



Social Media & Socialization Agents Influence on Consumer's Purchasing Behavior

Rida Nasim Butt ^{1*}  | Noshina Saleem ^{2*} 

Abstract

Social media is an important tool that has gained importance among researchers and marketers. People communicate with friends and family and collect and search information about brands through this platform. This research has analyzed the influence of social media sites and socialization agents on consumer purchasing behavior. The researcher applied social learning theory as a theoretical framework to the current research. Data was collected through convenient sampling with 400 sample sizes and respondents were from various leading universities of Lahore. The quantitative method with a survey method questionnaire tool has been used with an already-built scale from previous literature. The study explored the socialization agents that impact consumers' purchase intentions to buy certain brands compared to social media. Pearson correlation was used to analyze and draw inferences from data. The study's findings revealed that social media usage is not correlated with participant's purchasing behavior. However, socialization agents influenced their purchasing behavior moderately. The current study can help consumers, marketing groups, and different brands for making new strategies in marketing to influence consumption behavior of people.

Keywords: *Social media, socialization agents (Peer group, family, advertisement, Facebook communities/pages), consumer purchasing behavior.*

Author's Affiliation:


Institution: Principal International Learning Hub School ¹ | University of the Punjab²

Country: Pakistan

Corresponding Author's Email: *saimahanif2015@yahoo.com

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is used by customers to communicate, connect, meet new people, chat, look for work, and shop online. Businesses that are engaged in e-commerce gain from simultaneously marketing their goods on several social media channels, directly influencing customers via these channels, and creating their offering by delivering a “shop now” button (Sharma & Bhatt, 2018).

People now connect with their friends and family in different ways as a result of the social media revolution. Businesses all over the world are thinking about how they might use these platforms to sell to and draw in customers (A. A. Alalwan et al., 2016). Social media is a crucial aspect of our lives in the modern world, and we utilize it for different purposes. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube are being used by consumers more and more to communicate with brands and with each other (A. Alalwan et al., 2017).

In contemporary times, social media is significant in facilitating human activities. For instance, individuals across the globe utilize social media to enhance their ability to communicate with one another. In addition, social media is used by people for marketing. The field of marketing is believed to have been around for thousands of years, and shopping has evolved into a millennium-long way of life. Prior to the increase in fame of social media marketing, individuals would sell their wares at shops or businesses. It indicates that in the past, goods and services were sold through real establishments or stores (Mari et al., 2023).

According to G. Moschis & Churchill, (1978) “socialization agent is individual or organization which have the maximum time interaction with the learner” (p. 600). Parents, peers, schools, or mass media are the agents of consumer socialization. Adults learn how to consume related products and services from parents at different ages. Television as a type of media appears to be significant agent for learning in young people and teaches them to give social meaning to products. Adolescent’s exposure to television and advertisements lead them to be learn the expressive or affective features of consumption. Peers as an agent contribute in learn the consumption elements and it shows the social pressure. Adolescents become responsive of products & services in the market and purchasing process through interaction with peer groups regarding consumption matters (Moschis G. P., 1978, p. 605). School teaches expertise and education about good citizenship and economic independence (p. 601).

In the present study, the researcher has considered how social media influences consumer purchasing behavior. Socialization agent is the second terminology that has been used in current research in which the researcher has taken family, peer group, and family members are the significant consumer purchasing groups in the culture that influence the most as the primary reference group. Family orientation comprises parents, siblings, spouses and kids. People obtain the most orientation from family like religion, politics, sense of love, and personal determination. If the purchaser has less interaction with family their influence on behavior can be found significantly different and the parents who live with grown children have a

substantial influence (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Families, particularly parents, are significant sources of information for consumers looking for specific products (Shim & Koh, 1997)⁹⁵⁴. Customers' interactions with their parents taught them the fundamentals of consumer behavior. According to Mascarenhas & Higby, (1993) research, parents can have an impact on their children's consumption habits by allowing them to watch and emulate their consumption patterns, engaging with them during their consumption, and helping in consuming time. G. Moschis & Churchill, (1978) also discovered that children who communicate with their parents about their consumption habits are more likely to be financially responsible.

responsible.

The consumption of television can impact the actions of consumers. According to O'Guinn & Shrum, (1997), it is due to the information offered was centered on the physical world, which frequently influenced the viewer's frame of reference for their purchases. Similarly, marketers want to reach out to the intended population with television advertisements. According to Macdonald & Sharp, (2002), television advertising is still the most popular media and has the power to influence consumer behavior. The growing influence that brands have on individuals' everyday lives and their ability to leave a lasting impression, the relationship between the advertisement and the brand is now crucial (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005).

Consumer purchasing behavior is the third terminology that has been used in current research. Consumer behavior patterns that impact and control consumers' decision-making about the acquisition of needs (i.e., goods, concepts, and services) and the resulting satisfaction are referred to as consumer decision-making (Du Plessis, 1990). It's crucial to consider how peers' opinions affect consumers' intellectual growth. Peer pressure is predicted to have a significant effect on consumer behavior, particularly for female customers. Behavior can be influenced by peers in both positive and bad ways (Esser, 2014). Social media users are progressively in control of customer attitudes about products in digital areas, and this has influenced on offline opinion formation (Smith, 2009). Consumer buying decisions are influenced by peers, parents, social media, and advertising that's the reason this research is significant to know the change in buying behavior. Current research explains how social media and different socialization agents have an impact on consumer buying behavior.

Significance of the Study

Social media is used to advertise different brands, companies, and products. Users of social media believe that it is a credible source of information and people trust their friends, and people don't buy a particular product if others have said it is not good. People utilize social media to in touch with friends and family. Social media offers a way for customers to learn about products from many sources and acquire info they need. Besides, social media networks let consumers explore product assessments and other user feedback which shared by real users. People's buying habits are altered by social media, which also increases accessibility and

convenience for online purchases (Zhang, 2023).

Socialization is the process in which individuals get affected by different influences throughout life and these influences consist of different agencies of socialization like institutions or other structured situations in which socialization takes place. Socialization agencies like family, peer groups, schools, and mass media are important in modern societies and affect everyone powerfully. Mass media is the basic and considered to be the most important institution of any society as it progresses and leads towards the development of society. Likewise, social media is a new way of communication, and with its rapid development society's living trends are changing. Many researchers are conducting studies in this new media domain, this research specifically identifying the social media influence on consumer purchasing behavior and how the consumers get influence by their socialization agencies. Different universities all over the world are conducting studies so that they come to know how consumers interact and are influenced by using social media. This research helped understand the impact of social media and socialization agents on consumer purchasing behavior.

Objectives of the Study

To study the social media impact on consumer purchase intentions.

To identify the socialization agent's effects on individuals to buy certain brands (Family, peers, television & social media advertisement, Facebook pages/communities, and person's life stages).

To illuminate that consumers, buy those products that are bought by socialization agents through social media like family, friends, peer groups, and other factors that change the consumer buying intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Saha & Sahney, (2021) researched the association among socialization agents, social media communication, online shopping experience, and pre-purchase search. Their study aimed to examine the relationships among pre-purchase information search (PS) dimensions such as pattern (reliance on utilitarian value-RUV) and direction (reliance on information sources-RIS), as well as the moderating effects of the online shopping experience (OSE) and their impact on the behavior of socialization agents (family communication (FC), peer communication (PC), TV advertising-TV Advs., and social media communication (SMC)) for purchasing. The results support the significant impact of the PS dimensions (RIS and RUV) on the purchasing behavior of socialization agents, with RIS having the greatest effect on SMC. Except for the association between RIS and FC, the moderated effects of OSE between PS dimensions and socialization agents are found to be significant. For consumers with high OSE and lower OSE, the straight impacts of the RIS and RUV on the socialization agents are larger and lower, respectively.

According to Rana & Arora, (2022)marketing practitioners have been constantly using Web 2.0 based social media applications to advertise their products and conduct various marketing activities. The fundamental purpose of the study is to

discover the antecedents that lead to the acceptance of social media as an effective advertising vehicle. Thus, the current study is the first to employ the technology acceptance model (TAM, Social media's development as an interactive tool has gained widespread acceptance in our daily lives. Marketing professionals frequently utilize Web-based social media apps to advertise their brands and carry out numerous advertising happenings because of a growing number of active users and ease of usage. The research goal was to find the aspects that contribute to social media being accepted as a powerful tool for advertising. To understand consumers' behavioral intentions in the situation of social media advertisements, the study was the first to apply the technology acceptance model (TAM). 348 people who completed a self-administered questionnaire responded. The study's findings show that all of the predictors perceived utility, perceived ease of use, privacy concerns, and peer influence are legitimate antecedents that affect how consumers feel about social media marketing and their desire to make purchases. Thus, the study provides marketing professionals with a thorough framework and useful guidelines for creating successful social media marketing strategies.

Altaf, (2014) explored the social media influence on individuals purchasing behavior by consuming descriptive research with the collection of primary and secondary sources of data. The study revealed consumer follow an active role in info search on social media compared to traditional media. Çiçek & Erdogmus, (2012) research has shown that loyalty towards the brand is the major element of research for marketers; they used different means to build the trust-building of their consumers like social media. The purpose of the research was to categorize the impact of social media promotion on the brand faithfulness of consumers. This research scope consists of those customers who follow any brand on social media. By structuring questionnaires data was composed using multiple regression analysis. The study concluded that brand loyalty of the consumers is positively affected when the brand offers beneficial campaigns, relevant content, and popular content, appears on various platforms, and offer applications on social media. Consumers desire to share music, technological-related stuff, and comic content on social media platforms.

Social media platform specifically Blogs and YouTube is used by Pakistani consumers and they prefer to use Google and Facebook social networks for their own decisions. Bilal et al., (2014) examine the role of social media and social networks on individuals' decision-making in the garment sector. Results showed that online social media has a countless impact on the buying decisions of users as consumers use online social networks and social media to gain information about particular brands or products. This research indicates that a company's presence on social media is mandatory to increase a profitable market share and competitive edge. Word-of-mouth and content credibility are the two elements that influence Pakistani customers' purchasing behavior; social media is proven to have a partially significant impact on these factors. Pakistani customers under 40 exhibit more sophisticated purchasing patterns, which should be taken into account by business owners for their upcoming marketing plans (Palalic et al., 2020).

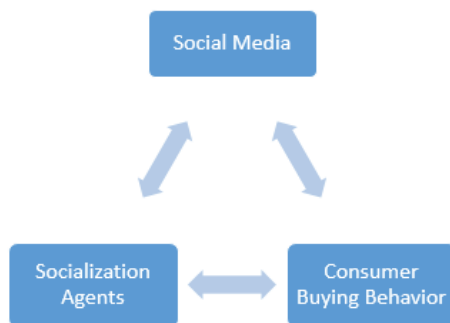
Socialization agents are the most significant sources which convey attitudes,

motivations, norms, or behavior to the learner. Many type of research indicate that peers, parents, mass media, stores, schools, products, and brands themselves are persuasive sources of information and learning, and these are called socialization (Xie, 2013; Dotson & Hyatt, 2005)media exposure, and identification with brand names in the usa along with an updated overview of the major findings in the consumer socialization literature, and to then provide an empirical explanation of how the consumer socialization process works with today's children.

Design/ methodology/approach– Based on a survey administered to 663 children, a factor analysis was performed on items designed to measure young people's attitudes toward, and interaction with, the various consumer socialization agents and marketplace factors, including shopping and media usage behavior.

Findings– Five major consumer socialization influence factors emerged: irrational social influence, importance of television, familial influence, shopping importance, and brand importance; and were used as dependent variables in subsequent analyses looking at the effects of a number of independent variables. Results indicate that the relative impacts of the various consumer socialization influence factors do vary according to the child's gender, age, amount of spending money available, amount of television viewing, and how he/she spends time after school.

Originality/ value– These results are important to practitioners because they show that the traditional consumer socialization models may apply differently to children with different demographics and lifestyle characteristics.”



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research purpose is to find the social media and socialization agent's influence on consumer buying behavior. For this study quantitative approach and survey method have been used. The population for this study is undergraduate, and postgraduate students and teachers of the University of the Punjab, Kinnaird College, and Lahore College for Women University. These made the main source of data and information about the present study. The researcher applied the social learning theory to test the hypothesis. This is descriptive research in which the researcher is checking the relationship between social and socialization agents with consumer purchasing behavior. For this research, the universe is the population of Pakistan

and the sample is selected from leading universities of Lahore. Non-probability convenience sampling has been applied in this research and 400 respondents were selected as a sample size. Researchers selected this sampling because they could easily get a sample that is cheap and quick. In array to gather information related to social media impact and socialization agents' influence on consumer buying behavior, a survey instrument was adapted from the literature of this study. The data hence collected was analyzed using the SPSS software and the frequency of responses for the different response categories and the correlation analysis was done to understand and elicit the differences between the relationship of social media and socialization agent's influence on consumer purchasing behavior.

Research Questions

The present study has these research questions:

RQ1. To what level do social media and socialization agents influence on purchasing behavior of consumers?

RQ2. How do social media-based brand communities impact the customer?

RQ3. Is there any influence of social media advertisements to change the attitude of customers towards the products and their desire to buy them?

RQ4. How do the family, peers, and different stages in life influence the decision-making process and buying intention?

Hypothesis

Below is the expected hypothesis of the current research:

H1. There is a relationship between Social Media Usage and Consumer Purchasing Behavior.

H2. Socialization Agents Influence is related to Consumer Purchasing Behavior.

Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion

After allocating scores to the response, the data was quantified. Then the researcher presented and analyzed the data. Data was analyzed by using PASW statistics (SPSS version 17). By default, the probability level (i.e. Alpha or p) for approving or disapproving a research hypothesis was taken as .05, which means the researcher is 95% sure that the relationship or difference between variables, if any, exists is real, or there only 5% chances that such relationship or difference is by chance. The sample for this study comprised 400 participants from three leading universities of Lahore to explore the relationship between social media usage & socialization agents' impact on the purchasing behavior of the participants. Out of 400 participants, 300 (60%) were taken from The University of the Punjab, Lahore, and 100 (20%) each from Lahore School of Economics, and Lahore College for Women University. Out of 300 participants taken from The University of the Punjab, Lahore, 75 participants were taken from each department including Mass Communication, Business Administration, Sociology, and, Political Science. Similarly, out of 100 participants from the Lahore School of Economics, all participants were taken from the Business Administration department. Out of 100 participants from LCWU, 25 participants were taken from each including Mass Communication, Business

Administration, Sociology, and, Political Science. Overall, the sample comprised 100 participants each from the Mass Communication, Sociology, and, Political Science departments, and 200 from the Business Administration departments. Education level considered from B.S Hons, Masters, M.Phil. and PhD students of leading universities of Lahore. 64 % of the students were from BS hons as shown in the graph too, whereas 25 % from masters, 8.8 % from M.Phil., and 1.2 % from PhD students. Most of the respondents were unmarried by marital status. Age of the participants were 18 to 25, 26 to 30, 31 to 35, and 36 onward, the graph showed that most of the respondents were from 18 to 25 age level.

The relationship between social media usage, consumer purchasing behavior, and the Socialization Agent's Influence was examined using Pearson product-moment correlation. Preliminary analyses were done to confirm that no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity.

There was no statistically significant relationship between Social Media Usage ($M=3.20$, $SD=.68$) and Consumer Purchasing Behavior ($M=13.96$, $SD=2.39$) of the respondents [$r=.05$, $n=500$, $p=.275$]. Thus our hypothesis H1 was not approved (see Table).

Whereas, Social Media Usage ($M=3.20$, $SD=.68$) was positively related to Advertising as Socialization Agents Influence ($M=21.92$, $SD=4.19$) among respondents [$r=.11$, $n=400$, $p=.01$]. However, this relationship is weak/small.

Table Pearson Correlation (r) between Social Media Usage, Socialization Agents Influence (Advertising, Facebook Communities, Family, Peers, Different Life Stages) and Consumer Purchasing Behavior (N=400)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Social Media Usage	3.20	.68	-						
2. Advertising as a Socialization Agent	21.92	4.19	.114*	-					
3. Facebook Community Pages as Socialization Agent	12.76	2.67	.080	.520**	-				
4. Family Influence as Socialization Agent	10.93	2.20	.056	.070	.135**	-			
5. Peers Influence as Socialization Agent	17.40	3.28	.113*	.395**	.469**	.223**	-		
6. Different Life Stages Influence as Socialization agent	6.83	1.70	.005	.225**	.208**	.182**	.352**	-	
7. Consumers Purchasing Behavior	13.96	2.39	.049	.360**	.296**	.224**	.404**	.354**	-

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Likewise, Consumer Purchasing Behavior ($M=13.96$, $SD=2.39$) was positively related to Advertising as Socialization Agents Influence ($M=21.92$, $SD=4.19$) among the respondents [$r=.36$, $n=500$, $p=.000$] and this relationship is medium. The coefficient of determination (R^2) predicted that the two variables shared 12.96% of the variance. Thus our hypothesis H2 was approved which means that if the influence of socialization agents on participants increases, their purchasing behavior is also positively influenced.

Whereas, Consumer Purchasing behavior ($M=13.96$, $SD=2.39$) was positively related to Facebook pages and communities as socialization agents influence

($M=12.76$, $SD=2.67$) among respondents [$r=.11$, $n=400$. $p=.01$]. However, this relationship is moderate. Consumer purchasing behavior ($M=13.96$, $SD=2.39$) was positively related to family as a socialization agent influence ($M=10.93$, $SD=2.20$) among respondents [$r=.11$, $n=400$. $p=.01$] and this relationship is moderate.

Consumer purchasing behavior ($M=13.96$, $SD=2.39$) was positively related to peers as socialization agents influence ($M=17.40$, $SD=3.28$) among respondents [$r=.11$, $n=400$. $p=.01$]. However, this relationship is moderate. Consumer purchasing behavior ($M=13.96$, $SD=2.39$) was positively related to different life stages as socialization agents influence ($M=6.83$, $SD=1.70$) among respondents [$r=.11$, $n=400$. $p=.01$]. However, this relationship is moderate.

Discussion

The underlying discussion was carried out in the light of findings concerning objectives, literature review, research questions, and hypothesis. The basic research question was as follows: “How do social media and socialization agents influence on purchasing behavior of consumers?” The application of empirical data combined with literature shows that social media has been a significant part of every individual in this era.

Present research indicated that social media usage has no influence on consumer purchasing behavior but Lee, (2013) in his research explained consumers use social media before buying products and they attend, process, and choose the information via this platform. Research concluded that individuals play an active role in social media to search for information compared to other mass media but exposure to information is selective and subjective during information. This research indicated the modifications that social media has conveyed to customers in their decision-making in each phase have been allowed now social media is considered an influential instrument for receiving certain information but on the other side, mass media creates awareness of certain concessions or elevations. Also, A. Alalwan et al., (2017) identified that social media have an important role in advertising by influencing customer trust and providing credibility. By using social media sites customers can access detailed product information, and view and read recommendations which may build trust. Social media brand companies permit consumers to engage with them and enhance their credibility and trust and facilitate purchasing decisions (Gaber et al., 2019; Appel et al., 2020). Whereas the present research findings indicated that social media does not influence consumers. Socialization agents like family, peers, advertising, and different life stages play crucial role in life. According to Panaackal et al., (2024)2024, family influences brand preferences in early childhood. Mavale & Soni, (2018) implied in their research how peers affect young adults preparing for college when they make decisions. The goal of the research has been to gain insight into how peer pressure affects purchasing decisions, peer influence when purchasing branded goods versus unbranded goods, and peer pressure at the product/service category level. It was discovered that young adults frequently purchase branded goods as a result of peer pressure. The majority of young adults interact with their peers frequently. The bulk of youth are impacted by the brands and products that their peer choose to utilize.

In particular, they had a lot of peer pressure when purchasing products in the areas of technology, entertainment, apparel, and cars. As far as this research is concerned consumers also take their peer's influence and the Facebook communities/pages as socialization agents.

According to Rahman et al., (2021) and Dorado, (2011) research, Facebook marketing posts have positive and negative influence on consumer intentions of buying products. Individuals can have access to all the information about the company and brand & they can view more diversity of products. But as everybody can express their views about the product, these Facebook pages can also result in negative publicity and make the consumer refrain from buying the product. This research examined how companies use social media how audiences respond and how companies in social media effectively reach their specific audiences. This research revealed that people likes Facebook pages because different brands provide special deals and promotions, and they like to take updates from that particular product or brand. Some people like to take reviews of their peers about that product before they go for purchase

Advertising as a socialization agent influences consumer purchasing behavior as indicated by the findings of the present research where as Bishnoi & Sharma, (2009) conducted research whose aim was either the housing circumstantial of customers has any impact on their purchasing decisions because of the impact of television advertisements. The study concluded that rural children like television advertising more than urban people. Television ads have increased engagement in the selection of products and purchases, and they help buy new products. On the other side, urban children don't buy products advertised on TV that they don't need. The study also revealed that male teenagers buying behavior are more inclined toward television ads compared to female teens. Likewise, the present research also concluded that social media and television ads as socialization agents have a noteworthy influence on customer buying behavior. Current research determined that family has an influence on consumer buying behavior likewise previous research also showed the same but with a different methodology and population. Fan & Li, (2010) researched children's purchasing behavior and concluded that children take TV ads as a significant information source for new products and develop trust in interpersonal information sources for example their parents are supposed to be the trustworthy information source about their learning about new food items.

However, usage pattern of social media is different according to different people of society and different ages. The respondents were asked in a questionnaire how often they use social media sites like Facebook, most of the respondents said they use social media most of the time and some of the time which shows the usage pattern of social media. The advent of technology and the availability of the internet to every student university has made it easy to access social media sites compared to older ones. Consumer purchasing behavior is the dependent variable and has a strong positive relation with the socialization agents (Advertising, Family, Peers, different life stages, and Facebook community pages). Present research indicated that social media usage does not influence consumer purchasing behavior. Social agents have a strong influence on the purchasing behavior of university students,

they prefer to take family and peers' advice for purchasing any product. It helps consumers to make purchasing decisions regarding any product or brand. Students find Facebook communities and advertising attractive tools to seek information and they easily get influenced by them in their purchasing behavior. In the present research social learning theory as the theoretical framework was adapted which shows that consumers paid attention to the socialization agents that influence purchasing behavior but hand, social media usage doesn't have any impact on consumers regarding purchasing behavior. Students paid attention to their family, advertising, and peers' recommendations for their consuming behavior and satisfied their needs.

Recommendations

The present research comprised the sample of the leading university of Lahore and students were the respondents; further studies could be a comparative analysis of private vs Government Universities. Specific gender can be analyzed by cross-age group comparison. Future studies can be conducted on online purchasing behavior as online marketing is emerging as a new tool for shopping.

Comparative analysis of mainstream media and social media influence on the purchasing decisions of consumers can be conducted in future research. Researchers can take a more diverse sample by using stratified sampling for the comparison of social media marketing and its effects on purchasing behavior. Moreover, researchers can take socialization agents' influence on purchasing decisions about Socioeconomic status, lifestyle, family structure, and class can be the most important factor.

Limitations

The limitations faced during the process of research are as follows:

The unplanned and excessive load shedding of the electricity was a major hurdle in the research. The time provided for conducting research was limited. The respondents of the universities were not motivated to fill in the research questionnaire. As we conducted convenient sampling it is not possible to generalize the findings to all the universities in Pakistan.

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