

IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING PERSPECTIVE IN THE PAKISTAN MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing (DM) has taken the world from conventional marketing to Information and Communication Technology enabled tools to reach consumers. Since the advent of digital marketing, research has been conducted to evaluate how DM shaped customer buying behavior and decisions in developing countries but its impact on developing countries' consumers has been inconsistent. Therefore, this study assesses the impact of DM and its platforms on the buying perception of Pakistani consumers. Data was collected through an online survey of consumers in Pakistani markets. This study showed social media having the highest persuasion power and Instagram the most effective in DM influence on buying perceptions of consumers, particularly among young people aged 18-32, followed by mobile marketing and the least SEO. This study provided empirical grounds to support that DM has changed the way Pakistani consumers buy things and this implies that to effectively reach consumers in Pakistan, DM space must be maximized. Based on the study, digital marketing has significantly transformed the purchase decisions made by Pakistani customers. Organizations must prioritize enhancing their digital marketing presence to effectively reach and engage these customers. Platforms like Instagram possess immense persuasive power, which businesses should leverage to persuade and sell their products successfully. This research also holds practical implications for Pakistani marketers and companies, such as understanding how social media platforms shape customer viewpoints. Marketers can utilize this knowledge to target and engage younger demographics. Marketers should incorporate mobile marketing methods due to the prevalence of smartphone usage among Pakistani consumers.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing; Social Media; Instagram; Mobile Marketing; Search Engine Optimization; Consumer Marketing.*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has shifted away from traditional marketing methods and toward using ICT-enabled tools to reach its customers. This has been accomplished through the invention of the internet and the widespread use of digital tools by a larger population, allowing for the practice of digital marketing. Digital marketing (DM) is the use of online tools to market a product or brand to potential buyers or consumers in order to reach a larger audience and achieve long-term organizational goals.

A paradigm shift in marketing has occurred as a result of the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) tools, specifically the Internet (Saad & Choura, 2021).

With its rapid spread, the internet and technology have become widely used throughout the world. These incredible resources have provided everyone with instant access to the most important information. It is estimated that roughly half of the global population has an internet presence, whether through social media platforms, blogs, websites, social apps, or social networking sites (Internet World Stats, 2017; Alam, Wang, & Rafique, 2018; Alam et al., 2019). This has resulted in a community of people who can communicate instantly, share ideas, and provide instant feedback on what they think about things.

The face of business has changed dramatically, and with a single click, a consumer can access any product in any part of the world while sitting in their own home (Osman, 2017). Furthermore, businesses have seized this opportunity to reach out to potential customers and solicit feedback on their products and services. This situation has altered the traditional marketing process. Rather than using “gorilla” marketing techniques, organizations have opted for Digital Marketing (DM) (Morais et al., 2021). This is because DM can assist in achieving a wider reach and instant feedback at the click of a button. DM tools (website, Facebook, email, search engine marketing, blog, content marketing, SEO, and so on). There is also the added benefit of sellers being able to measure a return on investment because it shows how many products were sold through the platform to measure the marketing effectiveness (KPMG, 2017).

DM is widely used in developed countries, and its use is beginning to spread to developing countries, such as Pakistan. There are approximately 30 million internet users in Pakistan, which has a population of around 22 million people (Imtiaz, Kazmi, Amjad & Aziz, 2019). The vast majority of these internet users are thought to be social media users (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms), with over 14 million on Facebook and 2.5 million on

Twitter (Shaheen & Lodhi, 2016). Pakistan is undergoing a critical marketing transformation as a result of the steady rise of the internet, which is significantly supporting digital marketing (Imtiaz et al., 2019). With the advent of the internet, consumers now pace from anywhere in the world (Ko et al., 2004). Many factors contribute to a product's visibility to consumers, the most important of which is the content with which the product is advertised (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 2002), which results in the creation of a brand.

A brand can influence consumer desire and direct them toward the product that will meet their needs. To determine the precedence of a product, use Google search, reviews, influencer comments, previous user ratings, and testimonials (Singh, 2017). Consistency and product improvement will determine consumer loyalty because consumers always want value for money.

Pakistan consumers use social media and DM platforms as well, but the impact has not been thoroughly studied by researchers (Imtiaz, Kazmi, Amjad, & Aziz, 2019), and they remain skeptical of the utility of DM. Consumer behavior has always been a multifaceted research topic, so digitalization should have a similar impact (Gungor & Cadirci, 2022). Customers nowadays want to enjoy their shopping experience while getting the most bang for their buck (Irfan et al., 2008). New trends in digital marketing challenge entrepreneurs to be proactive and anticipate customers' behavior in their online stores. With the emergence of new ICT tools, interactions in online environments have become central for consumers (Saad & Choura, 2021). By assuring safe payment mechanisms and providing post-purchase services, marketers may encourage consumers to think less about online threats, risks, and fraud. (Waheed et al., 2021; Alam, Wang & Rafique, 2018).

Therefore, this study evaluates the impact of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior in Pakistan, filling the knowledge gap, and recommending ways to maximize DM for effectiveness. It focused on the prevailing digital tools in Pakistan (i.e., Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, Social Media Marketing, and Mobile marketing).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing Overview

DM has been defined by different researchers, but the baseline is the use of the internet to reach potential consumers. (Chaffey, 2013) and (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013) defined it as the use of technologies to help marketing activities to improve customer knowledge by matching their needs, Chaffey and Smith (2017) and Dar and Tariq (2021) described DM as the consolidation

of data sciences, technological bits and continual target audience's requirements while Ramesh and Vidhya (2020) defined it as a process of adopting internet-based promotional activities by the marketers, by utilizing electronic media to sell their goods and services. Furthermore, Dar and Tariq (2021) opined that DM involves social media appearance, SEO and content marketing, augmented reality & and virtual reality activities. They stated that this marketing technique is not finalized yet, because of evolving technology.

The concept of digital marketing dates back to the invention of the internet as an online search in 1991 and its bubble burst in 2001 (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013). This has been amalgamated with the use of social media platforms where mobile devices served as a means of connecting people in 2007. Customers who shop online are cautious; they evaluate the product by reading related internet blogs, online reviews, and other people's experiences (Imtiaz et al., 2019; Ramesh & Vidhya, 2020).

There are several channels in which DM can be carried out. These include SEO, SEM, Social Media Marketing, affiliate marketing, email marketing, mobile marketing, blogs, and remarketing, among others (Ramesh & Vidhya, 2020).

Consumer Behavior

Behavior is the total of how an individual reacts to situations, and it determines what he/she selects, purchase, taste, and consume (Rami, 2012). These activities are to satisfy their individual needs. Needs, preferences, and purchasing powers are the deciding factors of what consumers buy and use. Therefore, the understanding or study of how an individual or group of people behave, organize, buy, and eventually use products purchased to meet their needs or wants is called consumer behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to Rami (2012), the gain each consumer is satisfied with the products and services requested. The pattern of behavior is diverse due to external/or internal factors that are specific to each individual, organization, and culture. These may include culture, family, social class, personality, peer group, financial capacity, psychological factors, etc. (Solomon, 2009).

Customer Buying Perception

Perception is the ability to perceive and comprehend stimuli (Kazmi, 2012) and this describes an individual's perceived image of what he expects of any product or service. Perception has a hold on consumer behavior (Yakup & Diyarbakirlioglu, 2011). Therefore, customer buying perception is how a consumer selects, organizes, and interprets information about a brand, product, or service. This invariably determines their thoughts and how they feel about the

product. Consumer buying perception can be a very tedious concept to determine (Omar & Atteya, 2020).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

DM and consumer buying perspectives stem from marketing and customer behavior. The need for this study is to provide an insight into how DM techniques and tools affect a typical Pakistani's perception of buying. As previously highlighted in this study, a consumer buying decision is triggered by need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, Purchase, and Post-Purchase evaluation. This process is aided by the aforementioned DM channels. SEO can be used to increase traffic to the website, and SMM can be used to create brand awareness as in the case of SEO (Desai, 2019). It, therefore, becomes important to assess how these channels have a resounding impact on the consumer perspective of a product, brand, and or service.

Figure 1 shows the pathways of consumer buying behavior which has departed from the conventional way since the coming of digital marketing. There is an information search which gives more power to the buyer. The decision-making process of consumers can be simple or complex, depending on several factors. It starts when a need is acknowledged. It could be as simple as noticing there are no longer any vegetables in the refrigerator. A customer then begins to look for information from both internal and external sources during the information search that comes next. When a consumer discovers knowledge and alternatives, he or she begins the alternative evaluation stage by evaluating them. A consumer chooses which good or service to purchase after weighing the alternatives. The user uses the purchased good or service after making the purchase (Netmera.com, 2015).

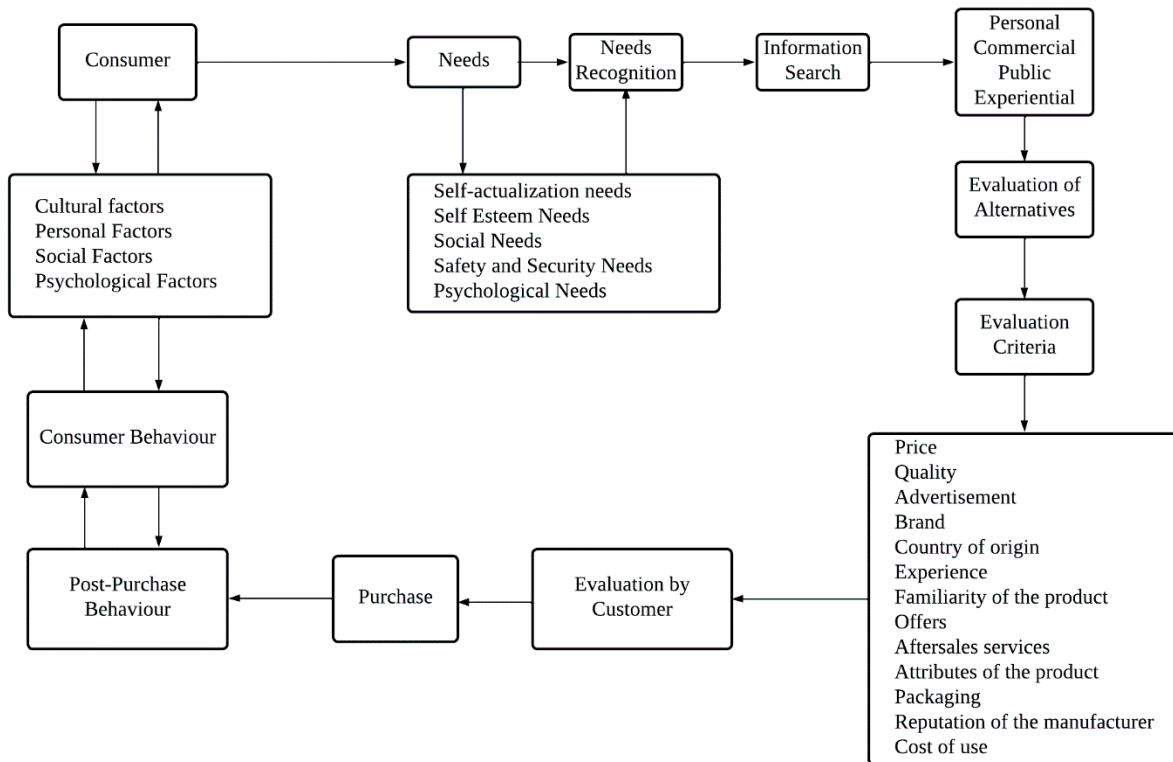


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Consumer Buying Decision Process & Consumer Behaviour. Source: Jisana (2014)

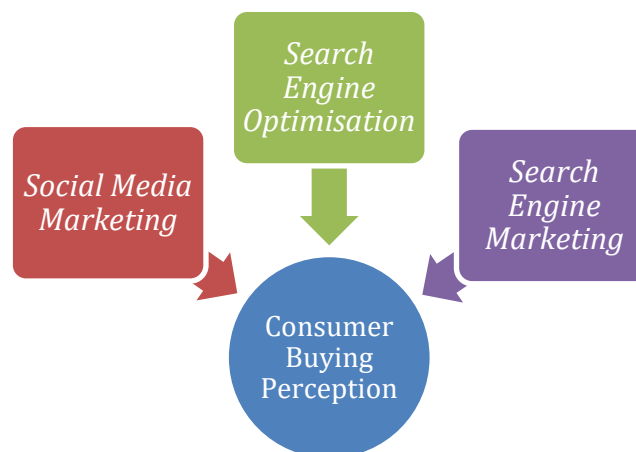


Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Framework on the Effect of DM on Consumer Buying Perception (CBP)

Figure 2. shows the proposed conceptual framework that is currently added to conventional marketing in the area of information search and access to the product will shape the consumer buying perception.

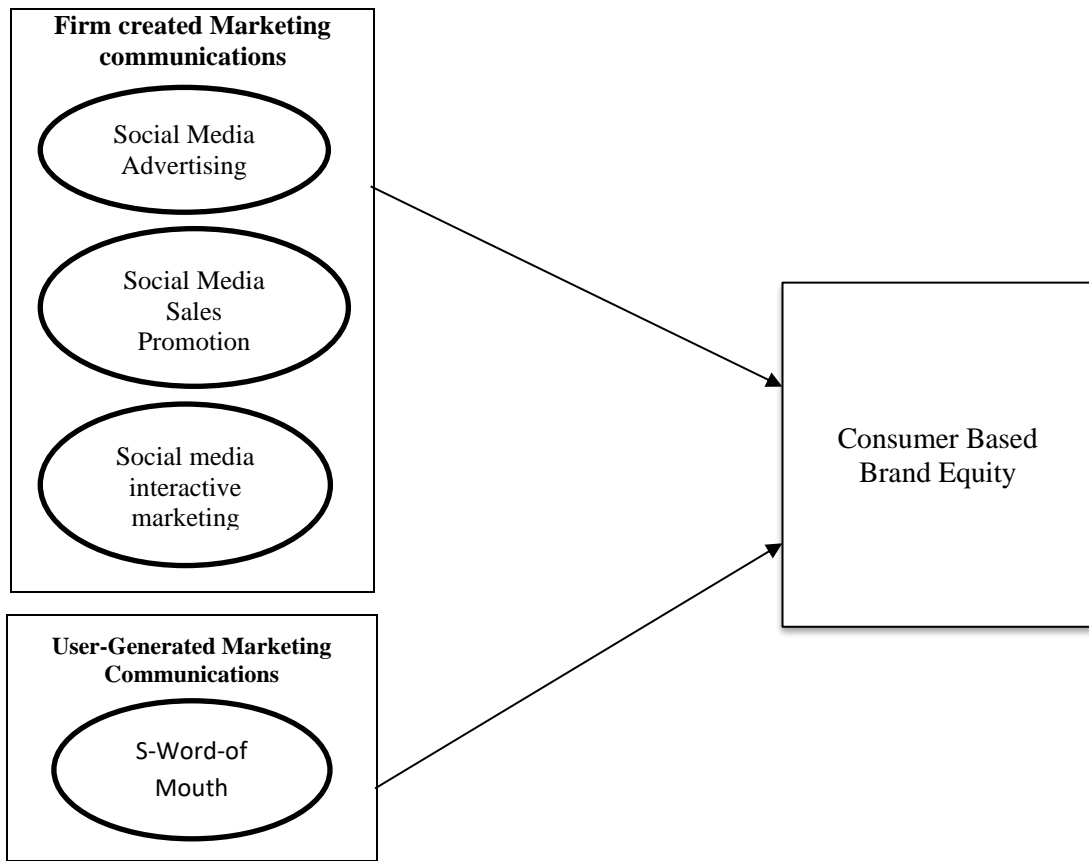


Figure 3. The Impact of SMM (Source: Raji et al., 2019)

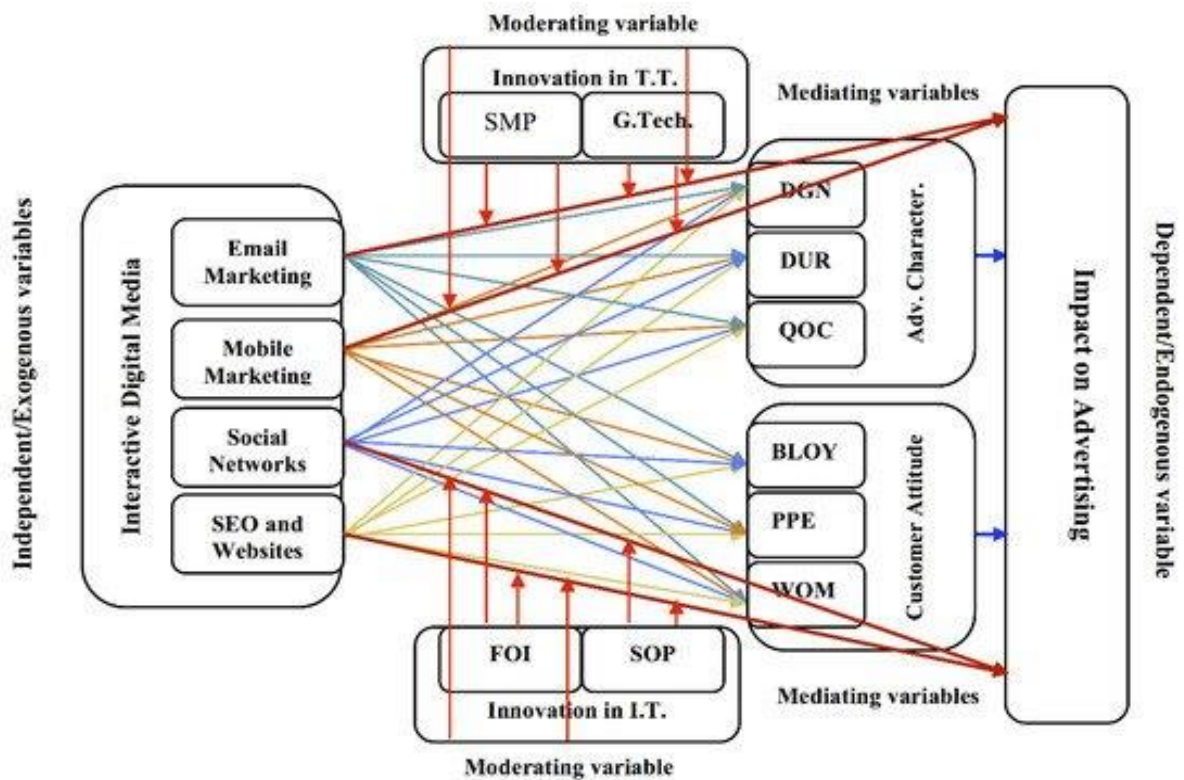


Figure 4. The Impact of SMM (Source: Husain et al., 2017).

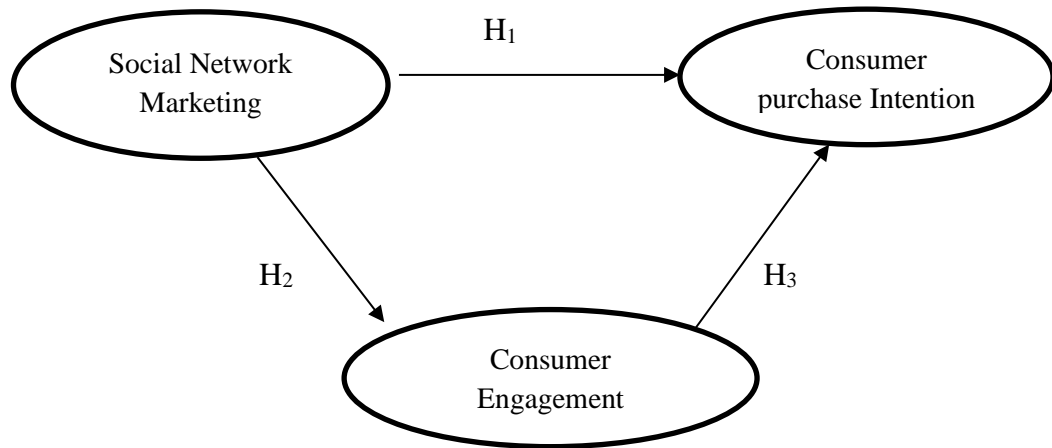


Figure 5. *The Impact of SEO and SEM. (Source: Ahmed et al., 2019)*

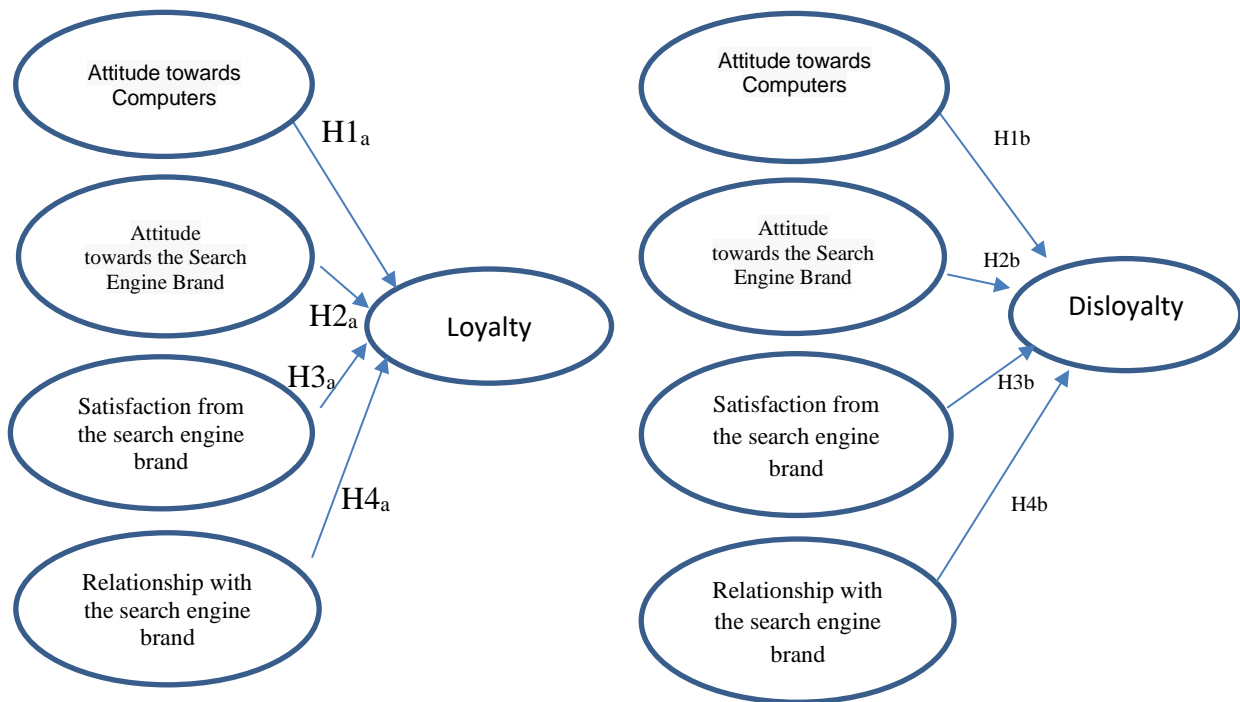


Figure 6. *The Impact of SEO and SEM. (Source: Veloutsou & McAlonan, 2012).*

The three components of the conceptual model (shown in Figure 2) were inspired by the work done previously (Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6). For example, based on the impact of SMM, Raji et al. (2019) designed the model to evaluate consumer-based brand equity and used Social Media Advertising, Social Media Sales promotion, and social media interactive marketing. Their findings were that consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) is shaped by social media marketing (SMM). Interestingly, Husain et al., (2017) presented similar models for how

SMM shapes consumer buying decisions. The framework formulated by Ahmed et al., (2019) links SEO to brand awareness, while the study by Ghose et al., (2008), Zenetti et al., (2014) and Veloutsou and McAlonan (2012) validate the direct relationship between search engine marketing and consumer engagement or brand awareness.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

To put the proposed conceptual model to the test, the following hypotheses will be tested. It is important to evaluate the impact of Digital marketing (DM) as it provides a platform in which consumers can air their opinions about a brand. It can be used to analyze and make decisions on consumer preferences. Therefore, adopting DM technologies can encourage customers to have a positive outlook toward a brand thereby increasing market sales/shares of an organization. Because DM involves tools, processes, and channels, and based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are framed according to Ahmed et al., (2019) and Veloutsou and McAlonan, (2012):

H1: Digital marketing impacts the perception of Pakistani consumers.

H2: DM marketing channels impact the buying perception of consumers in Pakistan.

H3: Social media platforms have an impact on CBP in Pakistan.

H4: Consumers are likely to recommend DM as a marketing technique.

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Data Collection and Analysis

This study's research methodology aimed to evaluate how digital marketing (DM) and its platforms impact the buying perception of Pakistani consumers. This study focused on consumers in Pakistani markets who have experience purchasing products online. The sample included 200 respondents who were selected using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was chosen because it is practical and accessible, allowing for data collection within a reasonable time frame and resource constraints (Simkus, 2023). The respondents represented various backgrounds and Pakistani nationalities.

The questionnaire design served as the primary tool to collect data from the participants. It was created to gather information about the impact of DM platforms on consumer buying perception. The questionnaire consisted of multiple sections covering demographic information digital marketing platforms and buying perception factors. The questions were developed based on a thorough literature review and tailored to fit the specifics of this study's

context. Both closed-ended questions with predefined response options and Likert scale questions were included in the questionnaire. Closed-ended questions provided respondents with predetermined choices. In comparison, Likert scale questions allowed them to express their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale. To obtain insights into how respondents utilize and perceive diverse DM platforms like social media, Instagram, mobile marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), a questionnaire was designed. The resulting data underwent meticulous analysis through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). CFA was used to assess the measurement model's validity and reliability confirming that the items chosen accurately assessed the constructs of interest as argued by Lourenço (2016). On the other hand, SEM provided for the examination of the correlations between variables and the testing of the suggested conceptual framework. Statistical studies were carried out to evaluate the influence of DM platforms on customer purchasing perception. The data were interpreted using statistical significance and effect sizes to establish the strength and direction of these associations (Amos et al., 2008). Stata IC 16, a widely used statistical software program with extensive analytic features, was used for data analysis. As part of the study, descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize demographic information and questionnaire answers. CFA and SEM analyses were performed to verify the measurement model and assess predicted correlations.

RESULTS

The result of the analyzed data is presented below. The results of the model were presented starting with the measurement model.

Data Screening

Before engaging the structural equation model (SEM), the data used was screened for consistency and statistically sound for further analysis and computations (Van den Broeck et al., 2005). There was no missing data.

Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity exists in instances where an independent variable has a high degree of mutual relationship with one or more other independent variables (Hadi, 1992). The results showed that there was no multicollinearity problem in the data.

The Measurement Models

According to Kline (2011), two-step modeling was employed as suggested by Kline (2011). The measurement model was achieved by using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and it

establishes whether a set of indicators has the property of desired measurement invariance. Therefore, CFA was conducted to cater to the independent factors and three endogenous factors. The connection between social media marketing (SMM), mobile marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Search Engine Marketing (SEM), YouTube marketing channel, Facebook marketing channel, Twitter marketing channel, and Instagram marketing channel factors was examined using an eight-factor measurement model using the CFA technique. The determinant of the correlation matrix was examined with convergent validity and divergence of the model. The parameter estimates were then studied and finally validated by their fit measures and residual covariance matrix. The eight-factor measurement model is presented in Figure 1. The result showed that Bartlett's test chi-square was found to be significant, $\chi^2(325) = 3566.295$, $p = 0.000$, demonstrating that there was significant redundancy among the variables that could be used to summarize the factors in the model. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was done to check the degree of sampling appropriateness a value of 0.886 was found, showing the data is adequate for CFA.

The results of convergent validity validated that all the construct correlations are within the range of 0.3 and 0.8 and they are all significant at 0.001. Construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated and all the values of CR and AVE were more than the accepted value of 0.5. Also, the value for Cronbach's alpha shows that all the factors have more than 0.6. The path coefficients were reported as standardized regression effects based on the effect of the latent variable on its indicators to interpret the results of the CFA in Table 1 of the measurement model. The results show that the coefficients range from 0.48 to 0.87 at a 0.001 significant level.

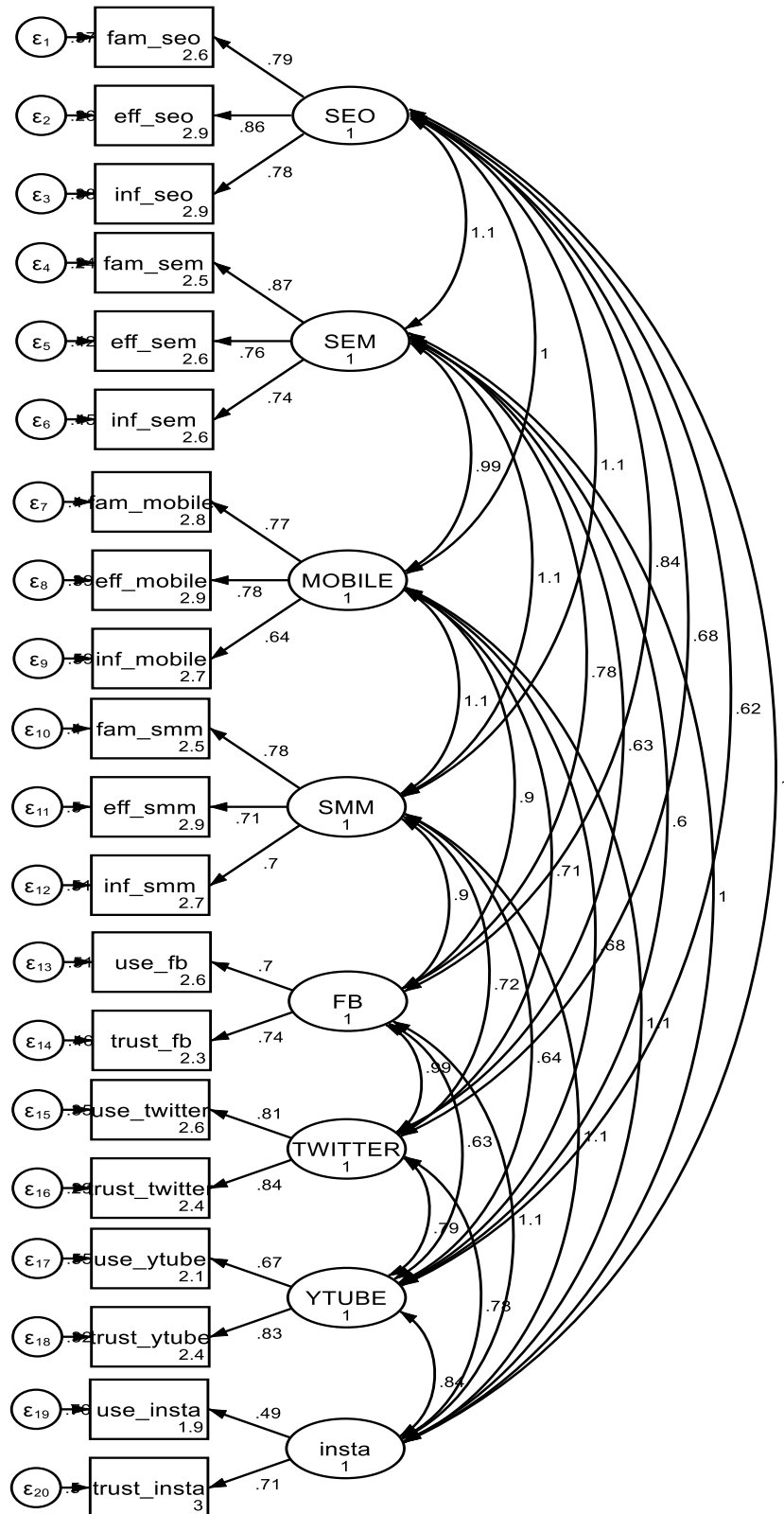


Figure 4. Measurement Model for Consumer Buying Perception.

The result in Appendix 1 also shows the model fit indices. The RMSEA was significant at 0.000 for the upper bound. The chi-square value was significant $\chi^2 (190) = 3446.538, p = 0.000$, CFI = 0.879, TLI = 0.838, SRMR = 0.050. The covariances of the matrix showed relatively low absolute values. The highest covariance matrix was seen between trust_twitter and trust_youtube which was 0.5.

Table 1. Constructs Results for the Measurement Model

Construct	Standardized factor loadings	Cronbach alpha	AVE	CR
SEO		0.8510	0.663	0.914
familiarity	0.7932792			
effectiveness	0.8616705			
Influence	0.7849762			
SEM		0.8302	0.63	0.9
familiarity	0.8736301			
effectiveness	0.7632226			
Influence	0.738446			
SMM		0.7754	0.532	0.854
familiarity	0.7756743			
effectiveness	0.7094288			
Influence	0.7010053			
MOBILE		0.7850	0.542	0.858
familiarity	0.7740152			
effectiveness	0.7832925			
Influence	0.6438285			
Facebook		0.6765	0.513	0.783
Use	0.6966965			
Trust	0.7356499			
Twitter		0.8093	0.681	0.886
Use	0.8085041			
Trust	0.8420711			
Instagram		0.8200	0.568	0.638
Use	0.4873051			
Trust	0.7057853			
YouTube		0.7149	0.569	0.818
Use	0.6735653			
Trust	0.827066			

Note: All factor loadings are significant at 1 percent

Structural Model Result

This model examined the hypothesized consumer buying perception model on Pakistani consumers. The results of the model are presented in Appendix 2. Results presented test statistics of 0.111 to 1.041 signifying that the estimates were moderately determined in the model. The results showed that all the coefficients or factor loadings were significant other than YouTube signifying that digital marketing and by extension, consumer buying perception were well explained by their corresponding latent variables. Thus, the hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were accepted in the model.

The results of the structural model showed that social media marketing (SMM), search engine marketing (SEM), mobile marketing (MOBILE), and search engine optimization (SEO) had an incremental and significant impact on digital marketing (DM). The largest impact on digital marketing was realized from SMM (0.72), followed by MOBILE (0.386) and SEO (0.193). SEM had the least impact on DM as it returned a factor loading of 0.111. Thus, social media was found to have the largest persuasion power in digital marketing.

These results are consistent with the coefficient of the determination of the latent equations discussed with the help of R-squared. The results show various variations of the four factors explained by each of their indicators. The proportion of variation in DM explained by the four significant factors, SMM, SEM, SEO, and mobile marketing was found to be 72 percent and digital marketing explained 52 percent of the variation in consumer buying perception.

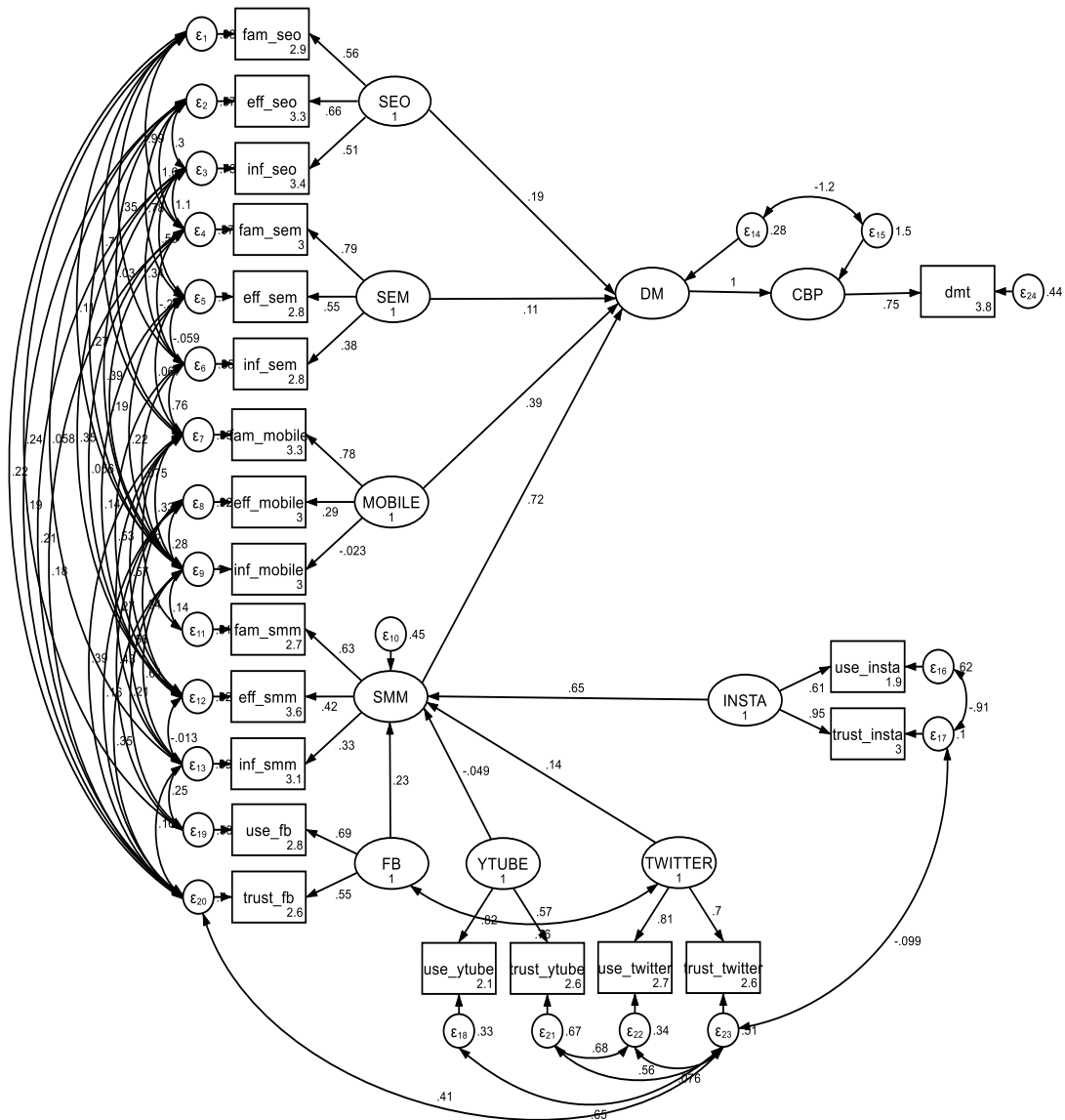


Figure 5. Consumer Buying Perception Model Representation.

DISCUSSION

The study provided empirical grounds to support the hypotheses that digital marketing impacts the perception of Pakistani consumers, digital marketing channels impact the buying perception of consumers in Pakistan and social media platforms have an impact on consumer buying perception in Pakistan. The results presented showed the data is adequate to proceed with CFA by showing some degree of observed linear correlation among the variables at a 0.000 significant level. This agreed with the study of Kline (2011).

According to Barrios et al. (2020), a value between 0.8 to 1 for KMO shows good sample adequacy and therefore, this study has adequate data to proceed as the value was found to be 0.886. The results showed that all the indicators within each construct depicted convergent

validity (Kline, 2011) all their correlations were within the range of 0.3 and 0.8 and they all had statistically significant validity at 0.001. This means the scale of a variable is closely related to other variables in the same construct.

CR and AVE of this study agreed with Kline, (2011) and thus, the two measures confirmed convergent validity within each of the examined constructs. Also, the divergent validity examined from the matrix and the correlations showed that divergent issues were within the accepted margin as most of the correlations around the constructs were below the individual constructs' correlations (Kline, 2011). SMM and Instagram constructs were the only constructs with perfect divergent validity as all their correlations were above the intermediate correlations.

Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha was used to show the degree of scale validity and according to Hair *et al.*, (2010), they must be more than 0.6 for them to be acceptable and this confirmed that the factors had good internal consistency and thus their indicators had a close relationship as a group. This was found consistent with the results from convergent validity.

The results of the path coefficients were reported as standardized regression effects based on the effect of the latent variable on its indicators to interpret the results of the CFA. According to (Kline, 2011) coefficients of 0.1 indicate a relatively small effect, coefficients of 0.30 show a moderate effect while the coefficient of 0.5 indicates a relatively large effect. The results from the measurement model show that the coefficients range from 0.48 (relatively medium effect) to 0.87 (relatively large effect). All the factor loadings were found to be statistically significant at 0.001. This showed that the exogenous measurement model showed a strong relationship and individual effect on each latent variable.

To establish the degree of fit of the measurement model, fit indices were inspected. Root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI) normed chi-square, and standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) were inspected. The RMSEA compares the hypothesized model with a perfect model and evaluates them against 0.01, 0.05, and 0.08 which are excellent, good, and bad fits, respectively. It could be concluded that the fit was good. The chi-square value was significant but showed that the model was worse than a base model (Kline, 2011). CFI is a fit index with values between 0 and 1. Together with TLI, they compare the hypothesized model with the base model (lowest) in terms of fit. CFI is the commonly used fit index criterion according to West (2012). $CFI \geq 0.95$ is accepted as a good fit (West, 2012). The results of this study indicate a moderate fit. According to West (2012), $TLI \geq 0.90$. The results showed the TLI was 0.838 indicating a

consistently moderate fit. The SRMR index measures the mean of standardized covariance residuals of the hypothesized and the observed matrices. An SRMR of 0.050 showed that the model was able to capture important associations among the variables. Hence, the fit indices consistently confirmed that the measurement model was a good fit.

The covariances of the matrix showed relatively low absolute values. The highest covariance matrix was seen between trust_twitter and trust_youtube which was 0.5. Hence, the indicators fit the model very well.

The structural model measures the hypothetical linear causal relationships or dependencies among the variables that are based on the paths in the structure while accounting for measurement error concurrently between the exogenous and endogenous variables (Hoyle, 2011). The structural model used in the current study sought to investigate the interaction of digital marketing platforms including their impact on consumers' perception of their usage as a buying platform alternative while making purchasing decisions.

This model examined the hypothesized consumer buying perception model on Pakistani consumers. RMSEA index presented a measure of 0.00 (RMSEA <0.05 criteria), a good fit. CFI was 1.00 (CFI>0.95 criteria) which presented an excellent model fit. Results presented test statistics of 0.111 to 1.041 signifying that the estimates were moderately determined in the model and significant.

The results of the structural model showed that social media marketing (SMM), search engine marketing (SEM), mobile marketing (MOBILE), and search engine optimization (SEO) had an incremental and significant impact on digital marketing (DM). The largest impact on digital marketing was realized from SMM (0.72), followed by MOBILE (0.386) and SEO (0.193). SEM had the least impact on DM as it returned a factor loading of 0.111. Thus, social media was found to have the largest persuasion power in digital marketing. These findings were consistent with some of the past studies. As Bala and Verma, (2018) looked into the current and future trends of digital marketing and found that social media marketing is the most effective. They added that this was because almost everyone was interconnected in one way or another within the various social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. This made it easier for marketers to target them. A study by Balakrishnan, *et al.*, (2014) found that social media had become the mainstay of digital marketing in the 21st century. They found out that this was mainly due to the ability of businesses to promote brand loyalty and cement product purchase intentions. These, they added, were possible since the platforms offered a fast and

efficient way to reach customers, especially the younger generation. This revelation was supported by Laksamana (2018). Incidentally, the current study was majorly composed of the younger generation that is, 18 –32 years which comprised 90 percent of the entire sample of the study. These age groups thus could have been swayed more towards SMM as the most popular marketing platform as they were more familiar with it.

Mobile marketing was found to be the second component impacting digital marketing. One probable reason mobile marketing would be a major digital marketing avenue was since the penetration of mobile devices had picked up, they could act as the primary driver and focal point for the adoption and usage of other marketing avenues (Smutkupt et al., 2010). In addition, he found that mobile marketing offered significant benefits to marketers as it could relay information in an individualized and interactive way without the restriction of time and place. Bala and Verma (2018) also found out that it was much less effort to brand a product to prospective buyers on social media platforms than in the context of SEO. This could be the reason SEO in this current study, was found to be less impactful on digital marketing than SMM.

Furthermore, results revealed that Instagram was the most significant social media platform influencing the buying perception of this group of respondents, mostly youths. The results found that each Instagram interaction among consumers would lead to positive changes in social media marketing by 0.651. Facebook and Twitter were also found to be major social media platforms influencing SMM. The results revealed that Facebook and Twitter positively affect changes in SMM by 0.234 and 0.138, respectively. Therefore, these were the indirect effects of social media platforms on customer buying perception. Arora et al. (2019) agreed that Instagram had the maximum impact on social media influence through engagements and reach more than Facebook and Twitter. Also, Instagram was found to have more impact on SMM due to its increasing user base and its integration into other platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Facebook was found to be the second most important platform influencing SMM. Pradiptarini (2011) in her study found that most Facebook users (over 70%) were fans of brands or companies. However, only 38 percent of Twitter users followed brands or companies.

Consequently, due to the positive effect of SMM, mobile marketing, SEO, and SEM on DM, digital marketing changes also had a positive effect on the consumer buying perception. In other words, due to changes in digital marketing, consumer perception would be positively impacted by 1.041. This meant that changes in digital marketing would lead to a positive impact on buying perception from buyers. This was consistent with the feedback from the respondents

who were asked to give more information on their choice of digital marketplaces based on attractiveness, convenience, accessibility, and reliability. Most of the respondents (86%) showed that the attractiveness of the online marketplace was the most important reason considered for buying. Convenience and accessibility were also favoured at 83 percent and 82 percent, respectively. Comparatively, 70 percent and 66 percent considered online buying a good experience and reliable respectively. Thus, most of the respondents, 85 percent embraced digital marketing based on the attributes it offered and their interactions.

These results are consistent with the coefficient of the determination of the latent equations discussed with the help of R-squared and it showed 72 percent variation in DM explained by the four significant factors, SMM, SEM, SEO, and mobile marketing and this is consistent with Pradiptarini (2011). This means that the four factors more than were able to explain the variance in digital marketing. In return, digital marketing explained 52 percent of the variation in consumer buying perception. These results thus confirmed that digital marketing had a relatively significant impact on consumer buying perception in Pakistan. The indicators and the latent overall explained 98 percent variance in the model showing an excellent model fit.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research examined how digital marketing (DM) platforms affect Pakistani customers' purchasing decisions. The investigation sheds light on digital marketing platforms, consumer purchasing perspectives, and Pakistani relevance. CFA confirmed the study's measuring tools' validity and reliability. Construct correlations confirmed convergent validity. Construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) met acceptable levels, showing high internal consistency and convergent validity. The measurement model accurately assessed the constructions of interest.

According to the structural model research, SMM, mobile marketing, SEO, and SEM had a substantial influence on digital marketing (DM). SMM influenced DM the most, followed by mobile marketing and SEO while SEM was the least influential. These results confirm social media's persuasive power and mobile marketing's growing influence on digital marketing. Instagram was the most prominent social media network in marketing, with Facebook and Twitter also contributing. Instagram's popularity and interaction with other platforms support these conclusions. Digital marketing's effect on customer purchasing perception was also considerable, demonstrating that digital marketing methods may favorably affect consumers' perspectives and purchase choices. Digital marketing accounted for 52% of customer purchase

perception variance. This emphasizes the relevance of digital marketing techniques in affecting customer behavior, and firms need to use digital platforms to improve their marketing success.

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATION

The study focused on the most common digital marketing platforms in the context of Pakistan. Prospective studies could explore the impact of other platforms such as display marketing both in the print and visual media. Future studies could also investigate the effect and relevance of influencer marketing which is increasingly becoming a game changer in the social media marketing framework. Finally, since structural equation models are capable of elucidating inherent hidden attributes, it would be interesting if future studies consider the impact of unintentional marketing such as customer referrals and reviews on the general brand success.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Goodness of Fit Indices

Fit statistic	Value	Description
Likelihood ratio		
chi2_ms (142)	536	model vs. saturated
p > chi2	0.000	
chi2_bs (190)	3446.538	baseline vs. saturated
p > chi2	0.000	
Population error		
RMSEA	0.119	Root mean squared error of approximation
90% CI, lower bound	0.108	
upper bound	0.129	
pclose	0.000	Probability RMSEA <= 0.05
Information criteria		
AIC	10816.569	Akaike's information criterion
BIC	11105.936	Bayesian information criterion
Baseline comparison		
CFI	0.879	Comparative fit index
TLI	0.838	Tucker-Lewis index
Size of residuals		
SRMR	0.05	Standardized root mean squared residual
CD	1	Coefficient of determination

Appendix 2. Standardized results of the model

Path	Coefficient	Std error
SMM (social media marketing) → DM (Digital marketing)	**0.72	0.281
SEO (search engine optimization) → DM (Digital marketing)	***0.193	0.188
SEM (search engine optimization) → DM (Digital marketing)	***0.111	0.15
MOBILE (mobile marketing) → DM (Digital marketing)	**0.386	0.168
INSTA (Instagram) → SMM (social media marketing)	***0.651	0.39
YTUBE (YouTube) → SMM (social media marketing)	-0.049	0.088
FB (Facebook) → SMM (social media marketing)	***0.234	0.313
TWITTER (Twitter) → SMM (social media marketing)	**0.138	0.29
DM (Digital Marketing) → CBP (consumer buying perception)	***1.041	0.393