities) associated with a brand's name and symbol that enhances (or diminishes) the value provided by a product or service to a company and/or its customers. Additionally, Aaker (1996) proposes that brand equity is built upon four key pillars: brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and the brand's associations. Furthermore, there is a fifth factor known as "other" brand assets, which encompasses legal assets such as patents.

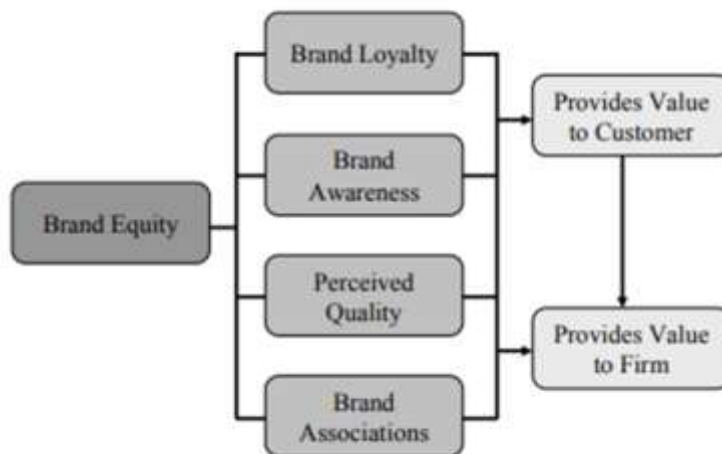


Figure 1 Brand Equity (Simplification of Melin (1999) interpretation of Aaker's model (1991).

according to Melin (1999) brand equity is a concept designed to consolidate a brand's assets and strengths. What's intriguing about brand equity is that it can be examined from both the brand owner's and the consumer's standpoint. This duality arises because the brand serves to create value for both the consumer and the brand owner.

1.2 Building Brand Equity: The Customer-Centric Approach

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) concept views brand equity through the lens of the consumer, whether the consumer is an individual or an organization, and whether they are an existing or potential customer. Successful marketing revolves around comprehending the needs and desires of consumers and organizations, and developing products and initiatives to meet those needs effectively. The fundamental principle of the CBBE concept is that a brand's strength is rooted in the collective knowledge, emotions, observations, and interactions customers have had with it over time. Put simply, a brand's power stems from what customers think and feel about it. For marketers, the challenge lies in crafting experiences with products, services, and associated marketing efforts that shape customers' thoughts, emotions, images, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and experiences in alignment with the desired brand image. We formally define customer-based brand equity as the unique impact that brand knowledge exerts on consumer reactions to the marketing efforts of that brand (Keller et al., 2011).

A brand exhibits positive customer-based brand equity when consumers respond more positively to a product and its marketing efforts when the brand is recognized, compared to

when it is not (for example, when attributed to a fictional name or left unnamed). Consequently, customers may be more receptive to new brand extensions, less price-sensitive, or more inclined to seek out the brand through alternative distribution channels. Conversely, a brand displays negative customer-based brand equity when consumers react less favorably to marketing activities compared to a version of the product with an unnamed or fictitious name (Keller et al., 2011).

The definition focuses on three main points: (1) differential effect, (2) brand knowledge and (3) consumer response to marketing.

Firstly, "differential effect" means differences in how consumers react, if there are no differences, the product might be seen as just like any other.

Secondly, these variations in response stem from consumers' understanding of the brand what they've learned, felt, seen, and heard about it through their experiences over time. So, while marketing efforts play a significant role, brand equity is ultimately shaped by what consumers perceive and feel about the brand.

Thirdly, customers' varying responses, which constitute brand equity, manifest in perceptions, preferences, and behaviors across all aspects of brand marketing. This includes decisions such as brand selection, recollection of ad details, reactions to sales promotions, and assessments of potential brand expansions (Keller et al., 2011).

According to the Customer-Based Brand Equity model, building a strong brand involves a series of interconnected steps, each building upon the success of the previous one. These steps aim to achieve specific objectives with both existing and potential customers.

- **Brand Identification and Association:** The first step is to ensure that customers recognize the brand and associate it with a particular product category or customer need.
- **Brand Meaning Establishment:** The second step involves firmly establishing what the brand represents in the minds of customers by strategically linking various tangible and intangible brand associations.
- **Customer Response Elicitation:** Next, the focus shifts to eliciting the desired responses from customers regarding the brand's identity and meaning.
- **Brand Response Conversion:** Finally, the objective is to convert these customer responses into a strong, active loyalty relationship between customers and the brand.

Each step is critical in building a robust brand that resonates deeply with its target audience. Indeed, these four steps encapsulate a series of fundamental questions that customers typically ask about brands, whether consciously or unconsciously:

- Who are you? (Brand Identity): Customers seek to understand the identity of the brand, asking questions like, "What makes this brand unique? What does it stand for?"
- What are you? (Brand Meaning): Customers want to grasp the essence of the brand and its significance in their lives, pondering questions such as, "What does this brand represent? How does it fulfill my needs? "What about you? What do I think or feel about you? (Brand Responses): Customers evaluate their thoughts and emotions towards the brand, contemplating, "How do I perceive this brand? What feelings does it evoke in me?"
- What about you and me? What kind of association and how much of a connection would I like to have with you? (Brand Relationship): Customers assess the nature and depth of their relationship with the brand, asking themselves, "What level of connection do I desire with this brand? How loyal am I willing to be?"

These questions underscore the importance of addressing key aspects of brand identity, meaning, responses, and relationships to foster a strong and lasting connection with customers.

Absolutely, there's a clear sequence in this "branding ladder." Each step builds upon the previous one:

- Identity Creation: Meaning cannot be established unless the brand identity has been clearly defined.
- Meaning Establishment: Responses cannot occur unless the right brand meaning has been developed and communicated effectively.
- Response Elicitation: A relationship cannot be forged unless the proper responses from customers have been elicited, indicating their engagement and connection with the brand.

This sequential progression highlights the importance of laying a strong foundation at each step to ultimately build a meaningful and enduring relationship between the brand and its customers

Achieving the four steps to establish the appropriate brand identity, meaning, responses, and relationships can be a challenging and intricate endeavor. To offer some organization, it's beneficial to consider six "brand-building blocks" to accomplish the necessary steps for building a robust brand (Keller, 2001).



Figure 2 Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid (Keller, 2001).

This set of questions aims to evaluate various aspects of customer-based brand equity.

- Salience

Could you list some brands within different product or service categories? Are these brands familiar to you? In what scenarios do you think you'd choose to use these brands? How frequently does each brand come to mind for you?

- Performance

How does this brand's performance compare to others in the category in terms of fulfilling the basic functions of the product or service?

How well does this brand meet the fundamental needs of the product or service compared to its competitors?

To what degree does this brand offer unique or special features?

Reliability

How dependable is this brand?

How long-lasting is this brand?

Serviceability

How easy is it to get service for this brand?

How effective is the service provided by this brand? Does it fully meet your needs?

How efficient is the service provided by this brand in terms of speed and responsiveness?

How courteous and helpful are the service providers of this brand?

Design

How stylish is this brand?

How much do you appreciate the appearance, feel, and other design aspects of this brand?

Pricing

Compared to its competitors in the category, are the prices of this brand generally higher, lower, or similar?

Compared to its competitors in the category, does this brand's pricing change more frequently, less frequently, or about the same?

- Imagery

To what extent do influential individuals use this brand?

How much do you admire people who use this brand?

How well do the following words describe this brand: grounded, trustworthy, adventurous, contemporary, dependable, prosperous, elite, charismatic, outdoorsy?

Where are suitable places to purchase this brand?

How fitting are the following scenarios for using this brand?

Is this brand widely available for purchase?

Is this brand versatile enough for various situations?

To what degree does thinking of the brand evoke positive memories?

How much do you associate growing up with this brand?

- Judgments

Quality:

What is your overall impression of this brand?

How do you rate the product quality of this brand?

To what extent does this brand meet all your product needs?

How do you perceive the value of this brand?

Credibility:

How knowledgeable do you perceive the creators of this brand to be?

How innovative do you find the creators of this brand?

How much trust do you have in the creators of this brand?

How well do the creators of this brand understand your needs?

How much do the creators of this brand value your opinions?

To what degree do the creators of this brand prioritize your interests?

How much do you like this brand?

How much do you admire this brand?

How much respect do you have for this brand?

Consideration:

How likely are you to recommend this brand to others?

What are your preferred products within this brand category?

How personally significant is this brand to you?

Superiority:

How unique do you perceive this brand to be?

To what extent does this brand offer advantages that other brands don't?

How does this brand compare in superiority to others in the category?

- Feelings:

Does this brand evoke a sense of warmth in you?

Do you associate this brand with feelings of fun?

Does this brand make you feel excited?

Does this brand provide you with a sense of security?

Does this brand give you a feeling of social approval?

Does this brand contribute to your sense of self-respect?

- Resonance

Loyalty:

I consider myself faithful to this brand.

I choose to purchase this brand whenever possible.

I prioritize buying this brand whenever I can.

I believe this brand fulfills all my needs for this product.

This is the brand I prefer over others.

If this brand wasn't available, it wouldn't bother me much to use a different one.

I would make an effort to seek out this brand.

Attachment:

I have a genuine affection for this brand.

I would genuinely miss this brand if it disappeared.

This brand holds a special place in my heart.

This brand means more to me than just a product.

Community:

I feel a strong connection to others who use this brand.

It feels like I belong to a community of users of this brand.

I relate to the people who use this brand.

I feel deeply connected with other users of this brand.

Engagement:

I enjoy discussing this brand with others.

I'm always eager to learn more about this brand.

I would be interested in owning merchandise with this brand's logo.

I take pride in others knowing I use this brand.

I enjoy visiting this brand's website.

I pay close attention to news and updates about this brand compared to others (Keller et al., 2011).

1.3 Building A Strong Brand Positioning Strategy

Brand positioning lies at the core of marketing strategy. It entails crafting the company's offering and image in a way that it occupies a unique and esteemed position in the minds of the target customers (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Positioning, as the term suggests, involves identifying the appropriate "placement" in the minds of a specific group of consumers or market segment. This ensures that they perceive a product or service in the desired manner, maximizing the potential benefit for the firm. Effective brand positioning serves as a compass for marketing strategy, elucidating the brand's essence, uniqueness, similarities to competitors, and reasons why consumers should choose it.

To establish a positioning strategy, marketers must first define a frame of reference by identifying the target market and understanding the competitive landscape. This involves determining the optimal points-of-parity (similarities with competitors) and points-of-difference (unique attributes) brand associations. In essence, marketers need to ascertain:

- Who the target consumers are?
- Who the primary competitors are?
- How the brand resembles these competitors, and?
- How the brand stands out from them (Keller et al., 2011)?

A strong positioning strategy should have one foot rooted in the present and another foot poised towards the future. It should be somewhat aspirational, allowing the brand space for growth and enhancement, positioning solely based on the current market state may lack foresight, but positioning too far ahead of the present reality might be unrealistic, the key to effective positioning lies in striking the perfect balance between the brand's current identity and its potential for evolution.

A successful positioning strategy pays attention to both points-of-parity and points-of-difference. Often, marketers focus only on the brand's strengths and overlook areas where it may lag behind competitors, however, it's important to address both aspects, one way to identify crucial points-of-parity is by imagining how competitors position themselves and what sets them apart, these points of difference for competitors become points of parity for the brand, additionally understanding consumer decision-making trade-offs can also help identify important points-of-parity.

A strong positioning should mirror the consumer's perspective, emphasizing the benefits that consumers receive from the brand (Keller et al., 2011).

1.4 The Significance of Brand Mantra in Branding

A brand mantra is a short phrase, usually three to five words, that captures the core essence of a brand's positioning. It's like a brand's essence or promise in a nutshell, helping everyone understand what the brand stands for. For example, McDonald's mantra "Food, Folks, and Fun" sums up its brand identity.

Brand mantras are crucial for maintaining a consistent brand image. Every interaction a consumer has with a brand can impact its equity. Since many employees interact with consumers directly or indirectly, their words and actions should always align with the brand's meaning. Even marketing partners, like ad agencies, may not realize their role in shaping brand equity. The brand mantra communicates the brand's significance to the company and underscores the essential role of employees and marketing partners in managing it. It also serves as a memorable reminder of the brand's key considerations that should remain top-of-mind.

Creating a brand mantra requires succinctly conveying what the brand represents and what it doesn't. Two renowned brands, Nike and Disney, offer excellent examples of effective brand mantras. Both follow a similar structure, consisting of three terms, demonstrating the power and usefulness of a well-crafted brand mantra.

A good brand mantra is:

- Concise: It communicates the essence of the brand in a few words.
- Memorable: It sticks in the minds of consumers, employees, and partners.
- Evocative: It evokes the core values and identity of the brand.
- Differentiating: It distinguishes the brand from competitors.
- Inspirational: It inspires action and loyalty among consumers.

	Emotional Modifier	Descriptive Modifier	Brand Function
Nike	Authentic	Athletic	Performance
Disney	Fun	Family	Entertainment

Table 1: exemplify these qualities, showcasing how a strong brand mantra can effectively communicate the essence of a brand (Keller et al., 2011).

1.5 Mastering Online Brand Building: Strategies for Effective Marketing Communications

Marketing communications encompass the methods through which companies strive to inform, persuade, and remind consumers, whether directly or indirectly, about the brands they offer. Marketing communications essentially act as the brand's voice, allowing it to engage in dialogue and cultivate connections with consumers (Keller et al., 2011).

Media advertising	Consumer promotions
TV	Samples
Radio	Coupons
Newspaper	Premiums
Magazines	Refunds and rebates
Direct response advertising	Contests and sweepstakes
Mail	Bonus packs
Telephone	Price-offs
Broadcast media	Interactive
Print media	Web sites
Computer-related	E-mails
Media-related	Banner ads
Place advertising	Rich media ads
Billboards and posters	Search
Movies, airlines, and lounges	Videos
Product placement	Message boards and forums
Point of purchase	Chat rooms
Point-of-purchase advertising	Blogs
Shelf talkers	Facebook
Aisle markers	Twitter
Shopping cart ads	YouTube
In-store radio or TV	Event marketing and sponsorship
Trade promotions	Sports
Trade deals and buying allowances	Arts
Point-of-purchase display allowances	Entertainment
Push money	Fairs and festivals
Contests and dealer incentives	Cause-related
Training programs	Mobile
Trade shows	SMS & MMS messages
Cooperative advertising	Ads
	Location-based services
	Publicity and public relations
	Word-of-mouth
	Personal selling

Figure 4 Marketing Communications Options (Keller et al., 2011).

While advertising and various communication channels may serve different functions within the marketing strategy, a fundamental objective they share is to enhance brand equity. As per the customer-based brand equity model, marketing communications play a crucial role in enhancing brand equity by increasing brand awareness, establishing associations with the brand in consumers' minds, eliciting positive perceptions or emotions towards the brand, and fostering a strong connection and resonance between consumers and the brand. Moreover, marketing communication programs shape how people perceive the brand, encouraging responses that build customer-based brand equity. Marketing communications offer flexibility in contributing to brand equity through various channels. Simultaneously, understanding brand equity guides marketers in designing and executing different communication strategies effectively.

Marketing communication programs face a challenge due to significant changes in the media landscape. Traditional advertising mediums like TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers are losing influence amidst heightened competition for consumer attention. The digital era presents numerous new avenues for consumers to engage with brands, either directly with companies or through peer-to-peer interactions (Keller et al., 2011).

In the early 2000s, companies quickly embraced online marketing to reach consumers in the digital world. The Internet became a vital platform for marketing due to its cost-effectiveness, detailed targeting options, and flexibility in achieving various marketing goals. We'll focus on three key online brand-building tools: websites, online advertisements and videos, and social media (Keller et al., 2011).

Websites: Company websites are among the oldest and most effective online marketing tools for brands. They leverage the interactive nature of the web, allowing consumers to access brand information tailored to their needs. Well-designed websites can effectively reach consumers across different segments, regardless of their familiarity with the brand or past interactions. Successful websites often focus on providing valuable information rather than entertainment, catering to consumers seeking knowledge. For instance, websites like P&G's www.pampers.com and General Mills's www.cheerios.com offer advice on baby care and parenting, demonstrating expertise in relevant areas to attract and engage consumers.

Brand-building today involves a partnership between consumers and brand marketers. This dynamic has led to the rise of many consumer-generated websites and pages where people share ratings, reviews, and feedback about brands. Platforms like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Epinions host consumer opinions and reviews, where individuals seek advice and feedback.

Marketers must stay vigilant, monitoring these platforms and engaging when necessary to uphold a positive brand reputation. When crafting company websites, marketers need to ensure they offer up-to-date and trustworthy information to consumers, websites should be regularly updated and tailored to provide personalized content, particularly for existing customers, designing visually appealing pages that capture visitors' attention is essential, leveraging the latest technology to effectively convey the brand message. Website design is critical, as a negative user experience may deter consumers from returning in the competitive online landscape (Keller et al., 2011).

Social Media: Social media's rapid growth has made it a vital tool for brand communication. It enables consumers to share text, images, audio, and video online with each other and with company representatives if desired. Social media takes various forms, including message boards, chat rooms, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, LinkedIn and YouTube, social media provides numerous advantages for marketers. It enables brands to create a visible identity and engage with audiences online. Moreover, it supports existing communication efforts and encourages creativity and relevance. Social media has become a vital platform for marketers to engage with consumers in unique ways. Initially met with hesitation by some, it's now widely acknowledged that online conversations will happen regardless of a company's involvement. Therefore, many businesses have embraced social media, establishing official Twitter accounts and Facebook pages for their brands (Keller et al., 2011).

Mobile marketing has emerged as a significant communication option in recent years and is expected to have an even greater impact on brand building in the future. With smartphones becoming increasingly integral to consumers' lives, marketers are recognizing the importance of reaching audiences through mobile channels. In fact, mobile ad spending exceeded \$1 billion in 2011, reflecting the growing significance of this platform (Keller et al., 2011).

IHOP restaurants achieved a 10 percent redemption rate for mobile coupons during one of its campaigns. Domino's aimed to raise awareness about the new Legends Pizza, drive more customers to its stores, and boost sales through its mobile campaign. Marketers can use different short-code keywords in various advertisements, both print and electronic, to track which medium is most successful in engaging consumers and driving action (Keller et al., 2011).

Another emerging trend in mobile marketing is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms. These technologies enable marketers to personalize content and messaging based on individual user preferences, behaviors, and past interactions. By leveraging AI, marketers can deliver more relevant and targeted mobile experiences, thereby increasing engagement and driving conversion rates. A few years ago, mobile marketing was viewed with concern, as there was worry that it might annoy customers with intrusive product promotions. However, innovative messages that invite interested consumers to engage with the brand have turned mobile marketing into an effective strategy for increasing brand awareness, especially when part of larger advertising campaigns across different media platforms (Keller et al., 2011).

2 Employer Branding

EB refers to a notion characterized by a collection of economic, operational, and emotional advantages that companies provide to their staff. This forms a well-structured managerial approach aimed at concentrating on foremost goals, boosting efficiency, enhancing hiring procedures, fostering stronger employee allegiance, and diminishing turnover (Sturges et al., 2002).

Moreover, EB can be understood as the amalgamation of a company's corporate identity and reputation, which collectively shape how individuals perceive an organization (Edwards & Martin 2009).

As time has passed, the original notion of EB has undergone a redefinition. EB is a collection of distinct characteristics that set the organization apart from others. Over time, this concept has transitioned from a mere list of organizational traits to the exploration of the organization's individuality (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004).

Because EB aims to outline the distinctive traits of the organization, it can be perceived as a strategy for the long run, a goal-oriented procedure designed to retain the most skilled individuals within the company (Srivastava et al., 2010). In this process of communication, every party involved (including clients, suppliers, media, and the public) is impacted, while simultaneously contributing to the formation of the employer's brand through their actions, recognition, and perspectives (Wilden et al., 2010).

At present, EB is succinctly characterized as a tactic aimed at prevailing in the competition for skilled individuals, seeking to retain existing staff members while also drawing in prospective employees (Amelia et al., 2016).

Given that EB functions as a means of communication through which an organization showcases its offerings and characteristics, these attributes subsequently evoke a heightened motivation in the intended individuals to engage more actively in their work within the organization (Love et al., 2011). The employer brand, at the heart of EB, stands as a valuable asset for an organization. Hence, its management should take precedence as a key organizational focus. (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004).

The understanding of a brand has undergone a substantial evolution concerning its definition and breadth. In its early stages, the concept was primarily associated with products and

services. However, this perspective has since expanded to encompass a broader array of entities, including concepts, events, physical locations, and even employers (Kapoor, 2010). In today's context, the management of jobs necessitates an approach akin to that used for products. This involves utilizing marketing methods to carefully structure job offerings, aiming to create a convergence between the aspirations of potential employees and the objectives of employers (Wilden et al., 2010). At present, one of the foremost dilemmas faced by businesses is the pursuit and rivalry in acquiring the most skilled and capable workforce (Chhabra & Sharma, 2016). Alongside brands, human resources stand as a paramount asset for a company, holding immense significance (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). Due to the intense competition within the job market, organizations are compelled to establish uniqueness as employers in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors (Kapoor, 2010). The original intent of the concept was to ensure a coherent and well-defined approach in shaping a value proposition for employees, mirroring the methodology used for consumer brands (Mosley, 2007).

EB arises as a novel strategy for organizations to set themselves apart and secure a competitive edge (López et al., 2014). Its role entails establishing a consistent management structure, streamlining processes, prioritizing objectives, enhancing productivity, and refining aspects like recruitment, retention, and employee commitment (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

The employer brand emerges through the integration of various Marketing and HR concepts, particularly those related to Branding. This integration aims to emphasize a specific stance that a company assumes as an employer. The objective of this Marketing process aligns with that of any other consumer brand: drawing in new customers while retaining existing ones. Nevertheless, it's crucial to recognize that focus should extend beyond mere attraction and encompass retention as well. Retaining current customers proves more advantageous, cost-effective, and efficient compared to the endeavor of recruiting new ones (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

The employer's brand involves an ongoing marketing effort that doesn't conclude with the signing of a contract as a result, intermittent endeavors to cultivate an employer brand are ineffective and yield no outcomes (Kapoor, 2010). Constructing this brand is an intricate process that draws from numerous factors, including brand recognition, positive and negative perceptions, loyalty, trust, and the sense that the brand is accessible to employees

when required. Due to these factors, the employer brand is the one with which an employee forges a deep connection (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

Similar to all Marketing endeavors, shaping or establishing brand perceptions is a complex undertaking. Consequently, constructing an employer brand entails crafting a distinct and recognizable company identity as an employer. This identity should stand out and set the organization apart from its competitors (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). In order for an organization to evolve into a model employer that surpasses mere proficiency in recruitment and retention, it necessitates a foundation of dedicated employees who align with the organization's mission, vision, and values (Kapoor, 2010). These sentiments foster a sense of loyalty among employees towards the employer brand. This loyalty hinges on the transition of employees from a contractual employment arrangement to a psychological understanding (Chhabra & Sharma, 2016). The connection established between the organization and the employee leads to numerous instances of reciprocal advantages. The employer brand offers the employee valuable opportunities for personal and professional growth, encompassing practical development aspects. This also includes monetary or material incentives, extending to the economic realm, alongside a sense of affiliation with a particular organization, spanning the psychological sphere (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). The components that compose an employer brand encompass both functional and symbolic advantages. Functional benefits pertain to tangible aspects of the job that hold objective appeal, like salary or flexible benefits. Symbolic benefits, on the other hand, are linked to perceptions of the company, such as the prestige or societal recognition an individual experience upon joining a specific organization. In a recruitment scenario, potential candidates are drawn to an organization not solely by functional benefits, but also by their perceptions of desired qualities associated with the company. Functional benefits alone fall short in generating initial attraction towards a particular company (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). When a potential employee lacks adequate and consistent information or holds inaccurate perceptions about a potential employer, they might perceive significant risks associated with joining the organization. Consequently, they might eliminate it as an employment option and instead opt for another organization about which they possess more accurate and positive information, thus perceiving lower risk. Therefore, ensuring the dissemination of transparent and cohesive communication signals should be considered an integral part of employers' investments. This practice aims to secure a prominent position in the minds of potential employees, ensuring the organization is seen as an attractive choice (Wilden et al., 2010).

Within this process, employees wield a pivotal influence in effectively shaping the employer brand. Their actions can either bolster the brand's values or, conversely, weaken the solidity of the job-related messages being conveyed (Berthon et al., 2005).

2.1 Employer Branding Process

Creating and overseeing an employer's image

The significance of social networks every company inherently possesses an employer brand, which can range from positive to negative. Some organizations might be unaware of the exact nature of their brand. In cases where organizations fail to actively cultivate their brand, external factors can influence and mold it without their input. In today's era of widespread information sharing, blogging, and social networking, an employer's brand can undergo swift transformations, often in unforeseen ways. The consequences for a company are too significant to ignore, making it imperative for organizations to take charge of crafting and overseeing their brand.

Maintaining a user-friendly and hospitable website that openly presents information about the organization's internal dynamics, culture, vision, mission, values, and the hiring process is a crucial step in introducing and conveying the brand to visitors on the organization's site. If your organization opts for a presence on social media, it's essential to remain well-informed and engaged. Assign dedicated staff to consistently update and disseminate accurate information on your social media platform. Ensure that it fosters interaction, allowing employees to share information and celebrate successes. Create a space for discussions and comments to gain insights into the perspectives of current, former, and prospective employees, as well as to grasp their concerns. Make a concerted effort to comprehend what people are expressing about your organization on social media and the reasons behind their sentiments.

Employees have access to websites that provide information about various aspects of organizations, including salary details, job descriptions, job titles, and the organizational culture. Current or prospective employees rely on this information to gain accurate insights into the organizations they are interested in. For example, Glassdoor.com is a platform that offers data enabling current and potential employees to discover salary information for different positions within a company. It also includes feedback and reviews from employees about their current or past employers. Such information is particularly valuable since some organizations do not provide transparent job postings regarding pay and job descriptions for

the positions they advertise. To gain a comprehensive understanding of these roles, employees and potential candidates often turn to websites like Glassdoor.com or Indeed.com, among others.

Furthermore, organizations may not always convey detailed information about their cultural aspects to potential employees. Individuals keen on learning more about an organization's culture and how well they might fit in can read candid reviews and feedback from current and former employees on these websites.

From the organization's standpoint, it is crucial to comprehend and value what past and current employees are expressing on social media platforms and assess whether the brand message being conveyed aligns with the intended brand message. If there are discrepancies, it is essential to identify where and why these messages diverge and make necessary adjustments to ensure consistency and coherence in the brand message, both internally and externally achieving this objective necessitates objective and candid assessments.

Social media platforms have simplified the process for individuals, including a company's target audience, to ascertain whether a company's actions are consistent with its brand image. If a company's advertisements tout its commitment to environmental friendliness, but numerous online sources reveal that its actual practices do not align with this message, it can suffer negative repercussions through social media. It's important to note that social media is a continuously active medium where people discuss a wide range of topics. Some employees may conclude their workdays feeling highly satisfied with their accomplishments and then turn to social media to express their enthusiasm for their employer. Conversely, others who have had less positive experiences at work may take to social media to share their contrasting sentiments.

Organizations must maintain a watchful eye over their brand and take proactive steps to engage their employees while actively listening to their needs. By doing so, employees will feel appreciated and respected, and these positive sentiments will be evident on social media platforms.

Employees serve as brand ambassadors who represent their employer's brand. They are the public faces of their organizations, and their voices and opinions, which are integral to their organizations, can wield significant influence over the organization's brand. For instance, it has long been recognized that an impolite receptionist can deter potential clients or customers. In today's digital age, social media can rapidly and exponentially amplify the

adverse effects of such interactions. In summary, every employee within an organization, regardless of their rank or role, contributes to shaping the organization's brand. A company's brand is not solely impacted by its current employees but also by former employees and prospective applicants. In conclusion, it is imperative for organizations to proactively mold and oversee their employer brands, often utilizing social media as a tool to achieve this goal (Wayne et al., 2016).

2.2 The advantages of having a positive employer brand are substantial

Developing an effective and prosperous employer brand unquestionably enhances an organization's value. For instance, the advantages of employer branding are demonstrated through improvements in the quality of applicants (Collins & Han, 2004). External employment branding, as exemplified by certifications like "Best Places to Work," has an impact on the quality of the applicant pool. To elaborate, when the number of these certifications rises, the quality of applicants tends to be higher, particularly in smaller companies and during periods of limited job openings (Dineen and Allen, 2016). In addition, firms with these certifications tend to experience lower collective turnover rates among employees. Simultaneously, their organizational performance surpasses that of competitors within the same industry (Fulmer et al., 2003). The employer brand serves as the identity of the company as an employer. It encompasses the company's values, systems, policies, and actions aimed at attracting, motivating, and retaining both current and prospective employees (Dell and Ainspan, 2001). One crucial strategic role for HR is to spearhead internal employer branding initiatives, collaborating closely with marketing specialists responsible for external branding efforts. HR processes and management decisions play pivotal roles in shaping the internal employer brand (Wayne et al., 2016).

2.3 The role of strategic HR in leading the employer branding process is paramount

In today's fiercely competitive global marketplace, organizations seek to gain a competitive edge by drawing in and retaining top talent, ultimately aiming to enhance productivity and profitability. It cannot be emphasized enough that people constitute the most critical resource for an organization, and the organization's brand represents its most valuable asset. The primary objective of strategic human resource management (SHRM) is to align the organization's strategic goals and objectives with its HR processes (Amber and Barrow, 1996). Strategic human resource management involves selecting, aligning, and integrating an organization's human resource management (HRM) in a manner that optimizes the contribution of its human capital resources to achieve strategic business objectives (Cascio, 2015). To accomplish this effectively, it is crucial to have a carefully designed HR strategy, as HR strategy centers on the decisions, processes, and choices that organizations make regarding the management of their workforce (Cascio & Boudreau, 2012). Collaborating closely with line managers, the HR function within an organization bears the responsibility of identifying and defining the specific types of talent that will make the most effective contributions to the organization's strategic goals. Employer branding campaigns led by HR and marketing leaders can be especially beneficial in attracting and retaining top talent, especially when they engage employees in the overall process. These campaigns serve to articulate and oversee an organization's concrete and intangible incentives, as well as its image and identity. Incorporating an organization's shared values into a branding campaign offers insights into its fundamental traits and its organizational identity (Edwards & Martin 2009).

The marketing function, with input from HR and line managers, is ideally positioned to concentrate on the organization's external branding efforts. Internally, HR should lead the charge in ensuring that employees can affirm the organization's employer value proposition, meaning what they can expect to experience in their daily work. This process commences with recruitment and extends through the onboarding of new employees, their training and development, performance management, and reward processes. Although HR has traditionally focused on each of these processes individually at the tactical level, the role of strategic HR is to leverage them, both individually and collectively, as internal mechanisms for conveying a positive employer brand. The following sections briefly delve into the details of each of these processes (Wayne et al., 2016).

Recruitment:

In essence, when job applicants' overly optimistic expectations are adjusted to align with the actual work conditions before they are hired, it might lead to a decrease in job acceptance rates. However, those who receive a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) tend to exhibit better job performance, higher job satisfaction, and increased longevity in their positions. As an illustration, when the apartment-complex operator Aimco shifted to providing realistic "day-in-the-life-of" descriptions for customer-facing roles, it observed that only 3% of new hires left within 90 days, a significant improvement from the 22% turnover rate experienced before implementing the RJP (White, 2007).

Apart from Realistic Job Previews (RJPs), organizations may also highlight essential aspects of the work environment and the organization's culture, such as teamwork, customer focus, equitable treatment of employees, initiative, and innovation. Each of these factors contributes to fostering a positive perception of the organization. Potential recruits are also interested in understanding the core values and principles an organization upholds, and transparent communication of these values is of utmost importance in the branding process (Wayne et al., 2016).



Figure 3 Recruitment funnel (Tracy Parson, 2016).

Recruitment marketing involves utilizing various strategies and tools by an organization to engage and nurture potential talent during the pre-applicant phase (Rouse, 2019).

Figure 3 illustrates the recruitment funnel and the role of recruitment marketing within it. While many studies position recruitment marketing at the top of the recruitment funnel, others view it as a pre-funnel stage. In this perspective, it initially generates awareness and enhances recognition of the organization. Secondly, it assists prospective candidates in

considering what the organization offers. Finally, it sparks interest in applying for the job. Once candidates apply, they enter the traditional recruitment channel, where their applications are processed, candidates are selected for evaluation, and ultimately, hiring decisions are made. Recruitment marketing, positioned at the forefront of the recruiting funnel, was previously overlooked by talent acquisition efforts. However, it has now emerged as a crucial component of contemporary recruitment and talent acquisition strategies, incorporating marketing practices to effectively attract and engage potential candidates (parsons, 2016).

Recruitment marketing combines various elements such as SEO, mobile recruiting, landing pages, content creation, career sites, social media, employee testimonials, and email marketing. Its aim is to ensure that qualified potential candidates are aware of the company's existence and have the opportunity to register in the company's talent pool. By doing so, they can stay updated about future vacancies. This process establishes a relationship with prospective candidates, allowing for ongoing communication through the dissemination of relevant information and job opportunities (Rouse, 2019).

On-boarding:

It's essential to underscore that during this phase, employees are more open to cues from the organizational environment than they are likely to be at any other time. These cues regarding appropriate behavior can originate from various sources (Cascio et al., 2016), including:

- Official literature of the organization.
- Behaviors demonstrated by senior personnel.
- Formal instructions provided by senior personnel.
- Exemplary conduct exhibited by peers.
- Rewards and consequences resulting from the employee's actions.
- Reactions to the employee's ideas.
- The level of challenge in the assignments given to the employee.

Among organizations with structured onboarding programs, 68% observe that new employees reach productivity faster, 67% notice higher levels of employee engagement, and 51% witness improved employee retention. From a business perspective, companies with the most successful onboarding programs report a 17% boost in revenue per full-time

employee and a 16% increase in customer retention. This results in a mutually beneficial scenario for both new employees and the organization's brand (Wayne et al., 2016).

Training and development:

Training and development have a well-established research tradition within the realms of personnel psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, and human resource management. In fact, multiple meta-analyses have consistently shown that training has an overall positive impact on job-related behaviors and performance (Brown & Stizmann, 2010). Strong Endorsement from Top Management: Companies with top-notch training practices have a firm commitment to training and development woven into their corporate culture. This commitment is particularly evident in leading organizations such as Google, Disney, Marriott, and Cisco.

- **Strategic Alignment:** Their training initiatives are closely linked to the organization's strategic goals and are designed to yield tangible, business-oriented outcomes.
- **Fostering Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** These companies cultivate environments where feedback is abundant. They promote a culture of constant learning and improvement, encouraging risk-taking and providing one-on-one coaching. They also value the opportunity to learn from both successes and failures.
- **Resource Investment:** These organizations are wholeheartedly committed to allocating the necessary resources. They allocate ample time and financial support to ensure effective training programs.

All of these characteristics are equally applicable to both external and internal employer branding endeavors. Just as in the recruitment and onboarding processes, the chance to engage in training serves as concrete proof of an organization's dedication to the personal and professional growth of its workforce. Positive training experiences directly contribute to enhancing an employer's brand (Wayne et al., 2016).

Performance management:

Regarding performance management, an increasing number of organizations are placing greater emphasis on regular communication and feedback, moving away from the traditional practice of conducting annual performance appraisals (Cascio, 2016). In the context of employer branding, organizations equipped with robust performance management systems can confidently declare, "We nurture the growth of our employees." Just like training and

development, consistent and constructive feedback serves as further confirmation of the organization's dedication to fostering the personal and professional growth of its workforce. This, in turn, becomes a central element of a favorable employer brand (Wayne et al., 2016).

Rewards:

The last strategic HR process we explore is the aspect of rewards, which can be seen within a broader framework as total compensation. Compensation encompasses everything that an employer is prepared to provide in exchange for the contributions made by employees. Total compensation comprises both direct forms, such as cash, and indirect components, which encompass benefits and services as rewards (Wayne et al., 2016).

Various organizations employ different reward strategies. Some organizations heavily reward individual performance, while others place less dramatic distinctions among individuals and tie rewards more closely to team or organizational outcomes. Certain organizations reward long service with incremental time-based raises, comprehensive benefits, and no performance-based incentives, which is commonly seen in the public sector. In contrast, others may offer moderate base pay along with equity and/or substantial short-term incentives based on performance, which is typical in startup organizations with uncertain revenues. There are numerous possible combinations of total rewards, catering to different segments of talent. The variety of alternative configurations for direct, indirect, and relational rewards is extensive. In multinational organizations, legal restrictions (such as employee stock ownership) or cultural norms (common in collectivist cultures) may necessitate the adaptation of rewards to meet these requirements. The primary consideration is to ensure that the rewards provided and the way they are communicated align with the organization's intended image and employer brand. This ensures that employees can verify the organization's employer value proposition (Wayne et al., 2016).

2.4 HR can play a crucial role in helping organizations develop and enhance their employer brands

Here are specific steps that HR can take to achieve this:

- **Gather Employee Input:** Administer anonymous surveys, utilize suggestion boxes, and conduct exit interviews to grasp the thoughts, opinions, and concerns of current and former employees. Understand what matters to them and seek their input before embarking on major internal and external communication efforts.
- **Secure Leadership Alignment:** Ensure that the CEO and key leaders from HR, marketing, IT, finance, and other functional areas are fully aligned with the employer brand message and its development. Harmonize this message with the organization's overall strategy and objectives. Maintain authenticity, honesty, and consistency throughout the organization.
- **Consistency in Actions and Values:** Ensure that an organization's actions, both internally and externally, along with its values, convey a consistent brand message. Remember that every employee, regardless of status or position, represents the organization's brand.
- **Involve Employees:** Value employees by making them an integral part of the employer brand message. Share the message with employees and educate them on each aspect of it. Help employees understand how to effectively convey the message and be active in sharing their stories through various communication channels, including social media.
- **Clear and Convenient Communication:** Ensure that communication methods are user-friendly, easy to use, and that all information is up-to-date. Utilize video testimonials from employees and images that reflect the organization's message and brand in action.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Stay informed about the employer brand by monitoring employee feedback in internal company surveys and their comments about the organization on social media. Evaluate whether these messages align. If disparities exist, take steps to understand the reasons behind employee sentiments. Based on the collected data, implement changes to ensure consistency of the employer brand message both internally and externally.

Recognize that building a positive employer brand is an ongoing process that demands continuous attention, time, and commitment, remember that the most crucial aspect is to embody the employer brand authentically. This is a tangible demonstration of HR leadership in action (Wayne et al., 2016).

2.5 Internal Branding: Bridging Marketing and HR for Brand Excellence

Internal branding is seen as a strategy for establishing robust corporate brands. It aids the organization in harmonizing its internal operations and corporate ethos with the essence of the brand (Vallaster & Christine 2004).

Both management and brand consultants play pivotal roles in offering valuable perspectives on internal branding (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

The aim of internal branding is to guarantee that employees translate advocated brand messages into tangible brand experiences for customers and other stakeholders (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

Several publications have highlighted that effective internal branding fosters employees' dedication to, alignment with, and allegiance to the brand (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). As employees internalize the brand values, they will consistently uphold the brand promise across all interactions between the company and its stakeholders (Vallaster & Chernatony, 2003).

To effectively implement internal brand building, utilizing Internal Marketing has been proposed as a pivotal tool. While Internal Marketing is recognized as a suitable approach for internal brand communication, it's important to acknowledge that communication alone isn't the exclusive method for ensuring the success of the internal branding campaign (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

Indeed, internal branding necessitates a more comprehensive integrative framework that encompasses corporate marketing, corporate management, and corporate human resource management, marketing serves as a conduit between communication, service, and quality. Improving both service and quality can be partly accomplished by grasping techniques utilized by the HR function, which is instrumental in nurturing human assets to boost the organization's economic performance and the success of its brand (Pfeffer, 1998).

By comprehending and integrating marketing and HR theories, it is contended that management can facilitate employees in embracing and internalizing brand values, aligning their attitudes and behaviors accordingly (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005). This alignment ultimately leads to the fulfillment of the brand promise to the organization's clients, thereby fostering customer satisfaction, preference, and loyalty (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006).

2.6 Building Competitive Advantage Through Employee Engagement and Personal Branding

The personal brand of an employee can be viewed as an indirect component of internal marketing, as it plays a role in selecting, delivering, and communicating value to the client (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

Given the ever-changing market and increasing customer demands, it's tough for companies to stay ahead. That's why it's crucial for them to understand the real value of their employees. When employees consistently go above and beyond, it gives the company a big competitive advantage. Additionally, employees with strong personal brands are always competitive, performing well and boosting the company's image and success (Vosloban, 2014).

Furthermore, it's crucial to highlight the significance of fostering high-value relationships between employees and employers. To achieve this, it's essential to identify potential employees who can offer the most value in helping the organization achieve its strategic goals. By recruiting these individuals and establishing a mutually beneficial employment relationship, both the employee and the employer stand to gain. This alignment leads to improved performance and ultimately provides a competitive advantage for the organization (Schweitzer & Lyons, 2008). Employers can achieve sustainable competitive advantages by empowering employees to leverage their personal abilities to generate knowledge. This advantage is rooted in and shaped by the organizational competencies and forms the foundation for long-term success (Shahzad et al., 2012).

In top-tier organizations, the employee brand serves as a vital source of sustainable competitive advantage. These organizations uphold the traditional construct of employee workplace performance, ensuring that the necessary requirements are met (Blumberg & Pringle 1982).

Due to their extensive knowledge, employees in all-star organizations tend to feel confident in their ability to make decisions aligning with organizational priorities, thereby enhancing job satisfaction. Additionally, these individuals are less inclined to leave the organization, leading to a more stable and experienced workforce. Positive sentiments among all-star team members also contribute to favorable word-of-mouth communication about the organization. Consequently, increased interpersonal communication is likely to have a positive impact on both customers and other employees within the firm (Mangold & Miles, 2007)

II. ANALYSIS

3 Methodology

This study aims to develop a project aimed at improving almatar's branding strategies. The project will include cost, time, and risk analysis to provide actionable recommendations for improving almatar's branding strategies.

Main objective

How can online travel agencies differentiate themselves to attract more consumers in a competitive market?

Research Question

What are the key factors that influence consumers' decisions to use a specific online travel agency brand over others?

Research Objective

To identify and understand the factors that consumers prioritize when selecting an online travel agency brand.

To achieve the main objective, the following procedures were followed:

- Describing the characteristics of almatar company was sourced from almatar's website and internal materials.
- Analyzing a Strategic Brand Analysis of almatar was conducted using internal materials and external environment.
- Analyzing competitors of almatar including Seera Group, Flyin, Flaynas, and Rehlat
- Conducting a SWOT analysis followed by an External Factor Evaluation (EFE) and Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) analysis of almatar sourcing from almatar internal material and. were sourced from almatar's internal materials and external environment.
- Conducting a quantitative research through a questionnaire survey among company customers, used a descriptive statistic to understand the behaviors and preferences of Egyptian travelers towards online travel agency brands, conducted a quantitative research study by distributing a structured questionnaire via social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn) from March 13th to March 22nd 313 participants responded to the questionnaire, which consisted of 21 questions, the sample size was determined based on the research scope and available resources, focusing on

obtaining reliable and accurate insights and utilized SPSS software for data analysis, including relative evaluation, to identify key factors influencing consumers' decisions, assess trust in online travel agency brands, examine the correlation between travel frequency and satisfaction levels, and explore demographic influences on attitudes and behaviors towards online travel agencies.

The research questions to support the main objective

RQ1: Is there a relationship between trust in almatar's brand reputation and the likelihood of recommending almatar Company to friends or family?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between overall satisfaction with almatar Company's services and the frequency of using almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between how frequently individuals use almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services and their monthly income?

RQ4: Is there a relationship between individuals' age and their frequency of using almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services?

- To develop a project aimed at improving almatar's branding strategies and conducting cost, time, and risk analysis for the project.

3.1 Description of the Characteristics of almatar Company

almatar, a cutting-edge Saudi OTA, stands as a beacon in the realm of travel services, offering comprehensive solutions and invaluable resources for globetrotters. Our platform is a gateway to seamless travel experiences, facilitating hotel reservations, and flight bookings, and furnishing detailed insights into countless destinations worldwide.

More than just a booking platform, almatar is a treasure trove of travel wisdom, equipping travelers with tips, hacks, and insider knowledge to elevate their journeys. Whether you're traversing the bustling streets of Tokyo or basking in the sun-kissed beaches of Bali, almatar ensures that every aspect of your trip is meticulously planned and effortlessly executed.

Central to our ethos is a deep reverence for our Arabic culture. almatar's services and programs are meticulously crafted to cater exclusively to families and individuals, ensuring that every traveler embarks on a journey that resonates with their cultural values and heritage. We take immense pride in fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among our Saudi citizens, enriching their lives through unforgettable travel experiences.

At almatar, we spare no effort in delivering excellence. Our dedicated team works tirelessly to curate bespoke itineraries that showcase the finest destinations and experiences, allowing travelers to immerse themselves in the richness of our world while upholding the integrity of our cherished culture. With almatar as your trusted travel companion, embark on a journey of discovery, enlightenment, and boundless adventure.

Vision:

To lead OTAs in a creative and integrative manner in the kingdom. Gulf countries and North Africa.

Mission:

Is to give our user's a smooth, fast and precise travel experience.

Through almatar you can

- Find the best hotel with the best price between more than 1 million hotels covering 60.000 cities around the world.
- Book your next flight with more than 500 airlines around the world. You can choose from economy, business and first classes.

Source: <https://almatar.com/en/>



Figure 5 almatar company logo

almatar logo features the Arabic text "المطار" in a stylish font which means "airport" in Arabic doesn't include an airplane image instead it uses a simpler symbol that signifies travel and cultural ties this choice reflects almatar's commitment to offering more than just flight bookings it's about the entire travel experience.

3.2 Strategic Brand Analysis of almatar Company

Bridging Cultures Through Travel:

In the realm of travel, almatar isn't merely a booking platform, it's a cultural bridge, connecting the warmth of Arab hospitality with the excitement of global discovery. Let's take a closer look at how almatar's brand identity, image, culture, and personality come together to create unforgettable experiences for travelers.

Brand Identity

almatar's identity is rooted in celebrating Arab heritage while embracing the excitement of exploration. Its logo, reminiscent of Arabian motifs, symbolizes the brand's commitment to preserving cultural identity while venturing into new horizons.

Positioning the trusted travel partner who bridges the gap between cultural heritage and global exploration.

Brand Image

almatar's brand image is one of sophistication and cultural resonance. Our marketing materials are eye-catching and our online presence is strong, but we're not about showing off – we just want to share the joy of travel with you. We're all about genuine luxury and real experiences. The brand voice is warm, informative, and respectful, promoting adventure alongside.

Brand Culture

Values: Respect for Arab culture, commitment to customer satisfaction, and a passion for fostering a love of travel.

Internal Environment: almatar fosters a team culture that celebrates diversity and cultural understanding, employees are encouraged to learn about different cultures and share their knowledge with customers.

Customer Experience: From the booking process to post-trip support, almatar prioritizes a seamless and respectful experience, this includes offering culturally appropriate services, such as Arabic language support and halal food options.

Brand Personality

almatar embodies the persona of a knowledgeable and trustworthy friend, guiding travelers on transformative journeys with care and expertise. Its personality exudes warmth, reliability, and a passion for exploration. Whether it's offering personalized recommendations or sharing insightful travel tips, almatar establishes itself as a trusted advisor and confidant in the realm of travel. With a blend of professionalism and genuine empathy, almatar forges meaningful relationships with its customers, enriching their travel experiences and shaping lifelong memories.

3.3 Competitors Analysis

In this competitor analysis, we will examine key players in the market landscape to gain insights into their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. By understanding our competitors' strategies and market positioning, we can identify areas for differentiation and inform our strategic decision-making process.

almatar Competitors

Seera Group

Is a leading travel and tourism company, offering a comprehensive range of travel services including online booking platforms, travel agencies, and hospitality services.

Strengths: Seera Group has a diverse portfolio of travel brands and services, including Almosafer and Tajawal, catering to different segments of the market, the company benefits from its extensive network and partnerships in the travel industry.

Weaknesses: While Seera Group offers a wide range of travel services, it may lack the exclusive focus on personalized experiences that almatar provides.

Flyin

Is a popular online travel agency offering a wide range of travel services including hotel bookings, flight reservations, and car rentals.

Strengths: Flyin has a user-friendly platform and a strong market presence, it offers competitive pricing and a variety of travel packages catering to different budget ranges.

Weaknesses: Unlike almatar, Flyin may not prioritize cultural sensitivity or offer specialized services exclusively for Arab families and individuals, the company may also lack the personalized travel advice and destination insights that almatar provides.

Flynas

Popular online travel agency provides a range of travel services including hotel reservations, flight bookings, and destination information.

Strengths: Leading low-cost carrier with extensive domestic and international flight options.

Weaknesses: Focus primarily on airline services, lacking comprehensive travel booking options, may not offer as detailed destination information and travel resources as OTA competitors.

Rehlat

Is one of the leading online travel agencies in the Middle East

Strengths: established presence in multiple Middle Eastern countries, accepts payments through various methods, including KNET and CashU.

Weaknesses: limited to online operations without physical office locations, relatively shorter operating history compared to some competitors



Source: <https://awww.similarweb.com/website/almatar.com/#competitors>

Figure 6 A bar graph titled "Competitors" is presented the x-axis categorizes the travel companies, while the y-axis represents their affinity as a percentage.

Affinity: In competition refers to the level of natural likeness or similarity between a company and its competitors.

3.4 SWOT Analysis

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on family-friendly and culturally sensitive travel • Customer-Centric Approach • Large scale of operation • Strong customer service department • User-friendly website and mobile app 	Weakness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited Brand Recognition • Dependence on external partners for service offerings • Liquidity limitations in key operation branches (Cairo, Alexandria, and Bangalore)
Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Demand for Online Travel Services • Expansion of digital platforms and technology advancements • Potential partnerships with airlines, hotels, and tourism boards 	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense competition from established online travel agencies • Economic downturns and political instability • Changing travel regulations and visa restrictions • Technological disruptions and cybersecurity threats

Table 2 SWOT Analysis of almatar (own source)

3.4.1 EFE Analysis of almatar:

Factor	Description	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
Opportunities (O)				
O1	Increasing Demand for Online Travel Services	0.2	3 (High Growth)	0.6
O2	Expansion of digital platforms and technology advancements	0.15	3 (High Growth)	0.45
O3	Potential partnerships with airlines, hotels, and tourism boards	0.05	2 (Moderate Growth)	0.2
Threats (T)				
T1	Intense competition from established online travel agencies	0.2	4 (High Threat)	0.85
T2	Economic downturns and political instability	0.15	3 (Moderate Threat)	0.3
T3	Changing travel regulations and visa restrictions	0.1	2 (Moderate Threat)	0.2
T4	Technological disruptions and cybersecurity threats	0.15	2 (Moderate Threat)	0.3
		1		2.9

Table 3 EFE Analysis of almatar (own source)

3.4.2 IFE Analysis of almatar

Factor	Description	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
Strengths (S)				
S1	Focus on family-friendly and culturally sensitive travel	0.15	4 (Major Strength)	0.8
S2	Customer-Centric Approach	0.16	4 (Major Strength)	0.45
S3	Large scale of operation	0.08	2 (Moderate Strength)	0.2
S4	Strong customer service department	0.17	2 (Moderate Strength)	0.35
S5	User-friendly website and mobile app	0.1	3 (Minor Strength)	0.3
Weaknesses (W)				
W1	Limited Brand Recognition	0.14	1 (Major Weakness)	0.2
W2	Dependence on external partners for service offerings	0.15	3 (Moderate Weakness)	0.45
W3	Liquidity limitations in key operation branches (Cairo, Alexandria, and Bangalore)	0.05	2 (Minor Weakness)	0.3
		1		3.05

Table 4 IFE Analysis of almatar (own source)

In conclusion, the SWOT analysis of almatar highlights its strengths such as its focus on family-friendly and culturally sensitive travel, customer-centric approach, large scale of operation, strong customer service department, and user-friendly website and mobile app. However, it also identifies weaknesses including limited brand recognition, dependence on external partners for service offerings, and liquidity limitations in key operation branches. The opportunities for almatar include the increasing demand for online travel services, expansion of digital platforms, and potential partnerships with airlines, hotels, and tourism boards, while threats include intense competition from established online travel agencies, economic downturns, changing travel regulations, and technological disruptions. The EFE analysis indicates a weighted score of 2.9, reflecting the company's slightly stronger external opportunities compared to threats. Conversely, the IFE analysis yields a weighted score of 3.05, indicating that the company's internal strengths slightly outweigh its weaknesses. Overall, these analyses provide valuable insights for almatar to capitalize on its strengths, address weaknesses, leverage opportunities, and mitigate threats to enhance its competitive position in the online travel agency market.

3.5 Customer analysis

3.5.1 Characteristics of consumers

The customer analysis, based on 313 responses, reveals key demographic insights. The majority of respondents identify as male (71.9%), with a smaller portion identifying as female (28.1%). The largest age group falls within the 26-35 years old range (68.4%), while other age groups are represented in smaller percentages. Most respondents are employed (71.2%), with students, self-employed individuals, retirees, and others also included. In terms of income distribution, the largest bracket is EGP 20,001 - EGP 30,000 (58.1%), with various other income ranges represented.

Evaluation of Questionnaire's results

Question 1.

How often do you travel domestically or internationally in a **year**?

313 responses

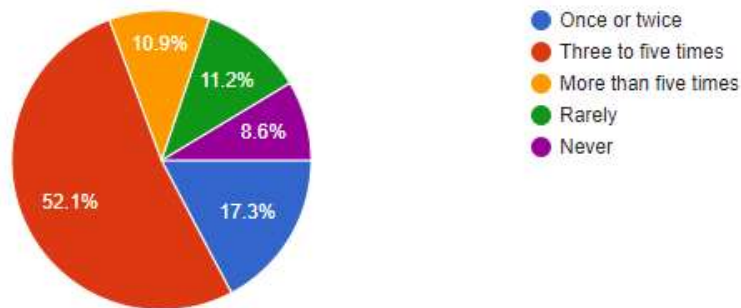


Figure 7 Frequency of Travel

This question aimed to understand the frequency of travel among respondents, from the 313 responses received:

17.3% of respondents indicated that they travel once or twice a year. This suggests that a significant portion of the sample engages in occasional travel.

The majority, constituting 52.1% of respondents, reported traveling three to five times annually. This indicates a relatively moderate frequency of travel among this group.

A smaller segment, comprising 10.9% of respondents, reported traveling more than five times a year, indicating a high frequency of travel.

11.2% of respondents reported traveling rarely, implying infrequent or sporadic travel behavior.

Finally, 8.6% of respondents reported never traveling, suggesting a portion of the sample does not engage in domestic or international travel.

Question 2.

When planning your travels, which sources do you primarily use to choose and book flights, hotels and other services? (Select all that apply)

313 responses

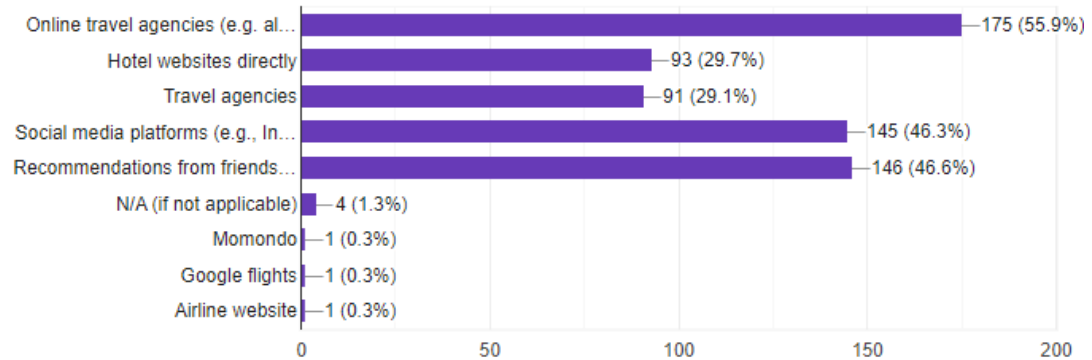


Figure 8 Identify The Source of Travelling

This question aimed to identify the primary sources utilized by respondents when planning their travels, from the 313 responses received:

55.9% of respondents primarily use online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Almatar, Booking.com, and Expedia. This indicates a strong reliance on digital platforms for travel planning and booking.

Social media platforms and recommendations from friends or family play a significant role, influencing 46.3% of respondents in their travel decisions. This highlights the importance of social networks and word-of-mouth recommendations in travel planning.

Direct bookings through hotel websites are preferred by 29.7% of respondents, indicating a desire for direct engagement with accommodation providers.

Traditional travel agencies remain relevant for 29.1% of respondents, suggesting a continued demand for personalized assistance and guidance in travel arrangements.

Question 3.

Which online travel agencies have you used in the past 6 months? (Select all that apply)

313 responses

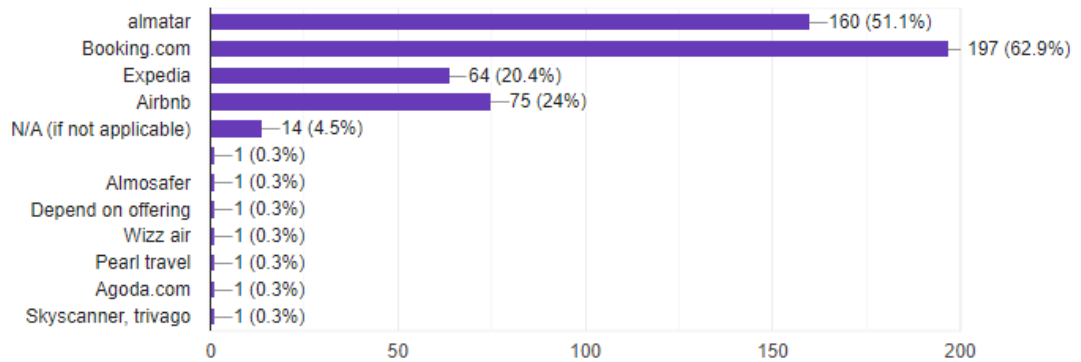


Figure 9 OTAs Usage

This question aimed to identify the online travel agencies (OTAs) frequented by respondents within the past six months, from the 313 responses received:

almatar emerges as a prominent choice, with 51.1% of respondents utilizing its services. This indicates a substantial user base for almatar among the surveyed population.

Booking.com follows closely, with 62.9% of respondents using its services, highlighting its popularity as a booking platform.

Expedia's usage stands at 20.4%, indicating a comparatively lower preference among respondents.

Airbnb, though popular in the travel accommodation sector, attracts usage from 24% of respondents, suggesting a moderate level of adoption.

Question 4.

When you think about traveling, what brand do you think of **first**?

313 responses

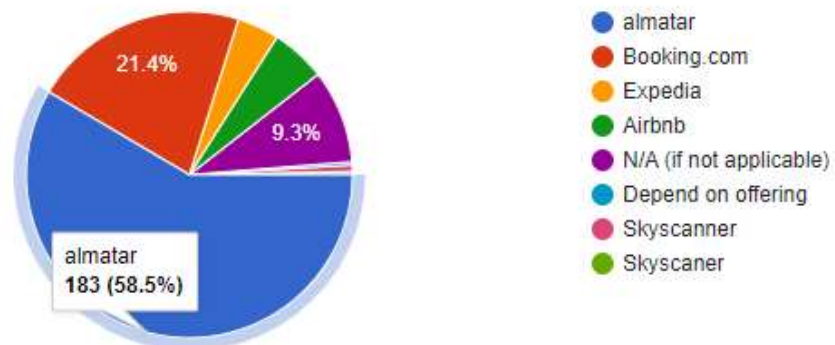


Figure 10 Positioning

This question aimed to ascertain the top-of-mind brand recall among respondents when considering travel, from the 313 responses received:

almatar emerges as the most recalled brand, with 58.5% of respondents associating it with travel. This indicates a strong brand presence and awareness in the minds of consumers.

Booking.com follows, albeit with a lower recall rate of 21.4%.

Expedia, Airbnb, and Skyscanner have lower recall rates, ranging from 0.9% to 5.4%, indicating lesser top-of-mind presence compared to almatar and Booking.com.

Question 5.

Have you ever heard about the brand of **almatar** Company?

313 responses

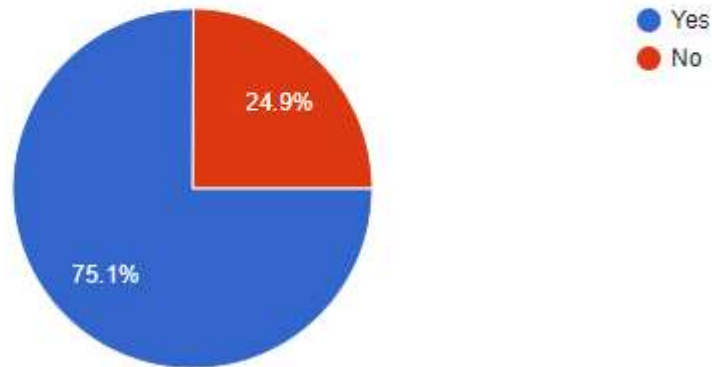


Figure 11 Level of Awareness of almatar Brand

This question aimed to determine the level of awareness among respondents regarding the brand of almatar Company, from the 313 responses received:

75.1% of respondents indicated that they have heard about the brand of almatar Company, demonstrating a relatively high level of awareness.

Conversely, 24.9% of respondents reported not being familiar with the brand, indicating that there is still a segment of the population that has not been exposed to almatar Company.

Question 6.

How did you first hear about the brand of almatar Company?

313 responses



Figure 12 Primary Channels Through Which Respondents First Became Aware of the almatar

This question aimed to identify the primary channels through which respondents first became aware of the almatar Company brand, from the 313 responses received:

Online advertisement emerges as the most common source of brand discovery, cited by 58.1% of respondents. This underscores the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in brand promotion.

Word of mouth, through friends or family, also plays a significant role, with 15% of respondents attributing their awareness of almatar Company to this channel.

Social media and other channels contribute to brand awareness to a lesser extent, suggesting that online advertising and personal recommendations are the primary drivers of brand discovery for almatar Company.

Question 7.

Have you ever used almatar services for book flights, hotels and other services?

313 responses

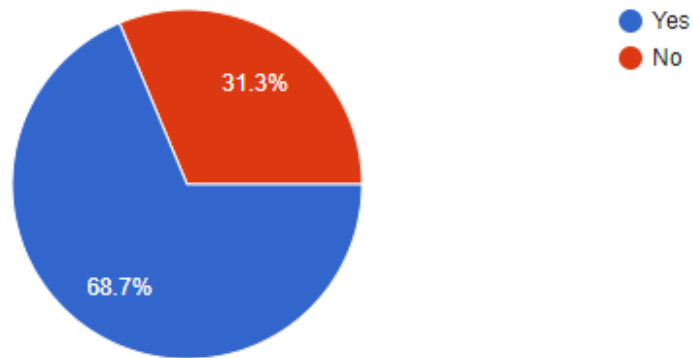


Figure 13 Usage of almatar's Services

This question aimed to determine the extent of usage of almatar's services among respondents, from the 313 responses received:

68.7% of respondents have used almatar's services to book flights, hotels, and other services, indicating a substantial user base.

Conversely, 31.3% of respondents have not utilized almatar's services, suggesting that there is still potential to expand the customer base or improve service offerings to attract new users.

Question 8.

How satisfied are you with almatar Company services overall?

313 responses

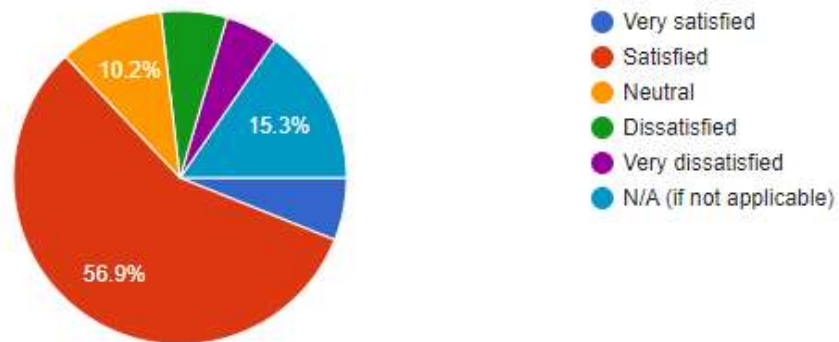


Figure 14 Level of Satisfaction

This question aimed to gauge the satisfaction levels of respondents with Almatar Company's services, from the 313 responses received:

The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with almatar Company's services, with 56.9% indicating they are satisfied.

A smaller percentage, comprising 6.1%, reported being very satisfied with almatar Company's services.

Dissatisfaction levels were relatively low, with 6.4% expressing dissatisfaction and 5.1% being very dissatisfied.

This indicates generally positive sentiment towards almatar Company's services among respondents, with room for improvement to address the needs of dissatisfied users.

Question 9.

What do you like most about almatar Company's services? (Select all that apply)

313 responses

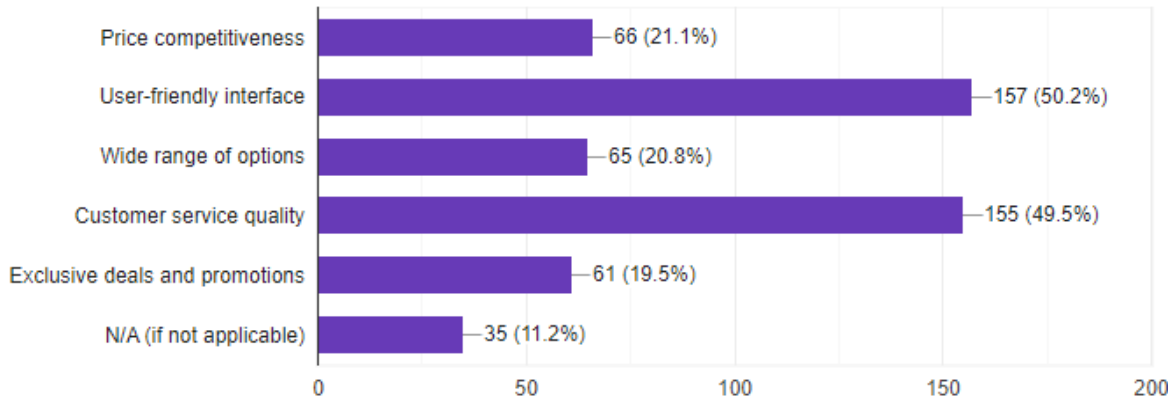


Figure 15 Key Aspects of Almatar Company's Services

This question aimed to identify the key aspects of almatar Company's services that resonate most with respondents, from the 313 responses received:

The user-friendly interface emerged as the most appreciated aspect, with 50.2% of respondents highlighting it.

Customer service quality closely followed, with 49.5% of respondents expressing appreciation for this aspect.

Other appreciated aspects include price competitiveness (21.1%) and exclusive deals and promotions (19.5%).

This provides insights into the strengths of almatar Company's services from the perspective of users and highlights areas where the company excels in meeting customer expectations.

Question 10.

What improvements would you like to see from almatar Company to enhance your booking experience? Please select all that apply.

313 responses

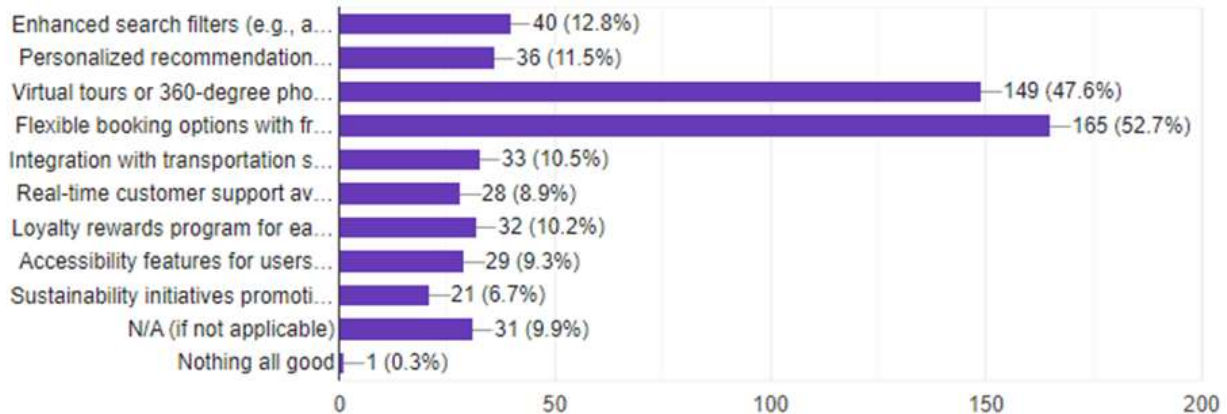


Figure 16 Enhancing The Booking Experience Offered by almatar

This question aimed to gather suggestions for enhancing the booking experience offered by almatar Company, from the 313 responses received:

Flexible booking options with free cancellation or modification policies were the most requested improvement, with 52.7% of respondents indicating this preference.

Virtual tours or 360-degree photos of accommodations were also highly desired, with 47.6% of respondents expressing interest in this feature.

Personalized recommendations based on past bookings and preferences (11.5%) and loyalty rewards programs (10.2%) were also suggested as areas for improvement.

This provides valuable feedback for almatar Company on areas where enhancements to their services could lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Question 11.

Will you recommend almatar Company to friends or family based on your experiences with the platform?

313 responses

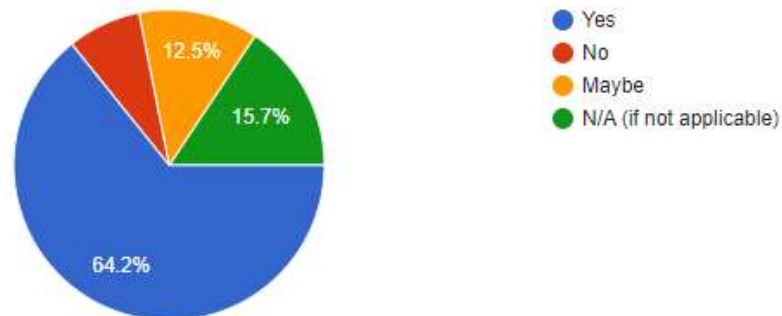


Figure 17 Recommending almatar Company

This question aimed to assess the likelihood of respondents recommending almatar Company to others, from the 313 responses received:

The majority of respondents (64.2%) indicated that they would recommend almatar Company to friends or family based on their experiences with the platform.

A smaller percentage, comprising 7.7% of respondents, stated that they would not recommend almatar Company.

Some respondents (12.5%) were unsure about whether they would recommend the platform.

This provides insights into the likelihood of almatar Company benefiting from word-of-mouth recommendations and underscores the importance of delivering positive customer experiences to drive advocacy.

Question 12.

How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?

313 responses

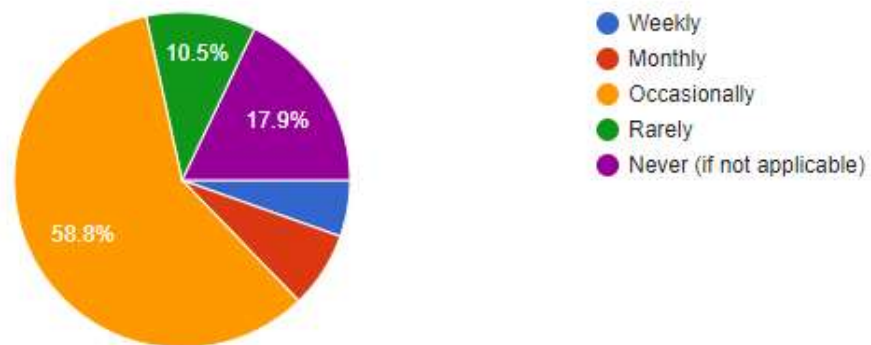


Figure 18 Frequency Usage of almatar Company

This question aimed to ascertain the frequency usage of almatar Company's services among respondents, from the 313 responses received:

The majority of respondents (58.8%) indicated that they use almatar Company occasionally.

Smaller percentages of respondents reported using the platform rarely (10.5%) or never (17.9%), suggesting varying levels of engagement with almatar Company's services.

Some respondents reported more frequent usage, with 5.4% using the platform weekly and 7.3% using it monthly.

Question 13.

How much do you trust almatar's brand reputation?

313 responses

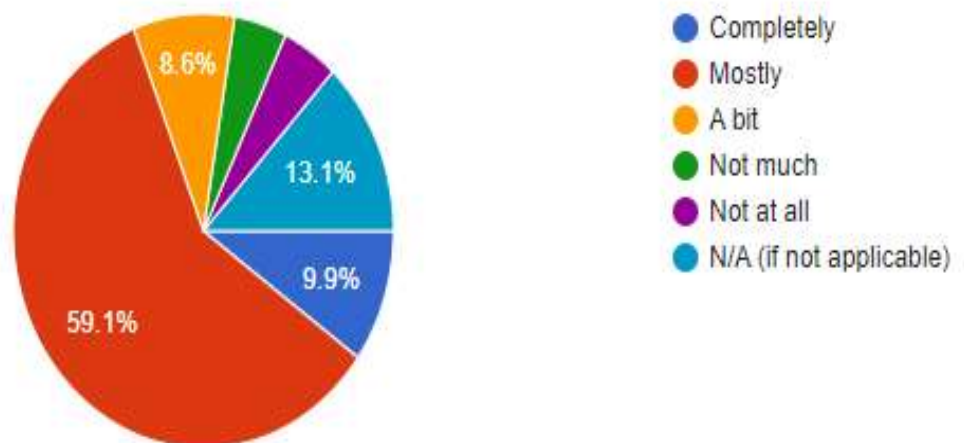


Figure 19 Level of Trust

This question aimed to gauge the level of trust respondents have in almatar's brand reputation, from the 313 responses received:

The majority of respondents (59.1%) indicated that they mostly trust almatar's brand reputation.

Smaller percentages of respondents reported complete trust (9.9%), followed by a bit of trust (8.6%). However, some respondents indicated less trust, with 4.5% not trusting much and 4.8% not trusting at all.

Question 14.

What mainly influences your choice of online travel agency when booking flights, hotels, and other services?



313 responses



Figure 20 Factors Influencing Customer's Choice of Online Travel Agency

This question aimed to identify the primary factors influencing respondents' choice of online travel agency, from the 313 responses received:

Availability of discounts and deals emerged as the most influential factor, with 57.8% of respondents indicating this preference.

User interface and ease of use were also important, although to a lesser extent, with 6.4% of respondents citing this as the main influence.

Reputation and brand trustworthiness (12.1%) and variety of accommodations and services offered (8.3%) were also cited as important factors.

This provides insights into the decision-making process of respondents when selecting online travel agencies, emphasizing the importance of pricing, user experience, and brand reputation.

Question 15.

How do you prefer booking through an online travel agency?

313 responses

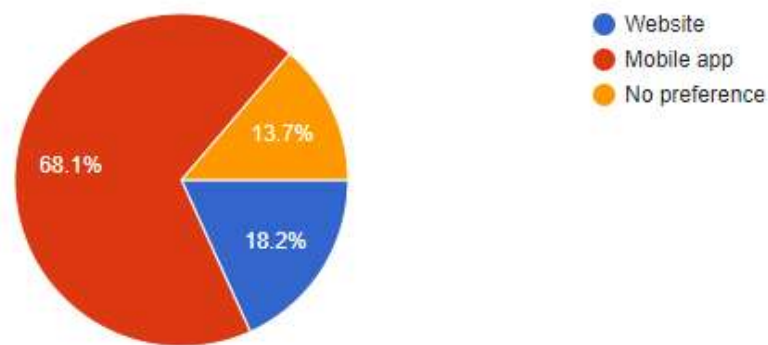


Figure 21 Preferences Regarding the Booking Channel (Website or Mobile App)

This question aimed to understand respondents' preferences regarding the booking channel (website or mobile app) for online travel agencies, from the 313 responses received:

The majority of respondents (61.1%) indicated a preference for booking through mobile apps, suggesting a preference for convenience and flexibility.

A smaller percentage (18.2%) preferred booking through websites, while some respondents (13.7%) had no preference between the two channels.

This highlights the growing importance of mobile apps in the travel booking process and underscores the need for online travel agencies to prioritize mobile accessibility and functionality.

Question 16.

How much do you care about customer reviews and ratings when booking accommodations or services online?

313 responses

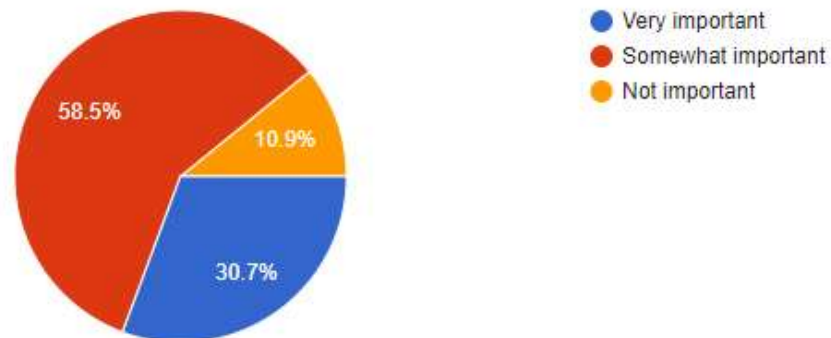


Figure 22 The Importance of Customer Reviews and Ratings

This question aimed to assess the importance of customer reviews and ratings in respondents' decision-making process when booking accommodations or services online, from the 313 responses received:

A significant portion of respondents (58.5%) indicated that customer reviews and ratings are somewhat important to them.

Another substantial group (30.7%) considered them very important, highlighting the significance of social proof in influencing booking decisions.

A smaller percentage (10.9%) of respondents reported that customer reviews and ratings are not important to them.

This underscores the importance of maintaining positive reviews and ratings for online travel agencies and accommodation providers, as they significantly impact consumers' decision-making processes.

In conclusion, my analysis has provided valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer behavior and perceptions towards almatar, my findings underscore the importance of **price competitiveness, user-friendly interface, and availability of discounts and deals** in driving consumer preferences for online travel agency brands.

The research questions have been addressed based on the survey results.

- RQ1: Is there a relationship between trust in almatar's brand reputation and the likelihood of recommending almatar Company to friends or family?
- Yes, there is a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.216$, $p < 0.05$) between trust in almatar's brand reputation and the likelihood of recommending almatar Company. This means that higher levels of trust in almatar's brand reputation correspond to a greater likelihood of recommending the company to others based on personal experiences with the platform.
- RQ2: Is there a relationship between overall satisfaction with almatar Company's services and the frequency of using almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services?
- Yes, there is a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.350$, $p < 0.05$) between overall satisfaction with almatar Company's services and the frequency of using the company for booking flights, hotels, and other services. This means that higher levels of overall satisfaction with almatar Company's services correspond to a greater frequency of using the company for booking various services.
- RQ3: Is there a relationship between how frequently individuals use almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services and their monthly income?
- Yes, there is a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.225$, $p < 0.05$) between the frequency of using almatar Company's services and individuals' monthly income. This means that individuals with higher monthly incomes tend to use almatar Company more frequently for booking flights, hotels, and other services.

- RQ4: Is there a relationship between individuals' age and their frequency of using almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services?
- No, there is no statistically significant relationship between individuals' age and their frequency of using almatar Company for booking flights, hotels, and other services. This is based on a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.040 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that age and frequency of using almatar Company's services are not significantly associated.

Detailed results of the statistical analysis conducted using SPSS can be found in the appendix for reference.

The findings from the survey have informed the project aimed at enhancing almatar's branding strategy.

4 Project to Improve almatar's Branding Strategies

The main objective of the project is to aim at improving almatar's branding strategies. The project will include cost, time, and risk analysis to provide actionable recommendations for improving almatar's branding strategies.

4.1 Action plans to achieve the main objective

Action plan	Responsible department	Duration in weeks	Cost
1.Enhancing Brand Recognition	Marketing	3	\$10000
2.Digital Marketing Initiatives	Marketing	2	
3.Loyalty Programs	Marketing	4	\$5000
4.Strengthen Technological Infrastructure	IT and HR	5	\$6000
5.Risk Mitigation Strategies	Board of directors	1	
6.Market Expansion and Partnership Development	Marketing, Commercial and Revenue	2	
7.Employee Engagement Initiatives	HR	4	\$5000
8. Measurement and Evaluation	Marketing & HR	3	

Table 4: Action Plan (Own Source)

Action plan 1. Enhancing Brand Recognition:

- Develop targeted social media advertising campaigns to increase brand awareness among the target audience.
- Partner with influential travel bloggers with a combined reach of over 500,000 followers to promote almatar's unique cultural experiences

Action plan 2. Digital Marketing Initiatives:

- Allocate resources to digital marketing initiatives, including content creation and social media advertising.
- Implement targeted marketing initiatives focusing on different customer segments, such as families, solo travelers, and luxury seekers.
- Create culturally relevant content that highlights Almatar's unique selling proposition, showcasing authentic Arab experiences and destinations.
- Leverage user-generated content and testimonials to build trust and credibility among potential customers.

Action plan 3. Loyalty Programs:

- Develop a tiered loyalty program with personalized rewards and benefits for frequent customers.

Action plan 4. Strengthen Technological Infrastructure:

- Invest in upgrading and securing almatar's technological infrastructure to mitigate risks associated with technical glitches and cyber-attacks.
- Provide continuous training and support for staff to ensure proficiency in using technology platforms and tools effectively.

Action plan 5. Risk Mitigation Strategies:

- Monitor economic and political developments in key markets to anticipate potential disruptions.

Action plan 6. Market Expansion and Partnership Development:

- Identify potential markets for expansion within the Middle East and beyond through market research and analysis.
- Form strategic partnerships with airlines, hotels, and tourism boards to enhance almatar's offerings and provide customers with exclusive deals and discounts.

Action plan 7. Employee Engagement Initiatives:

- Implement employee recognition programs to reward exceptional customer service.

Action plan 8. Measurement and Evaluation:

- Establish KPIs such as website traffic, social media engagement, and customer satisfaction scores to track the success of branding initiatives and conduct regular performance reviews.

In summary, over 19 weeks, the project aims to strengthen almatar's brand in Egypt's online travel agency sector. Key strategies include enhancing brand recognition through targeted advertising and influencer partnerships, implementing digital marketing initiatives, launching a tiered loyalty program, upgrading technological infrastructure, and mitigating risks. Additionally, market expansion efforts, employee engagement initiatives, and robust measurement and evaluation processes will be prioritized to ensure sustained growth and competitiveness.

4.2 Cost Analysis

Action plan	Cost
Social Media Advertising Campaigns	\$4000
Partnering with Travel Bloggers:	\$6000
Development of Loyalty Program Software	\$5000
Upgrading and Securing Technological Infrastructure	\$6000
Rewards and Incentives	\$5000

Table 5: Cost Analysis (Own Source)

1.Social Media Advertising Campaigns:

Cost: \$4000

This cost includes expenses related to creating ad content, running ads on various social media platforms, and monitoring their performance.

2. Partnering with Travel Bloggers:

Cost: \$6000

To partner with travel bloggers, almatar should negotiate with 6 different bloggers to promote its brand. The cost includes payments to bloggers for sponsored content, collaborations, or mentions. Negotiations may involve discussing terms, content requirements, reach, and engagement metrics.

3. Development of Loyalty Program Software:

Cost: \$5000

This cost covers the development of customized loyalty program software tailored to almatar's specific requirements. It includes expenses related to software development, coding, testing, and implementation. Negotiations may involve discussions with software developers or agencies to finalize the scope and pricing.

4. Upgrading and Securing Technological Infrastructure:

Cost: \$6000

This cost includes expenses associated with upgrading almatar's technological infrastructure to enhance security measures and mitigate risks related to technical glitches and cyber-attacks. It covers investments in hardware, software, cybersecurity tools, and IT services. Negotiations may involve discussions with IT service providers or vendors for bulk discounts or special packages.

5. Rewards and Incentives:

Cost: \$5000

This cost includes expenses for providing rewards and incentives to customers participating in the loyalty program. It covers the cost of rewards such as discounts, vouchers, freebies, or exclusive deals negotiated with partner businesses. Negotiations may involve discussions with suppliers or vendors to secure favorable pricing or bulk discounts on rewards.

Total Cost: \$26,000, the cost analysis outlines the budget allocation for each task in the action plan, including negotiations and considerations for securing the best possible deals and partnerships to optimize cost-effectiveness and maximize returns on investment for almatar.

4.3 Time Analysis

Task	Description	Immediate predecessors	Duration in Weeks
A	Enhancing Brand Recognition		3
B	Loyalty Programs	A	4
C	Digital Marketing Initiatives	A	2
D	Strengthen Technological Infrastructure	B	5
E	Risk Mitigation Strategies	C	1
F	Market Expansion and Partnership Development	C	2
G	Employee Engagement Initiatives	D,E	4
H	Measurement and Evaluation	F,G	3

Table 6 Time Analysis (own Source)

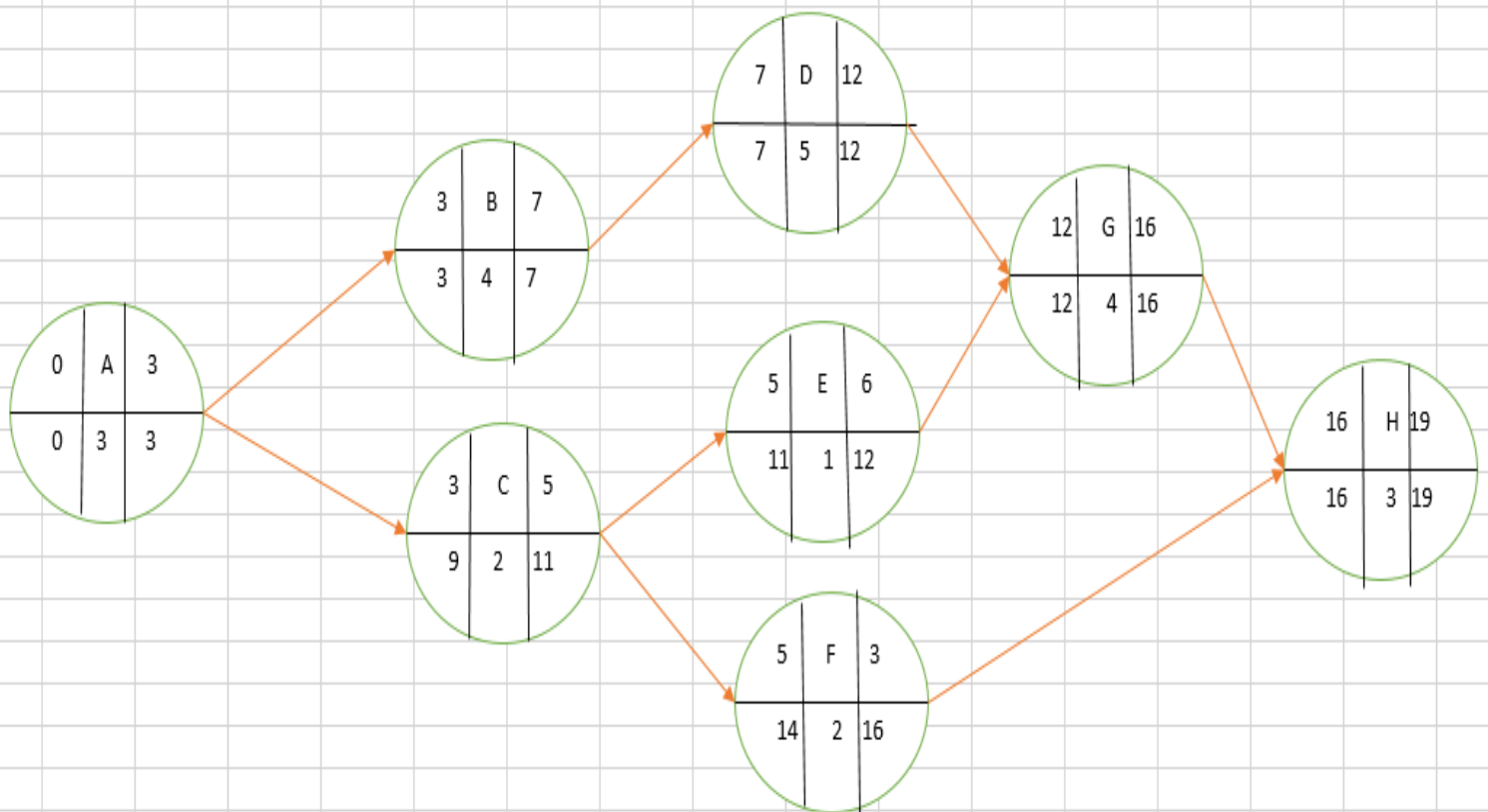


Figure 23 Critical Paths

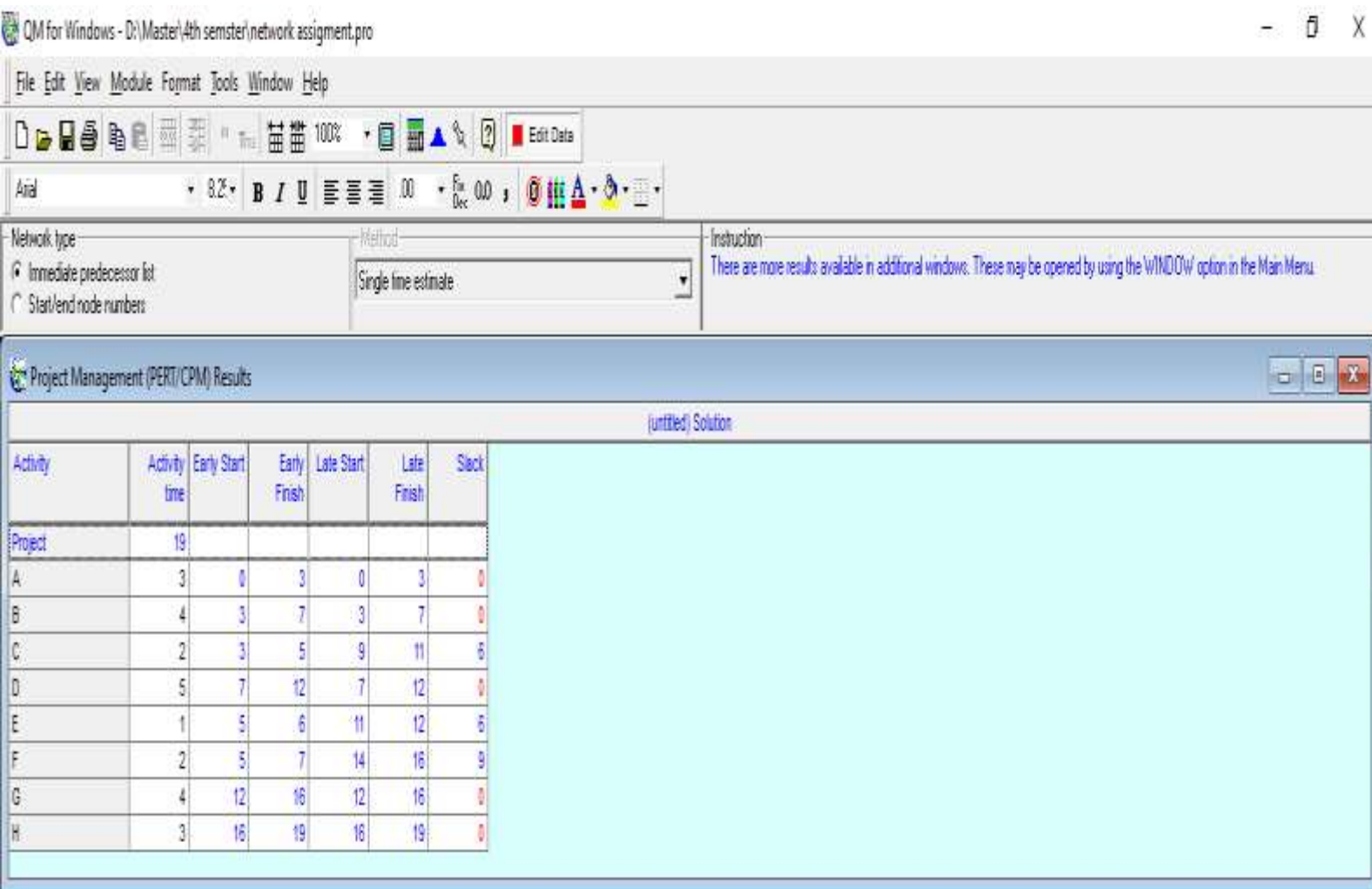


Figure 24 project management (PERT/CPM) results

The interpretation:

This action plan can be finished at earliest 19 weeks, the critical paths A, B, D, G, H

In summary, the time analysis using the POM-QM system reveals that the earliest completion time for the action plan is 19 weeks. The critical paths identified are A, B, D, G, and H, indicating the sequence of tasks that determine the overall duration of the project. This analysis highlights the key tasks that have the most significant impact on the project timeline and underscores the importance of efficiently managing these critical activities to ensure timely completion. By focusing on these critical paths and allocating resources effectively, almatar can streamline its project execution process and mitigate potential delays, thereby enhancing its ability to achieve its goals within the specified timeframe.

4.4 Risk Analysis

Risk	Mitigation
Social media advertising campaigns may not resonate with the target audience, resulting in low engagement and brand awareness.	Conduct thorough market research to understand audience preferences and tailor advertising content accordingly. Regularly monitor campaign performance and adjust strategies based on real-time feedback.
Low adoption rate of the loyalty program by customers.	Offer attractive rewards and benefits tailored to the preferences of the target audience.
Insufficient investment in upgrading and securing technological infrastructure may leave almatar vulnerable to cyber-attacks and technical disruptions, impacting customer trust and satisfaction.	Prioritize investment in robust cybersecurity measures and ensure continuous staff training to mitigate risks associated with technological vulnerabilities.
Inaccurate market analysis may lead to incorrect identification of expansion opportunities, resulting in wasted resources and missed growth prospects.	Conduct comprehensive market research to assess market potential and competitive landscape accurately. Establish clear selection criteria for strategic partnerships and perform due diligence to ensure compatibility and mutual benefit.
Ineffective implementation of employee recognition programs may lead to low morale and disengagement among staff, impacting overall service quality.	Design employee recognition programs that align with company values and goals, providing meaningful rewards and opportunities for professional development. Solicit regular feedback from employees to gauge program effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of key performance indicators (KPIs) may result in the inability to assess the impact of branding initiatives accurately.	Establish clear KPIs and measurement methodologies to track progress and performance consistently. Conduct regular reviews and analysis of data to identify trends, strengths, and areas for improvement, allowing for timely adjustments to strategies and tactics.

Table 7 Risk Analysis (own Source)

In summary, the risk analysis highlights potential challenges that almatar may encounter during the execution of its action plan. However, by implementing proactive risk mitigation strategies, such as conducting thorough market research, offering tailored rewards, prioritizing investment in cybersecurity, performing accurate market analysis, designing effective employee recognition programs, and establishing clear KPIs, the company can minimize the impact of these risks and increase the likelihood of achieving its branding objectives. Through diligent monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment of strategies, almatar can navigate potential obstacles successfully and enhance its brand presence in the competitive travel market.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALMATAR COMPANY

- **Customer-Centric Approach:** almatar should prioritize a customer-centric approach in all its branding efforts and initiatives. By actively listening to customer feedback, addressing concerns, and incorporating customer preferences into its strategies, the company can foster stronger relationships with its target audience, enhance customer satisfaction, and increase brand loyalty.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:** Establish mechanisms for regular monitoring of KPIs to identify areas of success and improvement, allowing for timely adjustments to strategies and tactics.
- **Investment in Staff Training:** Prioritize comprehensive training programs to ensure staff proficiency in new technologies, digital marketing tools, customer service skills, and cultural sensitivity.
- **Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations:** Actively seek partnerships with airlines, hotels, tourism boards, and other stakeholders to enhance offerings, access exclusive deals, and expand reach into new markets.
- **Investment in Technology and Cybersecurity:** Given the increasing reliance on technology in the travel industry, almatar should prioritize investment in upgrading and securing its technological infrastructure. Robust cybersecurity measures and continuous staff training are essential to mitigate risks associated with technical disruptions and cyber-attacks, safeguard customer data, and maintain trust and confidence among customers.
- **Employee Engagement and Recognition:** almatar should continue to prioritize employee engagement and recognition initiatives to foster a positive work culture and enhance employee morale. Recognizing and rewarding exceptional customer service will not only motivate employees but also contribute to the delivery of exceptional customer experiences, ultimately driving brand loyalty and advocacy.
- **Flexibility and Agility:** In a dynamic and rapidly evolving industry, almatar should remain flexible and agile in its approach to branding strategies. The company should be prepared to adapt to changing market conditions, consumer preferences, and technological advancements, embracing innovation and experimentation to stay ahead of the competition.

CONCLUSION

Brand building and enhancing brand equity are about more than just names or symbols they are about the emotions, perceptions, and associations customers have with them. Brand equity, which comes from how consumers see and react to a brand, is a valuable asset for standing out and succeeding in the long term. A customer-centric approach is key, focusing on understanding and meeting customer needs while building strong brand loyalty. This mix of branding, employee engagement, and customer focus is crucial for steady growth and success in a competitive market. Employer branding is also important, helping attract talent, keep employees loyal, and improve overall company performance. Strategic human resources management is at the heart of this, shaping the company's image, aligning operations with its brand, and boosting employee morale and personal branding.

The project aimed at enhancing almatar's branding strategies has provided valuable insights into consumer behavior and perceptions. The findings underscore the significance of factors such as price competitiveness, user-friendly interface, and availability of discounts and deals in driving consumer preferences for online travel agency brands. The research questions posed have been addressed through statistical analysis, revealing meaningful relationships between trust in almatar's brand reputation and the likelihood of recommendation, as well as between overall satisfaction with almatar's services and usage frequency. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between individuals' monthly income and frequency of using almatar's services. However, no significant relationship was observed between individuals' age and service usage frequency. Moving forward, the action plan focuses on initiatives to enhance brand recognition, implement digital marketing strategies, introduce loyalty programs, strengthen technological infrastructure, mitigate risks, expand into new markets, and engage employees. These actions aim to improve almatar's branding strategies and ensure sustained success in the competitive online travel agency industry.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBBE	Customer-Based Brand Equity
AI	Artificial Intelligence
EB	Employer Branding
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
OTA	Online Travel Agency
SWOT	Strength Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
RJPs	Apart from Realistic Job Previews

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APPENDICES

Appendix P I: Questionnaire

Appendix P II: SPSS Results

APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire, conducted by a Master's student at the University of Tomas Bata in Zlín, Czech Republic, seeks to understand your experiences and preferences when booking travel online. Your input will help identify areas for improvement and new features that could enhance the online booking process including the services offered by almatar company. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping efforts to make online travel booking easier and more satisfying for all users. Your participation is greatly appreciated, and the survey should take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for sharing your insights with us.

Please select the option that best reflects your experiences and preferences, if none of the options apply, feel free to select "Other".

mostafaselim181@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

Not shared

* Indicates required question

1. How often do you travel domestically or internationally in a **year**? *

Once or twice

Three to five times

More than five times

Rarely

Never

2. When planning your travels, which sources do you primarily use to choose and book flights, hotels and other services? (Select all that apply) *

Online travel agencies (e.g. almatar, Booking.com, Expedia)

Hotel websites directly

Travel agencies

Social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook)

Recommendations from friends or family

N/A (if not applicable)

Other:

3. Which online travel agencies have you used in the past 6 months? (Select all that apply) *

almatar

Booking.com

Expedia

Airbnb

N/A (if not applicable)

Other:

4. When you think about traveling, what brand do you think of **first**? *

almatar

Booking.com

Expedia

Airbnb

N/A (if not applicable)

Other:

5. Have you ever heard about the brand of **almatar** Company? *

Yes

No

6. How did you first hear about the brand of almatar Company? *

Online advertisement

Word of mouth (friends or family)

Social media

N/A (if not applicable)

Other:

7. Have you ever used almatar services for book flights, hotels and other services?*

Yes

No

8. How satisfied are you with almatar Company services overall? *

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

N/A (if not applicable)

9. What do you like most about almatar Company's services? (Select all that apply)*

Price competitiveness

User-friendly interface

Wide range of options

Customer service quality

Exclusive deals and promotions

N/A (if not applicable)

Other:

10. What improvements would you like to see from almatar Company to enhance your booking experience? Please select all that apply. *

Enhanced search filters (e.g., amenities, proximity to attractions)

Personalized recommendations based on past bookings and preferences

Virtual tours or 360-degree photos of accommodations

Flexible booking options with free cancellation or modification policies

Integration with transportation services (e.g., flights, car rentals)

Real-time customer support available 24/7

Loyalty rewards program for earning points or discounts

Accessibility features for users with disabilities (e.g., screen reader compatibility)

Sustainability initiatives promoting eco-friendly accommodations and practices

N/A (if not applicable)

Other:

11. Will you recommend almatar Company to friends or family based on your experiences with the platform? *

Yes

No

Maybe

N/A (if not applicable)

12. How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services? *

Weekly

Monthly

Occasionally

Rarely

Never (if not applicable)

13. How much do you trust almatar's brand reputation? *

Completely

Mostly

A bit

Not much

Not at all

N/A (if not applicable)

14. What mainly influences your choice of online travel agency when booking flights, hotels, and other services? *

Price competitiveness

User interface and ease of use

Availability of discounts and deals

Reputation and brand trustworthiness

Variety of accommodations and services offered

Other:

15.How do you prefer booking through an online travel agency? *

- Website
- Mobile app
- No preference

16.How much do you care about customer reviews and ratings when booking accommodations or services online? *

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

17.Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with online travel agencies or suggestions for improvement?

Your answer

18.What is your Gender? *

- Male
- Female

19.What is your Age? *

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56+

20.What is your Occupation? *

- Student
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Homemaker
- Retired
- Other:

21. What is your Monthly Income? *

- Less than EGP 5,000
- EGP 5,000 - EGP 10,000
- EGP 10,001 - EGP 20,000
- EGP 20,001 - EGP 30,000
- Above EGP 30,000

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your input is valuable in understanding Egyptian travelers' behaviors and preferences regarding online travel agency brands.

APPENDIX P I I: SPSS RESULTES

Correlations

			How much do you trust almatar's brand reputation?	Will you recommend almatar Company to friends or family based on your experiences with the platform?
Spearman's rho	How much do you trust almatar's brand reputation?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.216**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	313	313
	Will you recommend almatar Company to friends or family based on your experiences with the platform?	Correlation Coefficient	.216**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	313	313

Correlations

			How satisfied are you with almatar Company services overall?	How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?
Spearman's rho	How satisfied are you with almatar Company services overall?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.350**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	313	313
	How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?	Correlation Coefficient	.350**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	313	313

Correlations

		How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?	What is your Monthly Income?
How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?	Pearson Correlation	1	.225**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	313	313
What is your Monthly Income?	Pearson Correlation	.225**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	313	313

Correlations

		How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?	What is your Age?
How frequently do you use almatar Company for book flights, hotels and other services?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.483
	N	313	313
What is your Age?	Pearson Correlation	-.040	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.483	
	N	313	313