

THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER GOAL SALIENCE ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND BRAND PERFORMANCE: AN EXTENSION OF THE TAM2 MODEL

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Abstract

The research study has examined specific antecedents of customer engagement and their influence on brand-related performance. The study has extended the TAM2 model by including constructs like goal salience and brand performance related to constructs like job relevance, output quality and goal-oriented thinking. The study builds upon recommendations of past studies on customer engagement. In this regard, customer engagement at social media platforms through perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and goal salience has been measured. The research is quantitatively conducted by a survey method based on a self-administered questionnaire. Items of the study have been adapted from past studies. Smart PLS 4.0 is employed in this research for data analysis and hypothesis testing. The study's population are social media users who have shopped online. The sample size is selected as 220 study respondents approached through a convenient sampling method applied by reaching out social media pages of famous e-commerce websites in Pakistan. The study has theoretical implications due to the extension of TAM model and practical implications for strategy makers of a firm in the long run to align customer goals with the social media strategy for long-term retention and better sales or profitability. The research model can be improved through adding some mediating or moderation constructs like self-disclosure, gender specification or income level for assessment of results accordingly.

Key words: Customer engagement, brand performance, goal salience, social media and digital platforms

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INTRODUCTION

A recent study by (Busalim et al., 2023) has established mediation role of customer engagement on building of intentions and recommended future studies to endeavor for transformation of these intentions into actual behavior in the shape of brand loyalty or brand performance. Since, brand loyalty is more a subjective construct so we chose brand performance as outcome variable of the study. The PERMA+4 framework, related to positive psychology of wellbeing is proven for employee wellbeing and recommended for utilization for the customer's context (Cabrera & Donaldson, 2023; Falter & Hadwich, 2020), In order to extend the PERMA framework to consumer well-being which can offer certain theoretical and practical insights, for consumer engagement and wellbeing literature. Previously though Falter and Hadwich (2020) extended the PERMA model for customer service wellbeing; however overall customer wellbeing concept has not been evaluated yet. The customer engagement literature has been advancing since last decade or so. Customer engagement is defined as the amount of involvement, interaction, and emotional connection with a brand or organization (Vinerean & Opreana, 2021). The present era of social media has evolved customer relationship methods and literature by including constructs like cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements (Srivastava et al., 2023). Contemporary digital technologies like augmented reality and virtual reality have revolutionized the consumer engagement construct, yet no consensus has been developed in the literature about the definition and business performance (Santos-Vijande et al., 2022). The social media engagement of customers have been elaborated through activities like sharing, posting and liking content on social media whereas the customer engagement construct is confused with customer experience (Srivastava et al., 2023).

The extant literature is increasingly focusing on customer brand engagement through social media however, these studies are not conclusive, and there lies a significant research gap in academia about consumers' brand engagement through digital platforms (Dhaoui & Webster, 2021). Therefore, there is a dire need to address these study gaps for consumer brand engagement through social media and actual business performance outcomes (Hollebeek & Belk, 2021). Customer engagement through the social media technology and artificial intelligence adds a new dimension to the literature on customer relationships and business success (Hassan et al., 2023; Inam et al., 2023; Jabbar et al., 2023; F. A. Khan et al., 2024; Khan, Sheikh, Hassan, et al., 2024; Khan, Tahir, et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2023, 2025; S. A. R. Khan, Sheikh, & Tahir, 2024b, 2024a; Marrone & Testa, 2022; Rehman Khan et al., 2022; Sheikh et al., 2017, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024b, 2024a). Studies have evaluated TAM Model in various settings, highlighting significance of the indicators of technology adoption in shape of perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989) and their countless outcome constructs (Cabrera & Donaldson, 2024; Chaves et al., 2023; Merritt et al., 2024) whereas no such research study is available focusing customer engagement through social media technology adoption and brand performance. Hence the present study has targeted the visible and clear research gap and attempted to extend TAM model beyond TAM₃ due to inclusion of constructs goal salience and brand performance. The recent research on customer relationship literature have similar recommendations to extend the literature on customer brand engagement in contemporary setting of advanced and more connected world thorough social media (Cantone et al., 2022; Lin & Wu, 2023). A recent study by (Busalim et al., 2023) has established mediation role of customer engagement on building of intentions and recommended future studies to endeavor for transformation of these intentions into actual behavior in the shape of brand loyalty or

brand performance. Since, brand loyalty is more a subjective construct so we chose brand performance as outcome variable of the study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Above in view following research objectives have been formulated.

- a. Investigate customer engagement through social media technology platforms and its impact on brand performance.
- b. Investigate the predictors of customer engagement through social media technology platforms and develop a research framework for extension of technology adoption model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hollebeek & Belk. (2021) recommended evaluating customer engagement through use of interactive technologies wherein customer interactions become easy and steady. It is quite significant to understand customer behavior alteration by use of such technologies and implications for sustainable relationships with brand which enable marketers to develop successful strategy and desired results (Vinodh et al., 2024). In this way sustainable competitive advantage and business success can be achieved (Rasool et al., 2021). Therefore, the social media strategy for customer engagement has repeatedly proven its significance (Agnihotri, 2020; Salvietti et al., 2021; Srivastava et al., 2023). Zhou et al. (2022) have found that customer brand engagement at social media, assists in satisfying customer wants and make them contented with the brand which bring brand related success and performance. The consistent value creation by brands enhance customer wellbeing and relationship (Hong & Ahn, 2023).

TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)

Several attractive features have attracted users at social media platforms for fun as well as learning and information about products and services (Jacobs et al., 2022). Many a researches have performed evaluation and analyzed social media adoption for both customer and employees / organizational context (Al-Marroof et al., 2021). In present research study context, social media has been considered as a mode of customer engagement (Liadeli et al., 2023). Various social media has offered short reels that boosted their popularity among masses so the brands and organizations have rushed to adopt this technology for their market strategy, hence technology acceptance model is most relevant theory (Jacobs et al., 2022). Particularly in the present study context goal salience have been used with the classical constructs of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness for engagement of customers with the brands (Luo et al., 2024).

GOAL SALIENCE

Customer goals are objectives that they want to achieve and these goals represent the values and individual pursues to fulfill personal creativity and value addition (Aksoy & Bayazit, 2022; Urdan & Kaplan, 2020). The goal salience is related to the precedence of most important goals (Anshari & Hamdan, 2022). Goal salience is the significance that a person gives to a particular objective. This relevant importance decides for a person to adopt a technology inclusive of other factors (Kung & Scholer, 2021). The highly salient goals lead persons to achieve concerned technology for achievement (Chen et al., 2022).

The conflicting goals with respect to resources of time and value becomes difficult in decision making process (Niendorf et al., 2022). Since the goal salience describe relative importance of a goal to a consumer, it can be viewed as a key precursor of customer engagement (Hentzen et al., 2022). In case of innovative social media interaction platforms, customer goal salience shall predict their instructiveness, engagement and purchase

behaviors (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). Therefore the technology adoption and engagement in case of social media technology directly affect customer brand engagement (Wong et al., 2022). Hence, the goal salience is the key determinant of sustained customer engagement which would lead to successful brand performance (Zaefarian et al., 2024). Therefore, following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Goal salience has a significant positive impact on customer engagement.

PERCEIVED USEFULNESS

Perceived usefulness has been defined as the extent a person considers adopting a certain technology can assist him or her to perform better (Davis, 1989). The technology utility and advantage aligned with the customer objectives and values further the adoption and use of it (Arghashi & Yuksel, 2022). Hence, the perceived usefulness means knowledge of a person on use of the technology in achieving his personal or organizational objectives and value addition (Berakon et al., 2023). Hence, technology adoption is much impacted by perceived usefulness (Park & Kim, 2023). An individual's affirmative thoughts towards the usefulness of a technology and subsequent adoption are impacted by performance growth, lessened effort for the performance, reduced expenses, and better functionality (Alsyouf et al., 2023). In the present study context, the paybacks of using social media technology to the customers are certain, so they engage themselves on social media platforms of brands according to their needs and wants (Alsyouf et al., 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Perceived usefulness has a significant positive impact on customer engagement.

PERCEIVED EASE OF USE

The perceived ease of use means user's observation of technology as easy and requiring little effort to use, which can enhance their brand engagement (Anifa & Sanaji, 2022). This factor has also proven to impact technology adoption and engagement with it significantly (Siagian et al., 2022). Various studies have considered it as the reason behind the adoption of new technologies because such easy-to-use technologies would enable them to complete their work with less effort (Alsyouf et al., 2023). This effort minimization evokes individuals and organisations towards technology adoption and engagement with it (Han et al., 2024; Yulianto et al., 2023). The useful technology, but complex in nature, would be less likely adopted (Rey-Moreno et al., 2023) hence it is recommended to make the technology as user-friendly and easy (Qu et al., 2023) which are the social media interaction platforms in today's world? Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Perceived ease of use has a significant positive impact on customer engagement.

BRAND PERFORMANCE

The term brand performance is related to business success in the form of sales, profitability, and production targets. Various financial ratios represent brand-related performances, which include profitability ratios, liquidity ratios, efficiency ratios and solvency (Lestari et al., 2024). Our research is focused on performance concerning sales, profitability, sales growth, market share growth, growth in profit and return on investment due to increased engagement of customers with the brands at digital/social media forums (Menguc et al., 2014; Sharabati et al., 2024). Various past studies have examined the impact of social media adoption on brand performance and firm performance both financial performance and non-financial performance (Alhamami et al., 2024; Singh & Chen, 2024). It has been established by various authors that social media is a vital tool for attaining business goals by capitalising on this technology. Apart from financial performance weighed through aforementioned measures, the capability to engage customers and retain them for

increasing sales, profit, and return on investment (Pfister & Lehmann, 2024). Whereas, the impact of customer engagement through social media and the subsequent impact on performance needs to be examined hence this study.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA (CESM)

Presently, customer engagement through digital technologies has gained much popularity due to its ability to converse and discuss online simultaneously in real time, and the opportunity for the firms to have brand advocacy by directly interacting with the customers (Liu, 2013). This makes them understand customer wants and assist in successful long-term policy making (Khattak & Yousaf, 2022). Customer engagement means the extent to which customers keep themselves busy and interact with the brand (Erwin et al., 2023). It entails the customer’s investment of resources, including time, effort and money, in communications with the brand. This brand engagement of customers can take place at numerous social media and digital platforms (Akdin et al., 2023). Customer engagement through social media is witnessed through repeated interactions at these platforms wherein the customers reflect their psychological, emotional, and physical state with respect to the brand (Palazón et al., 2015). Herein, the consumers can express their opinions and impact the branding strategy (Samarah et al., 2022). The creative interactive forum of social media allows both way communication between consumers and organizations, which is of significant value for firms so they adopt it essentially for promotion and customer relationships (Hamzah & Johari, 2023). The possibilities of emoji’s in Likes, comments, and shares reflects users state of engagement with the brand (Pandrianto & Sukendro, 2018). The customer engagement value is of much significance because it earns customer satisfaction and loyalty which result in long term success of the businesses and performance. Therefore, following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Customer engagement has a significant positive impact on Brand Performance.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Based on above hypotheses, following figure 2.0 is the research framework of the study.

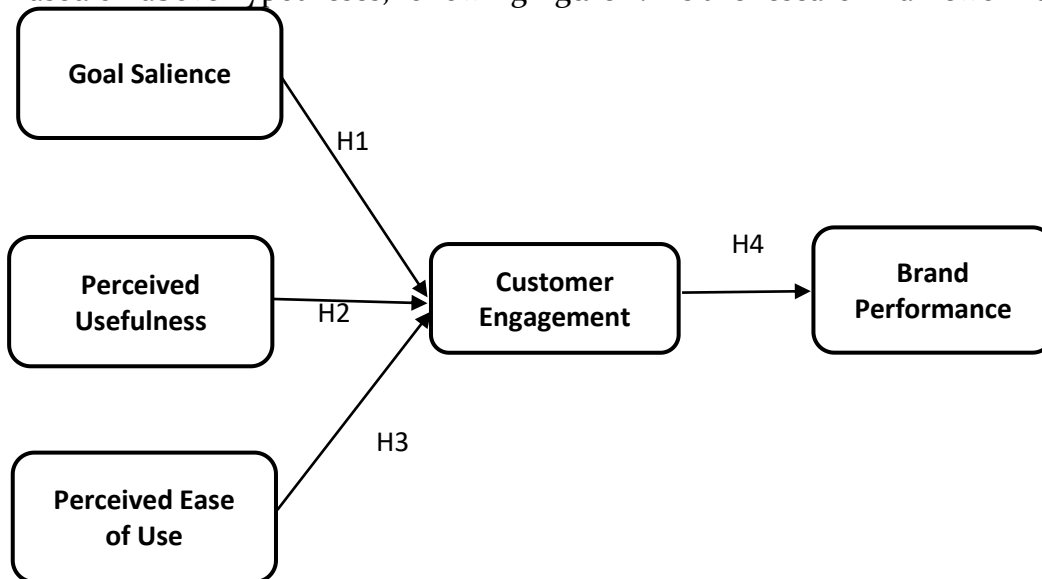


FIGURE 2.0 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research method is used in this study through survey conducted as per a self-administered questionnaire. Scales and items of the study have been adapted from available past studies and developed therein so validity and reliability of the study

outcomes is ensured. A five point likert scale is used in this study ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agreed (5). Smart PLS 4.0 is employed in this research for data analyses through structural equation modeling and hypotheses testing. Population of the study are users of social media platforms who have shopped online. A sample size of 200 respondents is considered as adequate for reliable results of statistical testing through Smart PLS. The sample size is thus selected as 220 study respondents because a total of 22 x questions constituted the study questionnaire and a method of 10 times multiple of a total number of study questionnaire is used for selection of the sample size. In order to achieve the required number of study responses a total of 270 questionnaires were distributed among the study respondents. A total of 239 study questionnaire were received back and after quality check 220 complete responses were selected for final analysis. The respondents were approached through convenient sampling method applied after reaching out social media pages of famous brands in Pakistan. Hence, the convenient sampling method most suited this research study. It is a cross sectional study and primary data will be collected from study respondents directly.

Whereas, the study variables of goal salience, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, customer engagement through social media platforms and brand related performance have been measured by adopting scale items from past studies. The study items of perceived usefulness have been adapted from the study of Davis, (1989) and Liu (2013) have used these items in his study. Following table describe these items.

Sr. No. Items Statements

- PU1: Using social media technology is beneficial for communication.
 PU2: I think social media technology will be useful in communication.
 PU3: The social media technology has no benefit for in communication.
-

Likewise, the scale items of perceived ease of use is adapted from the study of Davis, (1989). These items are described in the following table.

Sr. No. Items Statements

- PEU1: It will be easy through social media to do what I want at online brand communities.
 PEU2: It is impossible to use social media without expert help.
 PEU3: Learning to operate social media will be easy for me
-

The scale items of customer engagement have been adapted from the study of (Donaldson et al., 2022) which are described below.

Sr. No. Items Statements

- CE1: I typically become absorbed while I am interacting on social media brand communities that challenges my abilities
 CE2: I lose track of time while interacting on social media brand communities if it is enjoyable.
 CE3: When I am using something I enjoy like social media brand communities, I forget everything else around me.
-

Scale for goal salience have been adapted from (Pike et al., 2010) which is described below.

Sr. No. Items Statements

- GS1: The goal of interacting with brands on social media to receive the best value is important to me.
 GS2: Key aspects of my brand value goals often come to mind quickly.
-

GS3: This goal of seeking value through brand interaction on social media is highly prominent in my thoughts.

GS4: When I consider my needs, this goal of obtaining value from brand interactions on social media immediately comes to mind.

GS5: I have seen a lot of promoting advertising about this brand during my interaction with it on social media which frequently reminds me of my goal to seek its value.

Scale for brand related performance have been adapted from study of (Menguc et al., 2014) which was developed for performance of new product and has been adapted to the present study concept for brand performance. The scale is described as follows.

Sr. no. Items Statements

- BP1: Sales are relative to the competitor brands.
- BP2: Profitability is relative to competitor brands.
- BP3: Sales growth are relative to competitor brands
- BP4: Market share growth is relative to competitor brands
- BP5: Growth in profit is relative to competitor brands.
- BP6: Return-on-investment relative to competitors

SAMPLE OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

Non probability Convenience sampling method is used for present study and study respondents or population of the study were selected from social media platforms who were users of social media for at least two years and have experienced online shopping. A sample size of 200 respondents is considered as adequate for reliable results of statistical testing through Smart PLS. The sample size is selected as 220 study respondents because a total of 22 x questions constituted the study questionnaire and a method of 10 times multiple of a total number of study questionnaire is used for selection of the sample size. In order to assess their brand engagement and brand performance, these respondents were selected on basis of convenience sampling method from promotional social media pages of famous brands.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis is done through smart PLS version 4 for structural equation modeling. The reliability and validity of outcomes was assessed in the following.

TABLE 4.1 CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Performance	0.707	0.713	0.838	0.634
Customer Engagement on Social Media	0.802	0.813	0.883	0.717
Goal Salience	0.873	0.875	0.908	0.663
Perceived Usefulness	0.801	0.842	0.881	0.712
Perceived ease of Use	0.852	0.866	0.900	0.692

TABLE 4.2 HETEROTRAIT-MONOTRAIT RATIO (HTMT) - MATRIX

	Brand Performance	Customer Engagement on Social Media	Goal Salience	Perceived Usefulness	Perceived ease of Use
Brand Performance					
Customer Engagement on Social Media	0.777				
Goal Salience	0.542	0.873			
Perceived Usefulness	0.594	0.919	0.686		
Perceived ease of Use	0.764	0.721	0.647	0.612	

As described in the statistics tables above, the values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and Average variance extracted (AVE) show adequate results as per the recommended threshold values so study results have no issue of reliability and validity.

FIGURE 4.1 STRUCTURAL MODEL

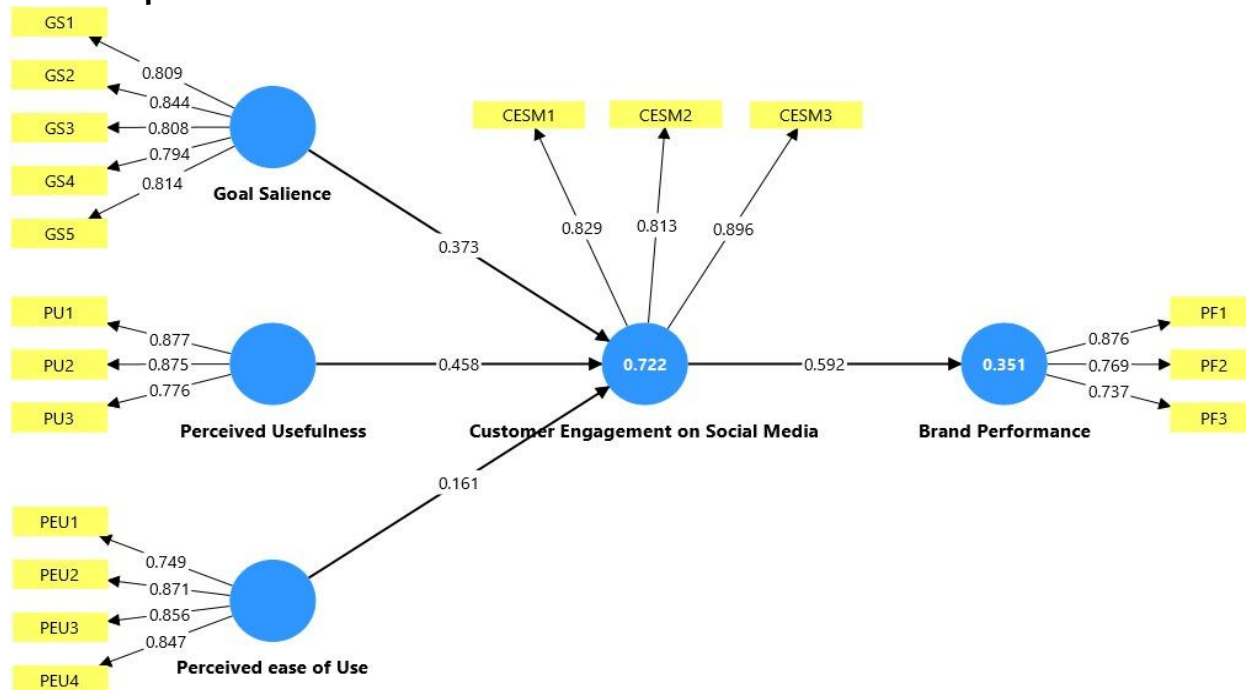


Figure 4.1 signifies pictorial description of the study results. Whereas, path coefficients and according pictorial representation are mentioned in the following.

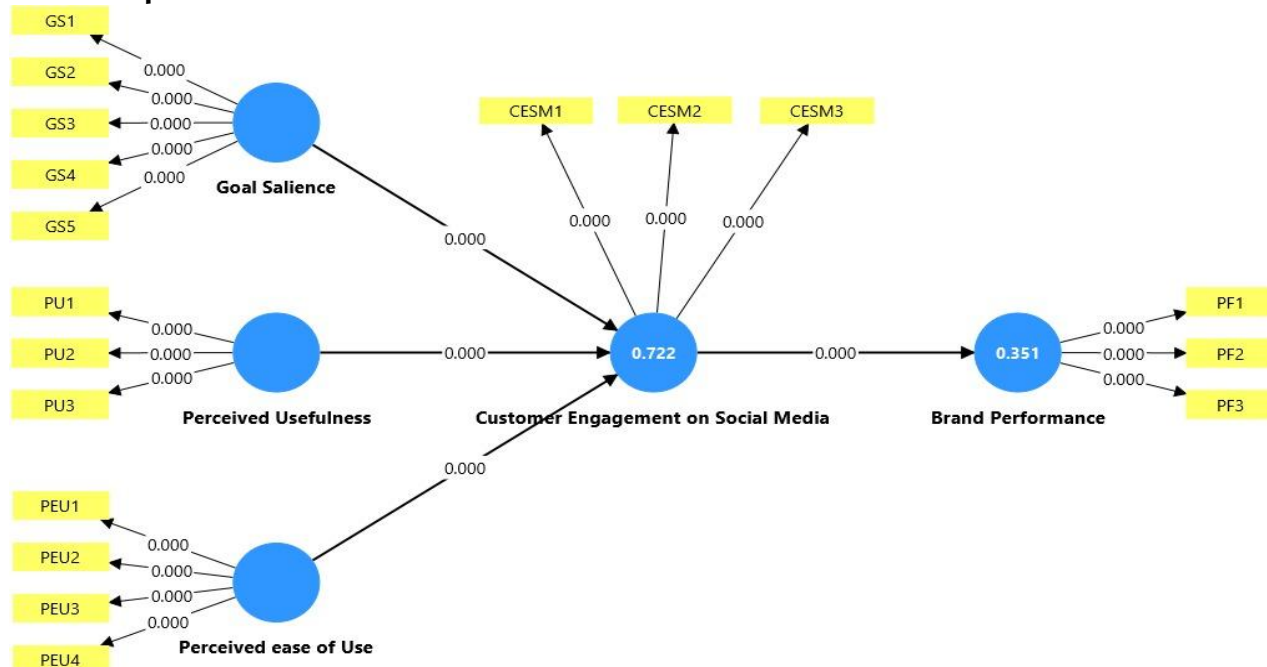
TABLE 4.3 PATH COEFFICIENTS (MEAN, STDEV, T VALUES, P VALUES)

	Beta	Sample mean	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
H1: Goal Salience -> Customer Engagement on Social Media	0.373	0.375	0.048	7.817	0.000
H2: Perceived Usefulness -> Customer Engagement on Social Media	0.458	0.458	0.051	8.995	0.000
H3: Perceived ease of Use -> Customer Engagement on Social Media	0.161	0.160	0.039	4.098	0.000

Customer Engagement on Social Media ->					
H4: Brand Performance	0.592	0.593	0.038	15.618	0.000

Outcomes in table 4.2 related to path coefficient reflect that all the study hypotheses (H1 to H4) have been established and the proposed relationships are found significant. Therefore, it is established that factors like perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and goal salience enhance customer engagement which improves brand performance. The businesses and industry needs to consider these antecedents for desired brand related performance.

FIGURE 4.2 STRUCTURAL MODEL



DISCUSSIONS

As per the results described above, it has been proven that the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, and goal salience of customers have a significant direct effect on Customer Engagement, which has proven to influence our company’s performance. The aforementioned study outcomes are in line with the findings of existing research studies and related to the TAM model findings (Nadeem et al., 2021; Soleimani et al., 2022). The present study targeted the extension of the TAM2 model by inclusion constructs of goal salience and brand performance, which have been established. It is related to TAM2 because the goal salience is related to constructs like job relevance, output quality and goal oriented thinking. This has been proven as per the recommendations suggested by (Cantone et al., 2022; Lin & Wu, 2023). Likewise, the present study has provided evidence to the suggested actual behavior and outcomes relationships by Busalim et al. (2023) in shape of brand performance and engagement. The present study has established that customer engagement through perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and goal salience has impacted brand performance.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed above the classical TAM model constructs of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use along with goal salience construct have proven to impact customer engagement

through social media platforms significantly. Resultantly engaged customers give opportunity to the firms / businesses to perform better. The study has important theoretical and practical implications. theoretically, the study has extended the TAM₂ model successfully by incorporating constructs like goal salience and brand performance. Past studies have evidently support the study outcomes. The study has established and build upon the recommendation of actual behavioral outcomes as was recommended by Busalim et al. (2023). Above in view, it is concluded that the businesses and marketing managers needs to concentrate on improving the customer goal alignment with the digital and social media campaigns to gain better customer engagement. Hence it is suggested that customer's engagement and motivation to interact at social media platforms benefit the strategy makers of a firm in the long run. In this way businesses and industry are supported from this research who needs to engage customer and gain desirable customer behaviors for better business and brand performance. The research model can be improved through adding some mediating or moderation constructs like self-disclosure, gender specification or income level for assessment of results accordingly.

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