

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

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Abstract

Technological development and growth of the skincare market in Pakistan have been enabled by the social media networking sites in the country. The research question is to determine whether social media marketing has the effect of increasing consumer intention to purchase Somethinc and the level of trust in the brand. Compelling content and phenomenal aesthetic are what Somethinc is known to be better at in comparison to its competitors. To this effect, the descriptive research design was used to collect data on 170 respondents who are current or potential customers of Somethinc. SmartPLS was used to subject the data to structural equation modelling (SEM). Results show that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand trust and purchase intention to consumers. Although digital marketing cannot force a buyer to make a purchase, it is very useful in creating a relationship between the consumers and the brand hence building trust and reliability. Skincare brands should thus develop campaigns that provide a sense of need of good digital marketing presence that can create trust, engagement, and buying behaviour among the consumers.

Keywords: Social media marketing, brand trust, purchase intention, skincare industry.

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1. Introduction

The blistering development of the social media platforms has emerged as a marketing booster in different markets, including the skincare market. Social media helps companies to directly interact with consumers, spread product information easily and maintain the attention of the audience. The social media marketing has become a crucial instrument that greatly influences the consumer behaviour (Mason et al., 2021) as consumers are more inclined to use digital media to get information and assess products.

The skincare market has been following those changes, and people want to find reviews and tutorials on Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. According to a recent report by Consultancy.Asia (2023), the skincare market in Indonesia is projected to increase by 5 percent in the coming four years due to the improved access of consumers to information about the benefits of skincare and the ability to find a personalized solution. Social media marketing enables open flow of information, excellent story telling and regular communication, thus, controlling brand relationships. Social media aesthetic content can raise the brand awareness and purchase intention well (Kusumasondjaja, 2019). Somethinc is a fast-growing skincare company with a consumer-oriented approach due to digital advertising, already having a strong reputation, and a strong social network. The brand builds trust and confidence through the use of influencers, educational content, and engagement features, including quizzes and interactive content. Although social media marketing is a visible phenomenon and there are moments, when it raises controversy, its role cannot be ignored. The additional study of the factors affecting consumer choices is justified.

2.2 Brand trust and Social Media Marketing

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory states that the emotions and behavior of people depend on the external stimuli to a great extent. Communication causes an individual to react to external stimuli and the SOR framework explains behavioural reactions of a particular stimulus. Human behaviour occurs differently in moods, which include happy, sad, angry, etc. Marketing communication therefore must know how people learn and assimilate information. The SOR model suggests that beliefs or behaviour of a person can be changed by the powerful and focused communication.

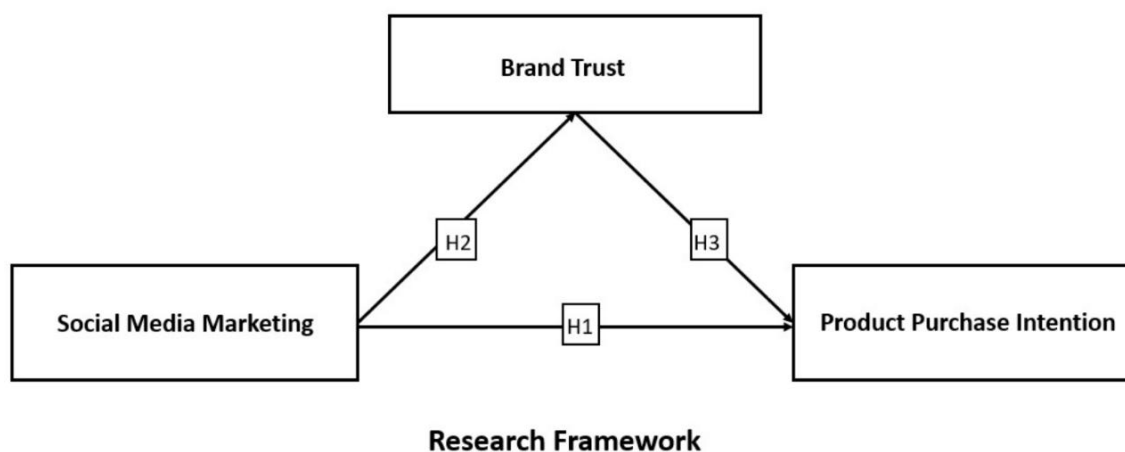
Segmentation of consumer behaviour can help a marketer understand the consumer preferences and behaviour especially in digital marketing and e-commerce. Any consumer, who has indulged in other activities like internet surfing, is exposed to advertising in one way or another. The SOR model outlines Stimulus, Organism, and Response: the stimulus is a set of marketing actions and advertisement messages that can potentially affect perception; the organism includes internal processes of thinkers, feelers, and doers (Sutjiadi and Prasetya, 2021); the response implies the actions consumers report after being influenced which can be interest in a product or indifference toward it. The framework helps marketers to develop powerful and focused messages, which manipulate consumer behaviour. Social media marketing has always been shown to have an effect on consumer response. According to Dulek and Aydin (2020), social media marketing strengthens e-WOM and brand loyalty in terms of positive brand sentiment, but it does not necessarily increase purchase intention. This highlights brand trust as an important mediating variable. The results of the study conducted by Somethinc skincare indicate that social media marketing increases brand trust, which in turn triggers customer interest. Social media marketing opens a direct contact with the consumers, which helps to develop trust and to enhance the experiences. Haudi et al. (2022), Salhab et al. (2023), and Ali and Naushad (2023) state that customer trust increases the effectiveness of digital marketing. Armawan et al. (2023), Sanny et al. (2020), and Savitri et al.

(2022) studies help to understand the interconnection between social media marketing and purchase intention. In general, consumer purchase intention significantly depends on the social media marketing of a brand through trust.

2.3 Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Environmental psychology will offer a model of how ambient factors like colour, sound, light, and layout are responded to (Glanzer, 1958; Eroglu et al., 2001; Tractinsky and Lowengart, 2007). The social factors determine the approach or avoidance decisions of the individuals. The behaviour is influenced by emotional states which consist of three main dimensions. Originally used in retail settings, such as music, light, smells, and design influencing mood, this view has moved to the web-based shopping. Consumer behaviour is also influenced by the site design, navigation and interactive.

According to cross-cultural research, social media marketing has a positive influence on consumer interactions within different cultures (Gautam and Sharma, 2017; Upadhyay et al., 2022). Brand trust is the most important in the skincare sector; customers have a greater purchase intention when they trust the brand. An example is an established brand that a consumer used before, which can contribute to the further usage. The research is helpful to marketers and researchers as it helps to better understand the digital consumers and emphasize on trust-building as one of the factors that can trigger buying behavior via social media marketing.



Hypotheses

- H1: Social media marketing has a strong influence on brand trust.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between brand trust and purchase intention.
- H3: Purchase intention and social media marketing have a mediating effect on brand trust.

3. Methodology

The research methodology is a quantitative research to respond to the research question and address the hypotheses. Quantitative techniques use numerical values to mathematical assessment of relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study examines how social media marketing influences purchase intention and the mediating role of brand trust on the consumer.

The data needed was gathered by use of online questionnaires to the respondents who are current or prospective consumers of Somethinc in Pakistan. As Handayani (2020) states, Somethinc is an internationally known beauty brand that is favoured by young people because

of its strong online image. Purposive sampling was used to make sure that the individuals who participated in the study met the criteria of the study, that is, the individuals aged between 18 and 40 who have or are planning to purchase Somethinc products. This is a group that often employs social media and online marketing.

The sample size was in compliance with the SEM rules, as at least eight times are required according to the number of indicators per respondent (Hair et al., 2019). Having 17 indicators, the sample size of 85 to 170 respondents suffices. A total of 170 complete and valid responses were obtained as the final sample. The data were analysed with the help of SmartPLS and both direct and indirect effects were estimated. The analysis particularly discussed the mediating role of brand trust between the social media marketing and consumer buying intention with the identification of important digital variables.

4. Results

The findings are based on the responses of the respondents. The demography of the participants, such as sex, age, occupation, and income is presented, making them anonymous. A well-designed questionnaire among the target population resulted in the collection of 170 filled questionnaires of people who use Somethinc products or are willing to buy them. The data set helped to analyze the relationship between social media advertising, brand trust, and purchase intention.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	29	17.1
	Female	141	82.9
Age	18–22 Years	46	27.1
	23–27 Years	86	50.6
	28–32 Years	34	20.0
	33–40 Years	4	2.4
Education / Occupation	Student	39	12.4
	College Student	55	32.4
	Private Employee	61	35.9
	Civil Servant	17	10.0
	Housewife	12	7.1
	Other	4	2.4
Income (IDR)	1,000,000 – 2,000,000	26	15.3
	2,000,001 – 3,000,000	59	34.7
	3,000,001 – 4,000,000	65	38.2
	4,000,001 – 5,000,000	11	6.5
	> 5,000,000	9	5.3

Chairina et al. (2023) note that the user base of Somethinc is dominated by female users: 82.9 percent of respondents were female. Most of them were young adults (2327) (50.6) 1822 (27.1) supported by findings that Gen Z starts skincare routines at an early age (ZAP, 2019). The respondents consisted primarily of college students (32.4 per cent) or private workers (35.9 per cent), which demonstrates a highly educated and socially media-sensitive group. The income data consisted of concentrating in the 3,000,0014,000,000 IDR range, which is congruent with the middle-income category. The results show that educated young females



form the core Somethinc target market, which supports the reason behind the study of social media marketing, brand trust, and purchase intention in this group.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Result (Revised)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Social Media Marketing	170	3.00	6.00	4.98	0.544
Brand Trust	170	2.75	6.00	5.23	0.513
Product Purchase Intention	170	3.25	6.00	5.35	0.533
Valid N (listwise)	170				

Table 2 indicates that the social media marketing variable has the lowest possible level of 3.00 and the highest level of 6.00 with a mean of 4.98 which indicates positive consumer perception of the social media activities. Recent studies support the idea that social media marketing improves consumer interaction and buying behavior (Dived et al., 2023) and builds trust and sustainability of a relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The average brand trust was 5.23, above the mean, and this represents confident consumers. The purchase intention and loyalty heavily rely on trust (Dived et al., 2023). The overall purchase intention was 5.35 (3.25-6.00), which indicated a high level of demand of Somethinc. Social media marketing has been shown to create a consumer experience, which has a positive impact on purchase intention (Dong et al., 2021). Overall, purchase intention

and brand trust become key factors of consumer behaviour, in this case.

**Table 3. Convergent Validity Evaluation Results
Using Outer Loadings (Revised)**

Indicator	Brand Trust	Purchase Intention	Social Media Marketing
BT1	0.703		
BT2	0.591		
BT3	0.614		
BT4	0.684		
PPI1		0.841	
PPI2		0.718	
PPI3		0.603	
PPI4		0.611	
SMM1			0.757
SMM2			0.649
SMM3			0.658
SMM4			0.700
SMM5			0.665

Table 3 will prove that all the indicator loadings were above 0.5, which meets the requirements of convergent validity. The values of the outer loading that are more than 0.5 also confirm the measurement of each variable.

**Table 4. AVE, Composite Reliability, Cronbach’s
Alpha and R-Square (Revised)**

Variable	AVE	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Trust	0.542	0.751	0.744	—
Purchase Intention	0.549	0.742	0.790	0.397
Social Media Marketing	0.547	0.788	0.817	—

Reliability and validity statistics are shown in table 4. Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that a value of AVE that is above 0.5 is a sign of convergent validity. Convergent validity is established by AVEs of 0.542, 0.549 and 0.547 of Trust, Purchase Intention and Social Media Marketing respectively. The values of Cronbach Alpha (0.742-0.788) and composite reliability (0.744-0.817) exceed the 0.70 mark (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2019). According to Hair et al. (2019), the adjusted R² in purchase intention is 0.397, which proves to have medium



explanatory power. On balance, both measurement model and structural model are reliable and valid and the structural model has acceptable predictive strength.

Table 5 measures multicollinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF). The values of VIF are less than 5, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019), which implies that there are no issues of multicollinearity.

Q² was used to assess the predictive relevance of the model, which is similar to R² in regression. The Q² of 0.686 implies that 68.6 percent of the variance can be explained by the model, and the rest can be attributed to other factors (Hair et al., 2019). In this way, the model has a high predictive relevance and general fit.

Table 5. Collinearity Statistics (VIF) – Revised

Indicator	VIF
BT1	1.228
BT2	1.155
BT3	1.107
BT4	1.099
PPI1	1.957
PPI2	1.771
PPI3	1.134
PPI4	1.161
SMM1	1.670
SMM2	1.286
SMM3	1.461
SMM4	1.367
SMM5	1.260

Table 6. T-Statistics and P-Values (Revised)

Variable	Hypothesis	T-Statistics (O/STERR)	P-Values
H1	Social Media Marketing → Purchase Intention	1.347	0.179
H2	Social Media Marketing → Brand Trust	5.225	0.000
H3	Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	5.615	0.000
H4	Social Media Marketing → Purchase Intention (Indirect via Brand Trust)	4.982	0.000

The bootstrapping processes in SmartPLS produced t -statistics in contrast with the critical value of 1.96 used to test a hypothesis. Bootstrapping was used to deal with non-normality. The t -statistic should be higher than 1.96 and the p-value should be lower than 0.05 to determine significance (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 6 shows the results of hypothesis testing. H1 was not accepted: the t-value of 1.34 (p=0.17) was less than the value. Therefore, the purchase intention is not directly affected by social media marketing. On the other hand, the t -statistic value of 5.225 (p value less than 0.05) is in favor of H2, which means that social media marketing has a positive influence on brand trust. Moreover, the t -statistic of 5.615 (p < 0.05) confirms H3 and shows that brand trust has a positive effect on the purchase intention and mediates the relationship between the social media marketing and the purchase intention.

5. Discussion

The results indicate that the use of social media marketing can not necessarily produce buying intentions. Though the social media content created by Somethinc is interesting and educative, the content does not force users to purchase after exposure. The article notes that consumers are initially looking to compare and evaluate the information through social media, and the majority of them are not making an immediate purchase (Dulek and Aydin, 2020; Sutrisno and Parso, 2023).

Brand loyalty can be developed by social media marketing. Customers will be more inclined to believe the brand that conveys clear, genuine, interactive content, interacts through influencer recommendations and requests peer reviews. Trust-building elements reduce the perceived risk and uncertainty and create positive brand attitudes (Kwon et al., 2021; Sohaib and Han, 2023). One of the positive effects of improved brand trust is stronger intention to buy because consumers have increased commitment to those brands they trust (Nartea et al., 2020; Armawan et al., 2023). The findings are that the companies are advised to focus on digital marketing approaches based on trust and not only promotion. According to Nielsen data, relatable and authentic brands on social media are likely to turn online interaction into real buying.

6. Conclusion

The current research aimed at establishing how social media marketing influences the purchase intention of Somethinc and to test brand trust as the mediating variable. The information gathered through 170 respondents and examined with the help of SmartPLS proves that there is no direct and significant impact of social media marketing on the purchase intention. However, it is also a successful way of creating brand trust and thus positively impacting the purchase intentions of consumers. Therefore, the promotions that are conducted via social media will not necessarily lead to the appearance of sales, but they play

the role of developing the trust that is necessary to produce the purchase intention (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Dived et al., 2023).

According to Bluey et al., the attention of Somethinc and similar brands should be paid to transparency, consistency and interaction via social media to improve consumer trust. Previous studies show that trust developed in the course of online communication leads to the establishment of long-term relationships that have a positive impact on decision making (Saudi et al., 2022; Ali and Nausea, 2023). Academically, this research adds literature to prove the mediating role of brand trust between social media marketing and purchase intent.

The study has weaknesses despite these contributions. The aim of one skincare brand can restrict the generalisability of the findings. Other critical factors like price, quality of products and customer satisfaction were not addressed. Further, the cross-sectional design does not allow studying behaviour variability through time. Other mediating or moderating variables such as customer satisfaction, online reviews, or influencer marketing could be used in future studies to help explain purchase intention. In depth longitudinal studies or multi-brand analyses would provide deeper understanding of the dynamics of digital marketing.

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