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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED USEFULNESS & SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TO STIMULATE CONSUMER'S IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF TRUST

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of online shopping and social media has created a number of new opportunities to understand impulse buying behaviour. Therefore, this research assessed the effects of perceived usefulness and social media marketing on impulse buying behaviour. The study also examined the mediating effect of online trust. A quantitative research design was employed in the present study, and data were collected from Pakistani students who are involved in online shopping. Data were collected from 350 students using simple random sampling, of which 281 valid responses were obtained. The study used SmartPLS 4 for the analysis of the collected data. The results revealed that online trust has a positive effect on impulse buying behaviour. Furthermore, perceived usefulness and social media marketing also showed positive effects on online trust. Additionally, online trust mediates the relationships between perceived usefulness, social media marketing, and impulse buying behaviour. These results highlight the importance of social media marketing in enhancing spontaneous purchasing decisions among students.

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Introduction

The marketing practices and the way customers interact with organizations is rapidly advanced as a result of digital technologies. Since last few decades, e-commerce has emerged as vital platform of marketing that facilities informational transactions and financial transaction between consumers and business through internet-based technologies (Rosário & Raimundo, 2021). It helps the firms to sell and promote the products, develop long term relationships and communicate with customers beyond traditional marketplace boundaries. With the continuous evolution and development of online marketing, e-commerce has emerged as important innovative approach that combines real-time consumer interaction, product demonstrations, and entertainment to create shopping experience that is engaging (Zwass, 2003). By using live streaming, marketers have the opportunity to influence purchase decisions of the customers, provide recommendations, respond to customer inquiroes, and present product features. As a result of these interactive marketing activities, customers are encouraged to make spontaneous decisions. As a result, impulse buying behavior is regarded as important area of research in presence of digital marketing. Impulse buying is regarded as spontaneous and immediated purchasing decision that takes place in response to marketing stimuli. This decision takes place without prior planning or extensive evaluation (Lakshmi et al., 2020).

Online trust has become important with the increasing popularity of digital shopping platforms and ecommerce (Kenney & Curry, 2000). It is because customers are often making decisions regarding purchasing without examining products or interacting directly with sellers. Online trust minimizes uncertainty and perceived risk among customers that is associated with digital transactions (Zhu, 2004). Customers as a result of this uncertainty are encouraged to get engage in purchasing activities, make online payments, and share personal information. Also, online trust plays a vital role in shaping customer purchase intentions, attitudes, and long term relationships with online businesses (Ebrahim, 2020). Furthermore, consistent service delivery, effective complaint handling, recommendations, and positive customer reviews strengthen perception of customers. Online trust also contributes to positive word of mouth communication, repurchase intentions, loyalty, and customer satisfaction. In highly competitive marketplace, organizations should prioritize customer relationship management, service reliability, data protection, and transparency to maintain and establish confidence of customers (Heidari, Zarei, Daneshfar, & Dokhanian, 2023).

Perceived usefulness is referred as level to which a user is of the view that using a certain technology, online platform, or system will improve performance, It will make activities more effective and provide more benefits (Dhingra & Mudgal, 2019). In context of digital services and online shopping, perceived usefulness shows belief of customers that using a certain online platform will provide easy access to services and products, save time, make shopping easy and help in making better purchasing decisions. Perceived usefulness also contributes to develop customer satisfaction as customers are likely to be satisfied when online platform meet their expectations and provide practical benefits. Presently, organizations should improve functionality of the online platform, service efficiency, and information quality to enhance perceived usefulness (Saadé, 2007).

The development of social networking platforms and digital technologies has significantly changed marketing practices and consumer behavior at the global level (Dwivedi, Kapoor, & Chen, 2015). Social media marketing is considered as platform of modern business strategies that allows organization to promote their services and products through YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Social media marketing provides business with opportunities to communicate, share, and create content with their target customers (Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016). Opposite to traditional methods of marketing is such as trade shows, magazines, newspapers, and television, social media helps organizations to interact directly with all stakeholders and receive feedback immediately. Through regular communication, promotional campaigns, online advertisements, and engaging contents, organizations can maintain relationships with existing customers and attract new customers as well. Moreover, effective social media marketing can improve customer loyalty, strengthen customer relationships, encourage positive word of mouth, and increase brand awareness (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013). So, social media marketing is considered as vital tool for businesses to attract customers, achieve sustainable competitive advantage, and build strong market presence. Primary aim of current research is to investigate the impact of Perceived Usefulness, social media marketing, on impulse buying behavior with the mediating role of customer trust.

Literature Review

Impulse Buying Behavior

Impulse buying behavior is the situation where customers make decisions on the spot to purchase any product. In other words, decision to buy the product is done moments before actual purchase (Dittmar, 2001). Impulse buying takes place as result of psychological and emotional trigger which entices a customer to make on spot decision to purchase decision. In this case, customers are not involved in planning or research before purchasing the product that did not intend to purchase initially. Impulsive buying behavior is considered as sudden, unplanned, and closely linked to desires and emotions (excitement, and happiness) in the process of shopping. Impulsive buying behavior is stimulated usually during process of shopping, that is not affected by cognition, shopping enjoyment tendency, and culture (Harmancioglu, Zachary Finney, & Joseph, 2009). Whereas, it is effected by external factors such as shopping partner and shopping environment. In past, few scholars revealed that impulsice purchase behavior is effected by a number of conditions such as time, place, and economy. In context of online shopping, impulse buying behavior is common (Li, Huang, Dong, & Wang, 2024).

Online Trust and Impulse Buying Behavior

Scholars have discussed online trust as attitude of confident expectation in the online situation of risk that weakness of one will not be exploited (Beldad, De Jong, & Steehouder, 2010). Trust in the online seller in vital in B2C partnership for evaluation of all transactions. The buyer's belief that any e-business or service might be capable to rely on and fulfil its promise dealing with honesty is known as customer's online trust. The online trust has high impact in shaping if the individual leaves the online cart, buy the product or return to the e-marketplace (Beldad et al., 2010; Habib, Khoso, &

Javed, 2022). Since the emergence of different platforms of e-commerce, there is change in the trends of retain sector. Presently, online shopping is considered as important platform. Whereas, at the same time, because of space time separation and virtualization of online shopping, it is easy to create the asymmetry regarding product information, that later effect consumer though process, reduce the sense of trust, and improve risk of shopping. Trust, ease of use, and security impacts consumer behavior regarding impulsive purchase behavior (Adriansyah & Rahman, 2022).

Online trust plays key role to influence impulse buying behavior of customers in environment of digital shopping. When customers develop confidence in transaction security, payment systems, product information, and online sellers, they feel comfortable while making purchase decisions without consideration (Ek Styvén, Foster, & Wallström, 2017). Trust minimize uncertainties and perceived risks linked with transactions online, encouraging customers to make unplanned and spontaneous purchases. Moreover, customers who trust online shopping platforms are likely to respond positively to product recommendations, promotional campaigns, and attractive offers. As a result, online trust has positively effect impulsive buying behavior (Moreno & Pasco, 2022).

Hence the researchers would like to find out the following hypothesis:

H1: The greater is the customer online trust in the e-shopping, the more impulsively customer purchases.

Perceived Usefulness and Online Trust

Perceived usefulness is the level to which a person is opined that using a certain system will improve their job performance (Anaam, Haw, Palanichamy, Ali, & Azni, 2023). Whereas, perceived usefulness shows the level to which a person is opined that using online community will play key role to fulfil goals. Positive perception regarding perceived usefulness improves satisfaction of users with the platform of online community. Higher perceived value will enhance commitment and usage of online community. Past studies regarding e-commerce shows that perceived usefulness is the factor of continuous intention. Thus, perceived usefulness is expected to have direct impact on intention to continue to use the online platform. The website with higher level of usability can help and support the experience of consumer shopping and build the positive attention towards the website (Omar, Munir, Kaizan, Noranee, & Malik, 2019).

On the basis of technology by users, perceived usefulness becomes a strong influence on development of intention to use. Most of the internet users need to enjoy the products of existing marketplace and get more richness, so perceived usefulness is one the important factor that can develop interest among users. Moreover, buyer will visit website if they believe that these website can be beneficial for them. As a result, users trust to repurchase if they feel that using online sites can be beneficial for them. Users are trusted to rebuy if they feel that they will get benefits of using online services and products (Kashyap, Sahu, & Kumar, 2022). Scholars mentioned that perceived usefulness will have positive effect on customers trust (Aren, Güzel, Kabadayı, & Alpkan, 2013). Internet shoppers are always willing to get more productivity from any website, thus perceived

usefulness is one of the factor that leads to continuation of use (Tarakan, 2023). Scholars revealed that perceived usefulness have positive effect on customer trust (Lukito & Ikhsan, 2020).

Consistently with the literature, we hypothesize that

H2:Perceived usefulness significantly impacts customer trust.

Social media marketing and online trust

Literature has defined social media marketing as the usage of different social media channels to exchange, deliver, communicate and create offerings of products that have value for the organizational stakeholders (Irshad, Ahmad, & Malik, 2020). Social media marketing plays a key role to facilitate customers to amplify their voices at the global level. Social media is one of the platform for advertisers or marketers to respond, listen, discuss, and interact with users in timely and effective manner. Different social media systems like Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram are taken into consideration, while defining a virtual reality for the users. Social media websites can enhance trust among users by assuring transparency and privacy (Hashim, 2020). Through the activities of social media marketing, organizations can share updates about the services, product demonstrations, customer testimonials, promotional content, and product information. These activities help customers to become familiar with a certain product and gain confidence in its services and products. When organizations consistently provide tranperant, relevant, and accurate information through their social media accounts, it is likely that customers will perceive them as trustworthy and reliable (Irshad et al., 2020)

By using social media marketing, customers are converted into promoters and marketers. They distribute, manage, and create information related to services, products, and companies. A number of different studies assessed the relationship between social media marketing and trust in different sectors. This research has established association between social media marketing and trust of brand. Trust is one of the factor that create sales. Studies have revealed that social media marketing have positive effect on customer trust (Azhar, Husain, Hamid, & Rahman, 2023). Study revealed that social media marketing have positive effect on customer trust (Hashim, 2020).

Therefore, based on the literature, it is hypothesized that:

H3:Social media marketing significantly impact customer trust.

H4: Online trust mediates the path of perceived usefulness and Impulse buying behavior.

H5: Online trust mediates the path of social media marketing and impulse buying behavior.

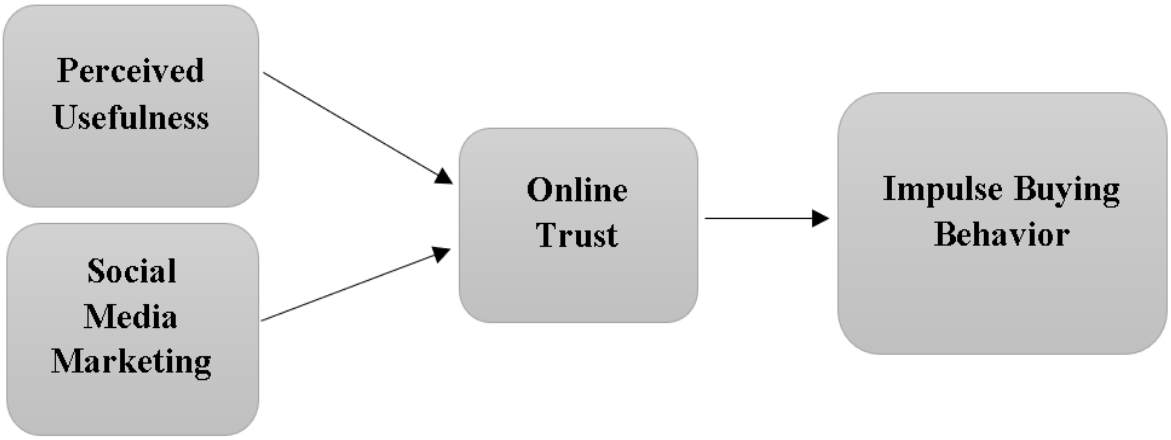


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Methodology

On the basis of literature review, potential framework and hypothesis are developed. The hypothesis of the study are mentioned in section above and framework is given in figure 1. Later, this study assessed the factors that enhance impulse buying behavior among university students of Pakistan. Quantitative research methodology was adopted for this purpose. Self administered questionnaire was developed to achieve goals of quantitative research. The items of questionnaire were adapted from the past studies. The items of impulse buying behavior were adapted from ((Badgaiyan, Verma, & Dixit, 2016), items of social media marketing were adapted from (Varela-Neira, Dwivedi, & Camoiras-Rodriguez, 2023), items of online trust were adapted from (Corritore, Marble, Wiedenbeck, Kracher, & Chandran, 2005), and scale of perceived usefulness were adapted from (Doll, Hendrickson, & Deng, 1998). The questionnaire was developed in seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. Questionnaire was distributed among students who are involved in online buying. Study distributed questionnaire among 350 students using simple random sampling. Study received 281 usable questionnaires from the respondents. These questionnaires were further analysed using smart PLS 4.

Results

Analysis of the study begins with demographic analysis. In terms of gender, 68.24% of respondents were female and remaining were male. From the perspective of marital status, 91.08% students were single and remaining were married. Later, this study used Smart PLS 4 for the analysis of proposed hypothesis. The software of Smart PLS is based on SEM technique. It is one of second generation method of data analysis that is used commonly for analysis of business and social sciences.

Table 1: Factor loading

	IBB	OT	PU	SMM
IBB1	0.964			
IBB2	0.975			
IBB3	0.757			
IBB4	0.936			
OT1		0.693		
OT2		0.892		
OT3		0.903		
OT4		0.746		
PU1			0.545	
PU2			0.838	
PU3			0.628	
PU4			0.705	
PU5			0.850	
SMM1				0.757
SMM2				0.869
SMM3				0.903
SMM4				0.777

Measurement model is the 1st step of analysis through Smart PLS that begins with factor loading. As per (Hair, Gabriel, & Patel, 2014), the acceptable range of factor loading starts with 0.40. Table 1 shows that all figures of loading in Table 1 are more than 0.40, thus acceptable. Table 2 later shows the results of reliability and validity through CR and Cronbach Alpha. Acceptable range of both values start with 0.70. Table 2 shows that all values of these tests in this study are higher than 0.70. Study also evaluated results of AVE as given in table 2 which are higher than the threshold level of 0.50.

Table 2: Validity and Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
IBB	0.782	0.883	0.695
OT	0.825	0.885	0.662
PU	0.769	0.842	0.523
SMM	0.848	0.897	0.687

Table 3: HTMT approach

	IBB	OT	PU	SMM
IBB				
OT	0.773			
PU	0.681	0.694		
SMM	0.789	0.681	0.624	

Discriminant validity was examined at the later stage of measurement model as recommended by (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016). Using HTMT 0.90 approach based on recommendations of (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). As given in Table 3, all values of discriminant validity are lower than 0.90, thus acceptable. Table 4 shows the findings of coefficient of determination also known as R square.

Table 4: R square

	R-square
IBB	0.521
OT	0.870

Structural model analysis was the second stage of analysis using Smart PLS. Results showed that OT has positive effect on IBB with p=0.000, PU has significant effect on OT having p=0.000, and SMM also have significant effect on OT with p=0.000.

Table 5: Direct Results

	B	SD	T	P values
OT -> IBB	0.721	0.041	17.482	0.000
PU -> OT	0.275	0.032	8.615	0.000
SMM -> OT	0.690	0.033	21.062	0.000

Findings of mediating hypothesis are given in Table 6. Results showed that online trust mediates between PU and IBB with P=0.000, and OT mediates between SMM and IBB with P=0.000.

Table 6

	Beta	SD	T	P
PU -> OT -> IBB	0.198	0.025	8.060	0.000
SMM -> OT -> IBB	0.498	0.039	12.616	0.000

Discussion

The objective of the study was to assess the factors that can enhance impulse buying behavior among students of universities. Study analysed effect of online trust, social media marketing and perceived usefulness. Results showed that online trust have positive effect impulse buying behavior. Findings showed that online trust is one of the effective factor to develop impulse buying among students. Results suggests that students will make on spot purchasing when they percueve online shoppig platform is trustworthy, secure, and reliable. Online trust minimizes the perceived risk linked with online transactions, specifically issues regarding misuse of personal information, product quality, and payment security. Moreover, when students have trust on the online sellers, they feel more confident to make decisions of purchasing immediately without evaluation of product. Secure payment mechanisms, reliable customer reviews, transparent information about product and positive experience can strengthen trust of the customers.

Results also demonstrated that social media marketing has positive significant effect on online trust among university students of Pakistan. In other words, social media marketing plays key role to develop online trust among students of Pakistani universities. This association can be linked to the informative and interactive nature of social media platforms, that enable organizations to establish regular communication with students. With the help of transparent promotional activities, customer feedback, regular updates, and engaging content, brands can develop positive impression among students. Furthermore, students are likely to trust businesses operating online when they observe authentic customer experience, positive interactions on social media, and product demonstration. Responsive customers and consistent brand communication provide support to strengthen perception of reliability and credibility.

Findings also showed that perceived usefulness have positive effect on online trust for students of universities. The possible reason for this finding can be that when it is recognized by the students that online shopping platforms provide offer convenient access to the information about product, simplify procedures of purchasing, save time, and provide practical benefits, they are likely to gain confidence on these platforms. The availability of efficient online services, accurate product descriptions, and useful features enhances overall shopping experiences. Additionally, online platform that effectively fulfil the needs of students develop positive perception, that ultimately strengthen trust in online environments.

Study also confirmed mediating role of online trust between social media marketing, perceived usefulness and impulse buying behavior. Results confirms that online trust play the role of important psychological mechanism by which social media marketing and perceived usefulness influence impulse buying behavior. Useful online shopping features and social media marketing develop confidence among students regarding digital platforms. As a result, students get comfortable regarding purchasing decisions. Once student establish trust, students get less hesitant to make purchase on spot.

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