The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention Mediated by Brand Image and Brand Awareness

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This research explores the impact of Social Media Marketing. (SMM) on Purchase Intention (PI) and explores the mediating roles of Brand Awareness (BA) and Brand Image (BI)Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, the study analyzes these relationships within the Pakistani consumer market. The research assesses these relationships within the Pakistani consumer market. Findings indicate that while SMM does not have a direct effect on PI or BA, it significantly influences BI, which subsequently enhances PI. Additionally, BA is found to be a key determinant of PI, reinforcing its role in consumer decision-making. This research enhances theoretical and offers practical strategies for marketers to strengthen brand image and awareness through social media. Additionally, it highlights limitations and recommends future cross-cultural research to validate these findings further.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media has transformed business engagement with their customers. SM is an important platform for reaching a broad audience and boosting brand awareness. Social media penetration has increased into millions of people's lives attracting marketers' attention (Manzoor et al., 2020). It has transformed the engagement between businesses and customers. Overall, 4.2 billion people worldwide are using social media 7.8 billion (We Are Social, 2022), so it's hard for businesses to avoid the power of SMM's impact on customer behavior. SM provides significant benefits by allowing consumers to access information where they can share opinions about brands, interact with other users, produce content, and have a persuasive impact (Moghadam et al., 2021).

As globalization continues to expand, consumer purchase intentions (PI) have appeared as a crucial focus in marketing studies. Unlike traditional markets, where products can be touched and evaluated in person, and interact with products before buying (Ashraf & Iqbal, 2021). In shaping purchase intention, social media plays a crucial part in influencing consumers. Consistent and well-designed campaigns can stay at the top of the consumer's mind. Zeqiri et al. (2024) point out that in emerging markets, growing social media usage enhances engagement, ultimately boosting purchase likelihood. Pakistani consumers' buying behavior is found to have been partially significantly impacted due to social media (Palalic et al., 2020). Interactive and personalized content is a key element of effective SMM strategies, as it helps in consumer engagement and creates impactful brand experiences. Faisal and Ekawanto (2021) highlight that these approaches boost brand exposure, making products and services more influential during purchasing decisions. BA and BI strengthen the impact of SMM on PI. Awareness increases visibility and creates recognition, while brand image builds emotional trust and positive perceptions. Studies have suggested a positive brand image can enhance customer trust and increase the probability of making a purchase (Keller, 2016). Brand awareness creates a sense of reliability and familiarity, and both of these are important for driving purchase intention (Hutter et al., 2013).

This paper examines the connection between (SMM), brand image (BI), (BA), and (PI) Through strategic SMM initiatives, businesses can resonate, link with audiences, recognize their needs, and interests, and cater to their preferences, ultimately achieving long-term consumer behavior understanding and sustainable success. Further, Faisal and Ekawanto (2021) state that interactive and personalized social media strategies can build trust and influence customers' buying decisions. As a mediator, brand image and brand awareness both enable consumer recognition and collective perception of the brand, which is crucial for continued purchase intentions. Brand image plays an important role as a mediator that shapes how consumers perceive quality and loyalty. A strong brand image secures customer loyalty and attachment, making purchasing behavior easier (Efendioğlu & Durmaz, 2022).

Collectively, these findings reveal that SMM influences PI by increasing BA and creating BI, supporting decision-making for both global and Pakistani markets. Research shows that brands are now more likely to utilize the opportunity to boost purchase intention by using cultural and localized content on social media (Ali et al., 2017). Kazmi and Mehmood (2020) found that a positive brand image adds value, positively impacting consumer behaviors and

perceptions. Manzoor et al. (2020) further argue that SMM enables companies to expand their market share and increase PI among their customers.

1.1 Problem Statement

The purchase intention of a customer is a critical part of an organization's success, as it directly connects with customers purchasing its product or service (Yang & He, 2011; Supna et al., 2021). In the Pakistani context, SMM has a notable impact on shaping consumer PI (Toor et al., 2017).The rise of SMM has greatly influenced consumer behavior, leading to a major shift in the way customers deal with brands (Kumar et al., 2020). Thus, SMM has become an essential tool for businesses to increase brand recognition, enhance brand awareness, and gain encouragement in purchase intention (Hasan & Sohail, 2020). However, the connection between SMM and PI is complex, with crucial mediators like BI and BA (Harrigan et al., 2020). We still don't fully understand how BA and BI influence SMM as mediators in shaping purchase intention. Faisal and Ekawanto's (2021) research found that purchase intention is strongly associated with brand awareness and perceived value. Ali et al. (2017) suggest that Further research is required to investigate the mediating roles of brand awareness (BA) and brand image (BI).BA affects customers' recognition of a brand, which influences consumer preferences and increases customer willingness, also shaping the perception of customers toward the brand (Hameed et al., 2023).

1.2 Gap Analysis

Despite previous studies on the influence of SM on PI (Manzoor et al.2020)Jamil et al., 2022; Dastane, 2020), and how SMM influences customers' purchase decisions with the mediation role of BA (Ardiansyah & Sarwoko, 2020) and the role of SMM in shaping BI (Waworuntu et al., 2022), the influence of BI and brand image between SMM and PI remains unexplored.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of SMM on purchase intention

- To explore how brand image mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention.

- To examine how brand awareness mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the influence of SMM on PI?

2. What is the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention?

3. In what way does brand awareness act as a mediator between social media marketing and purchase intention?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research explores the role of SMM in shaping PI, which determines the success of business in the digital era. Marketers must enhance BI to align with evolving consumer preferences. Through SMM, businesses can leverage emotional appeal, customer feedback, and engagement strategies to influence purchasing decisions. By examining the mediating roles of BI and BA, this study provides insights into how SMM impacts PI through both direct and indirect variables. The findings will assist businesses in optimizing their social media strategies to enhance purchase intention. By selecting the Pakistani market as a case study, this research contributes to marketing literature by addressing a rapidly growing yet under-researched market. The study offers valuable theoretical and practical implications, helping businesses understand digital consumer behavior and improve marketing strategies.

Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework
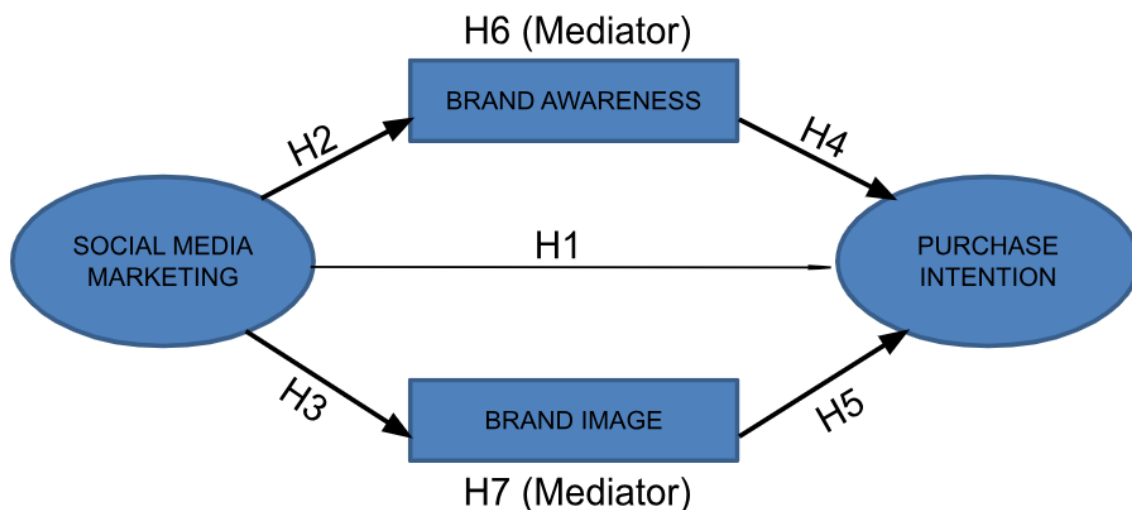
2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical framework

According to the SOR theory, an organism component has complex internal processes that occur within individuals when responding to a stimulus. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed this theory, which offers a comprehensive framework that has three pivotal elements: stimulus (S), organism (O), and response (R). This model highlights the critical role of consumer emotions to environmental stimuli in shaping behavioral outcomes. The term stimulus describes any external environmental element that affects an individual's cognitive and emotional state (Lin & Lo, 2016). The stimulus in this research refers to external marketing factors that shape consumer behavior, specifically social media marketing, which includes various tactics such as online advertising, engagement-driven interactions, content marketing, collaborations with influencers, and other marketing efforts on social media platforms. By capturing consumers' attention, these stimuli spark reactions that impact their purchasing decisions. Earlier findings have shown SMMAs can be considered external stimuli that

influence consumer behavior (Koay et al., 2020). Now, their brand image and brand awareness act as critical organismic mediators that intervene in the relationship between SMM stimuli on purchase intention (Desi Patmawati & Miswanto Miswanto, 2022). Brand Image and Brand Awareness are key elements between SMM stimuli and consumer responses. The response element of the SOR model represents the ultimate behavioral outcome. This study examines purchase intention as a response; it reflects the probability of consumers making a purchase decision.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

SMM encompasses the utilization of various online channels to generate and distribute content, as well as to promote products, services, or brands to engage with a wider audience. It is also used to achieve business objectives, such as increasing (BA), (BI), generating leads, and driving sales. According to Ebrahim (2020), SMM activities serve as a powerful advertising medium, comprising five important components:Engagement experiences,Two-way communication,Popularity,Personalization and word-of-mouth.. These elements collectively influence and shape consumer perceptions and engagement.

2.3 Brand Image

BI is the collection of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions That consumers link with a brand, forming a meaningful connection that influences their relationship with it. Brand image is influenced by multiple elements, such as the brand's visual identity, for example, brand logo, color theme or designs, and aesthetic, which shows an appealing look that helps to recognize a brand. Studies have suggested that a positive brand image can enhance customer trust and increase the probability of making a purchase (Keller, 2016)

2.4 Brand Awareness

BA is the level of consumer recognition and familiarity with a particular brand. BA can be enhanced by the high value of content and consistent visibility on social media. It shows that customers can recall a brand while making purchasing decisions. BA creates a sense of reliability and familiarity, and these both are important for driving PI (Hutter et al., 2013). For fostering a positive connection between SMM and PI, both brand image (BI) and brand awareness (BA) are crucial, as they contribute to building trust and emotional connections with customers.

2.5 Purchase Intention

PI describes a customer's mindset and intentional plan to buy a product or service. It is a precursor to actual buying behavior, shaped by influencing factors and past experiences. A strong intention serves as a strong predictor of actual buying behavior, whereas a low intention may result in indecision or abandonment. The probability of making a purchase is directly influenced by the positive impact of consumer perceived value and subjective display intention (Wang et al., 2023).

2.6 Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention

The connection between social media marketing and purchase intention has emerged as a prominent topic, gaining attention in numerous studies., indicating that SM has a Impactful

influence on consumer behavior. The enhanced engagement and trust between consumers and brands, driven by social media, significantly affect purchase decisions. An intention to buy is called the probability of buying a particular product by a customer. So, the high probability of making a purchase increases willingness (Liu et al., 2021). Purchase intention is an important factor in identifying consumer purchase behavior in previous studies (Jamil et al., 2021). Getting quality content from credible experts and similar sources on social networking platforms (SNPs) will influence purchase intention in a positive way (Onofrei et al., 2022). These studies highlight that SM is an important marketing tool. Strategies for consumer engagement, understanding consumer behavior, and SMM activities Can influence customers' intentions to buy.

H1: Social media marketing has a positive impact on purchase intention.

2.7 Social Media Marketing and Brand Awareness

Several studies have repeatedly highlighted the significant role of SMM in increasing BA. A study conducted in 2021,where vocational schools in Tangerang found that SMM among students positively affected BA and PI. This research highlights that the impact of SMM strategies can foster BA, ultimately impacting consumers' purchasing decisions. The strong influence of social media marketing on brand awareness is a crucial factor in shaping consumers' purchasing behaviors. Across various SM platforms, the importance of SMM has been emphasized for building sustained brand awareness (Nguyen et al., 2024). Studies in Pakistan's fashion industry reveal that brand awareness has been positively affected due to brand communication on social media in both user-generated and company-generated content (Amin, 2019). This result shows that SMM is essential for enhancing BA, not only in Pakistan but across the globe. By utilizing social media platforms, brands can interact with their potential customers and build stronger recognition and long-term loyalty.

H2: Social media marketing has a positive impact on brand awareness.

2.8 Social Media Marketing and Brand Image

The research emphasizes the contribution of Social media marketing influences brand image by enhancing brand engagement, cultivating trust, and developing emotional connections It underscores how customized and interactive content on social platforms improves how consumers perceive the brand (Ali & Naushad, 2023). 3. The effects of social media marketing strategies on purchase decisions, where brand image plays a mediating role, could improve online communication, adopting storytelling, focused marketing, or utilizing the distinct features of various social media platforms to strengthen brand perception (Akbari et al., 2024). Positive and well-established brand image helps a brand stand out from competitors, foster customer loyalty, and strengthen trust (Wijayanti & Nainggolan, 2023).

H3: Social media marketing has a positive impact on brand image.

2.9 Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention

A meta-analysis study identified a positive Connection between brand awareness and purchase intention, suggesting that increased brand awareness Increases the likelihood of making a purchase. According to Kerse (2023), A strong brand awareness level is considered

as a crucial foundation in the consumer buying journey. It significantly enhances the likelihood of a product or service being purchased. Another study confirmed a significant relationship between Brand awareness and PI, indicating that more brand awareness influences consumer consideration of particular products or services (Chen, 2024).

H4: Brand Awareness has a positive impact on Purchase intention.

2.10 Brand Image and Purchase Intention

Past studies have demonstrated that brand image has a significant impact in understanding consumer behavior and marketing. By leveraging the interactive environment of social media, brands engage with their audience, creating positive sentiment and a strong brand image. According to Mohammed Salem (2024), Brand image is essential in shaping purchase intentions, as it offers valuable insights for building a strong and recognizable brand in the beauty and personal care sector to drive consumer purchasing intentions. Consumers become more selective about their purchasing decisions along with the brand's reputation and image (Irawan & Suprapti, 2020). Additionally, a well-established brand image as a risk-reducing mechanism ultimately leads to increasing confidence in their purchasing decisions. These findings illustrate that brand awareness plays a large role in PI.

H5: Brand image has a positive impact on purchase intention.

2.11 Brand Awareness Mediates the Relationship Between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention

As a crucial component of modern marketing, social media marketing (SMM) has evolved to Considerably enhance brand awareness. Additionally, brand awareness serves as a mediator in the relationship between digital word-of-mouth and purchase intention. (Arifin & Syah, 2023). According to Angelyn and Kodrat (2021), brand awareness plays a mediating role by affecting the power of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions. One more study about the relationship between SMM, brand awareness, and PI shows that BI is found to be a critical mediator between purchase intention and social media marketing (Saputra & Wardana, 2023). The findings of Priatni et al.'s (2020) study showed that brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention. Aligning with these findings, brand awareness is a crucial factor in leveraging social media to increase consumer purchase interest.

H6: Brand awareness mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention.

2.12 Brand Image Mediates the Relationship Between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention

As a vital aspect of modern marketing, social media marketing (SMM) has become a powerful force in shaping brand image. A key finding of the study reveals that social media marketing impacts purchase intentions, with brand image perception fully mediating this relationship (Ali & Naushad, 2023). Multiple research studies indicate that social media marketing, product quality, and brand image play a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. And collective impact on consumer purchasing, with brand image playing an

important role as a mediating factor (Akbari et al., 2024). By conducting research for Kooka Coffee, Tauran et al. (2022) found that BI, as a mediator, significantly and positively affects purchasing decisions influenced by social media marketing.

H7: Brand image mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Choosing the correct research design is crucial for an expert investigation which encompasses a set of methods for the collection of data and analysis Explanatory research, utilizing descriptive surveys, aims to examine the more fundamental relationships between different variables. We have three main types of research designs: explanatory (causal), exploratory, and descriptive (Kolawole Akinjide Aramide, 2023). This approach is classified as a descriptive survey due to its ability to collect precise and clear data through quantitative methods such as questionnaires The study will examine the role of brand image and brand awareness as mediators between SMM and PI. Within the SMM industry, this method will evaluate how factors like engagement, and customer interaction influence consumers' purchase intentions and content visibility, providing insights into the effectiveness of SMM.

3.2 Research Approach

Research methodologies can be classified into two categories: deductive and inductive This research will apply the deductive method to test the proposed hypotheses The framework is grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory which will be used to analyze the relationships based on the theory. Because of this approach, the study aims to provide evidence-based conclusions and contribute theoretical insights to enhance the understanding of social media marketing.

3.3 Philosophies and Time Horizon

Research philosophies can be divided into four categories: interpretivism, positivism, realism, and pragmatism. We followed a positivist philosophy to analyze quantitative data In the context of the SMM industry it will be useful for measuring and quantifying key variables, including social media marketing, BI, BA, and PI It will also provide more dependable data and examine the relationships between these variables, helping to devise effective strategies that can strengthen marketing practices within the industry. Based on time horizons, observations are categorized into two types: Cross-sectional and Longitudinal. Data may be either qualitative or quantitative. The focus is on the timing of its collection. A cross-sectional method is used here because it is not practical to gather data multiple times.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Our study explored a convenience sampling method that was used to gather data from social media users and targeted active users with the ability to independently complete questionnaires. Data was collected from social media users who fit the study's criteria. The resulting sample of 400 participants was chosen based on their availability. After the

respondent's thorough briefing on the study's objectives, we collected the data. The distribution of 400 questionnaires resulted in 312 completed and usable questionnaires.

3.5 Scale and Measure

Our study adopts a questionnaire based on previous research. Table 1 presents an overview of key constructs, sources, and the specific items used in the study.

Table No 1: Scale and Measures

Construct	Source	Number of Items
Social Media Marketing	Smith et al. (2019)	20
Brand Image	Johnson and Lee (2020)	12
Brand Awareness	Brown (2018)	16
Purchase Intention	Taylor and Adams (2021)	11

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process in our research involved synthesizing and organizing data and facilitating statistical analysis. Smart PLS was chosen as the statistical analysis tool, aligning with the analysis, which includes correlations, measurement model assessment, structural model assessment, and the Sobel test for mediation.. Our research utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) with partial least squares (PLS) using SmartPLS 4, which offers advantages in mitigating the effects of data noise. Missing values, and skewness (Cassel et al.2000) the two-stage analytical approach facilitated the evaluation of measurement and structural models, Presenting a detailed perspective of the relationship between indicators and latent variables.

4 Results

The results section presents outlines of the key findings and results of this research. This chapter includes detailed statistical outputs, tables, and figures following APA 7th edition formatting to ensure clarity and proper presentation of data.

4.1 Factor Loading's

Table No 2: Factor Loadings – LOC

| Construct	Indicator	Loading
Brand Awareness	BA5	0.729
Brand Awareness	BA6	0.687
Brand Awareness	BA7	0.760
Brand Awareness	BA8	0.824
Brand Image	BI2	0.787
Brand Image	BI3	0.817
Brand Image	BI4	0.798
Purchase Intention	PI3	0.798
Purchase Intention	PI4	0.775
Social Media Marketing	SMM12	0.785

Table 2 illustrates the factor loading, which indicates the relationship between constructs and their corresponding indicator variables. The factor loadings exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70, demonstrating a strong relationship between the indicators and their constructs.

Table 3 summarizes the results of the reliability and convergent validity evaluation. The results suggest that the (AVE) values exceed 0.500, fulfilling the criteria for convergent validity (Wong, 2013).

Table No 3: Reliability and Validity of Measurement Model

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BA	0.773	0.789	0.816	0.597
BI	0.805	0.808	0.872	0.630
PI	0.807	0.810	0.873	0.633
SMM	0.884	0.887	0.909	0.589

Figure No 2: Measurement Model
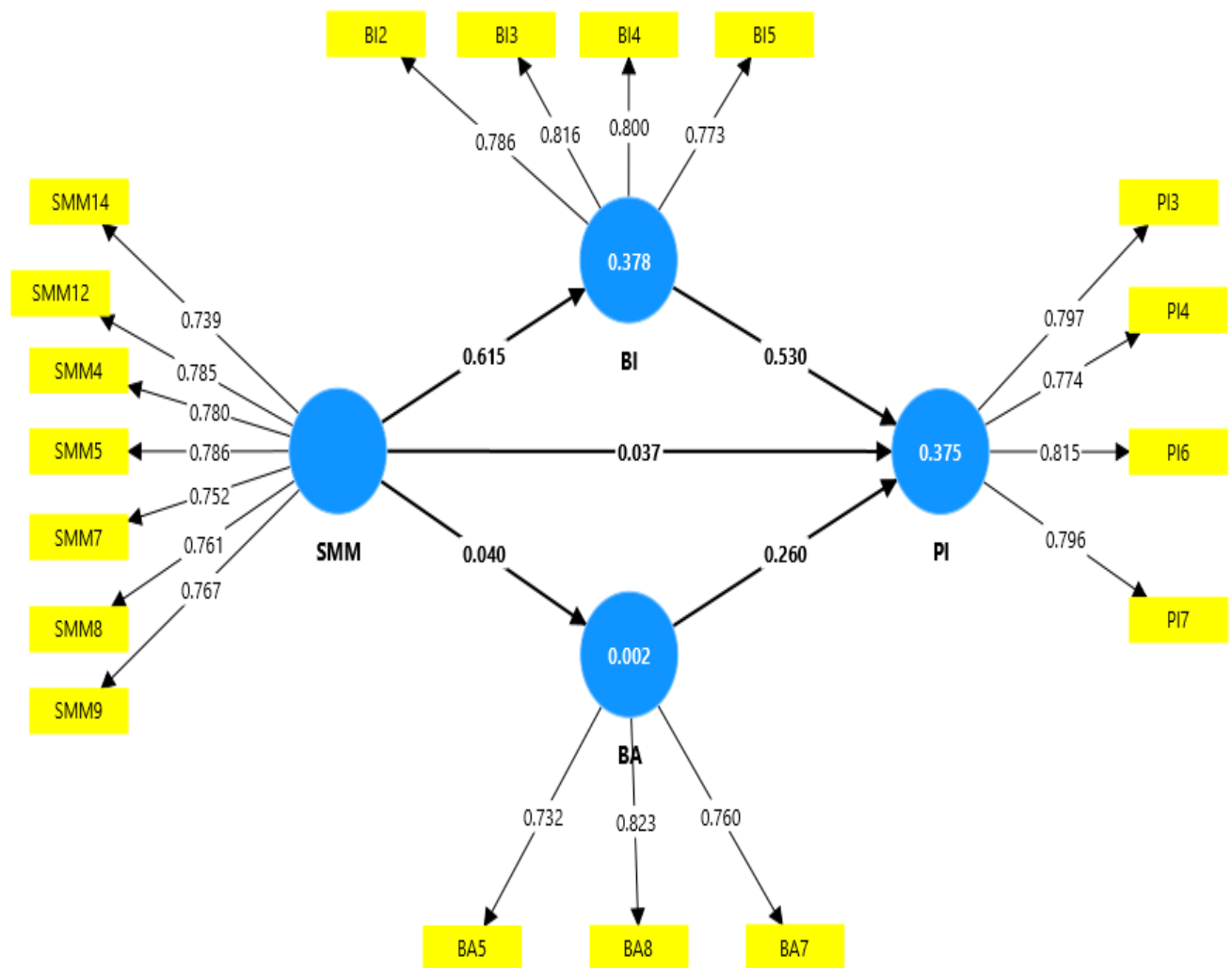
4.2 Discriminant Validity

To validate discriminant validity, using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria and cross-loading analysis. Tables 5 and 6 present the results, indicating that the latent variables are distinct and unique. The square root of AVE values exceeds Pearson correlation coefficients, and cross-loadings confirm the variables' uniqueness.

Table No 4: Discriminant Validity

	Brand Awareness	Brand Image	Purchase Intention	Social Media Marketing
Brand Awareness				
Brand Image	0.081			
Purchase Intention	0.332	0.682		
Social Media Marketing	0.101	0.719	0.436	

4.3 Structural Model Assessment

After assessing the measurement model, this study examined the path coefficients or significance, thereby providing insights into the structural relationships between the constructs (Hair et al., 2017). We used Smart PLS to assess the inner model and test our hypotheses using bootstrapping. The results of these hypothesis tests are presented in the subsequent sections.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing Results

This section summarizes the outcomes of the findings, wherein the acceptance or rejection wherein the acceptance or rejection is determined by statistical significance theoretical justification.

Table No 8: Hypotheses Results

Path	Beta	T Statistics	P values	Results
H1 : SMM -> PI	0.037	0.374	0.709	Rejected
H2 : SMM -> BA	0.040	0.410	0.682	Rejected
H3 : SMM -> BI	0.615	12.635	0.000	Accepted
H4 : BA -> PI	0.260	4.148	0.000	Accepted
H5 : BI -> PI	0.530	6.784	0.000	Accepted

We rejected Hypothesis 1, which states: "Social media marketing impact on purchase intention " (t=0.374, p >.05). Hypothesis 2 Indicates that we have rejected Social media marketing impact on brand awareness "(t=0.410, p > .05). We accepted Hypothesis 3, Indicating "Social media marketing effect by brand image" (t= 12.635, p <.05). Our research accepted Hypothesis 4, Indicating "Brand awareness impact on purchase intention" t=4.148, p > .05). The study accepted Hypothesis 5, Indicating "Brand Image impact on purchase intention" (t= 6.784, p <.05).

Figure No 3. Structural Model
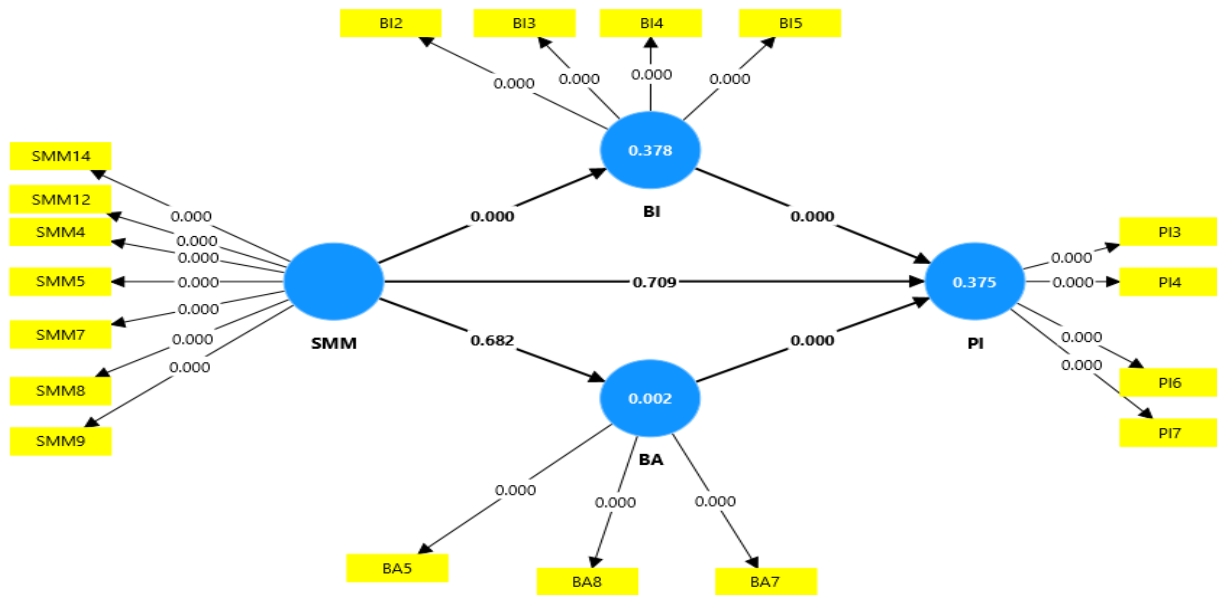
5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This study enhances the understanding of the interplay relationship between SMM, BA, BI, and PI. The study's results indicate that while SMM does not directly influence PI or BA, it substantially influences BI, which then affects PI. These results support prior research emphasizing the fundamental role of brand image plays a crucial role in guiding consumer purchasing decisions (Ali & Naushad, 2023).

The rejection of H1, which proposed a direct connection between SMM and PI, suggests that digital marketing efforts alone do not strongly drive purchase intent in the Pakistani context. This result is consistent with research in other developing markets, where trust and brand credibility are critical factors in consumer decision-making (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). Similarly, the rejection of H2 suggests the importance of adopting targeted and localized marketing approaches in Pakistan. This is supported by Saputra & Wardana's (2023) research, which demonstrated cultural and regional factors on brand awareness.

The acceptance of H3 underscores the significance of brand perception in digital marketing strategies, highlighting the substantial influence of SMM on BI.his is supported by research indicating that effective social media campaigns can increase consumer trust and engagement (Ali & Naushad, 2023). Furthermore, the positive correlation between BA and PI (H4) aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes the critical role of brand familiarity and recognition in driving consumer purchasing behavior (Kerse, 2023). The acceptance of H5 provides additional confirmation that the role of BI is to influence consumer attitudes and attitudes and purchase intentions (Salem, 2024).

5.2 Conclusion

This study provides critical insights into the interplay between Social Media Marketing (SMM), Brand Image (BI), Brand Awareness (BA), and Purchase Intention (PI). The results

indicate that while SMM does not directly impact PI or BA, it has a strong influence on BI, which in turn affects PI. These results underscore the importance of a strong brand image and awareness in converting consumer engagement into actual purchase intentions.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to marketing theory by reaffirming the importance of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model. Consumer perceptions (BI and BA) mediate the influence of SMM strategies.

5.2 Practical Implications

This research sheds light on the importance of SMM in driving consumer purchasing behavior. While SMM doesn't directly impact purchase intention or brand awareness, companies can amplify their impact by prioritizing brand image. By crafting engaging content, interactive ads, and strategic influencer collaborations, businesses can create a positive brand perception. Storytelling, customer testimonials, and user-generated content can help to establish credibility and foster brand loyalty.

Another important takeaway from this research is the significant impact of BA on PI. Although social media marketing alone may not be sufficient to significantly boost brand awareness, targeted campaigns, search engine optimization, and consistent branding can improve consumer recognition. To build stronger brand recall, marketers should emphasize content quality, active consumer engagement, and influencer partnerships to enhance brand image, Additionally, companies should focus on customer relationship management to cultivate brand awareness and consumer trust. This study also highlights the importance of considering regional and cultural preferences when developing social media marketing strategies. Businesses operating in similar economies should tailor their strategies to local consumer expectations, incorporating culturally relevant messaging, native languages, and trending local themes.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

While offering valuable insights, this study is limited by its focus on Pakistani consumers, making it less generalizable to other markets Future research should conduct cross-cultural studies and examine additional mediating factors like trust and perceived value.

In summary, while SMM is a powerful marketing tool, its success depends on its ability to enhance brand awareness and image, which ultimately drives consumer purchase intentions. Businesses should adopt strategic social media marketing approaches to maximize consumer influence and drive purchase intentions.

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