



The Effects of Social Media Marketing on Customer's Purchase Intention; a Moderated Mediation Model from Apparel Industry of Pakistan

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Abstract: Social media has become the modus operandi of the 21st century. Social media is being utilized more and more as a medium for advertising. A new, advanced, and unpredictable factor impacting consumer behavior is evolving: social media. Due to a widespread use of social media, it is the need of time to examine the social media marketing (SMM) empirically. Organizations nowadays, are more focused on using online marketing strategies to enhance their profits and performance. Due to the widespread of COVID-19 all over the world, it has been understood by organizations that the importance of using online stores is critical for every business. Social networking has gained much importance in current era and social networking platforms has highest number of users than ever. So, the importance of social media for acquiring customers cannot be ignored. Though the brand image is made due to many factors like quality of products, after sales services, value of money etc. but it can be enhanced by using proper social media marketing. This study included brand image as mediator for this reason. Brand image can affect purchase intention and social media marketing can be used to enhance brand image. Due to these reasons, this study has attempted to empirically to investigate the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on brand perception (BI) and purchase intent (PI). A quantitative questionnaire-based study was conducted. From the results it has been concluded that SMM has positive impact on purchase intention. The mediating role of brand image is also found significant. Findings of this study can be used by the decision makers as the findings will help them to understand the importance of social media marketing related to the purchase intentions and enhancing brand image. The findings of the study will also help them in understanding that how the use of social media marketing will help them in getting new customers.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Brand Image, Purchase Intention, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Apparel Brands

1. Introduction

Social media offers a platform for bringing individuals of all ages together. Selling and purchasing items online has been the greater chance that social media has provided, since this refreshes the worth of both customers and sellers [1]. There are several benefits to using the Internet. In the era of software, consumers may save money, do research, get training and knowledge data, and solve technical issues by shopping online. People are increasingly acclimated to buying online thanks to technological advancement, the ubiquity of the Internet, and

social media, and companies are leveraging online platforms to boost sales and profitability [2]. Customers may now publish reviews of the things they have bought thanks to the power of the Internet, which enables others to make buying decisions based on previous consumer feedback. E-commerce affects the buying choices of consumers [3]. Social media (SM), a highly well-known distribution channel, is used to post information about services and products.

All luxury fashion labels advertise their services and goods with free or inexpensive home delivery on different social media (SM) platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook,

YouTube, and Twitter [4]. Customers get access to a variety of blogs and in-depth product descriptions from premium businesses. For modern marketers, the phrase social media marketing (SMM) has completely changed the game. But in terms of popularity, brand image (BI) is what a business has to develop through time and provide its customers value items [5]. The main objective of any marketer is to capture the purchase intent of a brand. Therefore, there is a lot of potential for research into the psychological impact that social media has on its users.

Every company, but particularly brands, need marketing. According to Abdullah et al., conventional marketing methods like billboards, TV commercials, newspaper advertisements, etc. are excessively costly and ineffective nowadays [6]. Today, most individuals utilise their mobile devices for amusement [7]. One of the key participants in the current business is social media [8]. Compared to other advertising and marketing channels, it has more users [9]. There are several possibilities to investigate how social media influences viewers' thoughts. It is necessary to research how social media marketing affects consumers' buying habits [10]. Recent research have directly studied the impact of SMM, including those by Alalwan et al.,; Abdullah et al., and Laksamana [8, 6, 11]. The current study examined the relationship between brand image and these two parameters as well as the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on purchase intention (PI).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

The rational action theory (TR) of Fishbein and Eisen (1977) is used in as base in this research work. According to the theory of rational action (TR), an individual's actions are dictated by his intentions to carry them out. This is determined by attitudes and arbitrary behavioral standards [12]. Customers' intents are almost always driven by a few factors. The influence of social media marketing influences how customers decide what to buy [6]. The usage of TRA is appropriate in this situation since social media marketing is the cause of the customer's purchases. The way a consumer perceives PI depends on the conventions, assumptions, and perceived attitudes of TRA (for example; customers can influence products in a variety of ways through attitudes, beliefs, and opinions) [13].

2.2. Social Media Marketing (SMM)

One of the best marketing techniques and tools that businesses can utilize to boost sales is social media marketing [14]. Social networking sites are among the most effective tools for marketing [15]. SMM refers to the company's sales, online platforms, media tools and communication programs, information exchange, and cooperation with online users to increase consumer attention [16]. Every store uses social media marketing as part of their marketing plan to capitalize on their online network (SMM). When utilizing social media

SMM, marketers may manage consumer intent PI in a variety of ways [17]. A collection of fundamental facts may be provided by modern marketing on an hourly or daily basis, which retailers can utilize to change their procedures, products, standards, and even the product itself [18]. These changes take place swiftly and may have an impact on both company and customer buying intentions. As a result, social media marketing contributes significantly to the research of consumers' purchasing intentions and different methods for doing so [19].

Researchers Kim and Ko (2012) are credited for dividing the activities of social media marketing. According to Kim and Ko, the fundamental categories of the social media marketing strategy include more trend, personalization, communication, and engagement for upscale firms [20]. According to Yadav and Rahman [21], trendiness [22], entertainment [23], and customization [24], Seo and Park classified social media marketing activities in the airline industry according to perceived risk, trendiness, and customization [25]. Social media refers to the content, promotions, and events that are part of marketing campaigns on social networking sites [26]. They are known as marketing activities, such as advertising and information dissemination on social media. The elements of marketing efforts include information, personalization, and word of mouth [21].

In this research, we took into account the following social media marketing activities, including amusement, advertising, engagement, trendiness, and customization. These qualities were chosen for a number of specific reasons. This research is focused on branded clothing, first and foremost. When discussing clothing, one of the most crucial factors is trendiness [27]. People like dressing in accordance with the newest trends. So, firms attempt to seem trendy in their advertisements [28]. SMM need to be based on current trends. A company risks losing some clients if it doesn't use the most recent trends in social media marketing [29]. Brands attempt to target consumers based on their preferences. According to Anshari et al., customization is a crucial component of marketing [30]. Brands may use social media marketing to target consumers based on a variety of criteria, including age, ethnicity, culture, and more. Thus, the customization was included in this research.

We may argue that social media has today's customers and business community in a great connection. Social media respects the consumer; in addition to the submitted evaluations, their suggestions may be seen online [31]. The business is constantly interested in client feedback [32]. Another factor, trendiness, may be used to analyze the most recent and up-to-date information or updates on the product or services for the customers [28]. Additionally, SMM facilitates engagement, content exchange, and information distribution [33]. Last but not least, SMM may be connected to a brand or social media, including attitudes and perceptions, behavioral feedbacks like customer satisfaction, and more [34].

2.3. Brand Image (BI)

According to [35], a brand's image has to be vibrant, lively,

and consistently alluring. The firm must understand the consumer's mental picture and, based on that perception, create brands at a lower cost that engage strongly with customers, aid in client retention, and increase profit [36]. word "brand image" refers to the organization's processing of the customer's mental representation of the product in order create the goods and market them on social media [37]. items are put online, the description is always included in the caption [38]. A depiction of the brand image is provided by the thorough product description and general product knowledge [26].

Good brand image products are seen to be of high quality, whereas low price products are often thought to have poor brand image [39]. As a result, it may be claimed that customer purchase intentions are influenced by a strong brand image [13]. Hien et al., assert that BI influences customer buying intentions favorably [40]. A strong brand image draws consumers and eventually impacts consumer purchase intentions, according to research by Razy and Lajevardi, while a poor brand image draws less attention [24, 41].

Following a purchase, brand image affects customer behavior. It may also determine if a brand is appropriate for purchase. The single factor influencing customer purchase choices, according to Wang and Tsai, is brand image [25]. Numerous studies on brand image, including those by Coung and Khoi; Chowdhury; Becker and Lee; Sallam have demonstrated that stronger brand perceptions have a beneficial impact on consumers [42, 10, 22], and [39]. Customer's intent to purchase. Previous studies have shown that brand image and purchasing intention are positively connected.

2.4. Purchase Intention (PI)

The consumer may consider buying the goods or services during this activity [6]. The customer's perception, actions, and attitudes are related to their desire to make a purchase [17]. Foster argued that a customer's desire to buy a product does not guarantee that they would actually do so; rather, it indicates that they may do so if they believe it to be feasible for themselves [43]. The effectiveness of an internet advertising mostly depends on the consumer's desire to purchase the advertised goods, which is clearly discernible from empirical investigations. Analysis of client attitudes about the intention to utilize a mobile application for online purchasing is evaluated by prior research [32]. Additionally, it has been determined that customers may utilize their mobile devices at any moment to purchase the goods they want. The decision to utilize a mobile application has a significant impact on users' intentions [44].

One of the best ways for managers and the business to determine if the idea of the product needs improvement or additional development is via purchase intentions [45]. Additionally, it pinpointed the marketplaces in which the goods must be marketed. Customers with regional market loyalty may have different goals than those with global or geographical market loyalty [18]. Customers' intentions to make purchases are also influenced by the company's conduct [46]. To examine

and forecast the consumers' intentions, several online evaluation strategies must be used. Purchase intention is a broad issue that has been covered in research in a variety of industries, including marketing, advertising, and reporting. The eagerness of the customer to acquire the goods is a crucial predictor of the consumer's intentions, according to [47].

2.5. Hypothesis Development

2.5.1. Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention

The most recent marketing strategy practically all businesses utilize to get people to their websites is social media marketing [48]. Social media is your greatest option if you have an idea and want to instantly reach millions of people [11]. Social media has an influence on customers' online shopping choices, according to [49]. Consumers depend on the opinions of social media influencers while making purchases of costly and less expensive goods, claim [50]. According to Zeithaml's, Customers' intentions to purchase the product determine consumer recommendations and product value. (1988). Customer behavior changes and attitude factors are related. It enables businesses to precisely predict future client behavior in order to suit their demands [51]. When utilizing social media SMM, marketers have a wide range of tools and alternatives to control the PI of client purchasing intent. A collection of fundamental daily or hourly information are available in modern marketing, which marketers may utilize to alter their approach, strategy, services, quality, or even the product itself [17]. These changes take place swiftly and could have an impact on the market and consumer purchasing patterns. In order to influence clients' purchase intentions and to analyze those intents in numerous ways, social media marketing is crucial. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H1: Social media marketing positively influences Purchase Intention.

2.5.2. Social media Marketing and Brand Image

SMM has long served as a conduit for dialogue among brands and their customers. Customers are encouraged by advertising to post testimonials or images of the items or brands they like, which deepens their connection to those businesses [51]. Several social networking sites, like Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube, significantly boost a brand's reputation and link the connection between both the business and its clients, as per [52]. Social networks provide tremendous prospects for marketing as platforms for fostering interactions between brands and customers [53]. According to [52], collaborative marketing strategies using ties to social networks like Facebook and Twitter have a favorable effect on BI and increase brand and customer influence. According to [54], social media marketing efforts have an impact on brand loyalty and image. According to [55], the widespread use of social media has increased people's awareness of brands and how they are perceived by other people. E. J. Seo et al. (2020a) have also looked at how social media marketing efforts have benefited from the airline industry's strong brand image [23]. If their clients are dissatisfied or unsatisfied with the service,

they can identify it immediately away and address the issue to maintain a positive and long-lasting relationship [56]. Social media marketing is the primary instrument used nowadays for building brand image. According to [16], marketing initiatives on social media have an impact on customer brand perception.

H2: Social media marketing positively influences Brand Image.

2.5.3. Mediating Role of Brand Image

It is often believed that buyers would choose to purchase from a brand if it has a positive reputation [57]. A stronger brand image can help businesses attract more consumers. If a brand has a strong reputation, buyers may be easily targeted using SMM. According to Bilgin, a strong brand image will provide a business an advantage in influencing consumers' buying choices [16]. If a brand's perception among consumers is stronger, SMM may have a greater influence [58]. A stronger brand image increases the organization's value and its

competitive edge in the market [59]. Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob contends that marketing efforts are necessary to strengthen and differentiate a brand [60]. One brand's goods may be made available to the consumer with a variety of discounts, coupons, and offers, which ultimately boosts the consumer's trust and encourages them to keep buying that product [39, 61]. The fundamental benefits of a stronger brand image are security, friendliness, the perception of trust, and strength. As a result, this will be able to withstand uncertainty since the client receives pertinent information immediately, aiding in decision-making and increasing interest in purchasing the product [62]. Furthermore, the research made it clear that the successful marketing effort had a beneficial effect on both the consumers' purchase intentions and the brand's perception. Therefore, it is conceivable that:

H3: Brand image mediates the relationship between Social media marketing and purchase intention

2.6. Theoretical Framework

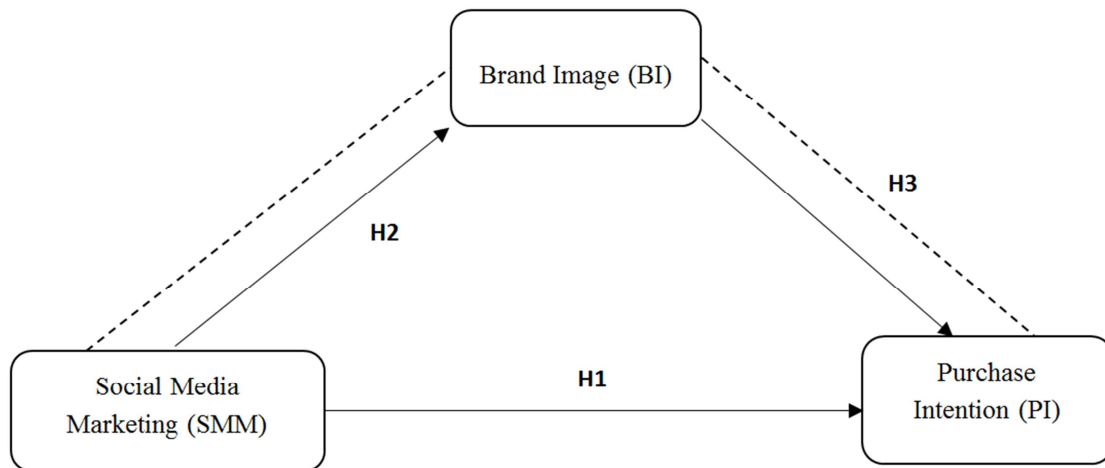


Figure 1. Framework (Source; Authors).

3. Method

This research has been conducted on the customers of fashion apparel brands working in Pakistan. The research population includes at least 200 clients as a sample size. Data for the research were gathered by means of a convenient sampling procedure. Participants' responses to a questionnaire served as the primary research instrument. To collect data, the researcher gave the questionnaires to the participants. A 5-point Likert scale has been used to collect all the data. This investigation made it possible to collect quantitative data for statistical analysis. To help people comprehend the research and its variables and to provide accurate replies, a short explanation was provided to them. 300 persons received questionnaires. 260 replies were received. Only 205 of these 260 replies were relevant and were utilized in this investigation.

To avoid the reliability and validity issues, the questionnaire for this research was adapted from the ones that had already been conducted. The questionnaire was adapted

from the research of, Boateng, and Okoe ; Seo and Park [23]. Purchase intention (PI) items from Bian and Forsythe were used.

4. Analysis

The reliability test is referred to be a device used to measure the elements in a study that act as indicators of factors or thoughts. The validity test is done by a precise estimate approach. Devote Partner (1978) recommended that a scale's Cronbach's alpha coefficient be greater than .07.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis.

Cronbach's α	No of Items
0.911	34

The Cronbach's alpha value is shown in the table above, which will help us determine how reliable our data is. The table shows that the Cronbach's alpha score is 0.911, indicating that 91.1% of our data is credible.

Table 2. Correlations.

		Social Media	Brand image	Purchase Intention	Cultural dimension
Social Media	Pearson Correlation	1	-.009	.340**	.933**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.897	.000	.000
	N	205	205	205	205
Brand image	Pearson Correlation	-.009	1	.023	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.897		.741	.749
	N	205	205	205	205
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.340**	.023	1	.358**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.741		.000
	N	205	205	205	205
Cultural dimension	Pearson Correlation	.933**	-.022	.358**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.749	.000	
	N	205	205	205	205

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

We will learn more about the relationship between the dependent and independent variables via the correlation matrix. The findings indicate that there is no association between the brand image and social media, with $r=-0.009$ and $p=0.897 > 0.05$ indicating that there is no relationship between the two.

Social media and purchasing intention are positively correlated, as shown by the values of $r=0.340$ and $p=.000 < 0.05$. In the end, there is a substantial positive association between the cultural component and social media, with a correlation coefficient of 0.933 and a significance level of 0.000.

Table 3. Summary of Model.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.3400	0.1160	0.1110	0.944150

a. SM is a predictor and constant variable

The findings of the tables above show us what the linear regression revealed about the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. As seen in the above table, the value of r^2 is 0.116, which indicates that the strength of our model is only 11.6%.

Table 4. Coefficients analysis.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Std. Error of the Estimate	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.730	0.207		3.5200	0.001
	Social Media	0.379	0.074	0.340	5.1510	0.000

a. SM is a predictor and constant variable

Table 5. Summary of Model.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.19	0.09	0.005	0.23400

a. SM is a predictor and constant variable

Social media's beta coefficient for the regression is 0.379, with a p-value of 0.000 to 0.005. Beta's value has a significant influence. It demonstrates that a change in the independent variable of one unit will result in a change in the dependent variable of 0.340 units. Positive evidence suggested a positive association between them.

We can see the results of the linear regression used to examine the correlation between the independent and

dependent variables in the tables above. As seen in the tables above, the value of r^2 is 0.09, which implies that our model suggests that SMM accounts for 9% of changes in brand image. This is a given as the majority of businesses have worked hard and produced great products to build their reputations. SMM is a relatively recent idea. Therefore, even if the influence is little, it is acceptable.

Table 6. Coefficients analysis.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Std. Error of the Estimate	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.1620	0.051		22.6180	0.001
	Social Media	0.002	0.018	0.4	-0.130	0.000

a. BI is a dependent Variable

Social media's beta coefficient for the regression is 0.40, with a p-value of 0.000 to 0.005. It demonstrates that a change in the independent variable of one unit will result in a change in the dependent variable of 0.40 units. Which approves our second hypothesis.

In order to investigate mediation with 95% confidence intervals, this research employed Preacher and Hayes' (2012) (5000 bootstrap) process approach. First, brand image somewhat mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intent, according to the findings of the indirect regression analysis (Table 7) Direct contact was crucial and remained crucial after the mediation between SMM and PI. There is a strong positive association in both situations as shown by the positive lower and upper bounds of the confidence intervals (LLCI, ULCI).

Table 7. Indirect Effect.

SMMmean ->BI mean ->PI mean				
BI mean	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
4.0000	-0.1633	0.0530	-0.2752	-0.2752
4.5000	-0.1205	0.0456	-0.2186	-.0404
4.7500	-0.099	0.044	-0.195	-0.022

5. Conclusion

This paper was mainly focused on exploring the impact of SMM on the PI through the mediating role of BI from the fashion apparel brands of Pakistan. From the results it can be concluded that the impact of SMM on BI is positive when direct relationship is tested. The results of mediation analysis also show that BI mediates the relationship positively. Partial mediation is found in this study. For future researches it is recommended to include add moderating effects of cultural variables as Pakistan is a country where cultural values can affect the PI of customers. It is also recommended to add more variables such as SMM awareness, innovation and green marketing.

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