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Exploring The Drivers of Social Media Marketing in Pakistan's Perspective

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Abstract

Social media marketing is essential for business influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. (18 words) The study aims to examine the antecedent's social media marketing activities in retail sector of Pakistan. Perceived usefulness, hedonic motivation, interactivity and perceived expectancy. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, it is proposed that social media usage attitude are shaped by these four factors; and attitude are associated with purchase intention. Using a structured questionnaire and five-point Likert scale will collect responses from social media users in Pakistan a cross-sectional survey design will be used. The recommended analysis will include descriptive statistics, reliability and validity checks, structural model testing, and bootstrapping to examine the mediating role of attitude. Social media platform-specific evaluations of marketing susceptibility are hypothesized to be positively influenced by consumers' information value, enjoyment, interactive communication, and expected benefits. It seems that consumer attitudes may also link social media marketing experiences with purchase intention. As the numbers in the next analysis are simulated, they do not constitute empirical results, and the proposed relationship must be tested with real survey data. According to the study, a framework is provided for future investigations. Likewise, it can help retailers recognize features to investigate when developing consumer-oriented social media marketing strategies in Pakistan.

Keywords: Hedonic motivation, interactivity, perceived expectancy, perceived usefulness, purchase intention, social media marketing

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Introduction

Marketing over social media has changed the way businesses interact with customers and display products to the market. Retailers can share their product information, publish promotions and respond to questions through marketing by means of social networking applications. According to Aji et al. (2020) and Chen and Lin (2019) research, it helps to enhance brand awareness and consumer relationship, while providing information regarding the product and experiences shared by other consumers. Although conventional promotional channels sometimes fail, retailers can find means to engage with the right audience and communicate directly through social media (Kannan, 2017).

These developments are with respect to the retail sector in Pakistan where firms are competing each other and consumers are equipped with information to contrast products and brands. Retailers have social media tools for marketing, and the use of multiple social media to communicate with customers when they are not in retail outlet. Just having a presence on social media does not mean the consumers will always have positive brand attitudes and purchase intention. A person's response or attitude as a customer can be affected by the value of information, enjoyment, interaction opportunity and belief about the channel.

Earlier studies have focused on investigating the social media marketing and its effects on various brand outcomes and purchase intention. For example, a study undertaken by Aji et al. (2020) on social media marketing and purchase intention in the ready-to-drink tea industry in Indonesia. Another McClure and Seock issues out the relation of consumer involvement. Plus, this is about how brand social media pages impact purchase intention. Chen and Lin (2019) examined the relationship of social media marketing activities with social identification, perceived value and satisfaction. This means they form the basis on which consumer evaluations of social media may affect purchase intention.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the perceived usefulness and attitude towards social media practices in the retail sector of Pakistan.
2. To analyse the suggested connections of hedonic motivation, interactivity, and perceived expectancies with attitude towards social media usage.
3. To develop a conceptual explanation of the mediating role of attitude towards social media usage with social media marketing and purchase intention.

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Research Questions

1. Q1. How do retailers perceive the usefulness of social media? What is the impact on attitude?
2. Q2. How are hedonic motivation, interactivity and perceived expectances related to attitude toward social media?
3. Q3. In Pakistan's retail industry, how does social media marketing and purchase intention relationship mediate link between social media usage attitude?

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Theory of planned behavior is the behavior of the people towards a certain context. TPB suggests that one's behavior intentions, or the behavior itself, will depend on one's attitude (the more positive one feels), subject norms, and perceived behavior control (Ajzen, 1991). The attitudes of consumers towards social media platform influences their own usage of it for product information regarding brands along with purchase-related decisions. Recent studies can confirm this viewpoint in the digital marketing whereby social media marketing activities influence the consumer intention through social identification and satisfaction (Jamil et al., 2022). Similarly, Selem et al. (2023) investigated links between interactivity, hedonic motivation, perceived usefulness and purchase intention in social commerce in Pakistan. Although this framework is based on the TPB, it focuses on selected perceptions and attitudes rather than on measuring each one of the components. In the future, empirical research will need to carefully articulate these constructs and clarify their relation to the (wider) theory.

Social media marketing is using social media for information dissemination, audience dialogue, buzz creation, and links building. Through consumers sharing experiences, reviewing products and seeing what others more users think, as basic as it sounds, it could change the consumers view against the brand and their purchase (Kannan, 2017; Saura et al., 2019). Based on the studies of Chen & Lin (2019), social media marketing activities impact customers' social identification, perceived value, and satisfaction. Ebrahim (2020) also studied trust in the relationship of social media marketing, brand equity and brand loyalty. The latest research by Jamil et al. (2022) found that consumer attitudes towards social media marketing activities are correlated. Social identification and satisfaction serve as significant mediators in this correlation. Huang et al. (2024) further investigated the impact of the social media marketing dimensions of entertainment and interactivity with improved consumer engagement. This study's findings highlight the importance of not just social media exposure but focusing on specific consumer perceptions for effective campaigns. In particular, the perceived usefulness, hedonic motivation, interactivity and perceived expectancy can help explain consumers' evaluation of social media as a marketing channel.

The degree to which an individual think using a particular system or channel would be useful is referred to as perceived usefulness. Consumers consider information helpful when they are able to find relevant information regarding product, prices, availability and promotions

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and responses to their questions easily on social media. When information facilitates better evaluation or assists consumers in searching for alternatives, then users' attitude towards the platform becomes more favourable. As per Chen and Lin (2019) and Selem et al. (2023), perceived value and satisfaction and perceived usefulness assist in understanding consumer responses to social media marketing and linking various digital communication elements to purchase intention. Alternatively, hedonic motivation means the pleasure or fun that can be derived from using the platform. Eye-catching images, lively videos, vibrant campaigns, and engaging content can make for a more pleasurable browsing experience and encourage connections between shoppers and retail brands. A recent research paper by Kumaran et al. (2024) studied pleasure motivation in social commerce and consumer purchase intention.

Interactivity refers to the capacity to facilitate a two-way exchange or involvement of the consumer with the retailer. Consumers can engage with brands via comments, questions, polls, direct messages and replies to feedback instead of only getting ads. Interactions can induce feelings of involvement in consumers while alleviating retailers' concerns. According to Kannan (2017) and McClure and Seock (2020), communication through digital media can help consumers engage in ongoing brand relationships. Selem et al. (2023), in a more recent study, detected interactivity as a salient factor for greater comprehension of purchase intention in Pakistan which is mainly in the context of social commerce. Retailers, Please Do Not Overlook Me Online As per the research consumer-brand interaction can significantly impact purchase intention. Thus, privacy concern must be addressed. In the proposed model, the expectancy that is perceived consists of the consumers' expectations regarding the availability of information, the responsiveness of the retailer and the consistency of experiences in social media. When these expectations are satisfied, the platform gets better ratings by the users, while delayed response or erratic information may lead to just the opposite.

Social media usage attitude refers to the overall evaluation of an individual towards using social media for product-related activities. This behavior, in retail contexts, refers to whether consumers find social media functional, enjoyable, exciting and appropriate for searching product info and communicating with retailers. Significant factor linked with behavioral intention can be attested as attitude (Ajzen, 1991). Also, McClure and Seock (2020) studied consumer involvement with brand-specific social media page on purchasing intention. Jamil et al. (2022) studied the relationship between social media marketing activities and consumer intention. According to Hu and Zhu (2022), the use of social media does not bring about purchase intention in a social commerce context. Further, a study performed on the Facebook advertisement assessed the mediating effect of attitude towards advertisement explaining online purchasing intention. A consumer's likelihood or willingness to buy a product or service is called purchase intention. Despite intention to buy, constraints often prevent a buying behaviour from following.

Theoretical Framework or hypothesis

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The paper has four factors, which are perceived usefulness, hedonic motivation, interactivity and perceived expectancy which stem is linked to social media. Accordingly, attitude is placed as a mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention through social media. Future research, in operational terms, needs to clarify whether social media marketing should be treated as a higher-order construct represented by four dimensions or four dimensions should be tested as separate predictors. It's necessary for uniform measure and interpretation.

H1: Perceived usefulness is positively associated with attitude toward social media usage in Pakistan's retail sector.

H2: Hedonic motivation is positively associated with attitude toward social media usage in Pakistan's retail sector.

H3: Interactivity is positively associated with attitude toward social media usage in Pakistan's retail sector.

H4: Perceived expectancy is positively associated with attitude toward social media usage in Pakistan's retail sector.

H5: Attitude toward social media usage mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention via social media in Pakistan's retail sector.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative research design was used in this study to analyse the factors which affect attitude towards social media marketing and purchase intentions of consumers in Pakistan retail. The collection of data from consumers in one point of time was ensured through a cross-sectional survey approach. This research applies by the conceptual framework which explores whether perceived usefulness, hedonic motivation, interactivity and perceived expectancy can predict attitude toward social media use.

Population and sampling

People belonging to Pakistan who are using social media on a daily basis and are able to use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc. and who have watched marketing and advertisement content related to retailing purposes were considered as the target population for the current study. Participants were deemed appropriate as they came across product advertisements, promotional campaigns, customer reviews, and interaction through social media.

A convenience sampling technique that was non-probability was used to recruit respondents who were accessible and available. Additional eligible participants were also reached through snowball sampling. Sample size was determined by constructs of study, measurement items, envisaged statistical analysis and consideration of statistical power.

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Instrument of research

A standardized set of questions was used for data collection. The questionnaire had two sections. The first part consisted of demographic information including age, gender, education and social media use frequency and most used platform. In the second part of the study, the main constructs including perceived usefulness, hedonic motivation, interactivity, perceived expectancy, attitude toward using social media and purchase intention were measured.

The extent of their agreement with each statement was measured on a five-point Likert scale, that is, from one as “strongly disagree” to five as “strongly agree”. The study adapted a questionnaire from some past researches conducted in social media marketing and the consumer behaviour.

Data Collection Method

Eligible social media users in Pakistan were contacted with an online questionnaire to collect data. Researcher shared the link on social media and relevant online communities. Before completing the questionnaire, the participants were provided with a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, the fact that they could choose not to participate, and that their responses would be kept confidential. Only individuals who informed consent were invited to continue. The questionnaire did not ask for identifying data. Before analysis responses reviewed for completeness and eligibility.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and structural equation modelling tool wherever applicable. The examination occurred in several stages.

To put it another way, researchers used descriptive statistics to summarize the demographics of respondents. The second step consisted of screening the data for inconsistencies, missing values and other quality. The measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity using appropriate criteria for internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

At last, structural equation modelling was employed to assess the proposed relationships of perceived usefulness as well as hedonic motivation and interactivity, perceived expectancy, attitude toward social media usage and purchase intention. We examined the indirect effect through bootstrapping for the mediating role of attitude. The analysis determined whether the hypothesized relationships received statistical support, based on the observed results.

Results and Analysis

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4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	165	55.0%
	Female	135	45.0%
Age	18–25 years	108	36.0%
	26–35 years	111	37.0%
	36–45 years	54	18.0%
	Above 45 years	27	9.0%
Education	Intermediate	45	15.0%
	Bachelor's degree	138	46.0%
	Master's degree or above	117	39.0%
Social media use	Daily	231	77.0%
	Several times a week	48	16.0%
	Occasionally	21	7.0%

The simulated demographic profile of 300 respondents is shown in Table 1. The sample has 55% male respondents and 45% female respondents. The age bracket 26-35 years formed the largest (37%) segment of respondents, followd by the age 18-25 years (36%). Conducive to the educational aspect, the percentage of population with a bachelor degree stands at 46 per cent. Also, the population with a post-graduate degree stands at 39 per cent. The majority of participants (77%) use social media on a daily basis. This profile reflects a sample with high social media exposure making it apt for illustrating how consumer responses to social media marketing can be assessed.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Main Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation
Perceived usefulness	3.84	0.72
Hedonic motivation	3.76	0.78
Interactivity	3.69	0.81
Perceived expectancy	3.73	0.75
Attitude toward social media usage	3.91	0.69

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Purchase intention	3.78	0.77

As shown on table 2, there are descriptive statistics for all six qualities of the study. The highest mean score of attitudes (M=3.91, SD=0.69) is from the respondents with regard to social media usage and perceived usefulness (M=3.84, SD=0.72). Interactivity displayed the smallest mean (3.69, SD 0.81) suggesting that in this hypothetical sample there is relatively greater variation in ratings for interactivity. All mean scores are larger than the scale midpoint of 3 thus require indication of favourable scores in the simulation. Descriptive findings can be interpreted thanks to these values but does not provide proof of what consumers truly think.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. Simulated Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Proposed relationship	Standardized β	p-value	Illustrative decision
H1	Perceived usefulness → Attitude	0.31	< .001	Supported in simulated data
H2	Hedonic motivation → Attitude	0.24	< .001	Supported in simulated data
H3	Interactivity → Attitude	0.19	.002	Supported in simulated data
H4	Perceived expectancy → Attitude	0.22	< .001	Supported in simulated data
H5	Attitude → Purchase intention	0.56	< .001	Supported in simulated data

Table 4 illustrates the interpretation of the proposed hypotheses that may emerge from a true structural model. As observed in figure 1, the first order model demonstrates that perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$) has a positive association with attitude toward using social media. Followed by hedonic motivation ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$), perceived expectancy ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$) and interactivity ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = .002$) The positive association between attitude toward social media usage and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < .001$) The hypothetical coefficients suggest that attitude is an important correlate of purchase intention. Also, perceived usefulness is the strongest of the four proposed predictors of attitude. Hypothesis decision making requires an analysis of data that has been collected.

Mediation Analysis

Table 4. Simulated Mediation Results for Attitude Toward Social Media Usage

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Mediation pathway	Indirect effect	Bootstrapped 95% confidence interval	Illustrative interpretation
Social media marketing factors → Attitude → Purchase intention	0.28	[0.19, 0.38]	Significant indirect effect in simulated data

The mediating role of attitude toward usage of social media is shown in Table 5. The estimated indirect effect is .28, 95% CI [.19, .38], based on bootstrap confidence intervals. Because the confidence interval does not include zero, this hypothetical finding would suggest a statistically significant indirect relationship. The findings would indicate that purchase intention may be partially linked to social media marketing factors through consumers' social media usage attitudes. Without considering the relevant direct and total effects, a significant indirect effect would not demonstrate either full or partial mediation. Before any empirical conclusion can be drawn, it is necessary to test the proposed mechanism with actual survey data.

Discussion

The conceptual framework can assist in exploring how perceived usefulness and hedonic motivation, interactivity, perceived expectancy govern consumers in regard to attitude to use social media in retailing in Pakistan. The illustrative results indicate that perceived usefulness might be the strongest predictor of attitude, followed by hedonic motivation, perceived expectancy, and interactivity. Although patterns can be compared with the existing bibliography the estimated outcomes of the paper are simulated and are therefore not evidence. Selem et al. (2023) said that 490 social media users in Pakistan find the relevance of interactivity and perceived usefulness to purchase intention in social commerce. Liu and Qureshi (2023) conducted a comparable study on social media marketing and purchase intention in the apparel industry in Pakistan, finding a role of brand image. In their paper, Malik et al (2023) also suggest that purchase intention for social commerce can be explained through cognitive and affective attitudes.

Retailers want to convert consumers' social media interactions into sales. There is a connection between a person's attitude and the intention to purchase. According to a study by Tariq et al. (2023), social media advertising of a shoe retailer in Pakistan was associated with customers' purchase intention with brand preference and brand image playing the mediating role. Similarly, Khattak et al. (2024) explored social media marketing and purchase intention and emphasized the significance of social factors in the study. According to Pasha et al. (2024), social network marketing significantly influences purchase intention, brand trust, and brand image in Pakistan. It seems that purchase intention is not solely derived from the exposure to promotional content but possibly from evaluations made towards brands and online experiences.

The proposed attitude mediation provides a useful theoretical justification for the link between social media marketing and purchase behaviour. Hajdúc and Balogh (2025) have listed

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several relevant dimensions of social media marketing, which impact the online purchase decisions of young consumers of Bangladesh. Content, engagement, interaction, brand awareness, and influencer marketing are the dimensions mentioned. Although their setting is not quite Pakistan, their findings show how consumers respond to social media content so it matters. Waheed Khan and Adnan (2023) investigated the relationship between social media use and advertisements in Pakistan and consumer purchase intentions, so it makes this study contextually relevant for the research. Researchers need to take authentic survey data and proper measurement checks and make appropriate conclusions regarding the relationships suggested in the next experiment.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper proposes a framework to study the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention in Pakistan's retail sector, with attitude toward social media usage proposed as a mediator. A range of potential antecedents of attitude were identified such as perceived usefulness, hedonic motivation, interactivity, and perceived expectancy. The model is informed by the Theory of Planned Behavior and associated literature on digital marketing consumer engagement and purchase intention. The framework may assist in ordering future investigations into consumer responses to retailers' social media activities. Twenty-first century China has witnessed the emergence of a substantial economic space that is distinct from its locality. The relationships that were proposed must not be taken to be confirmed effects as no empirical testing appears in source material.

Limitations and Future Research

The conceptual nature of the material working paper has some limitations. It lacks a specified population and sampling process, questionnaire, sample size, data collection, and statistical analysis. It's impossible to reach any empirical conclusions regarding the strength or significance of proposed relationships.

Research in future may be conducted collecting survey data from social media users who have used retail brands in Pakistan. Where applicable, researchers should use established measures, pilot the study, and report evidence of reliability and validity. Testing the mediation hypothesis could have occurred using an appropriate indirect-effect procedure with analysis plani.e., specified prior to examining results. Other studies might investigate whether the proposed relationships differ by retail category, platform type, or consumer group. Actual purchasing behaviour could provide clarity regarding to what extent purchase intent actually corresponds with purchase behaviour when paired with actual purchase intent.

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